



**MINUTES of
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
14 JULY 2022**

PRESENT

Chairman	Councillor S White
Vice-Chairman	Councillor M F L Durham, CC
Councillors	M G Bassenger, A S Fluker, K M H Lagan, N G F Shaughnessy, R H Siddall, W Stamp CC, C Swain and Mrs M E Thompson
Substitute Member	Councillor B B Heubner

158. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and went through some general housekeeping arrangements for the meeting.

159. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs P A Channer and in accordance with notice duly given, Councillor B B Heubner was attending as a substitute for Councillor Mrs Channer.

160. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 25 May 2022 be received.

Minute 4 – Disclosure of Absence

Councillor W Stamp advised that reference to Mrs J L Fleming in this agenda item should actually be her. The Chairman advised that this would be amended.

RESOLVED

- (ii) That subject to the above amendment, the Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 25 May 2022 be approved.

161. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Councillors M F L Durham and W Stamp declared non-pecuniary interested as a Member of Essex County Council.

Councillor A S Fluker declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of Southminster Parish Council.

162. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No requests had been received.

163. SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, VIREMENTS, PROCUREMENT EXEMPTIONS AND USE OF RESERVES

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources reporting Virements and Supplementary Estimates agreed under delegated powers. The report also informed on procurement exemptions granted and the use of reserves.

It was noted that there were no virements or use of reserves granted during this period. The report detailed one supplementary estimate and two procurement exemptions which had been agreed and these were noted.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the supplementary estimate as set out in paragraph 3.4.1 of the report be noted.
- (ii) that the procurement exemptions as set out in paragraph 3.5.1 of the report be noted.

164. PROVISIONAL OUTTURN

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources presenting the provisional Outturn position for the year ended 31 March 2022. Movements in relation to the Council's General Fund, Earmarked Reserves and Capital Commitments as 31 March 2022 were also detailed.

It was noted that the draft Statement of Accounts was due to be published by 31 July 2022 and the audit of this was due to conclude in November, therefore the figures detailed in the outturn report were provisional as they were subject to change. The report provided detailed information regarding:

- Provisional Outturn – The report detailed budget variances which included Covid-19 and other budgets. Appendix 1 detailed movement in Earmarked Reserves. It was noted that the pandemic had financially impacted a number of areas. A detailed breakdown of the variances was provided in Appendix 3.
- General Fund Balance - It was reported that this would remain above the minimum recommended level of £2.6m.
- Earmarked Reserves - Appendix 1 to the report provided a breakdown of Earmarked Reserves and it was noted that there had been a net decrease of £1.0m from 1 April 2021. Appendix 2 detailed a number of revenue commitments carried forward to spending 2022 / 23.
- Capital Commitments – The report highlighted a number of capital projects that were still ongoing and sought approval to carry these over into 2022 / 23.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the provisional outturn position for the 2021 / 22 financial year be noted;
- (ii) That the movement in Earmarked Reserves as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved;
- (iii) That Revenue Commitments set out in Appendix 2 to the report be approved to be brought forward to 2022 / 23;
- (iv) That the Capital Commitments set out in the report roll forwards into 2022 / 23 be approved.

165. UK SHARED PROSPERITY AND LEVELLING UP FUNDING UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance updating Members on the progress of the Council's UK Shared Prosperity and Levelling Up funding opportunities.

Levelling Up Fund (LUF):

An addendum to the report was circulated prior to the meeting and provided Members with further information in relation to the LUF. Three recommendations to replace recommendation (i) as detailed in the report were set out on the addendum.

The Committee received a presentation from the Strategy, Policy and Communications Manager which outlined a number of areas including background to the LUF, how it was to be delivered, the application process and investment priorities. Members were reminded that Maldon had recently been upgraded to Category 1 and the details of this change were explained. The LUF application process was complex with a high level of detail that the Government expected to be provided when considering each stage.

A lengthy debate ensued and in response to a number of comments and questions raised Officers provided Members with additional information which included:

- Officers had spent a large amount of time working on the contingency figure and 20% was felt to be sufficient to put into the bid.
- A letter of support from Maldon Town Council could be submitted as part of the process and if they were minded to Officers could make appropriate arrangements outside of the meeting.
- The costs had been arrived at through detailed work with architects and had been through independent economic appraisal.
- Full details, surveys etc. would be carried out if approval for the spend was approved by Members.
- The Council had to **overunderwrite** the cost of any **underoverruns**¹, but a quantity surveyor would be employed to drive value and ensure there was as little wastage from the construction stage as possible.
- Whilst there were other locations that were also worthy of further investment there had to be a degree of policy or strategy approval in place. Without the Central Area Master Plan (CAMP) the bid could not have been progressed in six weeks. Officers felt the proposed options gave the Council the best chance of gaining funding.

