

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY, 10 APRIL 2017
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.00 - 8.37 PM**

Members Present:	S Kane (Chairman), A Patel (Vice-Chairman), N Bedford, D Dorrell, R Jennings, J Lea (Chairman of the Council), C Roberts, D Roberts, G Shiell and J M Whitehouse
Other members present:	R Brookes, G Mohindra, M Sartin, B Surtees, G Waller, C Whitbread and J H Whitehouse
Apologies for Absence:	A Boyce, R Gadsby, A Mitchell and H Whitbread
Officers Present	P Maddock (Assistant Director (Accountancy)), I Almond (Council Staff), D Bailey (Head of Transformation), R Carroll (UNISON), G Chipp (Chief Executive), P Freeman, G Greenwold (Council Staff), O Shaw (Head of Customer Service), J Shingler (Principal Planning Officer) and A Hendry (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

62. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

It was noted that Councillor J Lea was substituting for Councillor A Boyce and Councillor G Shiell was substituting for Councillor A Mitchell.

63. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

64. TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME - OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

The Chairman of the Select Committee noted that this meeting was called to establish the baseline for the scrutiny of the Council's Transformation Programme as proposed by the PICK form considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting held on 28 February 2017. The O&S Committee agreed that the Resources Select Committee should be tasked with this scrutiny.

The Chairman of the Resources Select Committee had agreed to start with a one item special meeting to further explore the best approach and to establish an appropriate way forward. To do this the Head of Transformation, the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council were invited to give a brief outline of the programme. All council members were invited via the Council Bulletin, as were the staff representatives on the Joint Consultative Committee.

The meeting opened with the Chief Executive giving a short introduction to the transformation programme saying it was the council's vision to make the council fit for the 21st century. It would enable the council to react quickly, make changes and drive efficiencies. Transformation meant any major changes to services. These were not delivered by just one or two people but by all the staff, over a period of years. There was a need for a programme to manage a council wide progress towards this

and the Transformation Programme was to manage this process and progress. Any major project would have to put together a project charter that would have to go to the Transformation Programme Board to be agreed. For example, currently there were about 4 or 5 separate projects to set up electronic forms that would be helpful to co-ordinate this council wide.

There were four drivers for change: responding to customers whose needs were changing; customers expected modern customer focused services; demanded well managed value for money services; and they wanted us to reduce our cost and protect front line services. Customer expectations were changing, they were using social media more and we had to respond to this. We also want well managed services working more efficiently and effectively. We did not want to reduce services but were looking to reduce accommodation costs and back office costs. There was a corporate need to manage projects and keep us out of Silos.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Chris Whitbread added that this was an ongoing process over a long period of time. With current pressures from central government we still needed to maintain services to our residents and be fit for purpose in the 21st century. We need to supply services in a new way, such as online transactions and use of mobile phones and twitter etc.

This way we would be protecting front line staff and jobs for the future. The change of the use of the building was part of this, using our assets and protecting our services. We need to be a Council that works across the board and to add resilience to our services. An example of this would be our planned new reception area for customers.

The Head of Transformation, Mr Bailey, gave a short presentation on the Transformation Programme. The Committee noted that all organisations had to change and this was a council wide attempt to manage these change corporately and in a co-ordinated manner.

Programmes were comprised of groups of projects managed collectively to get better outcomes for the work. They have audited all the projects using the corporate plans for this. They had found projects in the organisation seeking major pieces of change for the authority and looked at them via the four "Workstreams" headings of 'customer experience', 'business culture', 'resources, accommodation and technology', and 'major projects'.

There was a 'Golden Thread' that was followed that said that projects deliver outputs that enabled changes that created outcomes that resulted in benefits and achieved objectives and addressed drivers. We were good at carrying out these changes but less good at measuring the impact of these changes and what they would mean for our residents. Organisations tended to work from 'outputs' to 'drivers' but the best way was to work the other way around and work from 'drivers' to 'outputs'. Working this way provided four key benefits of improved customer value, reduced waste, increased agility and increased savings and income.

