



**MINUTES of  
PERFORMANCE, GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE  
28 SEPTEMBER 2023**

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**PRESENT**

Chairperson	Councillor V J Bell
Vice-Chairperson	Councillor M E Thompson
Councillors	M G Bassenger, S J Burwood, N R Miller, R G Pratt, N G F Shaughnessy, N D Spenceley, W Stamp, CC and J C Stilts

**273. CHAIRPERSON'S NOTICES**

The Chairperson welcomed everyone in attendance and went through some general housekeeping arrangements for the meeting.

**274. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were none.

**275. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 September 2023 be approved and confirmed subject to updating the attendance list.

**276. MATTERS ARISING**

**RESOLVED** that the Matters Arising from the 15 June 2023 meeting be received and noted.

**277. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

There were none.

**278. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No requests had been received.

**279. REVIEW OF CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 1**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy and Resources 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 2023 – 2027. Appendix 1 to the report provided an overview of performance as at the end of Quarter 1 (Q1) (April 2023- June 2023).

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Assistant Director, Programmes, Performance and Governance (Assistant Director, PPG) to present the detail. She advised the Committee that following a new Corporate Plan for Maldon adopted on 22 February 2023, this was the first presentation of the rebuild of the corporate performance reporting to reflect new key performance indicators (KPIs) that had been mapped to delivery. Some of the performance indicators were under development and the Specialist: Performance had worked hard to complete this rebuild for Q1 reporting, to adhere to the Performance, Governance and Audit (PGA) reporting cycle. It was noted that the new build was informed by the feedback received from the Committee Member Workshop in June 2023.

The data covered quarter one, April- June 2023 and section 3.1 of the covering report highlighted the high level view for each corporate priority. At this stage, work for all priorities was broadly on track, but there were conditional elements currently flagging in:

- Supporting our communities
- Enhancing and connecting the place
- Smarter finances

The full set of KPI data was set out at appendix 1, which informed the priority views.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Thompson, and opened the debate. Prior to any issues raised Councillor Stilts commended staff on the clear presentation and colour coding of the performance data which was accessible to all, this was echoed by Councillor Stamp. She further expressed thanks to Ms Cable and Ms Corless for the work on the 'Walking Festival' project and this was echoed by the Chairperson.

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

- That data was available for all categories of calls, including those abandoned calls where the caller had ended the call without a response. It was noted that this may not necessarily be because of the wait but that the pre-recorded information available may have answered the query. The data covering this area would be circulated outside of the meeting.
- That the Youth Engagement Programme was being run in partnership with Essex Youth Service with a launch date of October 2023 delivered on a bi-monthly basis. The programme was open to all students with activities including Volunteering, Community Safety, Climate Change and running community events with the support of Essex Youth Service. The end goal was to create the Maldon District Youth Forum to provide a vehicle for young people to have their say.

It was noted that the Essex Forum Youth Strategy Group was now defunct, this had high levels of youth engagement and it was hoped the new programme would attract similar interest. It was further hoped that these activities would engage hard to reach youth and not just be located in a school environment. At this point Councillor Stamp declared an interest as an Essex County Councillor and advised that she was currently engaged with other county councillors in developing a package of support for the district to deliver and fund urgent subjects around knife crime etc. and were also looking at delivering programmes to younger age groups.

It was agreed that details on the inclusive offer in relation to the Youth Engagement Programme would be circulated outside of the meeting.

There being no further issues raised the Chairperson put the recommendations 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 Priority level performance.
- (ii) That Members confirmed they were assured through this review that corporate performance was being managed effectively.

## 280. REVIEW OF CORPORATE RISK - QUARTER 1

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy and Resources that required Members to undertake a quarterly review of the Corporate Risk Register as assurance that the Council's corporate risks were being managed effectively. A table of the Corporate Risk Register, latest ratings and officer commentary was attached as appendix 1 to the report.

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Assistant Director, PPG to address the detail. She advised that the report covered the Corporate Risks for the first quarter of 2023/24, (April- June 2023). Appendix 1 provided the full Corporate Risk Register as at the end of June 2023. Section 3.2 contained the risks that had changed direction since quarter four. There was one risk which had a rating decrease since Q4 *R7 - Failure to maintain a 5-year supply of Housing Land* and one risk where closure was recommended, *R29 - Failure to deliver services as a result of COVID- 19*. There were no emerging or anticipated additional risks to report this quarter.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Thompson, and opened the debate.

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

- That in respect of R10- Failure to develop jobs to support the growing population- the specific details as to what made up the figures were not always available as they contained what was classified by Nomis, a service provided by the Office for National Statistics, as 'disclosive' information, particularly given the size of the district. These figures included e.g. student looking after family, long-term sickness, part-time sickness etc.
- That the Budget Setting report was due to be considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee at its November 2023 meeting. The Member Training Group had committed to training for all members on budget setting processes and Council finances.
- That dates will be provided on the next iteration of the Corporate Risk Register so that Members can assess how long the risk had been live.

