



**MINUTES of  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
22 NOVEMBER 2017**

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**PRESENT**

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Chairman          | Councillor M W Helm   |
| Vice-Chairman     | Councillor R P F Dewick   |
| Councillors       | Mrs P A Channer, CC, P G L Elliott, M S Heard, S J Savage<br>and Mrs M E Thompson |
| Substitute Member | Councillor A T Cain   |

**613. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES**

The Chairman drew attention to the list of notices published on the back of the agenda.

**614. APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTION NOTICE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor N R Pudney and in accordance with notice duly given Councillor A T Cain was attending as a substitute for Councillor Pudney.

**615. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

**RESOLVED**

- (i) that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 October 2014 be received.

**Minute No. 493 – 2017 / 18 Programme of Work**

Councillor S J Savage proposed an addition to the fourth paragraph of this Minute, adding to the end of the sentence “on their own register but could accept more patients that were funded differently”. This was agreed.

**Minute No. 494 – Project Update - Procurement and Delivery of the 2016 / 17 Capital Programme**

Councillor R P F Dewick proposed that the following be added to the end of paragraph two of this Minute:

“Various Members of the Committee raised their serious concerns at the £60,000 (60%) overspend and criticised the apparent poor management of the contract leading to this overspend. The Chief Executive stated that no-one was to blame for this.

Concern was also voiced at the reduction of capital reserves over the last few years from £12 million to under £4 million. The Chief Executive stated that these reserves would soon be spend and then it would be necessary to borrow money to continue funding capital projects.”

The above addition was agreed.

Councillor Mrs P A Channer raised a number of concerns regarding the accuracy of the Minutes and felt that they were not representative of the meeting that took place. There was a discussion regarding suggested amendments and Councillor Mrs Channer advised she was happy for the Chairman to agree suitable wording with the Director of Resources.

Councillor Savage advised that in respect of paragraph three of this Minute the lighting had been part of a separate planning application. He also suggested that paragraph five should read “The Committee *requested* they would...”. He proposed that a copy of the corrected Minutes be presented to the Committee for approval.

Following further discussion it was agreed that the Minutes not be agreed but amended and brought back to the next meeting of this Committee.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (ii) that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 October 2017 be further amended and brought back to the next meeting of this Committee for confirmation.

#### **616. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

In accordance with the Council’s public participation scheme Mr Horner of Woodcraft, Bacons Chase, Bradwell on Sea addressed the Committee in respect of Agenda Item 8 – Final Report: Procurement and Delivery of the 2016 / 17 Capital Programme.

#### **617. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mrs P A Channer declared a non-pecuniary interest as an Essex County Councillor and Essex County Council was referred to within the reports before the Committee. She made particular reference to Agenda Item 6 – Review of Performance – Quarter Two 2017 / 18 and in relation to this declared that she was the Chairman of the Maldon Youth Strategy Group and the report made reference to Chelsea’s choice. Councillor Mrs Channer also declared an interest as the Chairman of the Planning and Licensing Committee and that she was the Council’s representative on the Police, Fire and Crime Panel.

#### **618. REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE - QUARTER TWO 2017 / 18**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which provided details of performance against targets set for 2017 / 18 (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) and

to ensure that progress was being achieved towards overall corporate goals and objectives set out in the Corporate Plan 2015 – 19.

Members' discussed the report in detail focussing on those activities behind schedule or at risk. In response to a number of questions the following information was provided:

- Medium Term Financial Strategy – The Director of Resources explained the process Officers were going through as part of the budget for 2018 / 19 and 2019 / 20, including considerations regarding fees and charges and reserves.
- Bradford Score (sickness absence trigger) – Members were provided with information regarding the Bradford score and the Director of Resources advised that she would provide Members with further details including the triggers for review.
- Adopt the Maldon District Design Guide – It was noted that the Appendix incorrectly referred to this as having been submitted to the Council in November 2015.
- Maldon Health Hub – It was confirmed that the Chief Executive attended meetings of the Health Hub Project.
- ICT Strategy Projects – Members were advised that the Digital Strategy would be included as part of the workstream relating to the Committees next item of scrutiny.
- Empty Homes - It was clarified that the Council did charge full council tax against all empty properties. It was noted that the number of long term empty properties returned to use had plateaued. In response to a comment raised, the Director of Resources advised that she would discuss this with the Chief Executive and Strategic Housing Manager and seek to obtain further information, including focus for the remainder of the year.

The Director of Customers and Community advised that he would speak to the Strategic Housing Manager and seek clarification as to what rigorous interventions referred to in respect of bringing empty homes back into use.

- Sickness Absence – In response to questions, the Director of Resources provided the Committee with statistics regarding sickness absence. Members were advised that the Finance and Corporate Services Committee would be receiving the quarterly statistics at its next meeting. Improvement had been seen in relation to long term sickness. It was noted that of the reasons for sickness absence stress made up 1%. The Director of Resources agreed to provide the reasons for long term absence to Members outside of the meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the report on performance for quarter one 2017 / 18 be noted.

