

**FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY PANEL
20 OCTOBER 2009**

Present :- Councillor?Dennis?Willetts (Chairman)
Councillors?Martin?Goss, Dave?Harris, Theresa?
Higgins and Nick?Taylor

Substitute Members :- Councillor?Nigel?Chapman for?Councillor?
Christopher?Arnold
Councillor?Beverly?Davies for?Councillor?Wyn?
Foster
Councillor?Margaret?Kimberley for?Councillor?
Jackie?Maclean
Councillor?Nick?Barlow for?Councillor?Jon?
Manning
Councillor?Philip?Oxford for?Councillor?Gerard?
Oxford

25. Minutes

The minute of the meeting held on the 22 September 2009 was confirmed as a correct record.

26. Items requested by members of the Panel and other Members

Councillors Chapman, Kimberley and Harris (in respect of being members of the Colchester Borough Homes Board) all declared a personal interest in the following item.

The panel considered a request from Councillor Gerard Oxford, who asked for regular two monthly reporting to the panel on the Decent Homes Contract, once the contract has been awarded and work on the programme has commenced.

Mr. Robert Judd, Scrutiny Officer, advised by officers, informed the panel that both the operational and financial performance of this contract would be reported by the Council to Colchester Borough Homes on a monthly basis, and this information could likewise be reported to the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Panel on either a one, two or three monthly basis.

The Chairman felt it would be prudent to review the detail of the Cabinet decision to be taken the following evening, the Capital Improvement Programme (Decent Homes), at a future meeting, but to allow time to be involved in the formal monthly reporting of the contract arrangements, both operational and financial.

RESOLVED that the panel agreed to review the detail of the Cabinet decision to be taken on the 21 October 2009, the Capital Improvement Programme (Decent Homes).

27. Risk Management Progress report

Ms. Hayley McGrath, Risk and Resilience Manager, attended the meeting and presented the Risk Management Progress Report – period April to September 2009.

Ms. McGrath informed the panel that the Council has now reduced the level of highest risk down to ‘medium level’ from ‘high level’, though the report does now include an additional ‘high’ risk, that of cuts in public spending.

Councillor Harris commended officers on an excellent report, which has progressed significantly in recent years. Councillor Harris asked that future reports gave a glossary of terms given the high number of abbreviations within the report.

In response to Councillors Willetts and Taylor, Ms. McGrath explained to the panel the reasoning behind the probability and impact scores for those risks that had an overall score of twelve or above, and why it may appear that the assessment of some risks is disproportionate to others.

Councillor Kimberley said she was reassured by the report, which is purposeful and easy to follow.

Ms. McGrath confirmed to Councillor Chapman that risk 5a, failure or inappropriate performance management of one or more strategic partnerships or key contracts, was not specific, and applied to both partnerships and contracts, for example, Decent Homes and Visual Arts Facility.

RESOLVED that the panel noted and commented upon the latest risk management issues, the performance relating to implementing the 2009-10 risk management action plan and the Strategic Risk Register.

28. Annual review of Business Continuity

Councillor T Higgins (in respect of being a member of Essex County Council) declared a personal interest in the following item.

Ms. Hayley McGrath, Risk and Resilience Manager, attended the meeting and presented the Annual Review of Business Continuity report.

Ms. McGrath confirmed to Councillor Willetts the Council's arrangements for keeping key services operational during breaks in power or IT access.

Ms. McGrath agreed to provide to Councillor Goss more detail on the Council's arrangements for storing data at remote data centres.

Councillor Harris commented that the report was a good body of work, explaining clearly the Council's Business Continuity Plan. Councillor Harris welcomed further regular reviews.

Ms. McGrath confirmed to Councillor Taylor that the Council's new flexible working arrangements will enhance business continuity, where problems contained within Rowan House will not always have the same impact on staff working remotely.

In response to Councillor Taylor, Ms. McGrath confirmed that in respect of the Council having to provide advice and guidance relating to business continuity to local businesses and voluntary organisations, this was done through partnership participation by Essex Councils to the joint Essex publication and website, and involved all economic development service areas.

Ms. McGrath confirmed to Councillor Barlow that she would raise with First Call Officers (Senior Management Team) scope to include member's participation in Emergency Planning exercises, for members to get a more informed idea of procedures.

Ms. McGrath confirmed to Councillor Goss, that Colchester was, with all other Essex public authorities and organisations, a member of the Essex Resilience Forum, a forum that considered major issues such as a blanket cut in power supply or earthquakes, and how we respond.

Ms. Wain, Executive Director, explained to the panel that as part of the current accommodation review, officers had considered the impact of flooding to Rowan House, a building that was located in an area vulnerable to a very low probability of flooding. It is considered that flooding would primarily effect the basement of the building, and therefore the impact on business continuity would not increase.

RESOLVED that the panel considered and commented on business continuity work undertaken during October and September 2009, the proposed business continuity strategy and the intended work plan for the remainder of 2009-10.

29. Work Programme

The panel were informed that following a further reply from Lord Hanningfield, Mr. Paul Probert, Head of Economic Policy, Essex County Council, will be attending the panel's next meeting in November to discuss Credit Union funding.

RESOLVED that the panel noted the work programme 2009-10 and agreed to review the detail of the Cabinet decision to be taken on the 21 October 2009, the Capital Improvement Programme (Decent Homes) at the meeting on the 23 February 2010, and at this time, to consider and agree any future reporting.

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