



**MINUTES of
FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE
30 JANUARY 2018**

PRESENT

Vice-Chairman (in the chair)	Councillor I E Dobson
Councillors	Mrs B F Acevedo, J P F Archer, A S Fluker, Miss M R Lewis and Rev. A E J Shrimpton
Substitute Members	Councillors B S Beale MBE and M F L Durham, CC
In attendance	Councillor R G Boyce MBE

769. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES

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

770. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTION NOTICE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M S Heard and D M Sismey. In accordance with notice duly given Councillor M F L Durham was attending as a substitute for Councillor Sismey and Councillor B S Beale as a substitute for Councillor Heard.

771. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 November 2017 be approved and confirmed.

772. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Councillor M F L Durham declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of Essex County Council should there be any business on this agenda pertaining to that organisation.

773. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No requests had been received.

774. CHAIRMAN'S GOOD NEWS ANNOUNCEMENTS

There was none.

775. CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Committee received the report of the Director of Resources on corporate health and safety activity for Quarter Three (1 October to 31 December 2017). A summary by Directorate and a description of the reported accidents and near misses were set out in the report and Appendix 1 provided progress with the Health and Safety Action Plan for 2017 / 18.

A fire safety audit had been undertaken by an external consultant and as a result an action plan had been drawn up. Members were informed that all actions would be implemented by 31 March 2018.

In response to a question regarding near misses, the Director of Resources advised that any such incidents were recorded in the accident book and reported to Directors and Members.

The Director of Resources reported on the need to ensure the Council Chamber was compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. Some debate ensued in relation to this.

RESOLVED that the accident and incident statistics for quarter three and progress with the Health and Safety Action Plan for 2017 / 18 be noted.

776. HUMAN RESOURCES STATISTICS - QUARTER THREE 2017 / 18

The Committee received the report of the Director of Resources presenting human resource statistics for the period 1 October to 31 December 2017 (Quarter Three (Q3)).

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

- Labour Turnover;
- Recruitment, including both Internal and External vacancies;
- Staff sickness levels;
- Workforce statistics – attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Members noted that the overall sickness figures for Q3 had increased significantly from Quarter Two and the report provided further details regarding this.

The Director of Resources highlighted how statistics showed that in comparison to previous years viruses seemed to be longer lasting and reported on the work being undertaken by the Corporate Leadership Team to identify alternative interventions. It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would also be reviewing the sickness policy to identify if there were improvements to be made.

It was noted that paragraph 5.10 of the report should refer to reduction of ‘sickness’ levels and not as detailed.

Councillor A S Fluker proposed that the Council consider implementing future interventions, such as reducing sick pay, in order to reduce sickness levels. This proposal was duly seconded and duly agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) that the Council consider implementing future interventions, such as reducing sick pay, in order to reduce sickness levels.

777. DOCUMENT RETENTION POLICY

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources, presenting a draft Document Retention Policy (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) for Members’ consideration and recommendation to the Council.

It was noted that the Document Retention Policy would provide a framework to govern the management of a decision on whether a particular document (or set of documents) should either be retained and if so for what period, or disposed of, and if so by when.

It was noted that the document control sheet to the Policy contained a spelling mistake in the summary of the purpose and the Director of Resources advised that this would be corrected.

It was noted that a briefing on the new General Data Protection Regulations would be arranged for all Members.

The Chairman reported that if Members’ were mindful to agree the Policy this would be a recommendation to the Council.

RECOMMENDED that the Document Retention Policy, attached at **APPENDIX 1** to these Minutes, be agreed.

778. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources providing a review of the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure and seeking Members’ approval and adoption of the revised version (attached at Appendix 1 to the report).

It was noted that a review of the Policy and Procedure had been undertaken to ensure that the Council’s Policy remained robust and current and as a result a much simplified and user-friendly version had been produced. Members were informed that there had been a change in emphasis away from reporting through line managers in the first instance, with the Legal and Democratic Services Manager being the point of reference for the most part.

RECOMMENDED that the updated Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure, attached as **APPENDIX 2** to these Minutes, be approved and adopted.

779. 2017 / 18 TO 2020 / 21 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources presenting year to date spend information on the 2017 / 18 Capital Programme (Appendix A to the report) and the proposed Capital Programme for 2018 / 19.

It was noted that four projects from 2017 / 18 were being carried forward into 2018 / 19 and the remainder of the 2017 / 18 Capital Programme was envisaged to be completed by 31 March 2018.

The project bids for 2018 / 19 were set out in Appendix B to the report and Members' attention was drawn to the three categories by which the bids had been categorised. It was noted that the 2018 / 19 Capital Programme included a number of projects from 2017 / 18 and Disabled Facilities Grant related expenditure. The proposed indicative 2018 / 19 to 2021 / 22 Capital Programme was set out in Appendix C.

It was noted that recommendation (ii) should refer to 2021 / 22 and not as detailed.