## **619. PROGRAMME OF WORK**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Resources confirming the Committee's Work Programme for 2017 / 18, attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Members were provided with the following updates and commented on the scrutiny items detailed on the 2017 / 18 programme of work:

- **Provision of Healthcare Services** – The Director of Customers and Community explained that the Homes First Programme had to be worked through before a decision on the hospital could be made. The Chief Executive would be seeking clarity on the provision of beds.
- **Section 106** – It was noted that this was scheduled to be considered at the February meeting.
- **Planning Enforcement** - It was noted that this was scheduled to be considered at the March meeting.
- **Primary School education in the District** – It was noted that this was scheduled for the January meeting and education providers would be in attendance.
- **Administration of Council River Moorings** – The Director of Customers and Community advised that there was a scoping meeting taking place this week and he would raise comments made by Members regarding leases and licences.
- **Internal and External Communication** – The Director of Customers and Community sought clarification from the Committee regarding the Council’s website and if it was Members intention to include examples from other websites in terms of communication. In response to comments Members were advised that a comparison could be undertaken between other authorities and how the Council compared with them. It was noted that the proposed digital strategy would link into the customer strategy. A number of Members commented on the Council’s new website and the improvements it had brought.

In respect of Communications, concern was raised regarding the Planning Department in particular and in response the Director of Customers and Community advised that he would feed this back to the Chief Executive.

Councillor P G L Elliott proposed that a piece of scrutiny be undertaken on the Council’s policies on empty homes and how they were being implemented. This proposal was duly seconded and agreed.

Councillor Mrs P A Channer requested that sickness absence be added to the Committee’s Work Programme and that sickness absence reports along with information regarding Bradford scoring be received by the Committee. The importance of the Council’s staff was also raised at this point. Councillor Mrs Channer explained how it was necessary to have comparison between the old and new policy and ensure it was a working in the best way for the Council and its staff. This proposal was duly seconded and agreed.

In relation to the two new areas of scrutiny the following Members were appointed as lead Members:

- Sickness absence – Councillors Mrs PA Channer and N R Pudney.
- Empty Homes – Councillor P G L Elliott

**RESOLVED** that the Programme of Work for 2017 / 18 be updated in accordance with the discussions above including the addition of scrutiny items relating to Sickness of Absence and Empty Homes.

**620. FINAL REPORT - PROCUREMENT AND DELIVERY OF THE 2016 / 17 CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources, setting out findings on the procurement and delivery of the 2016 / 17 capital programme with particular reference to Project 180 (St Cedd's and car park). Within the report were a number of recommendations arising from the conclusions raised and it was noted that they were for immediate implementation.

A number of comments were raised regarding the report and in response the following information was provided:

- The Director of Resources agreed to provide Members with detailed financial information regarding the St. Cedds project.
- In response to a query regarding the constitution of the Asset Management Working Group (AMWG), its Terms of Reference and duplication of work, Members were advised that the AMWG would provide challenge and review rather than scrutiny. It was noted that the Terms of Reference for the AMWG were to be agreed at its first meeting. The Director of Resources advised that recommendation 2 could be amended to ensure when the Terms of Reference were agreed that there was no overlapping or conflict of interest.
- The Council had an outsourced procurement support from Braintree District Council who reviewed the issuing of tenders using a comprehensive standard document.
- Members were advised that in relation to the St. Cedds project there had been some work carried out by Council staff and the Director of Resources provided details of this. It was requested that this work by those Members of staff be recognised.
- The Director of Resources informed Members of a back office review of services to identify how the Council could become more efficient. Officers were also looking to appoint a Contract Procurement Officer.

Councillor S J Savage commented that he felt the report should not be noted. He proposed that the contents of the report be actioned as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report, assurances provided and reported back to this Committee in December. The Chairman advised that the next meeting of the Committee was in January and Councillor Savage amended his proposal accordingly. This proposal was duly agreed.

**RESOLVED** that Officers continue to complete the detailed review of this project with the final report and assurances reported to this Committee in January 2018.

**621. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF SCRUTINY MEMBERS WISH TO CONSIDER**

Councillor R P F Dewick commented on the recording of Committee meetings and it was noted that this would be a future item of scrutiny.

**621A ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE DECIDES ARE URGENT**

In response to a question regarding the sound recording for the last meeting of this Committee, the Director of Customers and Community advised that he had undertaken and submitted the results of an investigation into this matter requested by the Leaders' office. He provided a detailed verbal update to Members on this matter and the steps put in place following his investigation to address areas of concern.

A number of concerns were raised by Members following to the information provided and in response to questions further information was provided by the Director of Customers and Community.

The Director of Customers and Community advised that the Leader of the Council would be reporting back to Members regarding this investigation and he agreed to feedback to the Leader of the Council that this should be to all Members.

There being no further items of business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.30 pm.

M W HELM  
CHAIRMAN