



**MINUTES of
PERFORMANCE, GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
23 SEPTEMBER 2021**

PRESENT

Chairman	Councillor Mrs J C Stilts
Councillors	R G Boyce MBE, M R Edwards, Mrs J L Fleming, CC, M S Heard, A L Hull and E L Stephens
Substitute	Councillor C Swain
In Attendance	Councillor C Morris

287. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES

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

288. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K W Jarvis and S P Nunn.

In accordance with notice given Councillor C Swain was in attendance at the meeting substituting for Councillor Nunn.

289. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED by assent that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29 July 2021 be approved and confirmed.

290. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

There were none.

291. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No requests had been received.

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

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources that provided an update for 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. The Director of Resources took the Committee through the report

and advised that this year the preparation of the accounts had been significantly impacted both directly and indirectly by the Pandemic. The timescale for completion had been moved forward by two months. Additional requirements had been introduced and staffing changes took place in the middle of the closure period. In terms of the Pandemic from an accounting perspective, there had been far more transactions and technical adjustments, from a resourcing perspective staff had been off sick with Covid and were also focussed on the Covid response, for example dealing with complex grants. Despite these issues the Council's draft accounts were published ahead of the deadline of the 31 July 2021.

The Pandemic also compounded national issues of auditor resourcing. The audit of the Essex Pension Fund was now expected to commence in October and the Council's Audit was reliant on this being completed before the accounts were signed off so the accounts would not be audited by 30 September 2021. Due to the delay a notice to that effect will be published on the website. No significant issues have been identified by the auditors, the Finance team was now fully resourced and the intention was to bring the audited accounts to the next meeting of the Performance Governance and Audit Committee on 18 November 2021.

In response to issues raised the Director of Resources responded as follows:-

- That the link to the draft accounts would be circulated to all Committee members.
- That the Council had to await the conclusion of the Essex Pension Fund audit before the Council's auditors can carry out their work on it.
- That there were no additional costs to the Council in terms of the delay to the Essex Pension Fund audit.

There being no further discussion the Chairman moved the recommendation which was duly seconded and agreed by assent.

RESOLVED that the report was considered.

293. REVIEW OF CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 1

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, and for recommended changes and improvements to be reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee in January 2022. Appendix 1 to the report provided an overview of performance as of the end of Quarter 1 (April - June 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 first Corporate Performance report since the refreshed Corporate Plan was approved by Council in February 2021. The report covered quarter one, which was April- June 2021. This meant that the corporate performance measures for some of the themes had been updated to align to the new outcomes the Council was seeking to achieve, and some of the data collection for these was still in development. The rationale for this was set out in section 3.5 of the report.

Whilst the three theme areas were broadly on track, it was expected that the impact of Covid would still be seen within the performance reporting throughout the year, for example around business benefits and tourism together with school events.

The Committee's attention was drawn to section 3.4 in the report that highlighted the only performance indicator annotated 'at Risk', namely, the 'Five Year Housing Land Supply' (5YHLS) under the Place Thematic Strategy, and at Section 3.5 those new performance indicators introduced as a result of the refresh that were awaiting data.

The Chairman then moved the recommendations in the report and they were seconded by Councillor Fleming.

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

- That the call for sites commenced in April with a deadline of 23 June 2021, 180 sites were due to be reported to Strategy & Resources Committee. The next round of data on the 5YHLS was due in quarter 3 but in the meantime the council had commenced a number of actions to restore the supply including:- the review which will allocate more land; liaison with Parish Councils to prepare Neighbourhood Plans thus boosting local supply; creating relationships with developers to understand the pace of expected delivery etc.
- That the Action Plan comprised the need to approve plans for housing at a greater rate than at present.
- That where it states 'Awaiting Data' on the appendix this applied to new measures as a result of the Corporate Plan refresh. An example was fly-tipping where information was being sought on officer costs per clearance. That going forward 'awaited' or 'missing data' would be explained on the Appendix itself as well as in the covering report.
- That business engagement had been delayed due to staffing issues, however, the number of businesses now engaged in Sense of Place was at 24% equating to 774 businesses. That support for businesses included initiatives like 'Click it Local/Keep it Local', training support, recovery activities etc.
- That the work with Schools in supporting students with mental health issues had been disrupted due to Covid. The Community Lead Officer was now working on a strategy to support this area and data will be available in the next quarter. It was noted that Maldon District Council does not directly fund school initiatives, it sources funding for support programmes and signposts the respective Schools.
- That Officers would liaise with the Waste Management Team to progress the fly-tipping concerns.
- That Business benefit through Tourism would be assessed following the results of the Essex Wide Survey.
- That Intergenerational Projects delivery had been impeded by Covid and would be reported once up and running.

There being no further questions the Chairman put the duly 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.

294. REVIEW OF CORPORATE RISK - QUARTER 1

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 took the Committee through the report that covered quarter one of the corporate risk register, which was April- June 2021. As shown in Appendix 1 all risks, colour coded to reflect tolerance levels, remained unchanged in score since the last report received by the Committee.

However, there were three emerging risks highlighted where it was expected the Council could see a change for the next quarter reporting. These were:

- (i) R10 – failure to develop jobs to support the growing population;
- (ii) R29 - failure to deliver services as a result of Covid-19– changes were likely as restrictions ease, and,
- (iii) R9 - failure to have a coordinated approach for inward investment and maximising business rates growth.

