

**MINUTES of the meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee
held on 23 January 2014 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors Richard Speight (Chair), Barry Johnson, Wendy Curtis and Yash Gupta

Apologies: Councillor Charlie Key

In attendance: S. Cox – Assistant Chief Executive
S. Clark – Head of Finance
M. Essex – Head of Regeneration
S. Taylor – Programmes and Projects Manager
N. Warren – Community Development Manager
R. Harris – Director of Adults, Health and Commissioning
J. Hinchliffe – Head of HR OD & Customer Strategy
S. Welton – Corporate Performance Officer
M. Boulter – Principal Democratic Services Officer

23. MINUTES

The minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14 November 2013 were approved as a correct record.

24. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

a) Interests

Councillor Gupta declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Item 7 by virtue that he was a trustee of seven local organisations.

Councillor Curtis declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Item 7 by virtue that she was a trustee of south Ockendon Community Forum.

b) Whipping

No interests were declared.

**25. CORPORATE PLAN MID-YEAR PROGRESS AND SCORECARD
PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Committee sought clarity around the figures and understood that overall failing targets or 'Reds' had decreased since the last update. Officers confirmed that only one deliverable in priority 4, relating to improving health and well-being, had failed to meet its target. This deliverable was a joint target to increase the number of people with learning disabilities to receive an annual

health check by a GP. The Council was working with partners to improve this performance.

Following a question, officers explained that an amber performance, at this juncture in the year, meant that the target was in the balance in terms of whether it would succeed or fail target. A red indicator meant that remedial action needed to be taken straight away to improve performance against the target or it would fail.

Councillor Johnson felt that the percentage of indicators succeeding target was too low and should be well above the 66% it was currently at. He also felt that the Council should not include targets that were the responsibility of other partners as well because this gave a skewed picture of Council performance. The Chair felt that indicators needed to stretch the efforts of the council and officers highlighted that joint targets were becoming the norm and would continue to feature in performance reports.

A brief discussion was had on how the Council communicated the good performance to residents and officer stated there was an annual report that was published.

The committee finished the debate on a discussion about stress and officers informed the Members that the Health Week held in November had generated a lot of interest and events were generally well attended. Stress and absence due to stress was still a challenge for the Council and it was unlikely the performance target would be achieved this year.

Councillor Johnson added that he felt a good way to manage the budget was to think about taking resources away from those areas that performed very well and using those resources to bolster areas of poor performance. Officers noted this view.

RESOLVED: That:

- i) The committee acknowledges and commends service where there is good delivery against priorities.**
- ii) The Committee notes the performance and progress in areas of concern and identifies where it feels necessary, any further areas of concern on which to focus.**
- iii) The areas in Focus to be circulated as appropriate to relevant Overview and Scrutiny committee Chairs.**
- iv) The Committee notes the overall performance of Thurrock in the ASCOF national framework of performance outcome measures for adult social care.**

26. NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES – POOLING OPPORTUNITIES

Officers clarified an issue from the previous meeting by stating that the Monitoring Officer had confirmed they could continue to submit for the pooling opportunity during the Purdah period.

The Council had reached a pooling agreement with Basildon, Barking and Dagenham and Havering councils, which would bring an estimated £5.9 million into the Council over the next four years. As part of the proposals a small Economic Development Fund would be established and all councils were currently working on the common issues they shared to see which projects money could be best spent on.

Officers stated that should adverse economic conditions occur in a particular council area, for example the closure of a major factory, then it would be the responsibility of that council to bear the economic consequences of it and not the pool of councils.

The Committee discussed the governance arrangements of the pool and it was stated that an agreement on the split of benefits had been agreed by the councils and all other collection and allocation duties would be dealt with through the accountants of each council. Thurrock would be leading the administration of the pool but it was not anticipated that this would be a significant burden. It was added that the money received from the pool should not be used to support the Council's base budget as it was too unpredictable. A better use would be to support schemes which generated further business growth, thereby increasing the business rates payable.

Following a question from the Chair officers explained the relationship of the pool in relation to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The existence of the Pool would not preclude the council from accessing funds from the LEP and the pool, in fact, gave far more opportunities to the council to pursue its own specific priorities, as well as opening up partnership opportunities with London as well as the south east.

Some councillors felt Thurrock should be receiving more of the funding that was spread over the four councils but officers explained the funds were allocated proportionally and represented funding that the Council would otherwise not be able to obtain without the pool.

Resolved that the report be noted.

27. PUBLIC SERVICE (SOCIAL VALUE) ACT 2012 AND SOCIAL VALUES FRAMEWORK

The Committee learnt that the Council in partnership with other councils, had developed a toolkit to allow local community organisations to access contracts better. The impact of the toolkit had yet to be measured.

A number of the councillors highlighted that at least five community groups had failed to secure local contracts for a range of services in the last six months. Councillor Gupta felt this gave the wrong message to community

groups and that the Council should be supporting these organisations. Officers responded that community groups were excited about the opportunities to bid for contracts but that the award of contract included many other considerations as well as those of the locality of the bidder. Community groups had been successful in bidding for other contracts and those services that had gone to other companies would be receiving an enhanced or developed service from now onwards.

The Committee discussed contract management and how the Council decided to weight certain criteria when awarding contracts. There was also the understanding that to require companies to use local workforces meant the area needed structures in place to allow local people to gain the skills needed to apply and be successful in getting those jobs.

The Committee noted a working group was established to help develop community organisation access contracts and wished an update to return to committee in the new municipal year.

RESOLVED that:

- I) The Committee acknowledges progress made by the Authority to meet the obligations of the Public Service (Social Value) Act 2012.**
- II) The above comments relating to the means for developing and embedding a Social Values Framework for Thurrock be noted.**

28. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted that Full Council had requested them to review the changes to the 2013/14 budget before submission to Full Council in February. A date would be identified to hold this meeting.

The Committee also noted that bailiff charges would be included in the fair debt report for March.

The meeting was finished at 8.42pm.

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIRMAN

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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or alternatively e-mail mboulter@thurrock.gov.uk**