¹ Minute No. 285 (Strategy and Resources Committee 6 October 2022)

- Planning permission was still required along with a lot of work on the final design.
- Under the terms of the LUF dredging could not be included as this was considered a maintenance cost. If Maldon was successful, this may provide opportunity for discussions with barge owners and Heritage Harbour Association and may open other opportunities to fund a more regular dredging programme in the future.

Members commended Officers on the work they had done over a very short period of time to bring this proposal together.

It was requested that recommendation (iv) be amended to include reference to the LUF and would be reporting to the Corporate Projects Working Group. This was agreed.

Councillor A S Fluker proposed that the recommendations, as amended be agreed and requested that Officers consider doing a soil search, commenting that he did not want this as a further recommendation. This was duly seconded.

In accordance with Procedure Rule No. 13 (3) Councillor K M H Lagan requested a recorded vote. He subsequently advised he was happy to have his dissent recorded.

Councillor Fluker raised a Point or Order and asked for a point of clarity in respect of Procedure Rule 4, advising that he had reviewed the Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 25 May 2022 regarding the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and could see them mentioning the Maldon Hythe Quay. Councillor Fluker advised he was happy for the Officer to confirm this outside of the meeting.

The Chairman put the proposal including bringing forward updates to the Corporate Projects Working Group. This was duly agreed. Councillor Lagan asked that his dissent be noted.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

It was noted that since the last meeting of the Committee the allocated preparatory fund had been utilized to support the development of the Council's Investment Plan and capacity consultants had been appointed.

The Committee received a presentation from the Lead Specialist: Prosperity providing detailed information on the Fund and work being undertaken.

In response to comments, Members were advised by the Officer that initially 42 interventions had been identified and these were reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee on 25 May 2022 along with further updates sent to Members via email during May and June 2022. The number had since been reduced and although it was acknowledged this was ambitious it was hoped that some such as the Burnham-on-Crouch pontoon would be brought forward early. It was confirmed that projects would be prioritised and any changes would be done in consultation with the local partnership group.

The Chairman thanked both Officers for their informative presentations.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the progress made at compiling an application to the Government's Levelling-Up Fund Round 2 to invest in the Maldon Historic Waterfront Revival Programme be noted;

- (ii) That Members agree to commit the Council's land and property assets of Hythe Quay, the former River Bailiff Hut and the former River Bailiff Classroom, as a match-contribution to the application;
- (iii) that the release of £49,200 from the Levelling-Up Fund Capacity Grant 2022 / 23 to be spent on advancing the Maldon Historic Waterfront Revival Programme's planning application between July and September 2022 be approved.
- (iv) That Members agree to commit 10% of the Council's revenue allocation for years two and three of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to develop collaborative interventions with the North Essex Economic Board where feasible and appropriate;
- (v) That Members agree to commit 10% of the Council's revenue allocation for the duration of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to develop collaborative interventions to address health inequalities with the Mid Essex Alliance where feasible and appropriate;
- (vi) That Members note the aggressive pace of work required to submit the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan and delegate the authority to the Corporate Leadership Team for development and submission in line with our corporate strategies and bring forward new opportunities to be included. Members will be provided with a written fortnightly update along with the Corporate Projects Working Group in respect of both the LUF and UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

166. LEAD SPECIALIST PROSPERITY RESOURCE OPTIONS

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance seeking Members' support to extend the Lead Specialist Prosperity role to enable the Council to continue delivering the work of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Levelling Up Fund 2 (LUF).

The report provided background information regarding the role which had ~~commented~~^{commented}~~commenced~~^{commenced}² on 4 October 2021, including the development of the role to coordinate the Council's response the UKSPF and LUF. As both funds presented a significant opportunity for the District it was reported that the Council should consider investing resources to make these opportunities successful.

Councillor M F L Durham supported this and proposed that the recommendations as set out in the report be agreed. This proposal was duly seconded.

Councillor R H Siddall spoke regarding making the role permanent, the security this would give and how the resource would be able to focus more on projects and aspects for the Council. He then proposed that the position be make permanent now. This proposal was duly seconded.

In response to questions regarding funding, the Director of Resources advised that any additional monies should be considered as part of the growth bids going forward alongside other budget pressures coming forward at that time. It was noted that the funding would only be available for one year and the Council would have to fund the post after this.

