

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 12 APRIL 2016
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.30 - 8.50 PM**

Members Present: G Mohindra (Chairman), P Keska (Vice-Chairman), S Kane, A Mitchell, A Patel and J M Whitehouse

Other members present: A Lion, S Stavrou and C Whitbread

Apologies for Absence: H Mann and S Watson

Officers Present P Maddock (Assistant Director (Accountancy)), P Maginnis (Assistant Director Human Resources), J Dixon (Learning & Development Advisor), D Newton (Assistant Director (ICT and Facilities Management)), G. Nicholas (National Management Trainee) and A Hendry (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

46. TRIBUTE TO COUNCILLOR KEN ANGOLD-STEPHEN

The chairman paid tribute to Councillor Angold-Stephens who recently passed away. Councillor Angold-Stephens was a valued member of this committee and would be greatly missed.

47. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

It was noted that there were no substitute members for this meeting.

48. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The notes from the meeting on 9 February 2016 were agreed as a correct record subject to the apologies of Councillor Keska being added.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made pursuant to the Member's Code of Conduct.

50. PRESENTATION BY THE COUNCIL'S APPRENTICES

The Committee received a short presentation from the eight corporate apprentices, Tyler Raymond, Rebecca Linford, Rebecca Yellop, Emily Gowens, Sian Pavitt, Amber Stewart, Jay Binks and Zach Webb. They each gave a brief outline of the work that they were doing and how it helped them develop. Along with the day to day work that they did for their respective directorates the apprentices noted that:

- It had helped them to see how other departments work and to meet the various officers that work for the council;
- It showed them the different kinds of jobs available;
- It helped them to understand the situations and people that the council deal with;

- It gave them confidence and communication skills (Letter and email writing, dealing with people over the counter and on the phones);
- It added to their overall knowledge about the council;
- And best of all it added to their life skills.

As well as their routine jobs they also organised the Christmas Jumper Day (for charity) and helped in the Careers Fest.

The meeting was then opened up to questions from the members present.

Councillor Kane asked what the selection process like. She was told that there were different ways used, some were contacted by the Council, had their CV reviewed and then had interviews and after that they had a trial period to see if they fitted in. During this process they got to learn about interviews and how to prepare and conduct themselves at interviews.

Councillor Whitehouse noted that it was a balance between gaining working experience and gaining qualifications. The apprentices said that they had a tutor from college that interviews them once a month, monitoring how they were getting on.

Councillor Lion asked if they were still going to have their outplacements and was told that would happen later on in the spring. He then asked if this experience had helped them choose a career. They responded that it had helped them know what they wanted to do by giving them a taste of different jobs and getting to see what exactly the Council did.

Councillor Whitbread said he was proud of what they had achieved. They were all local residents and the Council had wanted to do something for its local young people.

The Assistant Director, Human Resources added that this was the second cohort of apprentices, as they recruit new apprentices every other year. She also noted that we still had most of the apprentices from the first cohort working for us; as we had invested in their training we would not like to see them go.

The Chairman asked the apprentices if there was anything they would like from the leadership, and was told that there was nothing in particular they wanted but maybe the council could use the apprentices to help promote the scheme. Councillor Stavrou suggested that maybe they could produce a video to help in the promotion for the next cohort, or they could publicise their work at a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The Chairman thanked the apprentices for their interesting presentation and their forthright answers to the questions asked.

51. NATIONAL GRADUATE SCHEME

The Council's National Graduate Development Programme appointee, Mr G Nicholas gave a short presentation to the meeting about his appointment and subsequent work at the Council. This was a national scheme for trainee management development he had applied for and had subsequently to go through various tests and interviews to get this placement. Since he had started with the Council he had been given a different placement every six months to get a broad experience of the work of a local authority. His first placement was with Democratic Services; he then

moved on to Human Resources; and then onto looking into the aging population and helping with the council's Transformation Project. All the projects he was involved in meant that he was entrusted to engage with both staff and members on important projects which provided him with a wide base of experience.

He had undertaken this scheme to stretch his abilities and knowledge and noted that it had been a real benefit to him, both as an individual and for his work and career prospects. He had been entrusted to handle the projects from the start and had received a lot of support from the relevant managers and staff. He had faced new challenges by having to write reports and present them to the Management Board. Finally he noted that his contract had been extended by another year to enable him to take on the various projects that needed to be done.