The Director of Customers and Community provided the Committee with an update on the Capital Project – Commemoration of the Fallen from the Maldon District. This update included a revised sketch of the proposed scheme. Members were advised that alternative funding streams had been looked into but there was no certainty at this time if they would come to fruition. A debate ensued regarding this project and in response to questions the Director of Customers and Community provided Members with further information. Some concerns were raised regarding the revised scheme and in response to a suggestion to include a shelter in the scheme Members were informed that this could be investigated.

Following further debate Councillor Miss M R Lewis proposed that the allocated capital for this project be reduced to £25,000 with match funding.

Councillor A S Fluker commented that the Community Services Committee were responsible for the design of the project. He then proposed that the Capital Project – Commemoration of the Fallen from the Maldon District be removed from the budget, referred back to the Community Services Committee and that Officers be requested to go out to the commercial sector.

Councillor B S Beale declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item of business as his father had been killed in the war. He commented on Members' discussion regarding the funding for this project and highlighted the importance of what the memorial would be commemorating.

Councillor Miss Lewis withdrew her earlier proposition and seconded that of Councillor Fluker.

The Chairman then put the proposal in the name of Councillor Fluker to the vote and upon a vote being taken this was agreed. Councillor Beale requested that his vote against this proposal be recorded.

In response to a question regarding the CCTV updated, the Director of Customers and Community advised that this was a phased programme of works to upgrade CCTV a result of which could lead to further cost savings.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the contents of the Quarter Three 2017 / 18 Capital outturn table be noted;

RECOMMENDED

- (ii) That the Capital Project – Commemoration of the Fallen from the Maldon District be removed from the Capital Programme and referred back to the Community Services Committee;
- (iii) That the Capital Programme for 2018 / 19 to 2021 / 22, as amended above, attached at **APPENDICES 3 and 4** to these Minutes, be approved.

780. DISCRETIONARY FEES AND CHARGES

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources, seeking Members' consideration of the proposed Fees and Charges for 2018 / 19 (set out in Appendix 1 to the report).

It was noted that the proposed fees and charges for 2018 / 19 had been based on the policy decisions recently updated and agreed by this Committee at its last meeting. The report detailed the budgets for income generated from fees and charges and highlighted three main changes.

In response to a question regarding the figures relating to river wharfage, the Finance Manager advised that these reflected income received by the Council.

Councillor A S Fluker declared in the interest of openness and transparency that he was a Maldon Harbour Improvement Commissioner.

The Director of Customers and Community advised Members that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were due to review moorings and wharfage at its March meeting. Some Members commented on the current fees and the need to align these as either monthly or annual charges and at this point comparison to other marine organisation charges was made. It was suggested that such matters be brought before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when they carry out their review.

The Director of Resources confirmed that, providing statutory notice periods were complied with, a provisional change could be made to the fees and charges until a review of certain charges had taken place.

It was agreed that the fees and charges be recommended for approval subject to a review of them all being taken and reported back to a future meeting of this Committee.

RECOMMENDED that the detailed Fees and charges for 2018 / 19 as set out in **APPENDIX 5** to these Minutes, be agreed subject to a review by the Finance and Corporate Services Committee.

781. REVISED 2017 / 18 ESTIMATES, ORIGINAL 2018 / 19 BUDGET ESTIMATES AND COUNCIL TAX 2018 / 19

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources presenting the revised 2017 / 18 and original 2018 / 19 and future years General Fund Revenue Budget estimate and the Capital Programme for consideration and recommendation to the Council. The report also detailed the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement announced by the Government in December 2017. Members' consideration was also sought on the proposed council tax increase for 2018 / 19 and the policy for the use of Reserves.

The report and associated appendices to the report outlined the following:

- the latest information on the provisional Local Government finance settlement 2018 / 19;
- revised General Fund revenue budget estimates 2017 / 18;
- General Fund revenue budget estimates 2018 / 19;
- budget growth, savings and income generation in 2018 / 19;
- Essex Region business rates pool to which no changes to the Pool membership had been notified;
- an update on interest on investments;
- the Council Tax requirement for 2018 / 19;
- General Fund balance and revenue reserves;
- risks to the Council's financial position;
- the tax-base position;
- the Collection Fund surpluses / deficit position;
- an update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to reflect the latest revenue budget position and indicated levels of Council Tax.

Revenue Growth Bids

The Director of Customers and Community drew Members' attention to Appendix 4 of the report, in particular the business food and music event and the work done by Officers in relation to this. Members' were advised that the budget requested should be revised to £8,000.

In response to a question, the Director of Resources advised that as computers were replaced within the authority they would be installed with Windows 10 and therefore this would be a gradual update across the Council.

Provisional Settlements

In respect of the pay award for 2018 / 19, the Director of Resources advised that the employer group had put forward 2% which had not been accepted by the Trade Unions. It was noted that the Council had a local agreement which mirrored the National Joint Council pay award.

Councillor J P F Archer left the meeting at this point.

Budget Estimates

When presenting the budget estimates the Director of Resources advised that the New Homes Bonus was not now seen as a sustainable stream of funding and therefore being gradually removed from the core budget.