At this point Members commended the work of the Housing Team led by John Swords, Senior Specialist Coordinator, Housing. There being no further discussion the Chairperson put the recommendations 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 plan may not be achieved.

## **281. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTIONS UPDATE**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy and Resources that updated Members on the actions identified in the 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The Chairperson introduced the report and deferred to the Assistant Director PPG, to present the detail.

She took the Committee through the report that covered the best practice governance actions identified in the 2023/24 annual governance statement and an update on progress against these. At PGA Committee on 27 July 2023, the Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 was signed off and in addition to commenting on the Council's governance arrangements for last year, this document also identified further actions around best practice for governance that will be implemented in 2023/24.

Section 3.5 of the report provided a table of those actions and an update of progress as of the end of June 2023. Actions highlighted in grey denoted actions completed and a further seven actions were ongoing for the year, with updated text provided.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Thompson, and opened the debate.

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

- That an email would be circulated outside of the meeting with updated statistics on the latest staff completion levels for the new e-learning module on Risk management.
- That as part of the annual cycle this year a new mechanism had been launched whereby each individual service area had their own Service Plan that identified how the service contributed to the delivery of the Corporate Plan. The Service Plans contained the activity that drove the corporate activity reported to Members. It was all part of the golden thread of performance from the Corporate Plan to Service Plans and individual staff members SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound) objectives, resulting in a shared vision and clear performance metric for the organisation.
- That the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) ultimately had the overview for delivery of the Corporate Plan.

There being no further discussion the Chairperson put the recommendation to the Committee and it was agreed by assent.

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

## **282. BALANCE SCORECARD EXCEPTIONS REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy and Resources that covered exceptions to operational service and provided visibility of any identified Balance Scorecard KPIs that had met their threshold, supported by an action plan to ensure targets were met.

The Chairperson introduced the report and deferred to the Assistant Director, PPG to present the detail. She drew Members' attention to the areas of operational performance where exceptions were evident, which included both under and overperformance. Internally, CLT monitored this data and discussed it monthly to help address performance issues in real time where possible, with a six-monthly report provided to this Committee to show the exceptions.

This report covered January to June 2023, section 3.4 contained detail on underperforming areas and the action being taken. Section 3.5 highlighted two indicators where the Council was overperforming and section 3.6 flagged an area where closer monitoring was taking place. Finally, she advised that in the Planning statistics at appendix 1 there was an appeal marked as determined by South Eastern Planning Committee which was a District Planning Committee decision. This would be addressed in future reporting to the Committee.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Thompson, and opened the debate.

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

- That the system issues had been resolved in Revenues and Benefits and all was back on track.
- That in relation to staff sickness levels staff were provided with a range of support which included support with mental health issues, occupational health, a welfare package etc.
- That Officers will investigate presenting the sickness statistics both with and without the long-term sickness data in the next iteration of the report.
- That Officers will investigate including data in future iterations of the report on repeatedly missed bin collections, including food waste collections together with clarity in the data on what was meant by 'justified'.
- That 'contact us' forms were initially answered by the Customer Service Team. However, those that cannot, were triaged through the various services. The outstanding forms reported were currently being addressed and it was noted that the majority included in the data had been responded to but not closed on the system.

The Chairperson put the recommendations to the Committee and they were agreed by assent.

### **RESOLVED**

- (i) That the Committee reviewed and commented on exceptions to service reporting provided in this report.
- (ii) That Members noted the additional performance in appendix 1.

- (iii) That Members confirmed they were assured through this review, Operational performance was being managed effectively.

## **283. REVIEW OF HEALTH AND SAFETY - QUARTER 1**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery that provided an update on Health and Safety statistics and activity during Q1 (1 April 2023 to 31 July 2023). The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Health & Safety Manager to present the detail.

The Manager took the Committee through the report advising on the numbers of accidents/incidents, near misses and unacceptable behaviour which were relatively low and dealt with according to Council policies with no particular trends identified during this period. As outlined in section 3.2 of the report work was continuing on Health & Safety (H&S) actions, draft policies concerning first aid and personal evacuation were completed and the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy work continued. Cross organisational forums had been set up for discussion on H&S and terms of reference had been drafted for approval. Departmental inspections were ongoing, visits had taken place to both Leisure Centres and Waste depot and action plans were in preparation as a result of mini-audits. The Chairperson commented that the report findings were very encouraging, moving in the right direction

The Chairperson then moved the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Thompson. There being no queries at this time the Chairperson 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 of key health and safety themes (as per Section 3.2).
- (iii) That Members considered additional health and safety improvements being implemented in addition to those identified in the main health and safety themes.