Councillor Lion asked if it had always been challenging as he had indicated. Mr Nicholas said that there had been a lot of extra development opportunities to be had. He had been involved in the coaching and mentoring of some of the apprentices and there had never been a chance to get bored. The jobs had always kept him on his toes and pushed him, but he always had the support of his managers and colleagues. The Assistant Director, Human Resources added that they had modelled his placement on how they handled the apprentices. All the placements were mapped out before he joined us and a structured work plan put in.

Councillor Lion then asked what Mr Nicholas would like to change in the council if he could. Mr Nicholas said that one thing he had identified was how projects were managed; it was a lot of work for a few people. This was something that could be looked at.

Councillor Mohindra noted that there were a few steps that he had to go through in the application process, how could we make it simpler. Mr Nicholas replied that it was not in the Council's control as it was a national process; but it has since been revised and slightly simplified. The Assistant Director, Human Resources noted that they had first met Mr Nicholas at a sort of Career festival; they then held some internal interviews for candidates. They were now lining up another National Graduate candidate for next year and Mr Nicholas would be helping with this.

Councillor Lion said that he was pleased that the contract had been extended for another year.

Mr Nicholas was thanked for his presentation and informative answers to the questions raised.

52. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Select Committee noted their Terms of Reference and their Work Programme and the fact that they had covered everything in that programme except for item 18 – Corporate Debt Process. This would be brought to the July meeting in the new municipal year when more information would be available.

Councillor Lion proposed that it would be useful to look at the Business Plan in the new year.

Councillor Patel asked about the S106 money. Mr Maddocks noted that most of the unspent S106 money had now been allocated to various schemes. The Chairman noted that this could be looked at again next year.

53. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2016/17 REVIEW AND TARGETS

The Select Committee considered the proposed Key performance Indicators for 2016/17 for those areas that fell within the Committee's area of responsibility. They noted that the KPIs provided an opportunity for the Council to focus attention on how specific areas for improvement would be addressed, and how opportunities would be exploited and better outcomes delivered. It was important that the key performance indicators were reviewed annually to ensure their continued relevance and that their targets were appropriate and challenging.

The review of the KPIs which fall within the areas of responsibility of the Resources Select Committee had resulted in no change to the indicator set, however it was proposed the target for three indicators be increased, whilst another was decreased.

Councillor Whitehouse asked how RES011 (*customer needs being met by the main Corporate website*) was to be measured. He was told that the number of page hits were being monitored, that is, where they started and where they stopped. It should only take three steps to get to where they wanted to be; except for the Planning website, which by its nature would take more hits.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed KPI targets for 2016/17 be agreed and reported back to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee.

54. QUARTERLY FINANCE MONITORING

The Select Committee noted that this report provided a comparison between the original estimate for the period ended 31 December 2015 and the actual expenditure or income as applicable. This was the third quarterly report for 2015/16 and covered the period from 1 April 2015 to 31 December 2015.

The Select Committee noted that:

- The salaries schedule showed an underspend of £284,000 or 1.8%. This time last year the variance was 1.1%;
- Communities were showing the largest underspend of £124,000 this relates in the main to the Housing Works Unit. The other three directorates were all showing an underspend though less significant;
- Investment interest levels were below expectations at Month 9 by £6,000;
- The Building Control ring-fenced account was now showing an in-year surplus of £55,000 and not as indicated in the report £53,000;
- Public Hire licence income and other licensing was now above expectations;
- Income from MOT's carried out by Fleet Operations were now £8,000 below expectations;
- Car parking income was £31,000 below the estimate as at month 9;
- Local Land Charge income was now £14,000 above the revised expectations;
- The Housing Repairs Fund showed an underspend of £366,000. The budget had been reviewed and savings identified. Officers were still unsure about what the final figure would be; and
- The resources available from Business Rates for funding purposes was set in the January preceding the financial year in question. Once these estimates were set the funding available for the year was fixed. Any variation arising from changes to the rating list or provision for appeals, whilst affecting funding

do not do so until future years. For 2015/16 the funding retained by the authority after allowing for the Collection Fund deficit from 2014/15 was £3,363,000. This exceeded the government baseline of £3,022,000 by some £341,000. The actual position for 2015/16 will not be determined until May 2016.

In regard to revenue, income was generally up on expectations and expenditure down. The increased income levels were very much welcome, and expenditure being below budget was not surprising as expenditure was usually heaviest towards the end of the financial year.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee noted the revenue and capital financial monitoring report for the third quarter of 2015/16.

