



**MINUTES of
PERFORMANCE, GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
24 MARCH 2022**

PRESENT

Chairman	Councillor Mrs J C Stilts
Vice-Chairman	Councillor Mrs J L Fleming, CC
Councillors	R G Boyce MBE, M R Edwards, A S Fluker, J V Keyes, W Stamp, CC and E L Stephens
Substitutes	Councillors S J N Morgan and N G F Shaughnessy

576. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES

The Chairman welcomed all present and took the Committee through some housekeeping arrangements for the meeting.

577. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M S Heard and A L Hull. In accordance with procedure rule 16 (9) Councillor F G F Shaughnessy was in attendance substituting for Councillor M S Heard and Councillor S J N Morgan in attendance as a substitute for Councillor A L Hull.

578. MINUTES

RESOLVED by assent that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 February 2022 be approved and confirmed.

579. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Councillor W Stamp, CC, declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of Essex County Council, on any agenda items pertaining to that organisation.

Councillor Mrs J L Fleming, CC, declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of Essex County Council, on any agenda items pertaining to that organisation.

580. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Whilst there was no official public participation the Chairman referenced an enquiry sent to her direct. It was agreed that a copy of the enquiry and response would be circulated to the committee following the meeting.

581. UPDATE ON THE AUDIT OF THE 2020/21 ACCOUNTS

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources that updated members on the audit of the 2020/21 accounts.

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Director of Resources to present the detail. He advised that the report updated the Committee on the progress of the audit. At the start of the year only 40% of Local Authority audits had been completed nationally. The delays were due to a shortage of audit staff and changes in audit requirements. The audit of Council accounts commenced in January and aimed for completion in April 2022. Impact of international and national issues could cause further delays. An accountancy issue had been raised around infrastructure assets and changes to accountancy guidance were due to be issued to address this therefore auditors needed to wait for this to be introduced. The Council's interim audit of accounts went ahead in February 2022 as planned.

The Chairman moved the recommendation in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Fleming. In response to a query from Councillor Stamp the Director of Resources advised that the current delay was due to a technical accounting issue relating to infrastructure assets identified by external auditors. This had been reported to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) who were reviewing the matter and would make the relevant changes to the guidance.

The Chairman then put the recommendation to the Committee, and it was agreed by assent.

RESOLVED that the report was considered.

582. REVIEW OF CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 3

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance that required the committee to undertake a quarterly review of the Thematic Strategies performance, as assurance that performance was being managed effectively to achieve the corporate outcomes set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021 - 2023. Appendix 1 to this report provided an overview of performance as of the end of Quarter 3 (Q3)(October – December 2021).

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Programmes, Performance and Governance Manager to present the detail. She took the Committee through the report that provided a broad update for each theme and highlighted the position at Q3, along with any areas of concern. All three themes delivery was on track but there were conditional elements. The detail behind this was set out at Appendix 1, some of the measures themselves or the way they were being delivered was under review as outlined in the summary status for each individual area.

She drew Members' attention to section 3.4 of the report and the indicators that sit at theme level that were at risk. Currently, one indicator had met these criteria, which was the 5 year housing land supply statement, sitting in the 'Place' strategy. It was noted that any developments in performance since January would be reflected in the next quarter 4 report.

In response to questions raised Officers provided the following information:

- That a review of the performance process was imminent together with a Workshop for Members. This would include report formats, reporting

mechanisms and a review/reset of performance targets to ensure they were ambitious enough/ fit for purpose.

