

Minutes

Performance Management Board

3rd September 2019



Present

| Councillors | Present | Councillors | Present |
|---------------|-----------|---------------------------|-----------|
| J Coleridge | Apologies | S Rehman | Apologies |
| G Courtauld | Apologies | B Rose | Yes |
| Mrs C Dervish | No | P Schwier (Vice-Chairman) | Yes |
| T Everard | Apologies | N Unsworth (Chairman) | Yes |
| M Radley | Apologies | | |

Councillor A Hensman was also in attendance.

1 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: There were no interests declared.

2 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked, or statements made.

3 **FOURTH QUARTER AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT 2018-19**

INFORMATION: Members considered a report on the performance of the Council as at the end of the fourth quarter, 1st January 2019 to 31st March 2019 and for the end of the financial year.

As at the end of March 2019, a total of 44 projects had been completed, whilst a further 19 were on track and progressing well. It was noted that two projects had an amber status: the Local Plan and the Braintree and Witham Rail Link project. The Local Plan examination had previously been suspended due to additional evidence required in respect of the Garden Communities and Part 1 of the Plan. The delays surrounding the progression of the Rail Link project were attributed to the high associated costs, the Council was awaiting the outcome of a commissioned second-phase study before any further action could be implemented in respect of this. The study would examine all modes of transport, including rail and potential recommendations relating to the Braintree Branch Line.

12 performance indicators had met or exceeded target, and five had marginally missed target. Of the five that had missed target, two were marginally missed and three had missed target by more than 5%. The three targets missed by more than 5% were in relation to the percentage of household waste sent for re-use, recycling and composting,

and the tonnage of residual household waste not recycled. It was emphasised that measures were in place to help improve the performance surrounding waste, which included promotional events and new recycling initiatives to further educate residents as to effective waste minimisation practices. In addition to this, the Council would review its waste targets in March 2020.

It was reported that the average waiting time for applicants on the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) had missed its target, having achieved 87 days against a target of 75 days. The target was not achieved due to the complexity of some cases, which often required additional time for installation works (e.g. planning permission needed for a dropped curb). Council staff remained in regular contact with customers in order to keep them informed of progress. Furthermore, Members were advised that the target of 75 days regarding the average waiting time for DFG applicants had been revised to 90 days for the 2019/20 period.

Performance indicators that had achieved amber status included the collection rate for Council Tax and the percentage of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt. The collection rate for Council Tax achieved 98.22% against a target of 98.3%, with over £86 million collected in total. It was added that the Council would continue to collect money into the next year and, as such, the target would eventually be met. The percentage of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt was also slightly under target at 99.02% against 99.25%; it was stressed that the Finance Team had contacted the relevant services to remind them of the need to process invoices in a timely manner.

Although the number of complaints received by the Council had increased over the last year, the trend had emerged in part due to changes made earlier to the District's waste collection routes; as such, there was a subsequent need for both residents and Council staff alike to familiarise themselves with the new routes and collection points, and complaints in this area later decreased. The number of planning complaints had also increased due to unprecedented demands on the service and resource issues. Members were assured that the situation was being monitored closely with a number of actions being implemented to help ease the pressures on the service. Planning had seen a subsequent decrease in the number of complaints received during the fourth quarter of the year.

In respect of financial performance, it was reported that there was an overall positive variance for the year of £1.545 million (-10.5%) against the budget. Staffing budgets were underspent by £551,000 across all services, which resulted in a net variance of £351,000 after allowing for the corporate efficiency target of £200,000. Other expenditure was underspent by £219,000, whilst income was overachieved by £975,000.

There followed a series of queries raised by Members. Further to a query raised by the Chairman, it was agreed that the improvement figure of 54% regarding the amount of branded and unbranded fast food packaging littering the District's roadsides, and how this was achieved, would be investigated and reported back to the Committee at a later stage.

A slight error was noted on page 25 of the Agenda under "Comments," paragraph four, in that the total number of complaints received in the fourth quarter was 142, not 134.

Officers agreed to report back to Members at a later meeting on the subject of the Council's complaints handling management.

The Head of Finance would be contacted in response to the Chairman's query about the market valuation of £19.308 million for all pooled funds and its position in regard to long or short-term funding.

DECISION: Members of the Performance Management Board agreed to note the report.

REASON FOR DECISION: To inform Members of the performance of the Council.

4 **MEMBER SCRUTINY– MATTERS ARISING FROM BBC WAR ON WASTE PROGRAMME**

INFORMATION: Members scrutinised the Council's handling of its recycling materials and the efforts it had taken to investigate the issue of the recycling bag discovered in Malaysia, which had reported in the BBC "War on Plastic" programme. A presentation was provided for the benefit of Members by Samir Pandya, Strategy and Policy Manager, and Paul Partridge, Head of Operations, entitled "BBC War On Waste – Recycling Sacks Malaysia."

The full presentation slides can be viewed at:

https://www.braintree.gov.uk/membershub/downloads/download/36/overview_and_scrutiny_committee_agenda_and_reports

Following the presentation, a discussion took place during which Members were able to clarify some of the key points raised, which largely concerned the Council's contract with Viridor Waste Management Ltd and the investigation that was undertaken in response to the discovery of the Council's recycling bag in Malaysia.

DECISION: Members scrutinised the issues raised and noted the efforts undertaken by the Council.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable Member scrutiny in relation to this topic.

5 **DECISION PLANNER**

INFORMATION: Members considered the Decision Planner for the period of 1st September 2019 to 31st December 2019.

After consideration of the Decision Planner, Members requested that future scrutiny be considered in relation to the North Essex Economic Growth Strategy and the Millennium Slipways.

DECISION: That Members noted the Decision Planner for the period 1st September 2019 to 31st December 2019.

6 **FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

INFORMATION: Members gave consideration to a report which provided an update on the anticipated work programme for the Committee.

A number of concerns were raised regarding the potential for overlap and duplication of work with the other three Scrutiny Groups, as well as with the independent working groups at the Council (e.g. the Climate Change Working Group). Members were

subsequently assured that the design of the proposed work programme would help to ensure that there would not be any overlap or duplication of work; however, the progress of the Committee would be monitored throughout the year in order to maintain this. The possibility of extra meetings to allow for further scrutiny of topics was also raised. In response, Members were advised that additional meetings could be arranged in future if needed, but it was not yet necessary to do so as the Committee was only in the early stages of its work programme.

DECISION: That Members noted the above and provided any additional feedback in respect of the future work programme.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure Members were aware of the future work programme.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8:48pm.

Councillor N Unsworth
(Chairman)