



**MINUTES of
PERFORMANCE, GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
19 JANUARY 2023**

PRESENT

Chairman	Councillor W Stamp, CC
Vice-Chairman	Councillor Mrs J L Fleming, CC
Councillors	M R Edwards, A S Fluker, A L Hull, Mrs J C Stilts and Mrs M E Thompson
In attendance	Councillor K M H Lagan

486. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES

The Chairman welcomed all present and took the Committee through some housekeeping arrangements. This included a request that late attendees speak with the Chairman at the earliest opportunity to ensure this is noted; that Officers presenting reports attend in person and, if not possible, seek approval for remote attendance and finally that going forwards future agenda will include Matters Arising from the minutes to afford the opportunity to monitor and track the progress of all actions requested at committee.

487. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor E L Stephens.

488. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 November 2022, be approved and confirmed.

489. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

There were none.

490. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No requests had been received.

491. AUDIT PROGRESS UPDATE

The Committee considered the report from the Director of Resources that provided an update on the progress of both the external audit and the audit fees.

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Director of Resources to present the detail. He advised that it was timely for an update to be presented to Committee and that this report addressed the status of the audit of accounts; audit fees and the future external auditors. Section 3 provided details of the challenges faced by the audit sector with only 9% of audits completed.

For 2021 despite the challenges Maldon District Council published their unaudited accounts by the deadline. Due to the pressures mentioned in the report the audit was ongoing with a view to completion of fieldwork by end of January with the intention to sign-off accounts planned for the end of March/April 2023. He drew Members' attention to the impact on the bottom line of £10,000 following the correction identified and advised that given the audit was still ongoing figures remained provisional. For 2023/24 and the following 4 years of audits a national procurement exercise was undertaken with an increase in fees of 150% with the actual fees due to be announced in Autumn. Finally, he advised that Deloitte, the current auditors, were leaving the market and the new external auditors will be KPMG.

In response to issues raised the Director of Resources provided the following information:-

- That the audit costs were linked to the work involved and this applied to all councils irrespective of size. The Council's materiality will be lower but the audit work involved will be the same.
- That review of the audit accounts would take place in February with a view to sign-off of the accounts towards the end of March beginning of April 2023.
- That the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Ltd was a subsidiary of the LGA, a national procurement agency. Given the challenges in this area membership of a collective like the PSAA provided additional bargaining power.
- That the Council has both internal and external auditors and discussions take place with counterparts in the region facing similar challenges.
- That comments on the report format, namely Section 6 *Implications*, were welcomed and would be actioned going forwards

The Chairman then moved the recommendation in the report, seconded by Councillor Fleming and the Committee agreed it by assent.

RESOLVED that members considered the report.

492. REVIEW OF CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 2

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 as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021 - 2023. Appendix 1 to the report provided an overview of performance as at the end of Quarter 2 (Q2) (July 2022 – October 2022).

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 starting with section 3.1. which outlined the high level outcome view for each

strategic theme area together with section 3.2 that covered performance at risk for the individual Key Performance Indicator (KPI) level.

It was noted that within Prosperity there were a number of red at risk areas, however, planned work such as the Covid Economic response, grant programmes, Covid Economic Recovery Transformation (CERT) Programme and forthcoming UK Shared Prosperity Fund Programme (UKSPF) would address business need. The Sense of Place Business Network had been disbanded and a new approach to *Supporting Existing Local Businesses* had been developed. This will include a Business e-newsletter along with social media and open invite business engagement events. These initiatives will be rolled out for Quarter 1 (Q1) 2023/24, with new performance measures and an update provided to Members.

It was envisioned that the Council's UKSPF programme will yield significant results and that engagement with partners like Essex County Council (ECC) and the North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) had been very constructive. The primary workstream for the outcome of enabling investment and jobs centred on the creation of the Maldon District Investment Prospectus as outlined in the Corporate Plan. The prospectus for this Project was scheduled to launch in Quarter 4 (Q4).

The Chairman moved the recommendations in the report and then took the committee through Appendix 1.

