

**PERFORMANCE SELECT COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 p.m. on 12 FEBRUARY 2009**

Present: Councillor H S Rolfe – Chairman
Councillors J E N Davey, A J Ketteridge, and P A Wilcock.

Officers in attendance: R Auty (Head of Community Engagement), S Bronson (Audit Manager), S Martin (Head of Customer Support and Revenue Services), J Mitchell (Chief Executive), C Roberts (Democratic Services Officer) and G Smith (Head of Environmental Health).

Also present: I Davidson and P J King (Audit Commission)

PS54 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Barker, M L Foley, T P Knight and J Salmon.

PS55 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2008 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the correction of Mr King's initial.

PS56 BUSINESS ARISING/ACTION LIST UPDATE

(i) PS16 Finance and Procurement Module

Councillor Wilcock expressed disappointment that no new roll-out date was available and Richard Auty undertook to obtain a new date in time to be circulated with the minutes. He also explained the nature of the security issue and added that the same issue affected the commitment accounting aspect of the Housing Audit Action Plan.

PS57 COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT

The Committee received a computer aided presentation by Ian Davidson on Comprehensive Area Assessment, an area which Paul King had described to the Committee in a previous meeting. Mr Davidson made comparisons between the new and old forms of assessment, describing the new assessment as looking at how local priorities expressed the community's needs and aspirations and how well the Council delivered the outcomes and improvements needed. The self assessment stage, when the Council might wish to highlight what had

gone well, would end in June.

Mr Davidson was asked how local the needs to be inspected might be and who would pay for the inspection. He gave an example of a local need in Thurrock and said that organisational assessment would be a part of the change to eg direction of travel, and Comprehensive Area Assessment would be paid for by Department of Communities and Local Government grant.

Councillor Wilcock asked how Uttlesford's aspirations would be linked externally across Essex and to the Local Strategic Partnership. Mr Davidson pointed to Key Issues, in the computer aided presentation, and to the LSP documents.

Councillor Wilcock questioned the target "Council reducing anti-social behaviour", since this subject was the purview of many agencies acting jointly. By way of answer Paul King referred to the "5 themes" for assessing use of resources and the "Final KLOE"(Key Line of Enquiry) whose content he listed. He said that the new approach was different; whereas assessment had involved "a prescriptive check list", it now involved "a rounded professional judgement against a headline KLOE". It would concentrate more on "outcomes" and focus less on "processes and mechanistic things" more "in line with comprehensive area assessment".

At this point the computer aided presentation displayed illustrations of perspective to demonstrate the value of self and comprehensive assessment which the Audit Commission representatives thought relevant.

Councillor Wilcock questioned "self assessment" and Paul King explained that the Audit Commission encouraged Councils to submit self assessments as it was the Council's opportunity to tell the Commission about good work and progress.

PS58

SUPPLEMENTARY OPINION AUDIT PLAN 2008/09

The Committee received the Supplementary Opinion Audit Plan updating the original Audit and Inspection Plan which went to the Performance Select Committee in June 2008.

Risk assessments had to be updated as the audit progressed. To date the Audit Commission did not propose to change the fee indicated in the original audit and inspection plan, although this decision relied on processes improving as anticipated.

The Chairman of the Committee drew a contrast between the fees charged to the Council for the Audit Commission's work and those charged to a local hospital at which he chaired an audit committee. He requested from the Audit Commission representatives a degree of transparency as to the calculations behind the fees charged, disclosing how the fees had been built up day by day and on what basis they could be challenged. Paul King said that fees were proposed and discussed and agreed by the Audit Commission. If they were felt

to be too high and the Council felt sufficiently unhappy they could refer them to the Audit Commission as Regulator to determine a fee.

The Chairman explained that the Council was not adducing a matter of competence and had not gone out to alternative auditors but wished to establish whether the Audit Commission's work represented value for money for the Council, so would be grateful to be provided with the requested information shortly.

He referred to the long journey the Audit Commission representatives had ahead of them and encouraged them to feel free to go.

PS59

FEEDBACK ON ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COMPLAINTS

The Committee considered the report it had requested from the Head of Environmental Health on requests for service (termed 'complaints' by the computer system used to log them), with a set of complaint statistics for 2008 covering every complaint received, and an example of a customer satisfaction questionnaire. The Head of Environmental Health added that the questionnaire was at present for business use only. In answer to a question he said that 20% of businesses responded and the others were chased a second time for a reply.

The Chairman of the Committee was enthusiastic about the systems and asked that, subject to cost, feedback from customers be sought as widely as possible.

RESOLVED that the report be noted as excellent and that a summary of the categories of the complaints covered and details of levels of satisfaction be incorporated in a report to a future meeting.

PS60

BI & P SUMMARY REPORT – CUSTOMER FEEDBACK MANAGEMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Business Improvement and Performance Manager, and was advised by the Chief Executive that the report and recommendations comprised a progress report for the areas of complaints and enquiries processes, making recommendations for change following relevant service reviews. The Chairman suggested that training in customer care management might be a useful addition to complaint tracking.