Officers were looking at the proposed Corporate Plan for 2018/23. It was noted that we were in the third year of our current Corporate Plan but that plans change and evolve as it goes along. The Corporate Plan will go through scrutiny and public consultation in its draft form. The projects identified usually deliver something that the Corporate Plan needs. There were a lot of projects in motion right now and officers were looking to manage and co-ordinate this.

There was a group looking at this at present using 'Covalent', looking at themes and connections between projects, programmes and performance indicators. A recent example of this was the Multi-Function Devices (MFD) project; replacing desk top printers with 26 MFD's situated throughout the council. Officers looked at where they were needed and at the cost benefits of printing. Using this system officers can share project work across the organisation and share experience and also be transparent on what was going on.

The Transformation Team use 'Risk Potential Assessments' classifications to assess the projects underway to classify them as either High, Medium or Low classifications. The Low level projects have minimal need for project management and were within a single service area. Medium level projects had slightly higher profiles and were usually managed within a single directorate. However, High level projects were classed as transformative and required Council wide co-ordination and would be overseen by the Transformation Programme Board and actively supported by programme management officers. There were currently about 38 High and Medium level projects, each one given its own unique number and was followed through to its completion.

In conclusion Mr Bailey said that it was all about communication, there could never be enough and there would always be the need for more. The officers of the Transformation Programme held regular Q and A sessions and also put regular items in District Lines to keep staff informed; all communications had been internally focused so far. Change was about people and engagement was key. Not everyone would agree with what was put forward but there needed to be a discussion.

The Chairman thanked Mr Bailey and Mr Chipp for their presentation and noted that this meeting was not meant to be a scrutiny session but they were looking at how to take this PICK form forward. He then opened the meeting out to questions from the members present.

Councillor Jennings asked about the suspension of the pro-rata rules governing the establishment of Task and Finish Panels. The Senior Democratic Services Officer explained that this enabled members that were specifically interested in the topic under consideration to let them sit on that Panel without having to fulfil the pro-rata rules. The Chairman expressed his preference for establishing a Task and Finish Panel to consider this PICK form.

Councillor Dorrell asked if an audit had been carried out and if there were a lot of projects not yet tied in with the transformation team and had they shut down any projects. Mr Bailey confirmed that they had not closed down any projects as they had not found pieces of work that have not been needed. They have found some good examples of project work being carried out. Mr Chipp said that there were a whole range of service plans with a lot of 'pet' projects included. Using the Covalent system we were able to put together a number of projects. They have found some good projects but could now identify common themes and fit them into our corporate priorities, such as the recent Customer Self-Service Payment Kiosk project, and bring them together.

Councillor Dorrell commented that their aspirations were to be transparent, but that could lead to blame. Mr Chipp said that he did not want a blame culture. Some projects needed more resources and transparency would enable us to do this. It also enables them to control the scope of the project; if changes were wanted we would look at it.

Councillor Shiell asked if they had all the Directors at their meetings or were they briefed individually. Mr Chipp replied that all directors were there as a corporate approach along with any other relevant officers. We empowered staff to try things on a small scale and this enabled us to see outcomes and any problems raised before it went large scale. It was a better way of working; we needed to be more efficient. Mr Bailey added that staff were encouraged to go and look at what was needed, like Parking at the Council offices; we had a number, but when we went to count up it came to something else. The same was for the number of meeting rooms used. We tried to make decisions that were evidence based. We also evaluated what went well and not so well and we needed to share this. Learning was important to us.

Councillor Patel asked how they engaged with members especially when seeking approval or it had an impact on the budget. Mr Bailey said that projects were Portfolio decisions or came under the Leader and were published in the Council Bulletin. Mr Chipp said that all four of the major projects reported to the various Select Committees. Two of the key projects went to the Cabinet. Also, a business case needed to be made and agreed. Staff have reacted well so far and were looking for better corporate overview and engagement. A good example of a good project was the installation of the MFDs. Officers were currently looking at hot desking and home working as there was a need to reduce building costs.

