

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATE MANAGEMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY 2014 AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
COUNCIL OFFICES, WEELEY**

Present: Councillors Steady (Chairman), Miles (Vice-Chairman), Bucke, Caines, R Callender, V E Guglielmi, Nicholls and Wood.

In Attendance: Finance and Procurement Manager (Richard Barrett), Business Manager (Jon Barber), Human Resources Manager (Anastasia Simpson), Democratic Services Manager (Colin Sweeney) and Democratic Services Officer (Michael Pingram).

61. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Callander to this, his first meeting of the Committee since his recent appointment to serve on the Committee in place of Councillor Platt and also thanked the Council's Finance and Procurement Manager for the hard work he and his team had put into the budget that had recently been approved at Full Council.

62. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none.

63. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 2 January 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

64. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none declared.

65. SICKNESS UPDATE

There was submitted a report by the Council's Human Resources Manager that provided the Committee with an update on sickness absence trends within the Council.

It was reported that the average sickness absence per employee had reduced in the last quarter (from 8.98 days per employee to 8.77) and further stated that, since the report had been published, the figure had fallen further to 8.38 days per employee, which was lower than the national average of 8.7 days. The Committee was also informed that there was currently no employees on long-term sickness (over 28 days) or with depression as the cause of absence, whilst viral complaints had increased in the last quarter, as expected, due to the winter weather.

The Human Resources Manager then answered questions before the Committee thanked her for her report and agreed that it was happy to see the average sickness per employee falling below the national average despite being in times of austerity.

66. PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 3 2013-14 (OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2013)

There was submitted a report by the Council's Business Manager, which highlighted the performance of the Council for Quarter Three of the reporting year 2013/2014. The Business Manager explained that the new performance dashboard approach was an improvement on the previous method but stressed that it was evolving and would become more refined as new business plans were developed for 2014/15.

He then presented the projects targets, focussing primarily on those that were behind schedule and explained the reasoning for that. The only project that was behind target, he said, was Community Leadership and Influencing (Rural Infrastructure and Flooding),

which was due to not delivering the activities that supported the project quickly enough as much of this relied on working with partners.

He then announced that having spoken with the Leader of the Council, a Rural Projects Working Party would be set up, chaired by Councillor Nicholls, to reinvigorate the Council's approach to the Rural Infrastructure Project.

The Business Manager continued by explaining that although the recycling rate was behind schedule, this was also the case at an Essex-wide and national level and that this issue had been discussed in detail by the Locality Board. Factors which were possibly contributing to this included the impact of the recession and said the same applied to waste tonnage collected also being behind target.

The Business Manager further explained to the Committee the rationale behind the remaining performance indicators that were currently behind schedule and said that with regards to fly tipping, it was in part due to a challenging self-imposed 48 hour target in place which wouldn't account for weekends and Bank Holidays so the figures could be misleading. He added that the greater detail presented in the dashboard for the performance for minor planning applications showed an improving trend and the cumulative target had masked this.

Questions were then asked by the Committee and the Council's Business Manager said that the Council benchmarked its performance where possible against other authorities.

It was **AGREED** that a Rural Projects Working Party be set up, with Councillor Nicholls as the Chairman, to consider the Council's approach to the Rural Infrastructure Project.

67. ANNUAL TREASURY STRATEGY 2014/15 (INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL AND TREASURY INDICATORS)

There was submitted a report by the Council's Finance and Procurement Manager that enabled the Committee to review the Annual Treasury Strategy for 2014/15 (including the Prudential and Treasury Indicators).

He informed the Committee that it had been a routine year, with little change. He added that the Council had no plans to borrow prior to 2015 and that a risk adverse approach to investments remained.

During discussion, the Committee was told that the Council still banked with the Co-Operative Bank but due to ongoing concerns regarding its stability, money was transferred out on a daily basis.

It was **AGREED** that the Committee **COMMENT TO CABINET** that it recognised the comprehensive report and endorsed its progress onto Cabinet.

68. COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

The Committee was invited to contribute on the forthcoming Work Programme and during discussion the Committee suggested setting up a working group to work with the Council's Sports Facilities Business Manager on Leisure fees and charges and also benchmarking against other authorities. It was further added that the Local Government Association had peer reviews where they inspect an authority and challenge what it does and that this could prove to be useful for the Council.

69. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

There were none.

The meeting was declared closed at 9.04 p.m.

Chairman