

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 14 MARCH 2018
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.30 - 9.34 PM**

Members Present: A Patel (Chairman), D Sunger (Vice-Chairman), D Dorrell, L Hughes, P Keska, J Lea, G Shiell, P Stalker and J M Whitehouse

Other members present: A Lion and G Mohindra

Apologies for Absence: R Bassett (Vice Chairman of the Council), N Bedford, J Jennings and A Mitchell

Officers Present P Maddock (Assistant Director (Accountancy)), D Bailey (Head of Transformation) and A Hendry (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

41. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

It was noted that Councillor L Hughes was substituting for Councillor R Bassett and that Councillor G Shiell was substituting for N Bedford.

42. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes

The notes of the meeting held on 19 December 2017 were agreed.

Matters Arising

1. Mr Maddock asked if there were any specific questions the Committee wanted to raise on Business rates appeals before a report was brought to a future meeting. None were forthcoming.

2. The Chairman thanked officers for the training session in January 2018 for members before the budget meeting of the Cabinet Finance Committee that proved very helpful and interesting.

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

44. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted their terms of reference and work programme.

45. RESOURCES DIRECTORATE BUSINESS PLAN 2018-2019

Technology and Support Services Portfolio

Councillor Lion the Technology and Support Services Portfolio holder gave a short presentation of his portfolio's business plan for 2018/19.

The Committee noted that the central support functions of Facilities Management, ICT and the People Team supported the Council and underpinned the Corporate Plan and the drive to be fit for the 21st century. Their support was provided to all Council services and enabled both internal and external transformation and especially provided support for the front line services in the form of mobile working.

The accommodation strategy would still go ahead as the building still had to be changed and this would still happen in some guise. ICT had developed a strategic plan to enable home and remote working. They were also improving network flexibility and security and providing equipment to meet business needs such as laptops, tablets and smart phones.

Facilities Management were reviewing the buildings, car parks and building facilities and would also be reviewing and delivering the planned maintenance programme.

The Peoples Team had a number of key objectives, they were to establish a common operating model by 31 August 2018, complete a review of business support for implementation from 1 April 2019 and complete a review of pay and terms and conditions by 31 March 2019.

The council was also involved with the West Essex and Eastern Hertfordshire Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ). Epping Forest DC had agreed to coordinate a joint response as part of the DIZ programme. The aim of DIZ was to roll out superfast broadband to be one of the best connected places to live, work, study and do business. £7.5 million was made available by the government three years ago of which £84k was for EFDC investment.

Councillor Patel noted that IT underpinned the whole transformation programme. He went on ask for a staffing structure of the council so that members could see who did what. It would also be interesting to see it evolve and the changes made over the coming years. Councillor Lion said that he could get officers to produce a list and bring it to the next meeting.

Councillor Patel said that it had been helpful to have a presentation on this. Councillor Lion said that a presentation would also be going to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Finance Portfolio

Councillor Mohindra the Finance Portfolio holder spoke to his business plan for 2018/19. He noted that the Resources Directorate was a mix of support and frontline services. The support came from accountancy that supported all council services. On the front line were benefits and revenues.

Accounts had to prepare the budget in a very tight timeline for mid-February adoption. He thanked members of the Committee for attending the joint budget meeting with the Cabinet Finance Committee.

He noted that we had one of the best accounts sections in Essex and that we had very good finances as a council.

The Benefits section was looking to improve processing times by 31 March 2019; they also provided assistance to claimants moving on to Universal Credit; they were presently rolling out the first stage of the scheme but he noted that the government

were now not charging ahead with the universal credit scheme and we were awaiting developments.

Further self service options for businesses and residents were being rolled out to improve customer experience and increase back office efficiency by 31 March 2019.

They were also looking to procure and implement a new Sundry Debts Scheme system by 31 December 2018.

His Portfolio continued to improve and he had no issues to report.

RESOLVED:

That the Resources Select Committee noted the Resource Directorates Business Plan for 2018-2019.

46. TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME - PROJECT CLOSURES

The Head of Transformation, Mr D Bailey introduced the report on project closures from the Transformation Programme. It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had requested that Project Closure reports from the Transformation Programme were submitted to the relevant Select Committee for their information.

There was one closure report to be considered that was the Corporate Online Booking System, this included an evaluation of the project and also included recommendations for improvement.

Councillor Lion noted that it was a detailed closure report but how could he to pick out the key elements? Mr Bailey said that they should look at the end dates, was it delivered on time and in budget. An explanation would be found in box 15 where areas for improvement and learning points were reported. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would get all closure reports at their April meeting to see what could be learnt from them.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse noted that box 17 said that the project was delivered under budget but box 8 did not reconcile with this. Mr Bailey said that he would investigate.

Councillor Mohindra commented that this was good report containing good feedback. Mr Bailey said that a fundamental area to look at was learning from the projects.

Councillor Lion said that it needed a time and cost forecast and a note on how the figures were arrived at; they needed a more fundamental work out of the costs involved. Mr Bailey replied that any future projects would first go to the Transformation Board to be scrutinised before they started.

Councillor Lion asked if there were still parts of the council's business still to be looked at by the Transformation Board. He was told that they were largely there; they were only chasing up one or two areas.

Councillor Mohindra noted that some areas for accounting needed to be chased up. Mr Maddock responded that they would get valuations done on time this year. This had to be done every year as there was a lot of work involved which had to be done near the end of the year as possible.

Councillor Patel noted that box 8 also had two different end dates inserted. He was told that this was due to a delay in the system. Councillor Patel then asked how the benefits were quantified. Mr Bailey said that the benefits appeared in the corporate plan. These closure reports were not an outcome; there was still a need to measure how this improved the Council's services to its customers. This would be done at a 6 month review of the benefits achieved.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee noted and commented on the Transformation Programme – project closure report.

47. TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME - PROJECT DOSSIER - RESOURCE DIRECTORATE

The Head of Transformation, Mr D Bailey introduced the report on the updated project dossier for the Transformation Programme for the Resources Directorate. He noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had requested that the progress of projects and programmes within the Transformation Programme – known as the project dossier - be reported to regular meetings of the committee.

The Committee were asked to consider and review the list of active High and Medium complexity projects, known formally as the Project Dossier.

The Committee reviewed the projects for the Resources Directorate as listed in the report.

Project 171 – Corporate Business Support Team Review – had a due date of 30 March 2018, but only had 12% completed. It was noted that this was date was only for the discovery phase. It had now moved onto the initiation phase and had been extended to March 2019.

Project 043 – Mail, Correspondence and Document management – an update was asked for this. The Committee was told that it was due to close but the officer did not have the information at that time. He would find out and report back.

Councillor Patel noted that not all projects followed a liner timetable and asked if it would be possible to see the anticipated progress so that members could judge comparative progress, the Committee agreed that this would be a good idea. Mr Bailey said that he would investigate if this information could be provided.

Councillor Patel went on to say that the Committee could ask to look at any of the projects in depth and also if they provided value for money for the Council. The projects should establish what their benefits were from the start.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee reviewed and noted the updated project dossier for the Transformation Programme; and
2. That the Committee would like to see the anticipated progress for each project so that members could judge the comparative progress made.

48. CORPORATE PLAN KEY ACTION PLAN 2017/18 - QUARTER 3 PROGRESS

The Assistant Director Accountancy, Mr Maddock introduced the quarter 3 progress report on the Corporate Plan, Key Action Plan for 2017/18.