Councillor Mohindra welcomed the PICK form and would like to have feed back from any Task and Finish Panel established on the evaluation of costs and best value for money. He would also like assurance that we were not missing any project ideas from the staff and would like to identify who sat on the Transformation Board. Mr Bailey said that staff ideas came from forums and up through line managers, all were examined and evaluated. Mr Chipp added that they had trialled staff forums and would like more ideas to come from the staff.

Councillor Sartin noted that a lot of communications went through District Lines, this information would be useful for Members, and could it be given to us?

Councillor Jon Whitehouse asked if the Local Plan was a Transformation Project. Mr Bailey replied that it was a programme within the Transformation Programme and not a single piece of work; but of course he did not manage it. The Local Plan mentions the Council offices site, it was all interconnected. Councillor Jon Whitehouse asked what difference has the programme made to the Local Plan? Mr Chipp said that it had its own consultations and was a large piece of work based on evidence. It would not change our processes or procedures.

Councillor Jennings asked about hot desking, what was the Council doing to learn from other Authorities. All local authorities develop at different speeds, were we looking at their best practice? Mr Chipp replied that we were looking at other projects and other Local Authorities and what they did. As a good council we can look at doing other things such as having a Council Tax reduction and not just a 0% increase. Councillor Mohindra asked that they looked at the private sector as well.

Councillor Brookes had concerns about hot desking and that it was not necessarily a good thing for some staff. She did not want staff pushed into this if they did not want to. Mr Chipp said that there would always be a need for staff to be retained here such as in the contact centre. Home working and hot desking would happen over a period of 5 to 6 years. We needed to change how we worked before we hot desked. The staff seemed to like this flexibility in other authorities. There was a whole change to go through to get us to that point. When we reconfigure the building we need proper ways of working to fit in so the staff could do their work.

Councillor Bedford said that he worked in a hot desking environment and found that it suited him. There was a need to sort out general access to all services. Had we considered recruiting people to a general workforce where we could then choose staff for particular jobs/projects? Mr Chipp said that technology was the key to making this work and we needed to get this right. We did have staff that moved between disciplines and we would be putting staff from all services into one area, freeing up specialist staff that at present deal with minor items. They would be looking at an organisational plan looking at the skill set for individuals for a wide range of jobs.

Councillor Waller said that Essex County Council was moving to a single contact point, but how do we overcome the problem of people not knowing what to do. Mr Chipp said that his previous authority formed a one contact point, where they could identify where to put a call to. These days you could create virtual contact centres and have knowledge transfer so we could get follow through. We would have triage system for our contact point, freeing up qualified staff, but we will always need to have face to face contact with people.

The chairman asked if the JCC Staff representatives had any questions they would like to ask, they did not, as a lot of the points had been covered.

The Chairman summed up the meeting, saying that they would like to scrutinise the Programme Management Board and the High Risks Projects that had been identified. He noted that the medium level ones went to the various Select Committees anyway.

There were two options, either to form a sub group, from a smaller pool of talent to choose from, that would have no formal structure making it more difficult to scrutinise the topic on hand; or to form a Task and Finish Panel. By the general feeling of the meeting he thought it would be better to go to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee and ask for a Task and Finish Panel to be set up. The meeting agreed that a Task and Finish Panel would be more appropriate.

It was agreed that the task and Finish Panel once set up should fully evaluate and establish:

- a) A clear statement as to the objectives of the programme;
- b) A clear understanding as to the scope of the programme;
- c) A clear understanding as to the budget and financial implications of the programme;
- d) To document proposals for the ongoing scrutiny required to ensure that the programme continues to be:
 - 1) Meeting the programme objectives;
 - 2) Focused on the identified scope;
 - 3) On schedule; and
 - 4) Within budget

The Panel should also look at the high risk projects that required Council wide co-ordination and were overseen by the Transformation Programme Board.

The Task and Finish Panel should also be mindful of having a clear end date to complete their work on.

RESOLVED:

That the Resources Select Committee recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that a Task and Finish Panel be established to specifically define the objectives, scope and budget of the Transformation Programme.