² Minute No. 285 (Strategy and Resources Committee 6 October 2022)

Members discussed the proposals and Councillor Siddall provided some further point of clarification regarding his.

The Chairman then put the proposal in the name of Councillor Durham and following a vote being taken this was duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Members support the recommendation of an initial nine-month extension to the existing Lead Specialist Prosperity contract, retaining current resource until October 2023;
- (ii) That Members note that if appropriate, this role will be considered and included in the Strategy, Performance and Governance Directorate 2023-2024 Growth Bid as a permanent addition to the Council's workforce structure.

167. APPROVAL IN PRINCIPLE TO APPLY FOR GRANT FUNDING FOR WOODFIELD COTTAGES, HEYBRIDGE THROUGH HISTORIC ENGLAND'S PARTNERSHIP SCHEMES IN CONSERVATION AREAS (PSICA)

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery seeking approval to apply for grant funding through Historic England's Partnership Schemes in Conservations Areas (PSiCA) to support the restoration of Woodfield Cottages, Heybridge.

Members received a detailed presentation from the Specialist: Conservation and Heritage which outlined how the Council had been encouraged by Historic England (HE) to apply for PSiCA funding to improve the condition and appearance of the Woodfield Cottages Conservation Area in Heybridge and the assessment undertaken by the Council in response to this. Further information regarding Woodfield Cottages and the works required was set out the report. Appendix 1 detailed the estimated cost of all enhancement opportunities to individual cottages identified in the Conservation Area Character Statement. It was noted that the Woodfield Cottages Conservation Area was on the Council's Heritage at Risk Register.

During the debate that ensued and in response to questions raised the Officer provided the following clarifications:

- Although the proposal was not without precedent since 2016 when the Council's annual historic buildings budget was disbanded no financial assistance had been provided to owners of the cottages. It was noted that works related not only to repairs but the sustainability of the building stock. If approved the grant funding would require a delivery plan with clear criteria of what was eligible.
- The priority level of the cottages was determined following the prominences of the cottages, degree of difference the improvements would make and whether the owners had expressed an interest in applying for grant funding if it became available. Financial hardship of the residents living in a cottage had not been considered.

The Chairman moved the recommendations as set out in the report. There being an equality of votes she used her casting vote against the proposal advising she had concern regarding funding some privately owned houses and not others.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for his work and hoped the proposal would come forward in a different format where house owners put more into the scheme and tax payers and the rest of the district were not funding privately owned homes.

RESOLVED that the request to apply for Partnership Schemes Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas funding from Historic England to support the restoration of Woodfield Cottages, Heybridge and related match funding is not agreed.

168. MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery seeking approval to implement amendments made to the Gateway to Homechoice Allocations Policy (the Policy) attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Members were advised that within the Policy clarification had been made to wording around Armed Forces to incorporate the term 'Armed Forces of the Crown'. Appendix 2 to the report provided a summary log of all other minor clarifications and changes made. These changes were also highlighted in the report.

In response to a question regarding whether authorities had sufficient accommodation to avoid the need for people to be placed in other authorities areas, it was agreed that the Lead Specialist: Community would provide a response outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED that the revised Allocations Policy (attached as Appendix 1 to the report) be adopted.

169. CUSTOMER STRATEGY - KEY PRINCIPLES

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery seeking endorsement of the key principles to enable the development of a new Customer Strategy.

The report detailed the Customer Strategy agreed by the Council in 2016 and how a move to Digital by default was at the core of the Strategy. It was noted that due to the following the Council's transformation project in 2018 and then the pandemic which required staff to work from home the Council had achieved high levels of channel shift. However it was essential that any future Customer Strategy had a change in emphasis from delivering channel shift to one of maintaining and building on the channel shift that had been achieved, with a greater emphasis on customer who may be digitally excluded.

The report set out eight principles from the original Customer Strategy, however Officers were proposing a strong focus to enable the Council to explore the most effective options for delivering customer service to residents and businesses.

Officers responded to comments raised by Members, providing various updates including the following information:

- Members were advised of the current process in place for reaching customers, especially those identified as vulnerable. Officers advised that the Council was looking to work in partnership with Parish and Town Councils to assist with identifying residents who may need additional support.
- The Council was working with partners and the Community Voluntary Service regarding digital inclusion and this included a weekly drop in service. This

provided a number of benefits to residents including allowing them access digital services.

- The Council was developing a new website which would allow greater flexibility in terms of content and layout. Members were advised that this was an ongoing project and a workshop would be organised for all Members.
- As a result of the pandemic there had been an acceleration in the shift to self-serve in terms of transactions and it was recognised that some of these may shift back to for example, face to face. However, as part of the new Strategy options would be brought back to Members for consideration along with facts and figures and the impact each would have such as a need to increase resources.