In response to issues raised Officers provided the following information:-

- That the revised pastel colour coding in the performance report was as a result of recent discussions to improve the reading experience for all customers.
- That data on fly tipping costs, including investigation and enforcement costs, together with locations, would be circulated to Members outside of the meeting.
- That the issue of how best to collate fixed penalty notices data would be investigated and reported to the Committee when available.
- That the statistics around business satisfaction were from Quarter 1. The results from the recent business satisfaction survey were currently being analysed and once complete a full report will be circulated to all Members. It was hoped that given the direct business engagement this time round there would be a marked improvement in feedback which will inform revised satisfaction rates. That future reports will contain response rates.
- That the UK Shared Prosperity Plan funding was now in place. This would mean a million pounds of funding over the next two and a half years. A list of the projects to be funded will be circulated to the Committee outside of the meeting.
- That the soft plastics recycling trial locations be circulated to Members outside of the meeting.
- That the Air Quality Management Area Action Plan (AQMA) funding will be known late February beginning of March 2023. That the original funding bid had been unsuccessful and Essex County Council (ECC) paused the destination survey because normal circumstances did not apply during Covid. The survey had now been completed and a meeting had been held with ECC to manage traffic flow on Market Hill. A report will be brought back to Committee and the

results of the Destination Survey will be shared with both the Maldon High Street Focus Group and the Committee outside of the meeting.

- That the housing need for the district was currently on target, there will be a slowdown filtering through next year as developers slow down on start dates and completion. Developers will build affordable as opposed to market housing.
- That the figures in the 5YHLS for Quarter 2 will not have changed since Quarter 1 reporting as the data is only published annually, in April of each year. That to date there was no apparent impact on this area as a result of the pandemic.
- That tree planting had been ongoing; however, the detail had not yet been co-ordinated. Now that the appointment of the Coast and Countryside Officer was imminent the data will be collated and circulated to Members outside of the meeting.
- That the Infrastructure Funding Statement was received by this committee for sign-off annually in March to align with the Council's financial year.
- That a number of factors had adversely impacted the Sense of Place work with the resignation of the Chairman and representation on the board waning. However the Council will retain the branding and marketing and continue to engage with business, through business forums, e- newsletters and the website.
- That the Council was awaiting the data for Tourism as of Quarter 2. The Tourism Sector Consultative Group for the Council's Tourism Framework supported by the Maldon District Tourism Group had held two events with industry representatives and Council Members. These were 'Open Forum' events whereby people could input and steer tourism activities and inform the Council's Tourism Framework strategy. There was data through Visit Essex and when available this would be circulated outside of the meeting or reported in the next quarter. It was further noted that the Council hosted the Visit Maldon Website linked to the visitor economy which recorded 4 million visitors a year and that the Council's Tourism Framework, which will set out the wider support available, would shortly be submitted to Strategy and Resources Committee for approval.
- That officers will look at the events that have been discontinued and determine if that impacted on Tourism levels and report back outside of the meeting. However, it was noted that some of these events will be re-instated.
- That grants were available through a number of avenues including Mid-Essex Alliance and Active Essex for Health and Wellbeing as tackling obesity was a priority for the Council. The Strategic Theme Lead- Community will circulate information on grants outside of the meeting.
- That the intergenerational projects were adversely impacted by the need to shield during Covid. Initiatives to tackle social isolation, mental health and loneliness issues were being developed further and One Maldon District was working closely with partners across the district to ensure these issues were addressed as a high priority.
- That front facing staff training had been impacted by staff churn. It was a priority and Officers were working with ECC to ensure delivery of the course. The training referred to in the report was of a specialist nature to identify customers

that have additional needs for referral to other specialist organisations, it was not general front facing contact training that all staff receive from the outset.

- That arrangements were in place for the removal of the Lys Helig weekend of 20 January 2023. This will then allow the Council to move forward with plans for the new houseboats and moorings.
- That the pontoon funding was now in place and an Officer Group meeting scheduled week commencing 23 January to plan the schedule of work which will be circulated to Members when available. The pontoon will be of a similar design with improved stability.
- That going forward the Commercial Projects part of the performance report be considered under Private and Confidential to afford a full discussion. Officers advised that a Members' Seminar was also scheduled to discuss these projects further.
- That the Council had not been successful with the levelling-up bid. The feedback was awaited which will be discussed at a review meeting that will also look at other avenues for funding given the bid information was now ready for submission.

