



**MINUTES of
PERFORMANCE, GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
25 FEBRUARY 2021**

PRESENT

Chairman	Councillor Mrs J C Stilts
Vice-Chairman	Councillor K W Jarvis
Councillors	Mrs P A Channer, CC, M S Heard, A L Hull, S P Nunn, N G F Shaughnessy and W Stamp
In Attendance	Councillor C Morris

288. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the remote meeting, held under new regulations which came into effect on 4 April 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. She took Members through the etiquette for the meeting and then asked Officers and Councillors in attendance to introduce themselves.

This was followed by a roll call of Committee Members present.

289. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M W Helm.

290. MINUTES

RESOLVED by assent that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 January 2021 be approved and confirmed.

291. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs P A Channer, CC, declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of Essex County Council in relation to any items on the agenda pertaining to that organisation.

292. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No public participation requests had been received. However, the Chairman advised that she had received a request from Councillor Morris to ask a question under an item on today's agenda and that this would be dealt with at the appropriate time.

293. INTERNAL AUDIT DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN - 2021/22

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources and appendix 1 that contained the Draft Annual Plan - 2021/22 issued by BDO LLP, the Council's Internal Auditors. The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Internal Audit Partner to present the detail.

He took the Committee through the report that was focussed around the Council's key risks and had been discussed and agreed with Officers. He then drew Members' attention to the COVID Recovery Plan that covered commercialisation, partnership and workforce management. It was noted that this was a wide ranging plan and that any changes required would be presented to the next Performance, Governance and Audit Committee for approval.

In response to questions raised Officers responded as follows:-

- that whilst the lack of a 5 year housing land supply was a key risk to the Council it was a matter of timing to determine what was auditable and where it could add value. There were clear reasons why the housing land supply had slipped, however, new plans were now in place to address the situation as agreed at Council on 24 February 2021.
- that in the case of risks R15 to deliver a balanced Budget and R26 Channel Shift the scoring was taken directly from the Council's risk register. Both Officers and Members were at liberty to review those risks and ratings as appropriate.
- that Corporate Governance had just been through an audit therefore the review date was set for 2022/23. Should Members feel that this needed an earlier review date that could be brought forward.
- that the number 15 in the case of Workforce Management related to the number of days for auditing and that this was standard as it was a major issue for the Council with work taking place annually. There were a number of areas to audit e.g. workforce planning, recruitment/retention, sickness etc. The scope of each audit incorporated planning, fieldwork, reporting, officer time and senior management time. This was scoped annually with Officers.

There being no further queries the Chairman moved the recommendation in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Nunn. She then put the recommendation to the Committee and it was agreed by assent.

RESOLVED that the Committee considered and approved the Internal Audit Draft Annual Plan- 2021/22 at appendix 1.

294. 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. The Risk Register was attached at appendix 1.

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Programmes, Performance and Governance Manager to present the detail. The Manager took the Committee through the report that covered Quarter 3 risk (October-December 2020) together with a summary of risk direction and changes since Quarter 2. It was noted that R23 - Financial resource and process issues – had seen a decrease as all posts in Finance were now filled with permanent staff, therefore this was recommended for closure.

There were no risks that had seen an increase in score and the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) continued to regularly monitor and review risks given the current pandemic. The Corporate Risk Register was also used to define the Internal Audit plan, although not all risks would justify a full audit. The Manager concluded by reminding Members that at an operational level there was the additional balance scorecard report that continued to monitor risks removed from the risk register. An example of this was Channel Shift which was removed as a result of Quarter 2 reporting but will continue to be monitored by the balance scorecard.

In response to an observation regarding R7 – Failure to maintain a 5 year supply of housing land - and the need to plan ahead of time to address risks the Director of Strategy Performance and Governance advised that this area was monitored throughout the year together with an annual formal response to government in Quarter 3. This year events were unprecedented hence the current situation with the land supply and the level of the risk.

In response to a query regarding progress on R3 – Failure to target services /influence partners effectively to support identified needs of an increasing aging population- the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance reminded Members that a private and confidential paper had been considered and agreed at Council in December 2020 that outlined proposals and opportunities for purchasing land to support housing delivery and affordable housing. He said he was unable to go into further detail as the issues were commercially sensitive. However, all Members had sight of the paper in question.

