

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
VALUE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
29 February 2012 (7.30 - 8.30 pm)**

Present:

Councillors Robby Misir (Chairman), Ray Morgon (Vice-Chair), Ted Eden, Billy Taylor and Damian White

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Ron Ower

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chairman advised those present of action to be taken in the event of emergency evacuation of the Town Hall becoming necessary.

19 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 November 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2011/12 - QUARTER 3

The Committee considered a report that set out the Council's performance against the Living Ambition Goal - Value for Quarter 3 of 2011/12.

There were 12 indicators listed under the Value Goal. Ten indicators had a RAG (Red/Amber/Green) rating this quarter. Five indicators were rated as 'red' as they were more than 5% off the quarter target and five indicators rated 'green' as they were on, or above the quarter target.

The report detailed a slight rise in Sickness Absence. It was explained to the Committee that this was expected in the winter period due to the increase in cold, flu and other viruses.

The Committee was informed that in relation to the PASC visitor indicator, performance was slightly worse than last quarter as system changes were still ongoing and the transformation had meant staff attending training and meetings than usual. The Committee was assured that the changes will result in improved performance in the longer term.

The Head of Customer Service explained to the Committee as a result of the service undergoing major changes which was impacting performance, this

figure showed an improvement on quarter 2 and the Committee was also assured that this indicator was been monitored closely.

The Committee requested for additional information be included with regards reference C13 "Corporate Complaint". Members suggested that the table include figures of number of complaint received. The Head of Customer Services stated that performance had improved since the last quarter as users were becoming more confident in running reports to indentify outstanding complaints, liaising with officers with outstanding complaints.

The other two indicators were included for monitoring purposes only did not have a 'RAG' rating.

The Committee **noted** the presentation and the assurances by the Head of Customer Services for various reasons the indicators had underperformed target in quarter 3.

21 **COUNCIL TAX TOPIC GROUP UPDATE**

The Topic Group considered a briefing note circulated by officers in response to a questionnaire submitted by a Member. This covered the following issues:

Agency workers were continuing to cover posts in the Council Tax section due to ongoing recruitment difficulties. The position had also been affected by the current review of the provision of bailiff services.

Charging orders were occasionally used to recover arrears but it was often a slow process to enforce the sale of a property that was still occupied.

Empty properties were now checked within the first six months of their being notified as in a vacated state. Properties left empty longer than six months were the responsibility of Housing & Public Protection.

As regards level of arrears, in the region of 1,600 residents owed in excess of £2,500 each with a total debt for this group of nearly £7 million. A further amount of nearly £5 million was owed by approximately 3,000 residents who owed between £1,000 and £2,500 each.

The Topic Group requested for the following information at its next meeting:

1. Updates on the performance of each of the 4 bailiff firms working for the Council.
2. A breakdown year on year of outstanding Council Tax debt.
3. A consideration by officers of the cost effectiveness of the six temporary staff employed.

4. The Topic Group suggested that a full update report on Council Tax collection be presented to the Committee at its October 2012 meeting.

The Topic Group **noted** the update.

Chairman