Members commented that it would be a good idea, in respect of the levelling-up funding, that officers also have the planning applications ready in advance.

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

RESOLVED

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

493. REVIEW OF CORPORATE RISK - QUARTER 2

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.

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Programmes, Performance and Governance Manager to present the detail. She advised that the report covered the corporate risk register from July 2022 – October 2022. As set out in section 3.3 of the covering report, there had been one risk where likelihood had increased, R1 - Failure to safeguard children and vulnerable adults and two risks where likelihood had decreased R3 - Failure to target services/influence partners effectively to support identified housing needs of increasing aging population together with R29 - Failure to deliver services as a result of COVID-19.

Prior to opening the debate the Chairman invited other officers to comment. The Lead Specialist (Community) provided a short preamble on the area of Safeguarding. He advised that the safeguarding risk was raised but he wished to reassure the Committee

that this was not as a result of any failures in case management but related to the Safeguarding Forum and low levels of attendance at meetings. He reported that the designated safeguarding officers, due to pressures of workload, had not been able to attend regularly. Work was underway to create a smaller, more focussed forum and he would continue to monitor levels of attendance.

The Chairman moved the recommendations and then took the Committee through both Appendix 1 and 2.

Councillor Stilts sought reassurance regarding the continuing status of R1- Failure to Safeguard Children and Vulnerable Adults- on the Risk Register and proposed that a review of this area by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may be prudent. The Lead Specialist (Community), in response, said that robust policies were in place however, he welcomed a review of this area given its importance. The Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance added that due to the high priority that this area of work attained within the organisation it would continue to be monitored through the risk register. This was corroborated by the Director of Service Delivery who reassured the Committee that there were adequate staff levels to carry out this work from across the organisation as safeguarding was part of everyone's remit.

Councillor Stilts proposed that the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults be referred to Overview & Scrutiny Committee for review to ensure that the Council was supporting this area of work appropriately together with the Officers undertaking the actual work. This was duly seconded and agreed by assent to be added as a recommendation. In response to an issue raised around risk assessment the Director of Service Delivery said Officers would undertake a review of the methodology in use.

There being no further discussion the Chairman put the already seconded recommendations, to include Councillor Stilts proposal, to the Committee and they were agreed by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Members reviewed the Corporate Risk Register in appendix 1 and provided comment and feedback for consideration;
- (ii) That Members reviewed progress of the Corporate Risk Mitigating actions in appendix 2 and provided comment and feedback for consideration;
- (iii) That Members were assured through this review that corporate risk was being managed effectively;
- (iv) That Members challenged risk where the Committee felt that the Council's corporate goals may not be achieved;
- (v) That R1 - the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults be referred to Overview & Scrutiny Committee for review to ensure that the Council was supporting this area of work appropriately together with the Officers undertaking the actual work.

494. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE ACTIONS UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance that updated Members on the actions identified in the 2022/2023 Annual Governance Statement.

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Programmes, Performance and Governance Manager to present the detail. She advised that since the revised format in 2020, each year the annual governance statement reflected on the Council's governance arrangements, and identified further best practice improvements that can be introduced for the following year. The table at 3.5 of the report contained the full list of identified actions in the 2021/22 report. Those highlighted in grey had previously been reported complete and a further action around staff process improvement training had moved to completion in this reporting schedule. Commentary updates were also provided for the open actions.

The Chairman moved the recommendations in the report and opened the debate. A brief exchange took place on the merits of face-to-face meetings where there might be opposing views.

There being no further issues the chairman put the recommendation to the committee and it was agreed by assent.

RESOLVED that the Committee reviewed the Annual Governance Statements table together with updates and challenged where necessary.

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

There were none. The Chairman thanked all for their contributions and closed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.18 pm.

W STAMP, CC
CHAIRMAN