

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH) held in Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 6th November 2018.

PRESENT: Councillor D B Dew – Chairman.
Councillors J C Cooper-Marsh, S J Corney, Dr P L R Gaskin, J P Morris, S Wakeford and D J Wells.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors M S Grice and J Neish.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors J A Gray and J M Palmer.

31. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd October 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(At 7.02pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor J P Morris entered the meeting.)

32. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

(At 7.05pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor J A Gray entered the meeting.)

33. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which has been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st November 2018 to 28th February 2019.

34. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19, QUARTER 2

With the aid of a report by the Corporate Team Manager and Finance Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Integrated Performance Report 2018/19 Quarter 2 was presented to the Panel.

The Policy, Performance and Transformation (Scrutiny) Manager highlighted the key points from the performance section of the report. This included fewer red rated performance indicators as those relating to grounds maintenance and street cleansing, which were rated red in Quarter 1, have since improved.

It was clarified, following a query, that the bulk of complaints received

by Operations are now business as usual complaints and not as a result of the waste round reconfiguration. Members were informed that a detailed report on complaints was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships) at their meeting in October 2018.

A question was raised in regards to the high turnover of staff in Customer Services and the reasons for it. In response, the Panel was informed that the main reason why the percentage of calls answered by the Call Centre remains below target is not because of high turnover per se but because of a short notice period and the amount of time it takes to train new Customer Services Advisors. Members were informed that a more detailed report on Customer Service Performance was to be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Performance) at their meeting on 8th November 2018.

In response to a Member asking for progress on the projects rated Red, the Panel was informed that the RAG Status is linked to the anticipated completion date. The issue is that for the projects listed there have been optimistic completion dates set. In addition, it was noted that the projects have experienced significant historical delays due to matters outside the Council's direct control.

Furthermore, regarding the 3C ICT projects, the Council's elements are rated green but the projects overall are rated red. The reason they appear in the report is because the Council has overall responsibility for the management of the projects.

Moving onto the finance section of the report a Member asked about the savings arising from the Human Resources and apprentice staff costs. The Panel was informed that the savings achieved are as a result of half of the apprentices now being employed in alternative permanent posts within the Council, therefore meaning that they are no longer being paid from the dedicated apprentice budget.

Discussion ensued regarding the £362k overspend on the Leisure and Health revenue budget. It was noted that the overspend represents a 190% variance on the budgeted position. The Executive Councillor for Partnerships and Well-Being and the Head of Leisure and Health were in attendance to explain that the budget position is because the service is not projected to make as much income as anticipated, particularly through the Burgess Hall.

Recruitment was discussed and Members were informed that there has been a particular issue with Development as nationally there is a shortage of planners which affects recruitment.

The Panel raised a query on New Homes Bonus and they were informed that the sooner that developers build out their permissions, the sooner the income is received by the Council. Members were also informed that there is a potential that the New Homes Bonus scheme would be altered in the future.

35. TREASURY MANAGEMENT SIX MONTH PERFORMANCE REVIEW

With the aid of a report by the Head of Resources (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book) the Treasury Management Six Month Performance Review was presented to the Panel.

The key change since the last report was that the Bank of England base rate has increased which has made a difference to the rate of some loans the Council has.

A Member questioned the reasonableness of the 6-9% returns target on Commercial Investment Strategy (CIS) investments. The Panel was informed that the target is a guide and that a balance is struck between the risk of the investment and the return received. It was noted that the Council does have CIS investments which yield less than the target.

Following a question on only making investments within the District, Members were informed that the Council has sought extensive legal advice which confirmed that it can make CIS investments outside of the District boundaries; however there are greater tests to meet in order to demonstrate that the investment is worthwhile.

(At 7.55pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor J M Palmer left the meeting and did not return.)

36. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel was informed that the work on affordable housing and skills is currently being scoped out in collaboration with the Corporate Director – Delivery. It is anticipated that once the scoping has been completed then expert witnesses will be timetabled in.

Chairman