There was some discussion regarding staff sickness and the costs relating to this.

Precept Setting

The Director of Resources presented the report and Members were advised that the figures could still change as the final settlement (from the Government) had not yet been received.

Councillor M F L Durham proposed that option 1, a 2.99% increase in Council Tax be agreed. This proposal was duly seconded.

The Director of Resources referred to her report as Section 151 Officer, in accordance with Section 15 of the 2003 Local Government Act, on the robustness of the budget and adequacy of reserves attached at Appendix 7 to the report.

The Chairman then put recommendations (i) (a) & (b)a and (ii) (c) to the Committee which upon a vote being taken were agreed.

The Chairman put the proposition in the name of Councillor Fluker for a Council Tax increase of 2.99%. Prior to a vote and in accordance with Procedure Rule No. 13 (3) Councillor M F L Durham requested a recorded vote. This was duly seconded.

For the recommendation (2.99% Council Tax increase):

Councillors Mrs B F Acevedo, B S Beale, M F L Durham, A S Fluker and Rev. A E J Shrimpton.

Against the recommendation:

None.

Abstention:

Councillors I E Dobson and Miss M R Lewis. Councillor Miss Lewis advised that she did not feel that she had enough information at this stage and felt it important that she made an informed decision.

The Chairman then put recommendations (ii)(e) & (f) and (iii) to the Committee which upon a vote being taken were agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the Committee notes the main details of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2018 / 19 described in section 3.3 of the report;
- (ii) that a pay award in line with national recommendations is approved of 2% for both 2018 / 19 and 2019 / 20.

RECOMMENDED

- (iii) that the Summary Revised 2017 / 18 and Original 2018 / 19 General Fund Revenue Budget Estimates (**APPENDICES 6, 7 and 8** to these Minutes) be approved;
- (iv) that an average Band D council tax of £192.97 (excluding parish precepts) (2.99% increase) for 2018 / 19 (**APPENDIX 6** to the Minutes);
- (v) that the policies on the designated use of financial reserves (**APPENDIX 9** to these Minutes) be agreed;
- (vi) that an increase in the minimum general fund working balance from £2,500,000 to £2,600,000 for 2018 / 19 be approved;
- (vii) that the Council gives due regard to the Director of Resources statement on the robustness of budgets and adequacy of reserves in **APPENDIX 10** to these Minutes.

782. 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 1, 2, 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that this satisfies the public interest test.

Councillor Rev. A E J Shrimpton left the meeting at this point and did not return.

783. MARKET SITE

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources providing an update following the offer made to the claimant in relation to the Council's ownership of the Market Place car park.

The report highlighted the report considered and decision made by this Committee in September 2017. A copy of the report considered was attached as Appendix A.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

784. LEASE OF OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Resources, seeking Members' consideration of a request from Moat Housing (Moat) to continue to rent office accommodation at the Council Offices for a period of three years.

The report provided background information regarding the request and current lease agreement with Moat.

RESOLVED that the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance and Corporate Services Committee, and on the advice of a legal advisor and independent Valuer, be authorised to negotiate and enter into a new lease for a period of three years with Moat Housing.

785. MALDON HEALTH HUB PROJECT

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which provided an update on progress of the Maldon Health Hub Project, further detail on the proposed service model and the Council's role in the future delivery of the project.

The report highlighted the ongoing work by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the NHS in respect of the Maldon Health Hub project which was now at the Outline Business Case stage.

Members' were advised that the Mid and South Essex Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP), made up of different NHS organisations and Council's across Essex, were working on a plan to improve health and care services across the region. Their review was looking at three key subjects and it was noted that these would ultimately impact on the service model to be delivered from the new Health Hub.

The report detailed a number of options regarding the Council's future role in the project. The Director of Resources explained that option (i) was an unrealistic option for the Council and outlined the reasons for this.

It was noted that the Community Services Committee had considered this report at its last meeting and recommended that option (i) be ruled out and that the Community Hospital Working Group not be constituted to oversee the project's progression. Some Members provided a further update on the discussions that took place at the Community Services Committee including a query regarding the cost of Officer time related to this project.

Councillor Miss M R Lewis proposed that option (i) be removed and the Council continue to the Outline Business Case stage and report back to this Committee before progressing further. This was duly seconded and agreed.

The report sought consideration of the reconstitution of the Community Hospital Working Group. Following discussions the Committee agreed with the Community Services Committee that the reconstitution not this did not take place at this time and any information be dealt with by the Council.

RESOLVED

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

RECOMMENDED

- (ii) that option 1 (i) as set out in paragraph 3.6.1 of the report for future Maldon District Council involvement in the Maldon Health Hub be ruled out at this stage;

- (iii) that the Council continue to the Outline Business Case stage and then report back to the Committee before progressing further;
- (iv) that the Community Hospital Working Group not be constituted to oversee progression of the project.

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

I E DOBSON
CHAIRMAN