In answer to a question from the Chairman the Chief Executive confirmed that the Council was adequately prepared for the community calls for action laid out in the Local Government White Paper.

- 1 that the report be noted and that the recommendations contained in the Business Improvement Summary Report on Customer Feedback Management be approved in principle subject to reference of individual proposals for expenditure to the Finance and Administration Committee as appropriate.
- 2 that a further update be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

PS61

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Committee received the report of the Business Improvement and Performance Officers presenting a summary of performance data for 2008/09 Quarter 3 (Oct - Dec) Corporate, National and Service Indicators. They were asked to review and comment on performance for that Quarter and to review and discuss the proposed amendment /deletion of certain indicators.

The Chief Executive commented that the extra resources (temporary external staff) for processing of planning applications had been introduced because the predicted decline in planning applications had not materialised to the expected extent. There was at present short and long term sickness in the Planning Department but it was expected that the expenditure over the whole year would be on target.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the report of the Business Improvement and Performance Officers be noted.
- 2 that the suggested deletions/amendments of indicators CI03a, CI03b, CI03c, CI05b, CI11, SI02a, SI29 and SI30 are approved.

PS62

ESTIMATED END OF YEAR (2008/09) PERFORMANCE DATA AND TARGET SETTING 2009/10

The Committee received the report of the Business Improvement & Performance Officers giving a summary of estimated performance data for all National, Corporate and Service Indicators collected by the Council for the year 2008/09. It also included proposed targets for 2011/12 and any revisions to previously set targets for 2009/10 and 2010/11.

Members were asked to review and comment on estimated performance for 2008/09 and to review and discuss the proposed targets for 2011/12 in addition to suggested revisions to targets for 2009/10 and 2010/11.

The relevance of indicator SI 19 was questioned and it was suggested that

officers might wish to consider whether it was worth continuing to measure it. The Chief Executive said that this item would be revisited and a response would be brought back to the Committee.

It was accepted that the figure for time to pay supplier invoices should be reviewed.

The Chairman of the Committee requested that an indicator around the cost of the museum service per visitor be considered.

RESOLVED

1 that the report of the Business Improvement and Performance Officers be noted.

2 that the suggested deletions of indicators SI02a and b, CI03a, CI03b, CI03c, CI01, and CI02 are approved with the replacement and addition targets and indicators as set out in the report.

PS63

INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER & TERMS OF REFERENCE 2009/10 AND STRATEGY 2009/10

The Committee received the report of the Audit Manager on the review and updating of the Internal Audit Charter & Terms of Reference and the Internal Audit Strategy 2009/10.

The Audit Manager explained that the previous Audit Charter had been reviewed and updated to include Terms of Reference to comply with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government, and to address the recommendations made in the Audit Commissions Review of Internal Audit September 2008.

Reporting protocols had also been revised and updated to bring them into line with best practice at other local authorities with the main change being the introduction of the agreement on management action, responsible officer(s) and implementation dates of actions on a completed management action plan prior to the issue of the Final Report.

The Internal Audit Strategy 2009-10 had been drawn up to comply with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government, and to address the recommendations made in the Audit Commission's Review of Internal Audit September 2008

RESOLVED

- 1 That the revised Internal Audit Charter and Terms of Reference 2009/10 be approved.
- 2 That the Internal Audit Strategy 2009/10 be approved.

PS64

INTERNAL AUDIT WORK PLANS 2008/09 AND 2009/10

The Committee received the report of the Audit Manager advising Members about the progress to date of internal audit work plan for 2008/09 and the proposed internal audit work plan for 2009/10

She informed the meeting that these plans had been agreed with the Strategic Management Board.

RESOLVED

- 1 That members note the progress on the Internal Audit work plan for 2008/09.
- 2 That members endorse the Internal Audit work plan for 2009/10.

PS65

REVIEW OF COMMITTEE REPORT RISK ANALYSIS

The Committee considered the report of Cllr Yarwood and the Audit Manager, which explained that the Risk Management Steering Group and Strategic Management Board had reviewed the current Risk Analysis in Committee reports. These analyses informed Members of the potential risk implications of the content of a report. The Group and Board had considered proposed amendments for submission to Performance Select Committee attached as an appendix to the report.

The Chairman of the Committee expressed appreciation for the content of the Risk Analysis box on Committee reports but said that he was unsure of the value of the Impact box and would like it removed unless others found it valuable.

The Chief Executive indicated that he thought the object of the format was to be concise and he would welcome any change towards this end.

RESOLVED that while the Committee supported the proposed amendments to the Risk Analysis section, it would like the entire committee report template to be reviewed by the Strategic Management Board, including the Impact box.

PS66

CAPITAL CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED THROUGH SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS BUT NOT CURRENTLY EXPENDED

The Committee considered the report of the Acting Director of Development which summarised the contributions received but not yet expended and the purposes to which they would be put, with indicative timescales. It arose from a request by the Committee for an assessment.

The Chief Executive said the report had been prompted by the belief of some people that there was a sum of money available to be generally used from this source. As the report showed, this was not the case.

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm