

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD ON 24 JULY 2012

### Present

S Candy	M Page
W J C Dick	J W Pike
N Edey	Mrs I Pummell
A M Hedley	J Roberts
M Mackrory (Chairman)	A Turrell
Mrs V Metcalfe	B Wood
G L Mitchinson	J A Young (Vice-Chairman)

The following Councillors were also in attendance for the item on Capita Resourcing: Councillors S Barker and G McEwen.

The following officers were present in support of the meeting:

Robert Fox	Governance Officer
Vivien Door	Principal Committee Officer

### 1. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

The Committee Officer reported apologies for absence from Councillors G Butland, S Mayzes and R Walters.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hedley declared a personal interest as the Chairman for the Essex Fire Authority.

### 3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 May 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman with the following amendment:

Minute 8, Work Programme 2012/13, Health and Safety at Work, the word "not" should be deleted from the minutes as the Committee **Agreed** that it would review this item.

### 4. 2011-12 Annual Report

The Committee considered the 2011-12 Annual Report, (ES/011/12), presented by Councillor Peter Martin, Leader of the Council and Joanna Killian, Chief Executive.

The Annual Report provides information on how the funding had been spent, and the progress on the delivery of the 2011/ 12 EssexWorks Pledges and Priorities. The Council had foreseen the change to the economic climate alongside the future increased demand for services and took early action with the Transformation Programme in 2008. The Customer First programme drives out

inefficiencies and reduces costs. £101 million savings were made to enable the Council to stay within its 2011/12 budget and it was on track to provide £370 million savings within the four year period ending in 2013. An additional £7 million savings were made above the £101 million target. It had been a remarkable achievement to provide effective services with reduced funding.

Eight of the EssexWorks Pledges have been fully met. There had been an increase in young people living with Foster Carers (approximately 200) which provides the best quality of life for the young people. 59 percent more people with dementia, or their carers, choose to manage their care packages through personal budgets. Extra resources have been provided for potholes from savings from back office efficiencies. Work took place to procure one contractor for highways (Ringway Jacobs) in 2011/12 which will provide £5 million savings. Ofsted met with the Children's Services recently and had moved the Council out of the Improvement Notice; it had been a difficult journey although there was still room for improvement. Primary School absence rates fell to 4.8 percent taking Essex into the top quartile of Councils. Twelve school infrastructure projects have been completed resulting in 600 additional primary school places to relieve the pressures on school places across the County.

There were six key achievements in 2011/12. Six major highways schemes were successfully delivered with significant impact for Essex residents and the local economy. £262,555 was saved as a direct result of Essex Trading Standards intervention. 1,153 jobs created or saved by Essex County Council, compared to 1,104 in 2010/11. Over half of Essex household waste was recycled, reused or composted. Over 17,000 tonnes less household waste was sent to landfill, compared to 2010/11, saving over £900,000 on Landfill Tax expenditure. There was 90 percent reduction in the number of days spent 'waiting' in acute hospitals for a social care service, compared to 2010/11.

There would be seven areas of focus over the next year. Development would continue for future Transformation activities for the on-going financial challenges. An enhanced Customer Services provision had been developed to enable more customers to be able to self-serve the services or information they required via the website. The list of telephone numbers to access services has been simplified. The Council was a pilot for the "Whole Place Community Budgets", working with partners to meet local needs collectively and control key spending. Funding had been secured through Social Investment to provide more intensive support to children and young people and families with complex needs. Improving performance in schools work was taking place with Academies. Opportunities will be maximised for economic growth including work in the South East Local Enterprise Partnership. The County is continuing to build upon the good progress it has made towards the transfer of Public Health responsibilities to the Local Authority by April 2013 and the development of the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- That the extra funding for highway repairs comprised of £8 million from the Capital Budget and £3 million from the Revenue Budget. The weather

had impacted on the road surfaces, this funding should bring the roadway up to a good state;

- Members noted a discrepancy between the Annual Report and the Corporate Plan, which would be corrected;
- There would be a priority to improve the major networks as 85 percent of the traffic used the A and B roads;
- Joint meetings have taken place for the Health Watch and the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Council was further ahead than other Local Authorities;
- The Council had saved £900,000 on land fill tax;
- The wording in the Annual Report should say the South East Local Enterprise Partnership to reflect all partners;
- As the school budget was overspent and less funding was being awarded to the Council it would be a challenge to improve schools especially as more schools became Academies;
- There were currently 50 Secondary and 40 Primary Academy schools, the Council would work with these schools to improve education by linking underperforming ones with high performing schools to raise standards;
- Historically pre-school and nursery education had been weak in Essex, with 52 percent of Essex children reaching the required standard against 60 percent of its statistical neighbour's children reaching the standard. The Troubled Families Programme should help provide communities with aspiration for children and families by encouraging children and parents to think that education was a good tool;
- Members suggested that it would be useful to have the census information as soon as it was available;
- Members noted that the figures for the Chelmer Park and Ride were subject to amendment;
- Members were involved with appointments of School Governors but did not take part in reappointments, but noted that there was no process to remove poor performing Governors.

The Committee **Endorsed** the Annual Report.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Martin and Joanna Killian for their information.

## 5. **2012/13 Financial Overview as at the First Quarter Stage**

The Committee considered the 2012/13 Financial Overview as at the First Quarter Stage, (ES/010/12), presented by Councillor David Finch, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation Programme.

Councillor Finch highlighted items from the report. There was an overspend of £1.577 million set against an underspend which includes several Business Cases awaiting approval. Funds have been drawn down from reserves. £64,000 from the Grants Equalisation Reserve in relation to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) which had not been spent. Funds have been drawn from the general balance, for example, £1.040 million in respect of rationalising property by providing hubs in Harlow and Braintree.

