

**PERFORMANCE SELECT COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 28 JULY 2009**

Present: Councillor H S Rolfe – Chairman.
Councillors S Barker, J E N Davey, A J Ketteridge, R M Lemon,
T P Knight, J Salmon, P A Wilcock and A C Yarwood.

Officers in attendance:

R Auty (Head of Community Engagement), S Bronson (Audit Manager), P Evans (Business Improvement and Performance Manager), R Millership (Head of Housing Services), J Mitchell (Chief Executive), C Roberts (Democratic Services Officer).

PS20 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2009 were received, confirmed and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

PS21 BUSINESS ARISING/ACTION LIST UPDATE

09-PS4 UPerform

The Chief Executive updated the meeting on the percentage of staff who had now received a UPerform performance review. Members were pleased to note the substantial improvement.

09-PS9 Risk Management Working Group

The Chairman reported that a meeting had taken place attended by the Director of Central Services, the Chief Finance Officer, the Audit Manager, Councillors Wilcock and Yarwood, and himself; the conclusions of this meeting were that the Risk Management Working Group was not considered to be adequate to manage the Council's risk function properly, and that this Committee should undertake direct control of risk management. It was noted that this would require stopping the Risk Management Working Group to avoid duplication. Approval at Annual Council would be required.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor A C Yarwood to the Committee, referring to his particular expertise in the field of risk management.

The Audit Manager directed the Committee's attention to her report on the Corporate risk register and risk management update to be considered later in the meeting. She understood that the Director of Central Services and the Chief Finance Officer would be reporting to the Strategic Management Board on this subject shortly.

Councillor Wilcock suggested the appointment of the Chief Executive as Champion to ensure that risk management became embedded in the culture of the Council.

Minute S18 VAT Fleming claim

The Head of Community Engagement read an interim update from the Chief Finance Officer on this claim and on the Council's use of "no win, no fee" arrangements in general. The Chief Finance Officer would be reporting on the

matter to the meeting of the Committee in September. The Chairman commented that the percentage taken by the “no win no fee” organisations varied and had been studied at Papworth; the Council was welcome to liaise with the Papworth Hospital Procurement Service to see whether they were getting the best deal.

Minute S18 Asset Management and Pension Scheme

In answer to questions from Councillor Wilcock the Head of Community Engagement confirmed that reports on asset management and the pension scheme would go to the September meeting of the Committee. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Council would be responding to the Government consultation regarding the pension scheme and that this would either be done by him or be considered by the appropriate Committee of the Council before the end of September if a meeting were available.

PS22

INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS

The Committee considered the progress report of the Audit Manager on work undertaken by Internal Audit since 01 April 2009 with an update on implemented and outstanding internal audit recommendations.

The Audit Manager explained that the purpose of the report was to provide to management and Members:-

- i) details of the work completed by Internal Audit since the last report to the Committee
- ii) summary of Risk level 3 and 4 recommendations made and agreed by Management.
- iii) performance against the 2009/10 audit plan.
- iv) details of Risk level 3 and 4 recommendations not implemented within the agreed timescale, and
- v) an analysis of other recommendations awaiting implementation.

She added that the report followed the format adopted by other authorities and provided a summary of all level 3 & 4 recommendations made since 01 April 2009. Recommendations made in Internal Audit reports from the 2008/09 Internal Audit Plan had been uploaded into the Covalent Performance Management system and reports on the status of recommendations had been extracted and were presented as appendices. Recommendations made in Internal Audit reports from the 2009/10 Internal Audit Plan onwards would be monitored through Covalent. Progress on their implementation would be reported to the Committee in future Progress Report appendices.

The Chairman of the Committee thanked her for the substantial and comprehensive report and invited comments from the Committee as to how the data should be handled.

Councillor Wilcock said that he thought the report was very good and that he presumed actions would be removed from the list once they had been carried out.

In answer to a question from the Chairman the Chief Executive outlined the action being taken by the Strategic Management Board. The Audit Manager added that new reports would be directly entered on Covalent, referred to the Committee and reminders would be sent to HODs.

The Chairman wished the actions from 07/08 to be brought into the new reporting procedure so that an adequate audit trail would be formed.

Councillor Yarwood was concerned about the risk to confidential information posed by home working. The Chief Executive outlined security measures which were already being implemented pursuant to the Government's Code of Connection ("COCO") initiative.

Members asked a question about provision of a protocol for tracking actions with extended implementation dates. The Audit Manager said that extended dates were rare and usually due to external factors but agreed to bring a protocol forward next year.

It was noted that some late implementations did not warrant Committee action, but did require information to be given to the Committee by way of explanation.

At the request of Cllr Knight the Chief Executive explained the extent of the Council's liability to maintain trees and agreed to supply this information to the Parish Councils.

RESOLVED to note the report and thank the Audit Manager for this good work.

PS23

CORPORATE RISK REGISTER AND RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Audit Manager on the Council's risk management arrangements and the Risk Management Steering Group. The report also requested the Committee's approval of the Corporate Risk Register.

Members welcomed the report and asked for more narrative in future reports about items with risk scores above 8.

In answer to a question from the Chairman, the Audit Manager confirmed that the Strategic Management Board assessed risks quarterly. The Chief Executive explained that the risk register was informed by the Corporate Plan, which was approved by the Council.

Members asked why such matters as the anticipated swine flu pandemic and other business continuity risks were not part of the Risk Register. The Chief Executive advised that these were emergency planning matters and the responsibility of the Community and Housing Committee. Plans were in place and constantly being developed and refined.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Risk Register be approved and the Risk Management Update noted.

PS24

2009/10 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Business Improvement and Performance Manager presented the Quarter 1 analysis of performance data with the comments of the Strategic Management Board.

Members expressed a preference for the format used at paragraph 24 of the report and asked that this be applied throughout future reports. They also requested that the non-performing indicators be visibly distinct from any others referred to, and that it be made plain what comparator data was being used for each indicator. They considered that the summary data was however now less necessary in reports.

As regards the content of the report, Members were concerned that due to lack of capacity and increasing demand the Council was unable to operate a first class benefits service and asked for a report to Council on the cost of doing so.

The Chief Executive reminded Members of the financial imperatives facing the Council and that Full Council had resolved on 21 July that partnership working was the way to address capacity issues in the Revenues and Benefits services rather than appointing more staff. Measures would be taken in the meantime to ensure the service was maintained in face of an increasing workload.

In answer to a question the Business Improvement and Performance Manager agreed to obtain benchmarking information regarding the amounts spent in this field by other authorities.

RESOLVED that approval be given to the following:-

1. The tolerance level rising from 5% to 10% (in line with many other councils);
2. That only red status indicators for National and Service indicators be brought to PSC for formal review;
3. The deletion of PI number C109.

PS25 CUSTOMER FEEDBACK UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered the progress report of the Business Improvement and Performance Manager on the Customer Feedback Project which described in particular investigations being made into possible system improvements, using software and/or partnership, and proposed consultation on streamlining of customer standards following benchmarking.

RESOLVED that all Members are included in the consultation exercise.

PS26 PLACE SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Business Improvement and Performance Manager on the results of the 2008 Place Survey which had been carried out on behalf of the Council by the Essex County Council.

RESOLVED that the results are noted.

PS27 AUDIT COMMISSION COMMUNITY HOUSING INSPECTION - UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing Services on progress made with recommendations from the Audit Commission inspection of Community Housing Services.

Members were pleased with the very positive tone of the update and the plans to meet future inspections.

RESOLVED that the report is noted.

PS28 STAFF SURVEY - UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on summarising the results of the 2008 Staff Survey.

Members noted the results which would provide comparators to enable a portfolio of changes to be compiled at the end of 2009.

The meeting ended at 9.35 pm.