- That in respect of fly-tipping performance targets Officers investigated sites as appropriate and worked with contractors to capture the information. The bulky items collection service had been suspended to focus on normal collections and officers would report back on any correlation between this suspension and the increase in fly-tipping of like items. In addition, possible resourcing of CCTV at known problem sites would be reviewed and reported back.
- That in respect of section 3.4 'Community' no individual indicators were at risk in this area. That clarity on the issue of 'data cleanse' would be circulated to members.
- That reporting on the five year housing land supply was not late, the dataset at this point in Q3 was not the complete set as the figures were reported annually. However, the next reporting period, Q4, would contain full data. The Council was on track as it had met the Housing Land test for the past four years. The problem lay with the lack of supply of future housing to meet that test in future years which had been caused by both a lack of approvals in the planning process and delays in house build caused by initial rejections by Council e.g. the North Heybridge Garden Settlement.
- That officers would check if there was still time to complete school led face-to-face projects and report back.
- That in respect of progressing the work on the Air Quality Management Area officers awaited the results of the destination survey and outcomes from new funding bids and would report back.
- That district-wide information on Section 106 projects would be reported at the July meeting of the Performance Governance and Audit Committee.
- That officers would circulate information to clarify the 99% target on coverage for Superfast Broadband.

There being no further discussion the Chairman put the recommendations in the report to the Committee and they were agreed by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Members reviewed the information as set out in this report and Appendix 1 with priority focus given to the Strategic Outcome level performance;
- (ii) That Members confirmed they are assured through this review that corporate performance was being managed effectively.

583. REVIEW OF CORPORATE RISK - QUARTER 3

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy. Performance and Governance that required the committee to undertake a quarterly review of the Corporate Risk Register as assurance that the corporate risks were being managed effectively. Appendix 1 was attached to the report for this purpose.

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Programmes, Performance and Governance Manager to present the detail. She advised the Committee that this report covered Q3 of 2021/22, (September 21- December 21) and the Corporate Risks. Appendix 1 provided a full table of the Corporate Risk Register as at the end of December 2021. She drew Members' attention to:-

Section 3.1.1 where risks had changed direction since quarter two:

- R13 - Failure to Manage the impact of Organisational change was recommended for closure as it related specifically to Transformation work, and was now replaced with a more specific new risk R31- Resources and Operating Staffing structure was not sufficient for resilience;
- R14 – Unable to recruit and retain specialist staff – had increased in risk score;
- R10 – Failure to develop Jobs for the population, and R3 Failure to target services and influence partners to support housing needs for aging population have both seen a decrease in likelihood.

Section 3.1.2 emerging risks, these were areas where the risk score could increase in the next quarter based on how the organisation responded and adapted to national changes from the pandemic and climate change:

- R29 – Failure to deliver services as a result of COVID-19;
- R14 – Unable to recruit and retain staff with specific skill sets in specialist areas to meet the demands of the service;
- R31 – Resources and operating staffing structure is not sufficient for Resilience.

In response to issues raised, officers provided the following information:-

- That terminology in the covering report would be reviewed and risk mitigations would feature more prominently in future reports.
- That where recruitment was proving difficult a number of strategies had been put in place including:- covering vacancies with overtime, agency, and through staff development. Shared services had also been explored and were currently in place in licensing.
- That advertising was nationwide now that the Council can offer agile working. Start dates for the new enforcement officers would be circulated to the committee.
- That information on rough sleepers would be circulated after the meeting.
- That, as per previous reports to this Committee, the Southminster Health Centre was in progress, awaiting a full business case from the National Health Service.
- That partnership working was the best way to progress the South Maldon Relief road. Considerable effort had already been invested in meetings with Essex County Council (ECC) regarding the potential shortfall in funding, as the relief road was integral to the infrastructure. A written update on this would be circulated to committee members.

With reference to the South Maldon Relief road Councillor Fluker proposed that the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance issue an invitation to a staff

member from Essex County Council's Highways department to attend the next performance focused meeting of the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee to answer Member questions on the issue. This was seconded by Councillor Stamp.

