

MEETING OF THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL IMPROVEMENT PANEL – THURSDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2005

Present: Ian Davidson (Audit Commission) – Chair, Elizabeth Forbes (ODPM), David Eagles and Stewart Frith (PKF), Cllr Terry Cutmore and Paul Warren (RDC).

RDC Officers Present: Graham Woolhouse (Head of Housing, Health and Community Care), Steve Clarkson (Head of Revenue and Housing Management), Chris Paget (Audit and Process Review Manager) and John Bostock (Principal Committee Administrator)

SUBJECT	KEY OBSERVATIONS	ACTION
Previous meeting – Matters arising	<p>Organisational Review/Succession Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Final HAY gradings were awaited from ECC for senior/middle management positions before finalising for Council consideration. – Elizabeth Forbes agreed to resend some emailed comments, as they had not been received by Paul Warren. <p>Partnership Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Under its current terms of reference, the review was on programme for conclusion by November 2005. – The Authority was mindful of the potential importance of LAA'S. As yet, however, there was still much work to do around what might be delivered through such agreements. <p>Revised Performance Management System</p> <p>RDC will:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Resend the report to the Policy and Finance Committee which details progress against the Council's key priorities as identified in Chapter 7 of the Performance Plan. 	<p>PW</p> <p>EF</p> <p>RDC</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="656 240 1727 276">– Continue to review targets to ensure that they are as smart as possible. <li data-bbox="656 309 1760 344">– Show the performance management system to Ian Davidson in chart form. <li data-bbox="656 378 1805 413">– Start to include cost analysis in decision making to facilitate VFM judgements. <p data-bbox="656 446 1344 481">Revenue and Benefits Service Improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="656 523 1805 628">– During a recent visit, Paul Howarth and other representatives of the DWP had been pleased with a number of aspects of the service and had given valuable informal feedback. <li data-bbox="656 667 1787 737">– The CAPITA Contact Centre project had moved service PIs into the first and second quartiles. <li data-bbox="656 775 1850 957">– In terms of cross-working, RDC had now signed up to an agreement to provide consultancy work on fraud to Castle Point. Some scoping work is currently under way around closer working with Chelmsford and Maldon to address peaks and troughs. This will link into the CPA Improvement Plan work around building capacity in Housing Benefits/Council Tax. <li data-bbox="656 995 1856 1101">– PKF remained happy to work/liaise with Council officers in identifying mechanisms for tracking/monitoring progress that can be applied to service areas across the authority. <li data-bbox="656 1139 1749 1209">– It would be useful for RDC/PKF to discuss some of the bottom line figures associated with the latest VFM toolkit. <li data-bbox="656 1248 1856 1353">– There would be merit in RDC liaising with a single tier authority such as Thurrock on VFM as such authorities have already had to conclude their work in this area earlier than Districts. 	<p data-bbox="1888 240 1966 276">RDC</p> <p data-bbox="1888 309 1951 344">PW</p> <p data-bbox="1888 378 1966 413">RDC</p> <p data-bbox="1888 1139 2040 1174">RDC/PKF</p> <p data-bbox="1888 1248 2040 1283">RDC (DD)</p>

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	<p>VFM Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Environment Inspection (led by Jon Barber) would take place in the week commencing 9 January 2006. Jon Barber would be contacting the Council imminently. 	
Report on RDC Housing Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The latest housing needs and housing market assessments pointed to a significant gap between the need for affordable homes and the number that it is possible to deliver. Possibilities around affordable housing were being explored as part of the Housing Transfer Project. Consideration was also being given to the inclusion of sheltered housing in transfer arrangements. – Officers would contact South Cambridgeshire District Council on its mechanisms for marketing affordable housing to rent. – The Stock Option Appraisal/Transfer process could be seen as an example of good practice. – It would be useful for future reports to the Panel on services to identify key areas of work that are being monitored and what has happened to each area. It can also be useful to have alternative indicators for areas where statutory indicators have been removed or changed, and to be clear about intended outcomes/returns on investment. 	<p>GPW/SJC</p> <p>GPW</p> <p>SJC</p> <p>RDC</p>
CPA Progress Assessment/Improvement Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Council's finalised self-assessment document should be in the form of a five page paper, the first page setting the scene and the following pages addressing each of the four main themes. Clarification was sought as to the distinctions between the Progress Assessment, Direction of Travel Assessment and VFM Assessment. In terms of the paper presented, it was agreed that it provided useful background information for submission with the short progress update self assessment. 	RDC

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In terms of the background report tabled, detailed comments were made on specific wordings. It was important to ensure supporting evidence was available to demonstrate the points made. Also, it was recognised that the Local Authority agenda had moved on with CPA being one influence, albeit an important one. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ian Davidson would be supplied with the latest copy of the Council's Procurement Strategy. 	PW
Next Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It would be appropriate to consider Planning Services at the next meeting. 	SS

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and closed at 12.46pm.