



**MINUTES of
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
20 JULY 2023**

PRESENT

Chairperson	Councillor M F L Durham, CC
Vice-Chairperson	Councillor A Fittock
Councillors	J Driver, A S Fluker, R H Siddall, M E Thompson, S White, M G Neall (Substitute for W Stamp, CC) and N D Spenceley (Substitute for K Jennings)

166. CHAIRPERSON'S NOTICES

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

167. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTION NOTICE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D O Bown, K Jennings and W Stamp CC. In accordance with notice duly given, it was noted that Councillor M G Neall was attending as a substitute for Councillor Stamp and Councillor N D Spenceley as a substitute for Councillor Jennings.

168. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 22 June 2023 be approved and confirmed.

169. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Councillor M F L Durham declared an Other Registrable Interest as he had been involved in discussions at Essex County Council regarding the Waste Strategy, although they were not a decision maker regarding this item.

170. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No requests had been received.

171. NORTH ESSEX ECONOMIC BOARD - REFRESHED STRATEGY AND DELIVERY PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy and Resources updating Members on the continued positive benefits of the North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) partnership. The report also sought Members' approval of the refreshed Strategy and Delivery Plan (attached at Appendix 1 to the report).

Background to the formation and work of the NEEB was provided in the report and Members' attention was drawn to the benefits to the District also highlighted. It was noted how the NEEB provided cohesive strategic oversight of North Essex's diverse, inclusive and productive economic priorities, ensuring tangible actions were delivered to support resident and business goals and aspirations. The refreshed NEEB Strategy and delivery plan were attached as Appendix 1 and the report provided an overview of the document.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the Leader of the Council attended the NEEB on behalf of the Council.

The Committee thanked the Lead Specialist Prosperity for her hard work relating to this area of work.

Comments were raised about those projects coming forward for development in the future and in response the Officer explained that workshops were taking place to discuss and support building of action plans, which included areas to be focused on, how the identified areas would be achieved etc.

Councillor A S Fluker proposed that the recommendations as set out in the report be agreed. The Chairperson put this to the Committee, and it was duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Council's continued involvement in the North Essex Economic Board be supported;
- (ii) That the refreshed North Essex Economic Board strategy and delivery plan (Appendix 1 to the report) be adopted for the economic benefit of the District.

172. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2022 / 23

The Committee considered the report of the Interim Chief Finance Officer reporting on the Council's investment activity for the 2022 / 23 financial year 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).

It was noted that the CIPFA Code of Practice required authorities report on the performance of the treasury management function at least twice yearly. The report provided detail in respect of the following areas:

- External Context – Appendix 1 to the report provided an overview of the external economic environment, prepared by the Link Group, engaged by the Council to provide treasury management consultancy and advice services. The Link Group had also provided a summary in respect of the outlook for 2023 / 24 which was set out in the report.

- Local Context – The Council was currently debt-free, and its capital expenditure did not include external borrowing during 2022 / 23. However, it was noted that this position could change in the future.
- Investment Activity (April 2022 – March 2023) – Members were advised that the level of investments held by the Council had seen an increase during this period and the report highlighted the reasons for this. The Council continued to take a prudent approach in relation to investment with priority being given to securing and liquidity over yield.
- Performance – Budgeted Income and Outturn – The average income returns on the Authority’s investments were detailed along with the overall investment for the year. Members noted that the overachievement was due to interest rates increasing throughout the financial year.
- Compliance with Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy - As set out in Appendix 2. It was noted that apart from some breached bank limits (set out in the report) all treasury management activities were fully compliant and all prudential indicators had been complied with to date.

In response to questions raised, the Interim Chief Finance Officer provided the following additional information:

- The Council carried out its own monitoring of Authorities and kept a list of those it would not invest in.
- The continued high interest rates were factored into the budget following the advice of the Council’s Treasury Management Advisors and would be monitored throughout the year.
- The Council did have some investment in Easleigh Council, however this had been made before the press activity which would be taken into consideration going forward.
- The Council had re-procured its Treasury Management Advice Services and the Link Group appointed over Arlingclose (the Council’s previous contractor). The Officer advised that she would provide Members with details of the contract amount outside of the meeting. It was noted that the Link Group provided a framework for investment with the Council’s risk appetite but did not invest for the Council.