There being no further queries the Chairman moved the recommendations in the report and these were seconded by Councillor Jarvis. She then 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 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.

295. 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 as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan

2019 - 2023, and for recommended changes and improvements to be reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee in February 2021. Appendix 1 to the report provided an overview of performance as at the end of Quarter 3 (Q3) (October - December 2020).

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Programmes, Performance and Governance Manager to present the detail. The Manager took the Committee through the report and, as with previous quarters, she advised that there were measures which were not performing as expected, largely due to the impact of COVID on how the Council delivered services or where officer resources had been diverted. Members' attention was drawn to the summary table that highlighted the measures in each of the three strategic themes that were either on track or otherwise.

She reminded Members that the full set of data was available at appendix 1. This also contained details of indicators impacted by COVID like 'annual better care fund grants' that had not been spent as home visits could not take place, and in-person online assistance at the offices, which had not happened due to the office moving to appointment only. However, some of the new activity taking place, not originally in the Corporate plan, included:

- Increase in channel shift as a result of the closure of the offices, which replaced 'helping people to use online tools'
- Virtual Fitness campaigns (as opposed to events at the Leisure centre)
- Direct engagement with those in 'isolation' risk group for COVID – far surpassing the original target of the number of people expected to reach with the original isolation programme
- Volunteering activity used for open spaces had been redeployed to COVID response
- Conversation 80 businesses in the high street as part of COVID response.

In conclusion she said that the performance team would be feeding into the wider review taking place on Corporate Plan objectives to ensure appropriate performance reporting would be produced as part of the review. The intention was that the Quarter 1 report scheduled for the Performance Governance and Audit Committee on 23 September 2021 would track the revised Corporate Plan format.

In response to a query from Councillor Jarvis regarding the performance monitoring process and the need for a more predictive tool the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance advised that performance reports by their nature were backwards looking, reporting a quarter in arrears. He said that considering the risk report alongside the performance report helped to anticipate problems around performance in advance. He acknowledged the importance of being able to forward plan and said officers would look at adding some further intelligence into the process and report back.

Councillor Nunn observed that given the pressures of COVID, flooding and elections he was amazed that performance was so good.

Councillor Hull, referring to funding that had not been spent because the activity could not take place due to COVID asked if there were funds available to tackle health and wellbeing issues like obesity. The Customers, Community and Casework Manager advised that there was funding available from Essex County Council for Health and Wellbeing. Currently this was being distributed through the Health and Wellbeing

Partnership Board. She said she would circulate further information on this to committee members outside of the meeting.

There being no further questions the Chairman moved the recommendations in the report and these were seconded by Councillor Jarvis. She then 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 Outcome level performance.
- (ii) That Members confirmed they are assured through this review that corporate performance is being managed effectively

296. HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE- 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 quarter 3 (October to 31 December 2020). The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Lead Countryside and Coast Co-Ordinator to present the detail.

He reported that there had been two accidents and two incidents of unacceptable behaviour, these had been dealt with in line with procedures. He drew Members' attention to section 3.3 in the report that dealt with issues raised by an Inspector from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and reassured Members that the HSE were satisfied all five areas that required action had been dealt with appropriately.

At this point the Chairman called on Councillor Morris to ask his question. Councillor Morris said he had been informed that certain members of staff did not have their first aid certification. The Lead Countryside and Coast Co-Ordinator advised that certificates for those frontline staff that were due to end the beginning of February 2021 had now been extended to 31 March 2021. With reference to new staff members he advised that they had been trained in October 2020. He added that it looked likely that a further extension would be granted as face-to-face training was not possible at present.

There being no further questions the Chairman moved the recommendations in the report and these were seconded by Councillor Nunn. She then put the recommendations to the Committee and they were agreed by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) To note the accident and incident statistics;
- (ii) To note the health and safety activity for quarter 3.

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

The meeting closed at 2.50 pm.

MRS J C STILTS
CHAIRMAN

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