



**MINUTES of
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
6 OCTOBER 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, W Stamp, CC, C Swain and Mrs M E Thompson

283. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES

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

284. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R H Siddall.

285. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

- (i) That the Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 14 July 2022 be received.

Minute 165 – UK Shared Prosperity and Levelling Up Funding Update

That in bullet point 5 'to overwrite the cost of any underruns' be amended to read 'to underwrite the cost of any overruns'.

Minute 166 – Lead Specialist Prosperity Resource Options

That in the first sentence in paragraph two the word 'commented' be replaced with 'commenced'.

RESOLVED

- (ii) That subject to the above amendments, the Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 14 July 2022 be approved.

It was noted that there was a further query regarding the accuracy of the final bullet point under Minute 165 in the previous minutes. Upon review of the YouTube recording this was found to be a correct record.

286. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Councillor K M H Lagan declared that he was a previous barge owner.

Councillor Mrs P A Channer, in respect of agenda item 11, declared a registrable interest as a trustee of an alms-house charity. It was noted that there was no mention of the particular Alms-house in question so she would remain in the Chamber for this item. With reference to agenda item 14, she declared she would leave the Chamber for this item.

Councillor N G F Shaughnessy declared a non-pecuniary interest as a trustee of Maldon Housing Association.

287. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No requests had been received.

288. TREASURY OUTTURN 2021 / 22

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources that covered the Council's investment activity for the financial year of 2021 / 22 in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Treasury Management Code (CIPFA's TM Code) and the Council's Treasury Management Policy and Treasury Management Practices (TMPs).

The Chairman introduced the report and moved the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Thomson. She then deferred to the Director of Resources to present the detail. He took the Committee through the report highlighting key sections. Paragraph 3.7.3 detailed the type of investments held and amounts at year end. The Council's long-term investments provided the highest returns and contributed to the higher than budgeted income. Paragraph 3.8.1 detailed the returns from different investments types. The Prudential indicators were complied with as outlined on appendix 2. Investment limits for banks was 2 million, however, due to the nature of current accounts, in that they are not fixed investments, the limit was exceeded on occasion due to large government grant payments. The previous approved changes were detailed in paragraph 3.9.2. In conclusion he recommended that a limit was retained on current accounts to ensure good management of cash and drew attention to Appendix 2 which showed that the Council had no capital borrowing.

In response to issues raised Officers provided the following information:-

- That a list of those local authorities the Council had investments in both as of now and at year end, would be circulated outside of the meeting.
- That with reference to the draw down at paragraph 3.7.6 regarding the investment income, the capital amount remained the same and the Council received the interest.
- That as at paragraph 3.9.2 the Council cannot guarantee that what comes in and out won't fluctuate however, it had a set limit and will report any changes on that.

- That low rates of return on investments were due to % rates at the time, the Council's policy was to balance risk and return, low risk investments e.g. money market fund.
- That the 2 million counterpart limit was set by the Council as part of its risk management limit with each bank.
- That there had been a relatively good uptake on the Treasury Investment training, presentations/slides could be circulated to those unable to attend.

Members commended the Director of Resources and his team for their work.

There being no further issues raised the Chairman put the duly seconded recommendation to the Committee and it was agreed by assent.

RESOLVED that members reviewed the treasury outturn report for compliance purposes.

289. BUDGETARY CONTROL 2022 / 23

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources that provided information in relation to financial performance over the period 1 April 2021 to 31 July 2022.

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Director of Resources to present the detail. He reported that the Council continued to be impacted financially by the pandemic and now the cost of living crisis. Due to ongoing covid pressures the budget was set with a contribution from the general fund reserve. Approved budget increases relating to increased resources in Planning Services resulted in a forecast service budget overspend. This had been offset somewhat by income from recycling. The budget variance was showing an overspend, above the minimum recommended level and a revised medium term financial strategy would be submitted to the next meeting of this committee.

The Chairman moved the recommendation, duly seconded by Councillor Thompson and opened the discussion. In response to issues raised Officers provided the following information:-

- That given the emerging pressures, changes in interest rates, inflation, energy prices etc the budget variance will continue to change to year end.
- That the revenue commitment reserve fund will not impact the bottom line as this was due to reserve commitment from last year to cover spend in the current year.
- That a report covering a review of all Member Allowances will be considered by Council on 3 November 2022.

There being no further issues raised the Chairman put the recommendation to the committee and it was agreed by assent.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the forecasted 2022 / 23 financial position as at 31 July of this financial year.

