



**MINUTES of  
FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE  
28 NOVEMBER 2017**

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**PRESENT**

Chairman	Councillor D M Sismey
Vice-Chairman	Councillor I E Dobson
Councillors	Mrs B F Acevedo, J P F Archer, P G L Elliott, A S Fluker, M S Heard and Miss M R Lewis
In attendance	Councillors E L Bamford, R G Boyce MBE, Mrs B D Harker and B E Harker

**629. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES**

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

**630. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B S Beale MBE, M F L Durham CC and Rev. A E J Shrimpton.

**631. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

**RESOLVED**

- (i) that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 September 2017 be received.

**Minute No. 477 – Market Site**

In response to a request for a verbal update it was agreed that an update would be brought to the next meeting of this Committee.

**RESOLVED**

- (ii) that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 September 2017 be confirmed.

### **632. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

Councillor D M Sismey disclosed a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 17 – Half Yearly Treasury Management as he was an employee of Goldman Sachs. He advised that he would leave the chamber for this item of business.

### **633. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No requests had been received.

### **634. CHAIRMAN'S GOOD NEWS ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman advised that none had been brought to his attention.

### **635. CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Resources on corporate health and safety activity for Quarter Two (1 July to 30 September 2017). A summary by Directorate and a description of the reported accidents and near misses were set out in the report. Appendix 1 to the report provided progress with the Health and Safety Action Plan for 2017 / 18.

It was noted that there had been very few accidents, work on the Action Plan for 2017 / 18 was progressing and a visit from the Health and Safety Executive had indicated that procedures around hand arm vibration may need improvement. In response to a question regarding and arm vibration, the Director of Customers and Community advised that this related to devices such as hedge trimmers etc.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (i) that the accident and incident statistics for quarter two be noted;
- (ii) that progress with the Health and Safety Action Plan for 2017 / 18 be noted.

### **636. STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE - QUARTER TWO 2017 / 18**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Resources presenting human resource statistics for the period 1 July to 30 September 2017 (Quarter Two).

Statistics and updates relating to the following areas were detailed in the report:

- Labour Turnover;
- Job Vacancies;
- Agency Workers;
- Off payroll workers procedure;
- Grievance policy.
- Staff sickness levels;
- Workforce statistics – attached as Appendix 1 to the report;

- Organisational change;
- Employee assistance programme – utilisation project;
- Workforce development strategy – update on forward plan.

Members noted that the overall sickness figures for Quarter Two (Q2) had fallen from Quarter One (Q1).

In response to a question regarding the target set for sickness absence, the Director of Resources advised that this was set by managers and Directors at the beginning of the year and determined on what was felt to be realistic and stretching.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report are noted.

### **637. HALF YEARLY REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Resources supplying Members with details of performance against targets set for the half year. The report also outlined progress being achieved towards the corporate goals and the outcomes detailed in the Corporate Plan 2015 – 19 adopted by the Council in February 2015.

It was noted that the Corporate Leadership Team had held a quarterly performance and risk clinic to review and challenge performance, financial and risk information, where necessary. This report had also been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The half year position for each corporate goal was set out in Appendix 1 to the report and detailed key corporate activities assessed as being “behind schedule” or “at risk of not being achieved”. The appendix also showed those indicators which were at risk of not achieving the end of year target. A number of successes, achievements and concerns related to financial / corporate health issues were outlined in the report.

It was noted that good progress had been made on a number of activities which would help the Council achieve its overall desired outcomes and corporate goals. There were some activities considered at risk / behind schedule and therefore these might not be achieved within the timescales set.

In response to a number of questions and concerns raised regarding the North Heybridge Flood Alleviation Scheme being at risk and the Environment Agencies current position regarding this, the Chief Executive provided the Committee with an update following recent meetings. The work being undertaken by Officers to identify the final options available to the Council was highlighted. The Chief Executive agreed to provide Members with details of the meetings which had taken place with key stakeholders and to place notes of discussions on the corporate I Drive for Members’ information.

**RESOLVED** that Members comments and the report be noted.

**638. DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF SCHEME AND APPROVAL OF ANNUAL RURAL SETTLEMENT LIST**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Customers and Community seeking Members' approval of the proposed Discretionary Non Domestic Rates Relief Scheme (attached as Appendix 1 to the report).

