



**MINUTES of
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
25 MAY 2022**

PRESENT

Chairman	Councillor S White
Vice-Chairman	Councillor M F L Durham, CC
Councillors	M G Bassenger, Mrs P A Channer, A S Fluker, K M H Lagan, N G F Shaughnessy, R H Siddall, W Stamp, CC, C Swain and Mrs M E Thompson
In attendance	Councillor M W Helm

1. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES

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

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none. It was noted that Councillor Mrs P A Channer had been delayed and would be joining the meeting later.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 3 February 2022 be approved and confirmed.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Councillors M F L Durham and Mrs J L Fleming declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of Essex County Council.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No requests had been received.

6. NOTICE OF MOTION

The Committee received a Motion (set out below) from Councillor A S Fluker, duly seconded by Councillors R P F Dewick and M W Helm, which in accordance with Procedure Rule 4 had been referred to this Committee by the Council at its meeting on 18 May 2022.

Motion:

With regards fiscal propriety, public interest, and value to customers the Director of Resources in his role under S151 Local Government Act 1972 brings forward an Autumn Budget for consideration by Council.

Councillor Fluker presented his Motion to the Committee and provided further background information regarding it. He proposed that the Committee accept his Motion, this was duly seconded.

A debate ensued, during which a number of questions were raised. Some concern was raised that a secondary budget would tie up Officers' time and take it away from other essential work. The importance for the Council to continue being able to deliver its services to residents, whilst maintaining the budget was highlighted. During the discussion the Director of Resources responded to questions raised and it was noted that:

- the Council's Reserves were at the highest they had been for a number of years.
- within the existing budget framework the Council had a budget monitoring process in place and throughout the year Members received updates on pay awards, budget challenges such as contract renewals etc. and this provided updated budget forecasts;
- as part of the budget setting process proposals were being developed to improve the financial position after going through appropriate governance, including the Finance Working Group. These would come forward to Members in the Autumn along with all the fees and charges policies, options to address any budget gaps, updated forecasts etc.
- some information such as the Local Government Finance Settlement would not be available until February 2023 and as part of the forecasting, assumptions would change from Autumn 2022 to February 2023;
- to replicate the work undertaken by Officers for a secondary budget would be very labour intensive.

Councillor Fluker provided further details on his Motion and the background to it. He clarified he was not asking for statutory accounts but an autumn budget statement to show where the Council was at that time. Councillor Fluker put his Motion to the Committee. Upon a vote being taken the motion was declared as lost.

RECOMMENDED that the Motion in the name of Councillor A S Fluker (as detailed above) not be agreed.

Councillor Mrs P A Channer joined the meeting at this point.

7. SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, VIREMENTS, PROCUREMENT EXEMPTIONS AND USE OF RESERVES: 1 JANUARY - 31 MARCH 2022

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, supplementary estimates or use of Reserves granted during this period. The report detailed seven procurement exemptions which had been agreed and these were noted.

RESOLVED that the procurement exemptions as set out in paragraph 3.4.1 of the report be noted.

8. MALDON DISTRICT GATEWAYS SIGNAGE

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance seeking Members' approval of the proposed new Maldon District Gateways signs.

Members were advised that the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 introduced new options for boundary signing and gave opportunity to produce a suite of signs to enhance the brand, local pride and visitor experience for the area. As part of the Covid Economic Recovery and Transformation (CERT) Programme, and in collaboration with the Reset and Recovery Working Group five proposed designs had been developed. These designs were set out in the report along with a concept town entry sign for Burnham-on-Crouch which was considered during the design stages but was not to be progressed at this time as part of this project.

The Chairman moved the recommendation as set out in the report. This was duly seconded.

A debate ensued and in response to questions raised, the Strategy Theme Lead: Prosperity provided the following information:

- The proposed new signage related to five entry points to the District, Town / Village signs were not included within this. The report set out the approximate locations for the proposed signs and they would replace existing signs at these locations which were currently in a poor standard of condition.
- The proposed colour palette used was the Sense of Place colour palette.
- One of the original images put forward had included a wind turbine but this had been removed to ensure that the image reflected the actual vista.
- The size of the signs would be determined in consultation with Highways and dependent on a number of factors including the size of the verge, distance from the road and speed of the road.

Councillor R H Siddall (a Member of the Covid Reset and Recovery Working Group) provided an outline of the work undertaken by the Working Group, liaising with the designers to come up with the designs before the Committee which he felt would enhance and be of benefit to the District.

The Chairman moved the recommendation as set out in the report and this was agreed by assent.

RESOLVED that the locations, designs and wording of the proposed Maldon District Gateways Signage be approved and Officers be instructed to develop this project, seek Essex Highways approval and investigate how this could be funded, realised and sustained, aligned with UK Shared Prosperity Fund work.

9. UK SHARED PROSPERITY AND LEVELLING UP FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance informing Members of the new opportunities presented by the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Levelling-Up Funds.

The report provided details regarding the UKSPF which was part of the UK Government's levelling-up agenda and would provide £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025. With all areas of the UK receiving an allocation via funding formula with funding starting in 2022 / 23 to 2024 / 25.

Round 2 of the Levelling-Up Fund had been announced by the Government in the 2022 Spring Statement and continued to focus on capital investment in infrastructure which improved everyday life across the UK. It was noted that in this round compared with Round 1 the Council had been moved into the higher priority Category 1. The three investment themes remain unchanged and were set out in the report.

It was noted that both the UKSPF and Levelling-Up Round 2 presented significant opportunity to the District supporting the economy, businesses, communities, cultural and heritage assets, regeneration and transport infrastructure.