290. FEES AND CHARGES POLICY 2023 - 24

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources that reviewed the fees and charges policies that had been put forward by officers: prior to the approval of the 2023 / 24 budget and updated Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Director of Resources to present the detail. He advised that the report set out the direction of travel which will come back to Members for final approval. The table at paragraph 3.3 set out the proposed changes to the policy.

The Chairman moved the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Durham and opened the discussion.

A lengthy debate ensued regarding a number of issues. Some Members felt that reporting the high level principle of the policy at this stage followed by the detailed report at the next meeting was possibly counterintuitive. This was of particular concern in relation to the changes to car parking and wharfage charges as it was felt there was not enough information at this point to make those type of decisions. It was also noted that all businesses were under pressure and it was important not to discriminate. However there was concern that should the recommendation not be referred to Council at this juncture, it would adversely impact on budget preparation.

Following discussion on an amended proposal the Chairman proposed that the 2023/24 Fees and Charges Policies attached at Appendix A be approved, subject to the provision of further information regarding wharfage and car parking charges. This was seconded by Councillor Durham. A recorded vote was requested by Councillor Lagan duly seconded by Councillor Stamp and the results were as follow:-

For the Proposal

Councillors M S Bassenger, Mrs P A Channer, M F L Durham, A S Fluker, N G F Shaughnessy, C Swain and Mrs M E Thompson.

Against the Proposal

Councillors K M H Lagan and W Stamp.

Abstentions

None

RECOMMENDED that the 2023 / 24 Fees and Charges Policies attached at Appendix A be approved, subject to the provision of further information regarding wharfage and car parking charges.

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

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources that advised on Virements and Supplementary Estimates agreed under delegated powers where they were below the levels requiring approval by the Strategy and Resources Committee and sought approval where they were above the levels requiring approval by this Committee. In addition, the report informed the Committee of procurement exemptions that had been granted and reserves used within the period.

The Chairman introduced the report, moved the recommendations, duly seconded and deferred to the Director of Resources to present the detail. He advised that this was a

regular report required by the Council's Financial Regulations with all items for noting. There were virements for repairs and maintenance items, one supplementary estimate for Health & Safety reasons and two procurement exemptions.

In response to issues raised Officers provided the following information:-

- That whilst normally reports for noting did not form part of an agenda, this report was included as required under the Council's Financial Regulations.
- That costs to date related to work on the Avian Flu were wholly human resources not financial support.
- That the Consultant working with the Council on the Leisure Contract was of long standing and aware of the Council's options/requirements etc.
- That the essential Legionella water testing costs were not just for the Council Offices, but across the entire property portfolio and procurement arrangements.

There being no further issues raised the Chairman put the recommendations to the Committee and they were noted by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the virements as detailed in paragraph 3.3.1 were noted;
- (ii) That the supplementary estimate as detailed in paragraph 3.4.1 was noted;
- (iii) That the procurement exemptions as detailed in paragraph 3.5.1 were noted.

292. STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING POLICY

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources that required Members to review, (amend as appropriate), and approve Maldon District Council's (MDC's) local policy and due diligence measures with regard to Section 3.1 of the Street Naming and Numbering Policy - Naming Streets after People attached as appendix A and approve adoption of the full Street Naming and Numbering policy.

The Chairman introduced the report, moved the recommendations and deferred to the Director of Resources to present the detail. He advised that the report sought to ensure a comprehensive and accessible policy and that the policy itself largely followed national criteria as the council cannot deviate from that. However there was discretion around naming streets as outlined in paragraph 3.1. Given recent sensitivities around name changing the council only allowed suggestions of surnames with local significance to be deemed suitable.

In response to issues raised Officers provided the following information:-

- That should requests be received to use a living named person that would only be allowed in exceptional circumstances and considered on a case by case basis.
- That in terms of charging the Council only recouped administrative costs as it was not allowed to make a profit in this regard.

Councillor Stamp proposed that the consultation period be extended from 14 days to 28 to allow for wider consultation with Parish and Town Councils and this was seconded. She further wished it noted that she did not agree with using names of living people.

The Chairman then put the recommendations, including Councillor Stamp's proposal, to the committee and they were agreed by assent.

RECOMMENDED

- (i) That the Street Naming and Numbering Policy (Appendix A) be approved.
- (ii) That a comprehensive, accessible policy for use by Residents, Developers, Officers and Council, Town and Parish Councillors was agreed which demonstrated and clarified the criteria applied to current Street Naming and Numbering decisions.
- (iii) That the Council agreed on the local policy for the use (or not) of peoples' names, including a due diligence stage undertaken via Ward Members on the suitable use of any names submitted by Residents, Officers or Councillors (Ward or Parish) prior to them being submitted for wider consultation when naming new Streets.
- (iv) That the consultation period be extended to 28 days to allow for wider consultation with Parish and Town Councils.

293. MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING STRATEGY EXTENSION

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery to agree an extension to the Homelessness and Housing Strategy from 2018 - 2023 to 2018 - 2025.

The Chairman introduced the report and deferred to the Specialist Services Manager to present the detail. She advised the Committee that the Housing Strategy, first drafted in 2018, contained a number of essential ongoing functions and actions yet to be delivered, hence the request for an extension. The strategy covered a wide range of areas from Homelessness to Private Sector and Housing Development. The purpose of the strategy was to explain the current service, the context in which it was delivered, to set out departmental goals and the actions required to deliver those goals. The Housing Audit in 2021 recommended that the strategy be extended to 2025 as many actions were still relevant. It was reported that the strategy had undergone a minor adjustment to ensure it aligned with the goals in the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Chairman and Members thanked the Housing Officers for their work. She then moved the recommendations and they were seconded by Councillor Fluker and agreed by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Committee agreed the recommendations of the Council's Auditor BDO which advocated that the Council's Homelessness and Housing Strategy be extended;

- (ii) That the proposed amendment and two year extension to the Homelessness and Housing Strategy so that Officers continued to deliver against the objectives therein, be agreed.

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

The Chairman advised that she had one urgent item of business 'Investment Zones', and that this item was brought forward for consideration as local authorities leading on the Expression of Interest process were required to submit expressions by 14 October 2022. She said this would be dealt with under Agenda Item 15 in the Private and Confidential section of the meeting.

Councillor Stamp wished to acknowledge that Councillor Lagan had run the London marathon and Councillor Channer felt that this should be reported at Council.

At this point Councillor Channer declared an other registrable interest in respect of agenda items 11 and 14 and reminded the Committee she would be leaving the Chamber for agenda Item 14.

295. 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.

Councillor Mrs P A Channer left the Chamber at 21:00pm for the next item of business, agenda item 14.

296. COMMUNITY LED HOUSING IN MALDON

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery to agree a programme of work to support the development of community led housing in Maldon.

A brief debate ensued regarding the different propositions and models to deliver community led housing. Members felt strongly that all housing, including community led, should be eco-friendly going forwards. It was noted that housing would be sustainable and matched to incomes.

Councillor Fluker proposed that the recommendations be agreed for a period of 12 months but with a commitment of £20,000. Once it was evidenced the projects/outcomes were successfully underway the balance of the original commitment could then be requested. This was seconded by Councillor Stamp.

The Chairman then put the revised recommendations to the Committee and they were agreed by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Members considered the attached programme of work in Appendix 2 to be delivered initially for a 12 month period, to increase awareness of and support for the delivery of community led housing in Maldon;

- (ii) That Members agreed £20,000 of the existing Community Housing Fund grant monies be allocated to fund the programme of work outlined in Appendix 2;
- (iii) That the Council re-joins the Essex Rural Housing Advisory Group at the cost of £1,000 per annum funded by the Community Housing Funding grant.

Councillor Mrs P A Channer then rejoined the meeting at 21:23pm.

297. URGENT BUSINESS: INVESTMENT ZONES

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance that informed Members of the opportunity presented by the UK Government's Investment Zones initiative.

A debate ensued where Members acknowledged that this was an opportunity for the Council working in tandem with Essex County Council (ECC) and that the situation was fast moving. However, it was acknowledged that there were still a lot of unanswered questions. The Lead Specialist Prosperity advised that a meeting was due to take place 7 October 2022 at ECC where clarity would be sought on a number of issues and officers would report back to Members on email.

There being no further discussion the Chairman put the duly seconded recommendations to the Committee and they were agreed by assent.

RESOLVED

- (i) That Members noted the opportunity presented for potential investment in the District by the Investments Zones Expressions of Interest process.
- (ii) That Members agreed, should the Council be approached, that it would engage positively with the opportunity should Essex County Council submit an Expression of Interest to nominate a site for a potential Investment Zone within the Maldon District.
- (iii) That Members agreed a letter of support be submitted from the Head of Paid Service and the Leader should Essex County Council submit an Expression of Interest to nominate a site for a potential Investment Zone within the Maldon District.

The meeting closed at 9.44 pm.

S WHITE
CHAIRMAN