The Chairman put the recommendations in the report together with the aforementioned proposal to the Committee and they were agreed by assent

RESOLVED

- (i) That Members reviewed the Corporate Risk Register at Appendix1 and provided comment and feedback for consideration;
- (ii) That Members were assured through this review that corporate risk was being managed effectively;
- (iii) That Members challenged risk where the Committee felt that the Council's corporate goals may not be achieved;
- (iv) That the Director of Strategy Performance and Governance issue an invitation to a member of Essex County Council's Highways Department to attend the next performance focussed meeting of the Performance Governance and Audit Committee to respond to Member questions regarding the South Maldon Relief Road.

584. BALANCE SCORECARD EXCEPTIONS REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance that required this Committee to be given visibility of any identified Balance Scorecard Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that had met their threshold, supported by an action plan to ensure targets were met.

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Programmes, Performance and Governance Manager to present the detail. She took the Committee through the report that covered areas of operational performance exceptions, both under and over performance. Internally, the leadership team monitored this data and discussed it monthly to address performance issues in real time where possible, with a six-monthly report provided to this committee to show the exceptions. This report covered July-December 2021.

Section 3.5 of the report provided a table of measures that were underperforming, with an explanation of action taking place to address this. It further highlighted an emerging trend where the data was currently within tolerance, but there had been an increase in housing demand. The team was managing this operationally. Section 3.6 of the report provided a table of measures that were overperforming.

There being no further discussion the Chairman moved the recommendations in the report, seconded by Councillor Fleming and the Committee agreed them by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the committee reviewed and commented on exceptions to service reporting provided in this report;
- (ii) That Members confirmed they were assured through this review; Operational performance was being managed effectively.

585. REVIEW OF HEALTH AND SAFETY - QUARTER 3

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery that provided an update on Health and Safety statistics and activity during Q3 (September to December 2021).

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Director of Service Delivery to present the detail. He took the Committee through the new format that provided more information around outcomes of reported accidents and incidents of unacceptable behavior. He drew Members' attention to the Health and Safety Action plan at Appendix 1 which reported satisfactory progress and section 3.4 of the report that confirmed fire risk assessments were underway across all council buildings. The Health and Safety Policy had been updated to reflect the structure of the Council and health and safety inspections had been undertaken in all areas. New reporting systems and appropriate training had been introduced to deal with near misses together with a number of other new activities now taking place as outlined at section 3.7.2 of the report.

The Chairman then moved the recommendations, and these were seconded by Councillor Fleming.

In response to questions put officers responded as follows:-

- That for officer safety the home visit form would be updated to include advice to residents about pet management.
- That furniture inspections would take place in a proactive rolling programme of inspection going forwards.
- That all staff received regular Visual Display Unit assessments and free sight tests.

There being no further discussion the Chairman put the recommendations to the Committee, and they were agreed by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Members considered the accident and incident statistics;
- (ii) That Members considered progress with the health and safety action plan;
- (iii) That Members considered additional Health and Safety improvements being implemented in addition to those identified in the action plan.

586. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTIONS UPDATE - QUARTER 3

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance that provided an update on the actions identified in the 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Programmes, Performance and Governance Manager to present the detail. She informed the Committee that the statement actions were set out as ways the Council might improve its governance arrangements in the AGS. The progress on these actions were tracked and reported back to the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee (PGA).

As part of the new AGA format, actions were identified around continual improvement to the Council's governance arrangements and best practice. The report provided an update for actions identified in the 2020/21 report together with a summary table set out in section 3.5 with officer commentary. It was noted that actions highlighted in grey had previously been reported to the committee as completed. In addition to this, there was one new action reported as closed, and two that were ongoing. The 2021/22 annual governance statement was being drafted and any outstanding actions would be reflected in this as well as new actions around the latest best practice.

The Chairman put the duly seconded recommendation in the report to the Committee and it was agreed by assent.

RESOLVED that the Committee reviewed the Annual Governance Statement table and updates below and challenged where necessary.

587. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE DECIDES ARE URGENT

It was noted that the new camera installed in the Chamber, but not yet in use, would provide a full view of the Chamber for the watching public. The Chairman then thanked all in attendance for their contributions.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm.

MRS J C STILTS
CHAIRMAN