It was noted that the Government had announced a package to help businesses affected by significant increases in business rates as a result of the 2017 revaluation and details of these schemes were set out in Appendix 2 to the report. Members were advised that the Council had implemented two of the schemes and developed a policy with other Essex authorities in respect of the third.

**RECOMMENDED** that the proposed Discretionary Non Domestic Rate Relief Scheme (attached as **APPENDIX 1** to these Minutes) be approved.

**639. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2018 / 19**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Customers and Community providing an update on the cost and impact of the current 2017 / 18 Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme for the Maldon District. Members' approval was also sought for a substantially unchanged cost neutral scheme for 2018 / 19.

It was noted that a recent consultation exercise had been undertaken and the key outcomes was set out in the report. The only change recommended to the LCTS Scheme for 2018 / 19 were for a cost of living increase in line with the rates proposed by the Department for Work and Pensions for pensioners.

**RECOMMENDED**

- (i) that a cost of living increase in line with the Department for Work and Pensions schemes be included in the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTS) for 2018 / 19 for Pensioners only;
- (ii) that any legislative changes being introduced to the Housing Benefit Scheme for 2018 / 19 are mirrored in the Councils LCTS scheme to ensure consistency;
- (iii) that a disregard of low value income changes notified electronically by the Department of Work and Pensions be allowed for;
- (iv) that in all other respects the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and Hardship Scheme remain unchanged, and that this decision has been made following Members' careful reading of, and regard to the Equality Impact Assessment at **APPENDIX 2** to the Minutes.

**640. ANNUAL REVIEW OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources seeking approval of revisions to the Financial Regulations as part of the regular annual review.

The changes to Financial Regulations were highlighted within the report and an updated version was attached as Appendix 1. It was noted that there were a number of additional policies and procedures relating to financial processes maintained by the Finance Team. Members were reminded of their request at the last meeting for procedure notes for debtors and creditors and these were attached as Appendix 2 and 3 to the report respectively.

In response to a question regarding not extending debts to those who have had previous debt with the Council, the Director of Resources advised that the Council could operate a list if this was the requirement of Members, but was not something currently done.

Councillor A S Fluker proposed that the Council should not extend credit to those persons whom had had previous debts to the Council written off. This proposal was duly seconded and agreed.

**RECOMMENDED** that subject to the above amendment, the Financial Regulations attached as **APPENDIX 3** to these Minutes, be approved.

#### **641. PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE TO OFFICE OPENING TIME TO PUBLIC**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Customers and Community seeking Members' views on proposals to change the opening time of the Council offices to the public to create opportunities for improved staff engagement, communication and training.

The report set out a proposal to change the opening times of the office, the reasons behind this proposal, benefits to staff and three options for Members' consideration. It was noted that any changes would be delivered in collaboration with partners and publicised ahead of implementation to minimise impact to customers.

Some concern regarding the detail of this proposal was raised including the need to ensure that if agreed relevant training was taking place during the time created by the planned late opening. It was proposed and agreed that the Council implement a three month trial of later opening to the public (on a monthly basis).

**RESOLVED** that for a trial period of three months, the Council implement a monthly later opening to the public of the Council offices.

#### **642. REPLACEMENT COMMISSIONING AND PROCUREMENT STRATEGY AND CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources seeking Members' approval of the Procurement Strategy (attached at Appendix A to the report) and Contract Procedure Rules (Appendix B) which had been updated and modified.

It was noted that the Commissioning and Procurement Strategy had been re-written to ensure it met the needs of the Authority and the report identified a number of requirements that had to be considered.

**RECOMMENDED** that the updated Commissioning and Procurement Strategy (attached as **APPENDIX 4** to these Minutes) and Contract Procedure Rules (**APPENDIX 5**) be agreed.

**643. PROMENADE PARK, MALDON - INCOME SHARE FOR THE MALDON MUD RACE**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Customers and Community seeking Members view on a request from Maldon Mud Race Limited on the income share allowance from the parking charges for Promenade Park, Maldon during the 2017 Maldon Mud Race.

The report provided background information regarding previous arrangements for car parking income during the Mud Race. A request had been received from Maldon Mud Race Ltd that the income share from car parking from the 2017 event be extended from the previously agreed two hours before and after the start of the event. A copy of this request was attached at Appendix 1 to the report and the Maldon Mud Race Ltd current accounts were attached at Appendix 2.