The Chairperson moved the recommendation set out in the report and this was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that the Treasury Outturn report be noted for compliance purposes.

173. FRAUD POLICIES

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Strategy and Resources seeking a review of the Council’s following policies:

- Anti-Fraud and Corruption (attached as Appendix 1 to the report);
- Anti-Money Laundering Policy (Appendix 2);
- Bribery Act Policy (Appendix 3).

It was noted that the Policies (detailed above) had been reviewed and amended to ensure that they were up to date and covered all key areas of fraud risk. The Policies

worked alongside existing policies and processes and sought to reduce the risks of financial fraud to the Council.

In response to a question regarding Anti-Money Laundering reporting requirements for Local Authorities and when the Council's Whistleblowing Policy was last reviewed, Members were advised that Officers would circulate this information outside of the meeting.

The Chairperson moved the recommendation set out in the report and this was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that the following Policies (attached as appendices to the report) be agreed:

- Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy;
- Anti-Money Laundering Policy;
- Bribery Act Policy.

174. CONSULTATION ON THE ESSEX WASTE STRATEGY FOR ESSEX

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery seeking Members' agreement to support a public consultation process with all Essex Authorities on the Waste Strategy for Essex.

Background information regarding the Essex Waste Partnership (EWP) was set out in the report. It was noted that in 2021 the EWP had agreed that the Essex Waste Strategy would be updated in response to changing policy / legislation and the ambitions of Essex Councils with respect to waste management and protection of the environment.

In response to a question, Members were advised that the costs related to this consultation were being covered by Essex County Council.

Members thanked the Specialist: Commissioning and Contracts Waste for her work.

A comment was raised regarding the online booking system at recycling centres and the Chairperson advised the Committee that this was a trial, and its success would be evaluated by ECC at the end of the trial period.

The Chairperson put the recommendations set out in the report and these were duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Council agrees to participate in the Waste Strategy for Essex joint consultation on behalf of the Essex Waste Partnership;
- (ii) that when the draft Waste Strategy for Essex is published the views of Members of the Strategy and Resources Committee are sought and the Director of Service Delivery be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Chairperson of the Strategy and Resources Committee to formally respond on behalf of the Council to the consultation as required later this year.

175. 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 item of business on the grounds that it involves 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.

176. MALDON CEMETERY

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery highlighting the future capacity of Maldon Cemetery and setting out options available to the Council.

The report reminded the Committee of the three cemeteries located across the District and the spaces they had available. It was noted at the current burial rates the Maldon Cemetery would reach capacity within the next eight years. The report set out three options for consideration when reviewing the Council's strategy for its cemeteries going forward.

There was some discussion regarding the three options set out in the report and Officers provided further information in response to questions regarding Option 2.

In respect of the drawn down from Council reserves, Members were provided with further assurance from Officers regarding the spend of these monies.

Following further debate, Councillor A S Fluker proposed that the Committee only agree recommendations (iii) and (vi) as set out on the report. This proposal was duly seconded. Upon a vote being taken the Chairperson declared that the Motion was lost.

The Chairperson proceeded to put each recommendation, set out in the report, to the Committee. Recommendations (i) – (iv) were agreed and Councillor S White asked that dissent in respect of recommendation (iv) be recorded.

In accordance with Procedure Rule No. 13 (3) Councillor A S Fluker requested a recorded vote on recommendation (v). The Chairperson put this recommendation to the Committee and the voting was as follows:

For the recommendation:

Councillors J Driver, M F L Durham, A Fittock, R H Siddall, N D Spenceley and M E Thompson.

Against the recommendation:

Councillors A S Fluker, M G Neall and S White.

Abstention:

There were none.

The Chairperson declared that recommendation (v) was therefore agreed. He then put recommendation (vi) to the Committee which was duly agreed.

RESOLVED that recommendations (i) – (v) as set out in the report be agreed.

There being no other items of business the Chairperson closed the meeting at 8.35 pm.

M F L DURHAM, CC
CHAIRPERSON