RESOLVED that the proposed Key Principles detailed at paragraphs 4.1.1 – 4.1.9 of the report to inform a full Customer Strategy be noted.

170. PLANNING POLICY WORKING GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2021 / 22

The Committee considered the report of the Chairman of the Planning Policy Working Group providing Members with an update on the work carried out by the Planning Policy Working Group during 2021 / 22.

The report reminded Members of the Council's decision to review its Local Development Plan and that to support this work in March 2021 it established a Planning Policy Working Group. The Working Groups Terms of Reference were detailed in the report.

A table within the report set out the work that the Working Group had carried out during 2021 / 22. It was noted that this work was assisting in the process of moving forward with the Local Development Plan Review.

During the debate and in response to questions the Strategic Policies and Communications Manager clarified that the report reflected on the work that had been undertaken and not future work. It was noted that all Members were now invited to Working Groups. The Officer provided Members on the reasons behind a recent meeting of the Working Group having to be cancelled and he explained that a forward plan would be brought to the next meeting to help provide more structure to the Working Group in the future.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

171. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE DECIDES ARE URGENT

The Chairman of the Committee advised that she had agreed for an urgent item of business to be brought forward to provide an update on the Burnham-on-Crouch pontoon. She handed over to the Director of Service Delivery who provided the following short statement.

"I can confirm the pontoon was identified for replacement and £60K sum was included within estimates for this year.

Unfortunately, in February the pontoon was damaged by storm Eunice resulting in its premature closure.

Officers have reviewed the necessary works to replace the pontoon and identified additional issues to resolve including

- The need to replace the existing steel locating piles
- The need to increase the physical size of the pontoon to cope with the public use (not just for boats landing alongside)
- The need to resolve structural movement (not connected to storm Eunice) in the sea wall (old steps under the jetty) with the owners (Environment Agency).

The additional work identified will exceed the available budget, other costs including the removal and disposal of the existing jetty were not included in the budget estimate for its replacement and add to cost pressures. Material prices have also increased dramatically since the estimate was prepared.

To resolve the matter the replacement of the pontoon has been included within Maldon District Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) investment plan in the sum of £240k. As UKSPF is a guaranteed allocation, this provides assurance that works can commence. However, due to the funding profile provided by Gov, this may not be until 2023/2024 and completion in 2024/2025 when the majority of our funding is provided

Finally, whilst the storm ended the use of the pontoon prematurely it is also recognised a more robust maintenance programme will be needed to maximise the life of any replacement. The council has been undertaking statutory safety inspections but will now fully cost a plan for Members consideration.

An options paper will be presented to Members in due course for consideration relating to this project."

172. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that this satisfies the public interest test.

173. BURNHAM-ON-CROUCH - LONG LEASE AGREEMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery seeking Members' agreement of a new 99 year lease for an electricity substation.

The report outlined a request received for a new electricity substation on land at Burnham-on-Crouch as identified in Appendix 1 to the report.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Council agrees a new lease for 99 years;
- (ii) That the Director of Service Delivery be given delegated authority to agree the terms of the lease in consultation with the Legal Services Specialist.

174. SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE REQUEST - SERVICE DELIVERY

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery seeking Members' approval for the provision of additional funding to finance short term staffing capacity issues within the Service Delivery directorate as well as making permanent improvements to customer access to the related team.

The report provided detailed background to the request and a copy of a presentation received by the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee at its last meeting was attached as Appendix 1 to the report. Specific roles identified and related costs were set out in Appendix 2. It was noted that a future report would be brought to Members in September 2022 on future measures to ensure the Service was resilient.

Following the debate that following Officers provided Members with additional information and responded to questions raised. The Director of Resources highlighted the Council's current financial position and existing requirement to use reserves.

Councillor A S Fluker proposed that the Committee accept the recommendations as set out in the report. This was duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Members approve a supplementary estimate in the sum of £111,500 for an 8-month period (August 2022 - March 2023 inclusive) to fund additional identified resources to support service delivery as set out in the report;
- (ii) That Members approve the addition of two Technical Support Officers to the establishment at an ongoing cost of £79,800 per annum;
- (iii) That Members approve a sum of £12,000 to fund ecology expertise associated with the service identified;
- (iv) That Officers continue to update the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee on service performance.

There being no other items of business the Chairman closed the meeting at 10.20 pm.

S WHITE
CHAIRMAN