Members were advised that the Community Services Committee had considered this request at its meeting on 29 August 2017 and it had recommended that

“the Finance and Corporate Services Committee not change the current policy in respect of the Maldon Mud Race, that being, car parking income received two hours before and after the start of the Maldon Mud Race 2017 is shared on a 50:50 basis with the Maldon Mud Race Ltd and reviewed on an annual basis.’

This item of business had been withdrawn at the last meeting of this Committee as accounts and returns had not been submitted by the Maldon Mud Race Ltd to Companies House or the charities commissions. The Director of Resources advised that this had now taken place.

Following a discussion the Chairman put to the Committee that the recommendation of the Community Services Committee and set out in the report be agreed and policy be followed accordingly. This was duly agreed.

**RESOLVED**

- (i) that the comments from the Community Services Committee on the 29 August relating to this matter be noted;
- (ii) that current policy in respect of the Maldon Mud Race, that being car parking income received two hours before and after the start of the Maldon Mud Race 2017 be shared on a 50:50 basis with the Maldon Mud Race Limited and reviewed on an annual basis;
- (iii) that Officers inform Maldon Mud Race Limited that they must ensure their accounts are filed with Companies House before any future requests are made to the Council for financial assistance.

**644. SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, VIREMENTS AND USE OF RESERVES - 1 AUGUST - 31 OCTOBER 2017**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources, reporting virements and supplementary estimates agreed under delegated powers and procurement exemptions granted.

Members were advised that there had been:

- one virement to fund continuing agency costs had been required for this period.
- one capital supplementary estimate to contribute towards a new Unisex Disability Changing Room at the Blackwater Leisure Centre had been granted .
- no procurement exemptions.
- one request to draw down £7,500 from the Repairs and Renewals reserve relating to the replacement of a hoist at the Blackwater Leisure Centre.

**RESOLVED**

- (i) that the supplementary estimate granted during the period, as detailed in paragraph 3.3 of the report, be noted;
- (ii) that the virement granted during the period, as detailed in paragraph 3.2 of the report, be noted;
- (iii) that the request to drawdown £7,500 from the Repairs and Renewals reserve to replace a hoist at Blackwater Leisure Centre be approved.

Following his earlier declaration Councillor D M Sismey left the chamber at this point.

IN THE CHAIR : COUNCILLOR I E DOBSON

**645. HALF YEARLY TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Resources reporting on the Council's investment activity for the first half of 2017 / 18 in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Accountancy Treasury Management code and the Council's Treasury Management Policies and Practices (TMPs).

The report detailed the Council's investment activity for both investments and instant access reserve accounts. Security of capital had remained the Council's main investment objective, which had been maintained by following the Council's counterparty policy.

Appendix 1 to the report had been prepared by Arlingclose (who provide treasury management consultancy and advice to the Council) and provided an overview of the external economic environment. The report outlined investment activity for April – September 2017.

The report provided Members with an update on Counterparty risk and projected investment income for the year. It was noted that the Council had complied with its Prudential Indicators for 2017 / 18 and this was detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.

Members were advised of a number of proposed amendments to the Treasury Management Strategy and these were detailed in Appendix 3 to the report. The investment strategy had also been updated to enable the Council's available funds to be invested to make better returns.

In response to a number of questions the Director of Resources provided Members with further information regarding the operational boundary for external debt, commercialisation and flexibility. The Director of Resources explained the reasons behind this report being brought to this Committee and how it allowed time for any amendments, if required, prior to consideration of the budget for 2018 / 19.

### **RESOLVED**

- (i) that the Treasury Management report be noted for compliance purposes.

### **RECOMMENDED**

- (ii) that the proposed amendment to the Treasury Management Strategy 2017 / 18 relating to Prudential Indicators for an operational boundary for external debt and an authorised limit for external debt, be approved;
- (iii) that the proposed amendments in relation to investment strategy (attached as **APPENDIX 6** to these Minutes) be approved.

Councillor Sismey returned to the Chamber.

IN THE CHAIR : COUNCILLOR D M SISMEY

## **646. BUDGETARY CONTROL (APRIL - SEPTEMBER 2017)**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Resources providing Members with key financial information on the progress to date against the agreed budget. Full details were set out in the Appendices to the report.

It was noted that current financial performance to budget was at risk due to significant reductions in planning income. Members were advised that capital projects were progressing, with further projects to start within the Council's parks and open spaces on the later period of the financial year. Items within the programme would be reviewed as the year progresses and updated accordingly.

