

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REVIEW WORKING PARTY

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2016 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Glenn Coleman-Cooke (Chairman); Councillors Bambridge, Campbell, Connor, Curran, Dennis and Jaye-Jones

In Attendance: Councillor Taylor-Smith

172. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received at the meeting.

173. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

174. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Campbell proposed, Councillor Curran seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 30 September 2015.

175. QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

Tim Willis, Director of Corporate Resources & S151 Officer introduced the item for discussion. In his presentation, Tim Willis said that the report format for his meeting still presented performance information in the old format which would be replaced by a new one. Madeline Homer, CEx said that the Destination Management Plan (DMP) has a number of activities still to be implemented. Officers would be reviewing these in the light of the current budget provisions.

The revised DMP will be presented to a future meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel. Officers also agreed that future reports to the working party should include the option for Members to make substantive recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel for onward submission to Cabinet where appropriate. Some Members expressed satisfaction at the decrease in sickness levels for staff.

They suggested that one way of decreasing the Freedom of Information requests (FOIs), would be for officers to ensure that information held by Council and published on the website should be easily accessible to the public. A communications exercise should be carried out to inform the public where this information can be found.

Members noted the report.

176. EAST KENT SERVICES AND EK HUMAN RESOURCES Q3 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2015/16

In his presentation, Dominic Whelan, Director of EK services reported that the performance for the quarter under review was stable. Collection of business rates was slightly above the 2014/15 levels for the same period. Staff had worked under significant pressure due to the implementation of the single system project that saw one platform set up for revenue and benefits for TDC, Dover District Council (DDC) and Canterbury City Council (CCC). Universal Credit system was also set up for Thanet in October 2015 and most recently for DDC and CCC.

Dominic Whelan said that EK Services were not expecting a high impact of the new benefits system in the coming financial year. He also reported that the service had been affected by the cyberattacks that had been targeted at the government. Members noted the error on page 35 of the agenda pack that the % should instead be actual £ values as there are full financial figures given out in that part of the report. They also noted the error on the advice of regarding the council tax rates which should read as follows:

Business Tax - £29 million;
Council Tax - £53 million.

One Member observed that use of tablets and smart phones had increased exponentially and EK Services could consider creating website linkages on common areas across the partner authorities. In response to a Member query, Mr Whelan said that he would be discussing with Tim Willis the various web applications options that were available. He also said that in order to mitigate the staff shortages in IT, EK Services would be considering outsourcing some components of their work.

Officers were working on coming up with single solutions to issues affecting the partner authorities. With regards to innovation projects, a contract had been offered to a company that was still to sign the contract. EK Human Resources was working on identifying the areas that needed improvement and EK Services was working would be holding a workshop for S151 officers to review and consider any financial innovation projects.

The report was noted.

177. EAST KENT HOUSING Q3 PERFORMANCE UPDATE REPORT 2015/16

Brendan Ryan, Chief Executive of EK Housing led discussion on the item and said that the rent arrears performance was good and he was confident that the arrears would be reduced for the fifth successive year. Evictions remained higher in Thanet in comparison to other partner Councils but probably reflected the larger number of flats let to young single people. Performance on re-lets was similarly good with a 36% improvement in performance over the last four years resulting in an additional £300,000 rental income per year for the four councils.

In his presentation, Mr Ryan reported that this year, there was an anticipated underspend of 12% in the Capital Programme which included £180,000 savings as a result of the Invicta lifts refurbishment. Members asked whether any analysis and conclusions drawn regarding the likely impact (particularly with regards to life time tenancies), of the changes to the 'Right To Buy' in the Social Housing Sector. Mr Ryan said his team had not done any work on that issue; however the Council's Housing Strategy Team may have done some of that work. He advised Members that he will provide the information after the meeting.

Some Members sought clarification on the priorities/promises that were highlighted in the performance report without accompanying action points and assigned individuals to accomplish the actions. In response Mr Ryan explained that the priorities were derived through consultation with tenants and the Councils and that the new priorities would replace the original promises made to tenants when EKH was set up. There were identified tasks that were assigned to given lead officers. Quarterly performance reports would be used to monitor performance.

Mr Ryan said that EK Housing were trying to make changes to how complaints were processed. Officers were also working with partners on ways to improve the delivery of the capital programme and reduce backlogs.

Members noted the report.

PLEASE NOTE that the following notes are a post-meeting officer response to a query that was raised by a Member at the meeting:

“The proposal to end life time tenancies for all new council and housing association tenants is included in the Housing Bill which is now at Committee stage in Parliament.

New tenants will get either a 2 or 5 year tenancy. (not dissimilar to the existing “Flexible” Tenancy regime which TDC applies).

It is proposed that tenants who transfer to a new home will lose their security of tenure and will start again with a 2 or 5 year tenancy. This is subject to some proposed amendments in the Bill; with the Housing Minister saying that in certain circumstances, e.g. where the council require the tenant to move, a new secure tenancy can be offered. This maybe a disincentive for people downsizing to avoid the Spare Room Subsidy (also known as the Bedroom Tax).

Although in the original policy discussions surrounding this proposal there was talk about providing secure life time tenancies for “the severely disabled” and the extremely old, there seems to be no provision for this in the Bill in its current form.

In reality I would imagine that most tenancies will simply roll on after five years but it will be an administrative nightmare and there will need to be appeals and review processes established. It will be interesting to see what happens when a tenant is evicted because their five year tenure has expired and they then present to the Council as being homeless?

You can follow developments in housing related matters through the following link or can subscribe through the link to a daily update via e mail:

http://www.housingnet.co.uk/60_Second_Housing_News/60_1302.html

178. MONITORING PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE NEW CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The new corporate priorities had values assigned to them, which indicated what was meant to be achieved for each priority and how that would be achieved. Performance indicators were also attached to each priority. Tim Willis said that the reporting on shared services would be in connection with reporting on delivery of TDC priorities. Members’ initial observations were that the new approach would take some time to get used to, and that more substantive observations could only be made once the reporting template had statistical information included and had gone live.

Madeline Homer, CEx offered Members a report using the new format and reiterated that this was a totally different approach to performance reporting. However it might take officers a few weeks to get that new report in place. Another Member suggested that training be offered to Members to go through the new format. Some Members further also suggested that the assets review be carried out in order to support the capital receipts and that Council ought to find ways to maximise the website to communicate clear messages to residents. Tim Willis said that EK Services had been approached regarding the review of the website and agreed to meet with the sub-group to explore further how the new reporting format will work.

Members agreed that the new reporting approach was more modern, much better and professional.

Councillor Campbell proposed, Councillor Bambridge seconded and Members agreed that the item on new corporate performance reporting against the new corporate priorities be included in the agenda for a future Members Briefing.

Members also noted the report.

179. PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPROACH

Tim Willis introduced the new project management approach to the sub-group. In response to a Member question, Madeline Homer said the new approach will be included in the TDC Constitution.

The Corporate Management Team (CMT) acknowledged the need to supplement its role with an officer level resource to make recommendations to CMT and to spread good practice.

The report was noted.

180. VERBAL UPDATE ON THE PEER REVIEW FOLLOW-UP

The Peer Review was carried out about two years ago and a follow-up peer review challenge is planned to take place on 25-26 February 2016. An interim review in September 2015 had reset performance targets up to March 2016. As part of the preparations for the follow-up review, Council had produced a position statement to be shared with the Peer Review Team. A Members Briefing has been arranged for 16 February to consult on the Position Statement before the review.

Members noted the report.

Meeting concluded: 8.40 pm