The Committee noted that 9 actions fell within the areas of responsibility of the Resources Select Committee. At the end of Q3:

- 7 (78%) of these actions had been 'Achieved' or were 'On-Target'
- 2 (22%) of these actions were 'Under Control'
- 0 (0%) of these actions were 'Pending'
- 0 (0%) of these actions were 'Behind Schedule'

Members went on to question the amber warning lights to Aim 1, Objective 1.b (12) *"to produce a plan to implement agreed recommendations from the Service Accommodation Review..."* And also Aim 1, Objective 1.c (6) *"to implement the recommendations of the reprographics service review..."* Officers informed members that these were on hold subject to consultations the council was having with Historic England about the future alterations of the building. These were difficult negotiations and any consent was likely to take up to a year. The project would take longer and cost more money, but it was possible to adapt the building to meet the council's needs and also keep Heritage England happy.

Councillor Dorrell commented that if officers knew that they were not going to hit a target date then they should class it as a red light and not an amber one.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee reviewed and commented on the third quarter (Q3) progress of the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan for 2017/18 in relation to its areas of responsibility.

49. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2017/18 - QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE

The Assistant Director Accountancy, Mr Maddock introduced the quarter 3 performance report on the Key Performance Indicators for 2017/18 within the Resources Select Committee's area of responsibility.

The Committee noted that six of the Key Performance Indicators fell within the Resources Select Committee's areas of responsibility. The overall position with regard to the achievement of target performance at Q3 for these six indicators was as follows:

- (a) 3 (50%) indicators achieved target;
- (b) 1 (17%) indicators did not achieve target,
- (c) 2 (33%) indicators performed within the agreed tolerance for the indicator;
- (d) 3 (50%) of indicators were currently anticipated to achieve year-end target and a further 2 (33%) were uncertain whether they would achieve year-end target.

RES001 – *how many working days did we lose due to sickness absence* – Councillor Patel noted that in the comments for this indicator it said that chances of meeting the target was vanishingly small. What did that mean? Mr Maddock said that he would get clarification on this.

RES002 – *what % of the invoice we received were paid within 30 days* – Councillor Patel noted that the council would hit the target for this quarter but noted that the indicator encouraged prompt payment of ‘undisputed invoices’. He asked why this was a KPI. Mr Maddock said that this was originally a mandatory KPI, it was now kept to monitor this from a management perspective, but would not stay as a formal KPI. He noted that local suppliers had a 20 day target and the council was not quite hitting that. One of the problems was the invoice system and officers were looking into that at present. Once solved it would speed up the process. The Committee will in future receive a six monthly report on this and not a quarterly KPI report.

ACTION: This would be put on the work programme for the new year.

RES003 – *what % of the district’s annual council tax was collected* – and

RES004 – *what % of the district’s annual business rates were collected* –

It was noted that both these indicators targets would be met but not until the new year.

RESOLVED:

That the Select Committee reviewed and noted the Q3 performance in relation to the key performance indicators within its areas of responsibility.

50. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT - Q3

The Assistant Director Accountancy, Mr Maddock introduced the third quarterly financial monitoring report for 2017/18 covering the period from 1 April to 31 December 2017.

The Committee noted that:

- The salary underspend of £233,000 or 1.4% was slightly higher than last year;
- Development Control income at Month 9 was down on expectations;
- Building Control income was revised upwards from £450,000 to £530,000 and indicators suggested that this may now be exceeded as income was £28,000 higher;
- Public Hire licence income and other licensing were above expectations;
- Car parking income was on track with the revised estimates a Month 9;
- The shopping park was included as the first units were now due to pay rent. Income in 2017/18 will be around £200,000 lower than expected as some units were let later than expected;
- Local Land Charge income was £3,000 below expectations; and
- Expenditure and income relating to Bed and Breakfast placements has been on the increase.

With regard to revenue, Building Control income was going well though Development Control income was down currently. Other income streams were either slightly below or above expectations but not significantly and expenditure was below budget which was often the case at this stage in the year.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee noted the revenue and capital financial monitoring report for the third quarter of 2017/18.

