

Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee

– 23 March 2006

Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **23 March 2006** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr K H Hudson
Vice-Chairman: Cllr P K Savill

Cllr R G S Choppen
Cllr Mrs S A Harper

Cllr T Livings
Cllr P R Robinson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs K J Gordon, Mrs J R Lumley and P F A Webster.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	- Chief Executive
R J Honey	- Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration)
R Crofts	- Corporate Director (Financial & External Services)
M Martin	- Committee Administrator

105 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

106 COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN: UPDATE ON PROGRESS

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive. This Committee had been tasked with monitoring the Comprehensive Performance Assessment's (CPA) Improvement Plan and as such was now required to endorse the main areas for improvement focus, following receipt of the Council's CPA Progress Assessment, and to recommend to the Policy, Finance, and Strategic Performance Committee the key areas/activities/outcomes to be monitored in 2006/07 as part of the Performance Management Framework.

The Council needed to demonstrate ownership of progress in those areas considered by Members to be of vital importance. The Member role included not only indicating commitments through the budget process, but ensuring that they were being fulfilled. This would be achieved most effectively by selecting a handful of key priorities which could then be monitored in the new municipal year, through the Policy, Finance & Strategic Performance Committee.

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In respect of the key issues identified within the CPA Progress Assessment Report published in December 2005, Members noted the following points:-

- The new revised draft of the Corporate Plan would be considered by Full Council at its meeting in April 2006.
- Work on the Performance Management System was ongoing. As the systems developed, it would be possible to rationalise the current mechanisms to ensure attention was directed to the key priorities. Systems already in place included the quarterly performance reporting to Members via the Bulletin, the monitoring of progress on Decisions via the main Committees, the quarterly monitoring report to the Policy & Finance Committee and the annual Key Priorities and Actions report to Full Council. These were now being looked at as part of the performance management review.
- Value for Money cost comparisons and market testing were already in place via the Council's contract tendering process but more work was needed.
- Members were actively engaged in reviewing the composition of the Council's Planning Committee and a decision would be reached in due course. The Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee already monitored the Council's risk and business contingency planning culture and systems on a six monthly basis, but more transparency and ownership was required across the organisation.

The Committee agreed to endorse the above areas for focus.

During Member debate, the following key areas were identified for recommendation to the Policy, Finance and Strategic Performance for regular monitoring in 2006/07:-

Recycling

This was one of the Council's major work activities requiring close observation; specifically in terms of meeting the Government's targets and developing the service taking into account Value for Money issues.

Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park

The service action plan for the expansion and development of this project needed to be managed and monitored to ensure delivery

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Lighting in alleyways

Whilst this was a relatively small scale initiative, it had been identified within the budget process that improving lighting in those alleyways that were the responsibility of this authority was a member priority.

Clean Green and Safe Environment

It was important to monitor the Council's activities in this area across a range of matters – graffiti clearance; fly tipping; abandoned vehicles and litter clearance

Housing Option Appraisal Process

This project was critical to the Council for a variety of reasons and would impact on a number of the Council's areas of responsibility.

Gardening/Handyman Service

Members had agreed to expand the Council's Gardening and Handyman services which were of benefit to older residents.

Benefits/Council Tax

As one of the Council's key services with a number of Best Value Performance Indicators around benefits and council tax, this should be monitored to ensure that this Council was placed within the top two quartiles for every aspect that was measured by the indicators.

Rochford Cemetery

The Council's decision to extend the Cemetery would be a long-term project and involve monitoring from the acquisition of land stage through to its completion.

Recommended to the Policy, Finance & Strategic Performance Committee

(1) That the following areas for focus arising out of the CPA progress report be endorsed:-

- Production of a Corporate Plan.
- Review and upgrade of the Performance Management System, with greater transparency and linkages between the various elements.
- Development of cost comparison/value for money concepts in service development and the budgeting process.

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- The Member decision-making process around planning.
- (2) That the following key projects/service developments be monitored in 2006/07 as part of the revised Performance Management system.
- Recycling
 - Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park
 - Lighting in Alleyways
 - Clean Green and Safe Environment Activities
 - Gardening/Handyman Service
 - Benefits/Council Tax
 - Rochford Cemetery. (CE)

The meeting closed at 8.44 pm.

Chairman

Date