Health and Wellbeing had an overspend of £555,000 which was mainly due to risks involved in delivering efficiencies in the Mental Health programme. Children's Services had an overspend of £1.604 million mainly due to the Intensive Family Support Service (IFS) which should reduce the prospective referrals in the future. Other Operating Cost of £4.567 million results from reduced borrowing to support the 2011/12 capital programme. The £199.296 million in the Capital budget refers to the revised forecast.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- The review of Home to School Transport produced £1.8 million savings for the academic school year rather than the financial year. More work was taking place to find more savings in this area;
- When schools were designed and built the sprinkler systems should be included, one example of savings being made was by not installing the sprinkler system during the school build, Councillor Finch would investigate to see if funding could be provided for it.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Finch for the information.

## **6. 2012/13 Corporate Plan Progress Report as at the First Quarter Stage**

The Committee considered the 2012/13 Corporate Plan Progress Report as at the First Quarter Stage, (ES/012/12), presented by Councillor David Finch, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation Programme and Mark Golledge, Head of Information and Intelligence.

There was a 9.9 percent decline in Library use which included virtual and physical visits; nationally the decline on these visits was approximately 21 percent.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- More use could be made of Libraries by using the space for Citizen's Advice Bureau and Credit Unions. District Councils already use Libraries in some areas, and the Police use Dunmow Library;
- More computers could be placed in Libraries located in deprived areas to enable more public internet access;
- Members would be provided with more information on the "Gap for Children with SEN at Key Stage 2", as to whether this statistic was for children in SEN schools or mainstream schools;
- Members were concerned regarding the economic conditions affecting employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities. Mark Golledge agreed to produce a report for the Equality and Diversity Board;
- There were a variety of ways for public engagement across the Council for involvement with local democracy although not all Districts have set up Locality Boards;
- Members suggested that 3.8 should include the word "reuse", which would be added to the next quarter report.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Finch and Mark Golledge for their information.

## 7. Customer Satisfaction Survey

The Committee considered the Customer Satisfaction Survey, (ES/013/12), presented by Mark Golledge, Head of Information and Intelligence and Duncan Wood, Head of Research and Analysis.

The Ipsos Mori survey satisfaction score had reduced from 55 percent to 46 percent, which was probably due to the credit crunch and the economic climate. The tracker enabled the service to see where gaps in surveys and would help to rationalise the number of surveys. Directorate Leadership Teams (DLT) receive the directorate scorecards on a regular basis looking at the finance and performance of the service.

The satisfaction element would be built into procurement of services.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- The Blue Badge Service and the Coroner's Service were not included in these surveys;
- It would be useful to streamline the surveys to combine the Corporate Services surveys into one;
- Face-to-face responses obtained the highest scores but were the most expensive surveys to run. The Council relies on postal surveys with a response rate of approximately 30 percent;
- Members asked for comparison information but were informed that not all the information was available nationally but other Local Authorities may collect the same information;
- The majority of parents were not given a chance to participate in a survey, discussion would take place with Schools Children and Families Directorate regarding how to capture/engage with the majority of parents;
- The number of people using Libraries was lower, therefore work was required as to how to survey people who did not use the Library to find out their reasons for that decision, this would be included to the tracker system in the autumn;
- The tracker survey does not include complaints which were monitored separately at DLT, although they could be included in the future;
- Any part of the survey which had a 100 percent satisfaction would be checked again.

The Chairman thanked Mark Golledge and Duncan Wood for their information.

## 8. Capita Resourcing

The Committee considered the Capita Resourcing report, (ES/014/12), presented by Adam Bowles, Head of Human Resources and Maxine Taylor, Head of Corporate Human Resource Services.

New starters had been surveyed on the service they had received, 316 from 915 new starters had responded. The Capita contract had been extended to 31 December 2013. More applicants would prefer to send their CVs rather than fill

in an application form. The recruitment establishment procedure was under review. Capita Resource Managers have raised concerns regarding addressing recruitment issues early on in the process. A service would be provided to enable new starters to visit the Council with their relevant information either early or late in the day outside office hours.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- Previously the CRB checks were taking a long time, but this had improved;
- The questions on the two surveys remained the same;
- Considerable improvements have taken place since the beginning of the review, when Members took information from officers in confidence and were very concerned with their findings;
- New starters were asked three times to respond to the survey, of which, 35 percent did respond. Of these 35 percent more rated the Council as very good unlike the earlier response where the Council had a bad recruitment service;
- Members noted that some people would always be unhappy regardless of the service they received;
- New starters could be sent the survey by email before they start at the Council;
- The service had improved but more improvements could take place.

The Committee **Agreed** that this item be reviewed in one year to monitor its improvement.

The Chairman thanked Adam Bowles and Maxine Taylor for their information.

## 9. Forward Look

The Committee considered the Forward Look (ES/015/12).

The Committee **Agreed** the Forward Look with the following additions the Coroner's Service review should be brought to the Committee earlier than originally agreed. The Governance Officer would liaise with the service;

## 10. Dates of Future Meetings 2012

The Committee **Agreed** the following dates:

Date	Time	Venue
Tuesday, 11 September	10 a.m.	Committee Room 2
Wednesday, 24 October	10 a.m.	Committee Room 2
Tuesday, 4 December	10 a.m.	Committee Room 2
Tuesday, 22 January	10 a.m.	Committee Room 2
Tuesday, 25 February	10 a.m.	Committee Room 2
Tuesday, 26 March	10 a.m.	Committee Room 2
Tuesday, 23 April	10 a.m.	Committee Room 2

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 12:20 pm.

Chairman  
11 September 2012