

Thurrock Borough Council

Improvement and Recovery Board

Minutes – 2pm, Monday 27 November 2023

Attendees

Gavin Jones (GJ) – Essex County Council Commissioner (Chair)
Nicole Wood – Finance Commissioner (NW)
Dr Dave Smith (DS) – Managing Director Commissioner and Chief Executive
Cllr Andrew Jefferies (AJ) – Leader
Cllr Deborah Arnold (DA) – Deputy Leader
Cllr John Kent (JK) – Opposition Group Leader
Cllr Lynn Worrall (LW) – Opposition Group Deputy Leader
Steven Mair (SM) – Acting Chief Finance Officer
Sheila Murphy (SM) – Executive Director of Children's Services
Asmat Hussain (AH) – Interim Director of Legal and Governance
Alix Macfarlane (AM) – Intervention Communications Lead
Claire Demmel (CD) – Interim Director of Public Realm
Luke Tyson (LT) – Chief Intervention Officer
Patrick McDermott (PM) – Chief of Staff to the Commissioners
Kerry Thomas (KT) – Chief of Staff to the Chief Executive
Keilah Gallardo (KG) – Business Support Officer, Chief Executive (minutes)

Guests

Jo Ellingham – Essex County Council Senior Strategy Planning Manager (JE)
Sarah Welton – Strategy Manager (SW)

Apologies

Jonathan Wilson (JW) – Acting Director of Finance
Mark Bradbury (MB) – Interim Director of Place
Cllr Graham Snell (GS) – Cabinet Member for Finance, Human Resources and Payroll

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Matters Arising

- 2.1. Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed. There were no further comments on the actions.

3. Leader Commissioner Update

- 3.1. GJ advised the Board that Commissioners were in planning stages for the next report for the Minister. GJ encouraged Board members to provide input if there were details they would like to be considered. GJ noted Commissioners might consider these points if evidence is available. GJ confirmed Commissioners will also be aiming to provide verbal briefings to the two group Leaders and Deputy Leaders before submission.
- 3.2. GJ raised recent issues with member behaviour and how it undermines the improvement of the Council. He urged members to hold each other accountable and noted that this would be reflected in the Commissioners' third report. AH noted that there have been inconsiderate comments made to junior member of staff. GJ asked members for comments on the matter.
- 3.3. DA noted they find it difficult to know how to address these situations. LW felt that if these situations continue to progress, this will negate progress the Council has made. JK felt that further member engagement might help strengthen member/officer relationships. DS noted that there is an inevitability in politics where from time-to-time disagreements take place. DS pointed out that there have been attempts to help members reflect on these comments but, have been dismissed, leaving officers in a difficult position. GJ noted that Commissioners will consider how officers can further involve members in their work.
- 3.4. JK suggested that the Non-Political Alliance of Independent Councillors' (NPAIC) may benefit from a mentor. GJ confirmed that this has been raised with the LGA.
- 3.5. GJ reminded the Board that this is not about diluting members challenging officers rather, managing this in an appropriate way.

4. Managing Director Commissioner Update

- 4.1. DS noted the progression of budget consultation taking place tomorrow evening. DS noted it will then go to a period of further consultation next year.
- 4.2. DS noted that after completed the IRP, work is beginning on the Corporate Plan. DS shared that after December, there is a view to open an engagement /consultation process to set the Corporate Plan. DS noted the intention is to draft something that would be presented to the new administration after the elections.
- 4.3. DS shared that they are in the process of onboarding new members of the SLT with recruitment for assistant director levels to begin in the early new year.

5. Performance Management and Assurance Framework

- 5.1. SW presented the Performance Management and Assurance Framework (PMAF), highlighting the scope and aspect of service delivery and how this can be provided. SW

noted three deliverables in the PMAF work: interim scorecard, corporate performance management, and assurance framework. SW noted they were currently in phase one of the work, with the hope to bring data with key indicators next month. Quarter three will aim to have proposed targets noting what services are working towards. The following year will have a more robust review of targets and benchmarking.

- 5.2. GJ asked how members can engage with PMAF. SW noted that phase two will incorporate further member engagement alongside creation of the corporate plan.
- 5.3. LW noted they would like to see when an item moves to a red RAG rating to better track progress. SW noted that the start of the KPIs will be reviewed for this in phase two. LW asked if directors will have the opportunity to provide input to which SW confirmed they would.
- 5.4. GJ asked how this piece of work will facilitate conversations with councillors and officers regarding performance. JK noted that regarding the earlier conversation about member behaviour, indicators on progress would be useful. JK also noted that they would like exit interviews and budget realisation. SW noted that these can be added but, regarding capturing member behaviour, there would be best suited for phase two.

6. Improvement and Recovery Plan Update

- 6.1. LT noted that following the approval of E IRP, work has been continuing to identify and develop milestones. LT noted that this a dynamic piece of work. LT confirmed that AM's team are working on creating an executive summary of the E IRP.
- 6.2. Commissioners noted they were pleased with the work.

7. Communications and Engagement Update

- 7.1. AM presented the paper, noting that it had previously gone to FRB. AM noted some information included in the report is to explain what will be going out on the website, demonstrating the change of approach in the Council. PM confirmed this was well received in FRB.

8. Any other business

- 8.1. AH noted that NPAIC were entitled to a room however, they are just checking on political advisor entitlement. AH confirmed they should be entitled to briefings that would normally be shared with shadow groups. AH noted they have a Spokesperson rather than a Leader.
- 8.2. JK asked raised that these changes needed to be recorded for further member awareness.
- 8.3. There being no other business, the meeting closed.

Appendix I: Full Meeting Actions

There were no actions that arose from the meeting.