## **284. UK SHARED AND RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUNDS**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy and Resources that updated the Committee on the delivery of Maldon Districts UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) allocation. A supporting document was attached at appendix 1.

The Chairperson introduced the report and advised that at section 3.1.6 the Officer would take questions and also take questions at the end of the report presentation. She then deferred to the Lead Specialist Prosperity who commenced by referring to the report at the 15 June Committee which detailed the £1million the Council received from the UKSPF as part of the levelling up fund allocation. Due to government delays a request was submitted to profile the underspend from 2022 to 2023 to the current financial year and the Council was very pleased this was approved. Appendix 1 of the report set out the projects being delivered via the funding over the three-year period of which the Council had circa 18 months left, projects continued to be delivered on time and within tolerance despite delays in receiving the funding. Where projects were not being progressed due to non- feasibility, funding will be reallocated to other existing projects within the investment plans. With the current economic climate and the cost of doing business increasing it was prudent to ensure all projects aligned to the Corporate

Plan and delivered its priorities. To date circa £168,000 had been committed to the progression of projects and agreed costs for management and administration.

In response to a query regarding the status of the projects and if they remained on track financially the Officer advised that all projects were reporting in accordance with what was budgeted and as noted in the report on section 3.1.5, where they haven't been feasible as a project, the funding has been reallocated to other areas, such as with the Supporting Local Business Programme which was a key priority in assisting the economy to thrive. Discussions and monitoring was taking place to ensure the high value projects that were scheduled to be delivered within the investment plan would be delivered and, if appropriate, modifications would be made to deliver at a lower cost without detriment to the original product.

In response to a question on the pontoon at Burnham-on-Crouch she said she was working extremely closely with the officer delivering the project, had been involved in costing analysis discussions and advised that a Ward Member Briefing was imminent where options will be discussed.

The Officer then resumed the report presentation that covered the Rural England Prosperity Fund. For the benefit of new Members she advised that the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) published the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) prospectus in September 2022 which confirmed that Maldon District Council had been allocated just over £430,000 to be spent by March 2025. This was a rural top-up to the UKSPF allocation which supported activities that specifically addressed the challenges rural areas faced.

At the Strategy and Resources Committee (S&R) on 10 November 2022 the development of the Investment Plan was delegated to the now Director of Strategy and Resources in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of S&R. The Investment Plan was submitted and approved by DEFRA and confirmed support for local business funding in the form of capital grants or small scale investment in micro and small enterprises, capital grants for rural circular economy projects, funding for impactful volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places. Given there were no additional funds to support the management and administration of this work officers had proactively secured additional funding from Magnox for this element of the programme over a 2-year period. Officers were now developing the eligibility and awarding criteria for the funding and the programme was expected to open in Autumn 2023.

The Chairperson commended the proactive work undertaken. She moved the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Thompson, and opened the debate.

Councillor Stamp commended the work and asked that the Council celebrate the hard work in securing grants etc. She suggested that a presentation take place in the future highlighting the achievements. Councillor Thompson echoed these sentiments.

There being no further discussion the Chairperson put the recommendation to the Committee and it was agreed by assent.

**RESOLVED** that the Committee acknowledged the update provided on Maldon District's UK Shared and Rural England Prosperity fund allocations and continued to monitor the delivery.

**285. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMITTEE DECIDES ARE URGENT**

There were none.

## **286. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that this satisfies the public interest test.

## **287. REVIEW OF CORPORATE COMMERCIAL PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 1**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy and Resources that required this Committee to undertake a quarterly review of the Commercial Strategy performance, as assurance that it was being managed effectively to achieve outcomes set out in the Commercial Strategy 2022-2027. Appendix 1 to the report provided an overview of the Commercial Strategy performance as at the end of Quarter 1 (April 2023 to June 2023).

The Chairperson introduced the item and deferred to the Commercial Manager to take the Committee through the report. He advised that the overall commercial strategy performance continued to progress positively for the projects within the Council's control. Where negative impacts had been realised, priority and focussed work had taken place, to bring output back on track.

The Chairperson moved the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Thompson, and opened the debate.

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

- That fluctuations in income v forecast would be provided in future iterations of appendix 1 to the report.
- That activities that could incur charges were at the feasibility stage only, ultimately charges would be determined by Members as the decision-makers. It was noted that fees and charges had been agreed at the Strategy and Resources Committee on 21 September 2023.
- That an Asset Management Strategy was currently being worked on.
- That briefings had been held for both Ward and Town Council Members in respect of the commercially active projects and a further focussed session was planned.

There being no further discussion the Chairperson put the recommendations 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.
- (ii) That Members confirmed they were assured through this review that Commercial performance was being managed effectively.

There being no other items of business the Chairperson closed the meeting at 9.14 pm.

V J BELL  
CHAIRPERSON