## MEETING OF THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL IMPROVEMENT PANEL – THURSDAY 19 MAY 2005

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

**RDC Officers Present:** Steve Clarkson (Head of Revenue and Housing Management), Scott Logan (Revenue and Benefits Manager), Christine Paget (Audit and Process Review Manager) and John Bostock (Principal Committee Administrator)

SUBJECT	KEY OBSERVATIONS	ACTION
Previous meeting	With regard to Gershon, the Annual Efficiency Statement – Backward Look 2004/05 is to be agreed by Council on 9 June 2005.	
CPA Improvement Plan	<ul> <li>Organisational Review/Succession Planning</li> <li>It could be recognised that each authority had specific challenges. There is no one successful structural model and sequential change can be appropriate.</li> <li>Corporate capacity/flexibility and stability would be key facets of a future structure, which will link to the Workforce Development Plan.</li> <li>As proposals are developed they can be shared with the Panel. It was intended that a finalised report would be submitted to Members by July 2005.</li> <li>Workforce Development</li> </ul>	RDC
	- It was pleasing to note that the Council had achieved Investor in People status.	

SUBJECT	KEY OBSERVATIONS	ACTION
	Partnership Review	
	<ul> <li>This was likely to include Thames Gateway South Essex, the Local Strategic Partnership, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, Health and the emerging Children and Young Persons Strategic Partnership.</li> </ul>	
	Essex Waste Procurement Project	
	- Street cleansing and grounds maintenance contracts would be considered in tandem with the procurement project. Project slippage at this stage should have no impact on the April 2008 deadline for a new contractor to be in place.	
	Housing Option Appraisal Process	
	- The Council had done well to achieve very high levels of tenant participation in the Stock Option Appraisal Process.	
	Homelessness Improvement	
	- The Council was currently reviewing corporate performance monitoring. This would include the identification of BVPI's against selected items where appropriate. The areas of benefits, homelessness and recycling were key areas for improvement.	
	- All Panel members could be furnished with a copy of the quarterly performance reports, which can be incorporated as a subject on a future agenda.	RDC
	<ul> <li>It would be helpful if a separate meeting could be arranged between appropriate Council officers and Ian Davidson/Elizabeth Forbes to facilitate a detailed understanding of the homelessness statistics.</li> </ul>	RDC

SUBJECT	KEY OBSERVATIONS	ACTION
	Introduce Revised Performance Management System	
	- Members would be receiving a report on progress with regard to key priorities prior to the summer recess. The report would identify the specific status of each priority.	
	- Now that the general election was over, the ODPM would be able to more rapidly process the Council's application for capacity building funds.	
	- As part of performance management the Council needs to consider including performance and cost analysis, to assist in identifying VFM services.	RDC
	- The Essex-wide Policy and Performance Network was due to have its second meeting. Four are scheduled per annum.	
Revenue and Benefits Service Improvements	- The impetus of the projects started in 2004/05 continues into 2005/06 either to a successful conclusion or as 'work in progress'.	
	- As a result of the progression of the Centre of Excellence Research Project, the bid submission to Go-East had been reduced to £35,000.	
	- Although it is early days, the Capita Contact Centre Project looked to be very cost effective. Consideration would be given to the applicability/implications of this approach to other service areas across the Council.	
	- The fostering of relationships and cross working with Castle Point and Basildon Councils included meetings between the Leaders.	
	- There was every indication that the Council would score well with regard to the end of year Benefit Fraud Inspection.	

SUBJECT	KEY OBSERVATIONS	ACTION
	<ul> <li>Where written papers identify initiatives, it can be useful for them to include comment on likely outcomes – such as the specific implications for BVPI's and impact on frontline services.</li> </ul>	RDC
	- There would be merit in identifying mechanisms for tracking/monitoring progress that can be applied to service areas across the authority. PKF would be happy to work/liaise with Council officers on this aspect.	RDC/ PKF
Workforce Development	- It was good to see that leadership programmes had been introduced.	
	- The investment in skills development could be seen as having positive implications for performance indicators and levels of customer satisfaction. Linkage to performance management is achieved through the PDR process. Monitoring arrangements include staff satisfaction surveys and exit interviews.	
Key Performance Targets – Report on Progress	- Work on the Local Development Scheme would include linkage with Thames Gateway South Essex and other authorities in the Gateway. It is also likely to involve liaison with the County Council.	
	- Housing needs assessment is undertaken on a sub-regional (South Essex/Thames Gateway) basis. It is likely that there will remain a significant shortage of affordable homes across the sub-region.	
Progress Assessment	- The Audit Commission was awaiting final guidance on self-assessment from the Government. As soon as this was available, Ian would commence discussions with the Council. A formal direction of travel statement would need to be agreed by the end of September/October. The statement would be made public in December.	

SUBJECT	KEY OBSERVATIONS	ACTION
	<ul> <li>PKF was still awaiting the final version of the Key Lines of Enquiry. Whilst a draft was being piloted and could be copied to the Council, this was potentially subject to change.</li> </ul>	PKF
	- Self-assessment was a significant element of the CPA process and there would be merit in the Council starting to consider where it is now, its key challenges, achievements to date and the challenges that remain. It will be important to demonstrate solid evidence of directional movement.	
	- With regard to the Environment Best Value Inspection, a Lead Inspector would visit the Council as soon as the inspection team is appointed (July at latest) to discuss inspection parameters/content.	
	- Ian would be happy to received draft progress assessments and to offer guidance as appropriate.	
Next Meeting(s)	Formal meetings of the Panel were scheduled for 1 September and 24 November 2005, commencing at 10.00am in Committee Room 4, Civic Suite, Rayleigh	RDC

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and closed as 12.42pm.