In response to a question regarding the number of persons using the splash park, the Director of Customers and Community advised that this could be provided to Members and on a monthly breakdown basis.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report be noted.



## 647. 2018 / 19 BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources setting out the proposals put forward by Officers for revenue growth, fees and charges policy, capital projects and the use of the repairs and renewals reserve prior to approval of the 2018 / 19 budget. It was noted that for all service areas the relevant programme Committee had considered the report prior to being reported to this Committee.

The report provided detailed information in respect of the following areas:

- Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS):
  - Collection Fund;
  - investment income;
  - income;
  - pension
- Revenue budget growth – Appendix A to the report detailed budget growth proposals for consideration and agreement on which items would move forward and included in the budget process.
- Fees and Charges – Appendix B showed the fees and charges policy for adoption and detailed any proposed amendments.
- Capital – Appendix C contained details of all 2018 / 19 project bids which had been categorised by Officers into three main groups.
- Repairs and Renewals – These were set out in Appendix D to the report.

Councillor A S Fluker declared an interest in this item of business and particularly in relation to the budget growth item regarding the Hythe Quay dredging as he was a Harbour Commissioner.

It was noted that the Community Services Committee had considered this report at its recent meeting and made a number of recommendations to this Committee which were set out in the report.

A lengthy debate ensued and in particular the following items were discussed:

- Budget Growth (Appendix A)
  - **Tree Officer / Consultant** – Members were advised that the Council required additional resource and expertise in this area to assist the Council with its management of trees etc. in the District.
  - **Business Food / Music Event** – The Director of Customers and Community reported that the team were working on a business case and the potential opportunity for combining such an event with, for example the Mud Race.
- Capital Programme (Appendix C)
  - **C5 - Commemoration of the Fallen from the Maldon District** – The Director of Customers and Community circulated at the meeting an indicative design of the memorial. Some concern was raised regarding the cost associated with this project and was questioned whether the Council should find external funding for it.

Councillor A S Fluker proposed that this project go ahead but only if 50% match funding (up to £25,000) was achieved. The Director of Customers and Community expressed concern regarding match funding for a project of this scale. He advised that Officers were currently working on the exact costs and suggested that a report on this and match funding could be brought to the January meeting of this Committee. Councillor R G Boyce provided the Committee with further details of the scheme and how he had been appointed as Forces Champion for this Council.

- **C7 - Upgrade PCs to Windows 10 Enterprise** – It was reported that Office 365 was a subscription service, although some Local Authorities were looking to move sums relating to this into revenue rather than capital. In response to a comment regarding the figures relating to ICT projects, the Director of Resources advised that she would ask the IT Manager to ensure that figures detailed were accurate. It was confirmed that all legacy systems would function on Windows 10.
- **C6 - Window Replacement** – It was commented that it was necessary to identify whether the windows could be repaired prior to replacement. The Committee commended the Council’s caretakers for the work they did.
- Repairs and Renewals (Appendix D)
  - **D3 - Replacement Street Lights to LEDs** – The Director of Customers and Community advised that the business case was being completed and a discounted rate for LEDs being sought from suppliers. This information would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

Members agreed that further work on the Capital Projects was required and this would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (i) that the revenue growth items (Appendix A to the report) be included for consideration in the 2018 / 19 budget;
- (ii) that the updated fees and charges policy areas for 2018 / 19 as outlined in Appendix B to the report be adopted.
- (iii) that the Repairs and renewals projects set out in Appendix D to the report be funded from the Repairs and Renewals reserve.
- (iv) that the Capital project bids set out in Appendix C to the report be updated and brought back for further consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.

#### **648. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2018 / 19**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources relating to the Council Tax Base for 2018 / 19. It was noted that the Council had to notify its tax base calculations to Essex County Council, Essex Fire Authority, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex and Parish Councils by 31 January 2018.

It was explained that the tax base figure was an integral part of the calculations for setting the level of Council Tax. The detailed calculation of the relevant amounts for 2018 / 19 were shown in Appendix A to the report.

Members were informed that the tax base used for 2017 / 18 was 23,868.7. The proposed new figure represented an increase of 324.5 or 1.36%. This increase related to the number of new houses now on the valuation list.

**RESOLVED**

- (i) that the contents of the report be noted.

**RECOMMENDED**

- (ii) that in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 2012 the amount calculated by the Maldon District Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2018 / 19 shall be set at 24,193.2.

There being no further items of business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.55 pm.

D M SISMEY  
CHAIRMAN