This was due to a number of factors:- the evolving picture of the Pandemic; the ease in restrictions and the expected positive impact of the creation of *The Maldon District Investment Prospectus* respectively. It was noted that Service level risks were identified and monitored in Service Plans by the relevant Service Plan Owners and, if deemed appropriate, were escalated to committee for consideration.

The Chairman moved the recommendations in the report and these were seconded by Councillor Fleming.

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

- That the Council approached Risk 10 - *failure to develop jobs to support the growing population* as a key stakeholder in the community.
- That information of the impact on non-domestic rates would be circulated outside of the meeting.
- That plans for a fully manned reception would be considered by the Recovery Working Group taking into consideration the continued operation of the booster clinic to the end of December 2021. At present, face to face appointments were taking place for those in need.
- That the Risk Register would be updated to reflect the reduced level of risk on safeguarding (R1) as the main concern that arose from the audit was regarding a secure case management system which was now in place.

- That feedback from the Committee regarding prioritising connections to the A12 over the South Maldon Relief Road would be fed back to the Corporate Leadership Team.

There being be further discussion the Chairman put the recommendations to the Committee and they were agreed by assent

RESOLVED

- (i) That Members reviewed the Corporate Risk Register at 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. BALANCE SCORECARD EXCEPTIONS REPORT

To consider the report of the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance that detailed exceptions to operational service reporting for Committee review and discussion.

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Programmes, Performance and Governance Manager to present the detail. She advised that the Corporate Performance and Governance framework required the Committee be given visibility of any identified Balance Scorecard key performance indicators (KPI) that had met their threshold, supported by an action plan to ensure targets were met

This was the second reporting of the six- monthly balance scorecard exceptions report that built further on performance insight, giving the operational exceptions in addition to the corporate outcomes reporting that was received by this committee on a quarterly basis. Internally, the Extended Leadership Team reviewed a monthly performance dashboard that covered reporting around financial, operational, customer, organizational and statutory performance indicators.

This report aimed to draw Member attention to the exceptions, where, as a Council, there was both underperformance or performance that surpassed targets. In section 3.5 the areas of underperformance were highlighted and in section 3.7 the areas of overperformance were highlighted.

It was noted that the missed bins issue had emerged since the last report and that many other authorities were also impacted by a national HGV driver shortage. This was being closely monitored with the contractor SUEZ. Overall, indicators were impacted in some way by the changes of the Pandemic and wider economic issues and the reporting mechanism allowed the Council to determine the extent of the impact and account for this in its strategies and response. In conclusion she reminded Members that there was a form available for Members to complete as they identify further work to support customers.

The Chairman moved the recommendations in the report and these were seconded by Councillor Boyce.

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

- That to counter the driver shortages, which was a national issue, the Council was advertising for drivers and developing contingencies working with the army to provide training and agencies to fill the staff gaps.
- That a meeting was scheduled with SUEZ week commencing 27/9/21.
- That leisure participation and uptake data activity would be more accurate when reported later in the year as the summer period was always quiet. Activities like swimming was almost back to pre-Pandemic levels however gym membership was down.
- A meeting of the Member Working Group to discuss leisure related issues was scheduled to take place November time, date TBC.

There being no further discussion the Chairman 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 the report;
- (ii) That Members confirmed they were assured through this review that Operational performance was being managed effectively.

296. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTIONS UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance that updated the Committee on the actions identified in the 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement.

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 advising that the annual governance statement identified an action plan to build on and improve best practice around governance at Maldon District Council. This was the second time that this report was presented six monthly to the committee so that it had oversight of progress on actions and what the Council was doing to improve governance arrangements, as well as any barriers to achieving this.

It was noted that section 3.4 provided a table of the actions and the associated commentary explained the progress/work that had taken place to date. The Chairman put the duly seconded recommendation to the Committee and it was agreed by assent.

RESOLVED that the Committee reviewed the annual governance statements table and updates and challenged where necessary.

297. 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 Quarter 1 (Q1) (1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021) and updated Members on activities commenced during Quarter 2 (Q2) (July to September).

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Specialist Services Manager to present the detail. She reported the accident statistics and incidents of unacceptable behaviour, both of which were low. The Resources Facilities Team was seeking quotes to resolve the floor level problems in the Council Chamber and the First Aid procedure had been updated to reflect current arrangements.

Recognising the need to progress the review of the Health and Safety Action Plan, an Interim Health and Safety Lead Officer had been engaged for a 3-month period. The Officer was based within the Service Delivery Directorate and will work closely with the Senior Specialist (Environmental Health) and other Managers to identify priorities, seek assurance or action any improvements. This officer will also lead on the work to improve processes and procedures in time for the re-opening of the Splash Park in 2022.

The Chairman moved the recommendations in the report, seconded by Councillor Fleming.

In response to queries Officers provided the following information:-

- That an investigation was underway into the cabling accident in the park to ensure no re-occurrence in the future.
- That the new Interim Health and Safety Lead Officer would be largely based at the Parks Depot as the main area of focus was the Health and Safety Action Plan review . A corporate wide review will take place later in the work schedule.

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

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Committee reviewed the accident and incident statistics;
- (ii) That the Committee considered the work underway during Quarter 2 on health and safety activities.

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

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

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.

MRS J C STILTS
CHAIRMAN

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