51. CORPORATE PLAN 2018-2023 - PROGRESS REPORTING AND PERFORMANCE INDICATOR SET

The Head of Transformation, Mr D Bailey introduced the report on the Corporate Plan 2018 – 2023. The plan linked the key external drivers influencing the Council services with a set of corporate aims and objectives, grouped under three corporate ambitions of stronger communities; stronger places; and stronger council.

A Corporate Specification for each year (previously called the Key Action Plan) detailed how the Corporate Plan was being delivered through operational objectives, with these in turn linked to annual Service business plans.

The success of the new Corporate Plan will be assessed through the achievements of a set of benefits, focussed on what the Council achieved for customers. These benefits in turn were evidenced through a set of performance measures. The new format for reporting the Council's performance was also proposed.

Management Board, Leadership Team and Cabinet Members were involved in developing the draft Corporate Plan 2018-2023. The content of the Plan – including drivers, objectives and benefits – were the subject of consultation with customers, businesses, partners and staff.

The Corporate Plan 2018-2023 was adopted by Council in December 2017. It was agreed that the four Select Committees – Communities, Governance, Neighbourhoods and Resources – be consulted on the draft benefits maps. Final definitions for the new key benefits and performance indicator set will then be agreed by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee, in consultation with the Head of Transformation.

To minimise expenditure associated with its production, the new Corporate Plan will only be available as an electronic download via the Council's website or for customers to view as a hard copy at the Council's Civic Offices.

An annual Corporate Specification detailed how the Corporate Plan would be delivered through a set of operational objectives for that year. The Council had a number of Key Action Plans, so to avoid confusion the yearly action plan for the Corporate Plan would in future be referred to as the Corporate Specification. This name denoted that it specifies the operational objectives for a given year, which in turn are responded to through annual Service Business Plans.

The report presented various ways to show the performance measures and benefits including a benefits map on A3 paper, although feedback on this particular 'map' indicated that it was too busy and difficult to read. A simpler 'map' on A4 was also included which updated the way it used to be displayed and this was likely to be the way it would develop.

Mr Bailey would welcome feedback on the look of the new indicator sets. They will also go to the April Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting and finally to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee meeting in June for agreement. The document will evolve as the year goes on and it was important to see how it impacted the council's customers.

Councillor Patel wondered how they quantified impact as in feedback from residents. Mr Bailey said that would come under customer satisfaction, measured in two ways. One was with an annual satisfaction survey and the other by how customers used the online services. Some measures were output measures and easily measured, others came from feedback from customers.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse wondered how accurate the figures were given as they tended to be within two decimal places, such as the indicator on commercial contracts.

Councillor Mohindra noted that the Council was looking to be self financing on business tenants; could the Committee look at the value added for contracts and for tenant value.

Councillor Patel noted that on the A3 benefits map under box 10 under corporate aims and objectives it said "Financial independence with low council tax". This phrase was very subjective? Mr Bailey replied that a full plan may have a fuller description for this.

Councillor Lion was suspicious of term "Under Control" as he did not know what it meant, was the indicator on target or not. Mr Bailey said that he would take that comment back, they really only needed the Red, Amber or Green indicators. Councillor Patel added that if it said 'under control' then it should have some explanatory comments with it. Councillor Dorrell said that if the indicator was Amber or Red then there should be some comments to explain the reasons behind the indicator.

Councillor Patel also noted that some of the definitions of the projects used were unclear and needed tidying up.

Councillor Patel noted that some of the indicators listed were old and some were new and asked if officers thought they were adequate. Mr Maddock replied that they tended to monitor most of these, something like Council Tax, which was not on the list, needed to be monitored anyway. Members could ask for any indicator to be added if they wanted to look at it.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee reviewed and commented on the proposed benefits and performance indicator set for 2018-2023 and on the Council's proposed format for reporting the performance of the indicator set and the progress of the Corporate Plan 2018-2023.

52. 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 meeting.

53. FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chairman noted that as the Committee had now gone through their work programme for the year, there was no need for the last meeting of the year due on 3 April to take place and therefore that was now cancelled.