Members commented on the Council's staffing resources to assist with the award of such grants and the need to maintain this for the future. The Committee thanked the Lead Specialist: Prosperity and Strategic Theme Lead: Prosperity for their work on this and other funding opportunities.

Councillor A S Fluker left the chamber at this point and returned shortly afterwards.

A debate ensued and in response to a number of questions raised the following information was provided:

- DigiGo was an Essex County Council initiative but the need for green transport in the rural areas could be flagged with them.
- The Council was working to ensure the success of grant bids by looking at what cultural elements within the District could be supported with significant capital investment.
- As well as working with Strategy Theme Leads and other officers across the Council, Officers were looking to buy in consultancy services to support the Council and ensure bids were brought up to the Government's green standard. In addition, as funding was part of the levelling-up white paper to support our investment plan to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF);
- With a deadline of noon on 6 July 2022, the deadline for the Levelling-Up fund was very tight.
- The UKSPF deadline was 1 August 2022 and the Council was waiting further guidance from the Government to better understand the outcomes of the fund. It was noted that the Council was charged with working with a local partnership group and who would work collaboratively with the Council to deliver the projects with the best outcomes for the District, visitors and the economy. Officers had spoken to the Chairman of the One Maldon District group as it contained the correct mix of stakeholders.
- The Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance provided information regarding the progress of work on the South Maldon Relief Road and explained that the detailed design stage had to be completed before any further external funding could be attracted. He agreed to provide Members with further on this matter. Officers were in discussion with Essex County Council (ECC) Highways to arrange for them to attend a meeting of this Committee and it was agreed that this invitation should be extended to the ECC Cabinet Member for Infrastructure.

- In response to a question regarding accidents on the Hythe Quay, the Director of Service Delivery advised he was unable to provide that information but would circulate it to Members outside of the meeting.
- In response to a question regarding Member involvement in delivery of the Maldon Health Hub, Members were advised that the Council was in discussions with the NHS and had requested that the Maldon Operational Group be reinstated to get Member engagement in discussions.
- In light of the very tight timescales for Levelling-Up fund bids Officers were looking to draw on the Central Area Master Plan and work of the existing Local Development Plan Policy to identify projects. The Council could demonstrate that these had been consulted on and had a strong basis around deliverability and evidence enabling the five cases required for a bid of such scale and detail. The importance to ensure there was not duplication of funding was also highlighted.

The Chairman moved the recommendations as set out in the report. These were agreed by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the opportunity presented for investment in the District by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Levelling-Up Fund and the Council's role in securing the investment and any administration be noted;
- (ii) that the use of any Government allocated preparatory funding to develop the Council's applications to both Funds be approved.

10. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES AND WORKING GROUPS

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance seeking new appointments of representatives for 2022 / 23 to Outside Bodies and Working Groups, as set out in the report.

In response to a comment regarding the Equality and Diversity Working Group, Councillor R H Siddall provided the Committee with an update on the work being undertaken by this Working Group. The Director of Resources advised that an update would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman moved the recommendation set out in the report and it was duly agreed that the current representatives on Outside Bodies and Working Groups listed in the report remain unchanged for 2022 / 23.

RESOLVED that the Committee appoints the following representatives to the bodies detailed below, for the ensuing municipal year.

Outside Bodies	2022 / 23 Representative(s)
Places for People Liaison Committee	Councillors M F L Durham CC and C Swain
Working Groups	2022 / 23 Representative(s)
Car Parking Task and Finish Working Group (Minute 588 – 17/11/15)	Councillors R H Siddall, C Swain, Mrs M E Thompson and S White

Working Groups	2022 / 23 Representative(s)
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer Working Group (Minute 588 – 06/21)	Councillor R H Siddall
Waste Member Working Group (Minute 945 – 27/03/18)	Councillors M F L Durham CC, K M H Lagan, R H Siddall and S White

11. 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.

12. ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR STREET CLEANSING AND LITTER COLLECTION

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery providing response to the written requests and previous discussions held regarding additional funding through the Change Control Procedure of the Contracts for Street Cleansing and Garden Waste Processing.

Members were provided with details of the current Street Cleansing and Garden Waste Processing contract and advised of the notable increase in the amount of litter and fly-tipping incidents reported over the last few years. Appendix 1 to the report showed some examples of this. The report provided further detailed information and set out three options for consideration and the related costs.

Members noted the evidence within the report and Officers updated on action taken against fly tipping. Members supported the need to increase resources to deal with additional litter and waste being deposited in the District. The Committee agreed that the recommendations within the report be changed to allow the Director of Service Delivery authority to negotiate with the Contractor to approach the funding request as partnership working and on a shared costs basis.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the need for additional resources be accepted;
- (ii) that the Director of Service Delivery be authorised to negotiate an increase in the annual cost to fund the additional resources, up to a maximum of £35,000;
- (iii) that a report be brought back to this Committee in 12 months' time to provide an update on this matter.

13. LAND PURCHASE PROJECT - NEW OPTION AGREEMENT TERMS

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources seeking approval to the principle of acquiring additional land. Appendix 1 to the report provided further detail.

The report provided detailed background information and gave an update on work being undertaken as part of the Land Purchase Project.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Members confirm their understanding regarding the need to acquire the additional land for the purposes of pedestrian access to local amenities and approve *in principal* the revised minimum purchase price for the land;
- (ii) that Members confirm their understanding of the issue and its impact to the Land Purchase Project delivery plan.

Councillor A S Fluker left the meeting during this item of business and did not return.

There being no other items of business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.48 pm.

S WHITE
CHAIRMAN