55. ICT UPDATE

The Select Committee noted the update on ICT projects. They noted that work on projects within the ICT Strategy for 2013/2018 was still on-going. Overall projects were on track and progressing well, in line with expectations. Previous years have seen ICT concentrated on implementing new systems to facilitate mobile and flexible working. This year we had been concentrating on fine tuning these systems and consolidating the processes required. Changes in the way we use the systems has also impacted on the way we licence these products and a lot of time has been spent liaising and negotiating with our suppliers to ensure we are correctly licenced for their products. In the future, most products will only be available as software as a service (SaaS) which will again change the way we use and pay for our software. Nowadays we have to rent software, while in the past we used to buy it outright. The suppliers are more stringent with the number of people using their software to get more money from us.

It was noted that:

- The Banker's Automated Clearing Services (BACS) required replacement in order to comply with stricter banking security regulations, this was achieved;
- The Civic Office rollout for the UPS (Uninterruptable Power Supply) was now complete. Remote sites would be completed early in the financial year;
- A remote PC management tool has been introduced to save time by removing the requirement of having to return a unit to base for essential upgrades;
- The replacement service desk for the running of both support functions within the same system had been delayed until May 2016;
- The upgraded version of the Virtual Private Network (VPN) had now been successfully installed, which along with increased stability replaced the physical key tokens with a software equivalent;
- The set up of off site servers for disaster recovery had now been set up to enable telephony resilience and data replication. This was now under testing and completion was scheduled for July 2016;
- Following a recent demonstration of the Northgate Mobile working solution for Building Control (BC), ICT approached the supplier regarding the potential for a similar solution for Development Management and Planning Enforcement. This upgrade was capable of transforming the way Development Management officers can work when out of the office – with or without mobile connectivity. Northgate were planning to launch this product during this year,

but required business input into the design process – EFDC ICT and Development Management working in partnership will provide this business input. The system will enable officers to work on site, and also to remotely update back office systems, for Officer's with casework it also offers the potential to change their work patterns as case load and visit details can be picked up from home in the morning – removing the need to attend the office to collect work;

- Following the recent purchase of an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle under the invest to save scheme, ICT GIS staff will after suitable training and accreditation by the CAA, be able to fly the 'drone' and undertake aerial surveys and 3D modelling. It was noted that the recent BBC report was factually incorrect and officers had asked the BBC to update their report; and
- Links to the Corporate Gazetteer Integration needed to be implemented for all property based systems not currently linked.

The Chairman asked if these were all weather drones. He was told that they had to be careful of windy conditions. Councillor Whitehouse asked if we had policies for the use of the 'drones'. He was told that was part of the CAA course, to develop a manual and policies for the use of them. Following on from this training the draft policy will be completed.

Councillor Lion noted that the mobile planning system worked very well and he would like to extend it to other directorates when they have ICT databases for the public.

Councillor Kane asked how current the disaster recovery data was. He was told that it was a timed backup not a real time constant update.

Councillor Kane asked where we stood legally in terms of the privacy law, with the impending use of a drone. He was told that we were complying with all the relevant laws. The drones were initially bought by planning for mapping purposes; the GIS officers know the rules and were being very careful with it.

RESOLVED:

That the progress of on the ICT projects for 2015/16 was noted.

56. CALL HANDLING

The Select Committee noted the updating report on the telephone monitoring statistics covering the period April 2015 to February 2016. They noted that ICT had been working with all directorates to assist in identifying best working practice using the 'Shoretel' system. With an average of 28,000 calls each month the abandoned call rate was now down to 5% and calls to voicemail at 6%. Officers from the Council Tax section were very good at handling calls. If they get an abandoned call they will ring them back.

These statistics are regularly reported to Management Board; operational managers are aware of these figures and were working to improve them further where possible.

Councillor Whitehouse noted that there were a lot of abandoned calls to the Homelessness section, this would be something to look at. Officers agreed that this could be investigated.

RESOLVED:

That the telephone monitoring statistics covering April 2015 to February 2016 be noted.

57. REPORTS TO BE MADE TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee noted that a general update would be going to the next O&S Committee with special emphasis on the Apprentices and Graduate presentations.

58. LAST MEETING OF THE YEAR

The Chairman noted that this was the last meeting of the year and thanked the committee for their diligence and the members of the Cabinet that regularly attended for their input into the meeting.