

## **Report to the Council – 25 January 2017**

### **Committee: Audit and Scrutiny**

**Chair: Councillor Jan Pound**

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### **Audit & Scrutiny Committee 12<sup>th</sup> December 2016**

#### **Audit Results Report 2015/16**

The Committee was presented with the Annual Audit Letter issued by the External Auditors following the completion of the audit of the 2015/16 accounts. The report was a positive one and there were relatively few issues to address.

#### **Internal Audit Progress Report**

Internal audit provided a report which detailed the progress to date against the 2016/17 internal audit plan that had been agreed by the Committee in March 2016. The audits completed since the last Committee were Local Development Plan, Affordable Housing, Commercialisation and cost savings and Contract Management and Cost Savings and a summary of the findings were also included in the report.

#### **Strategic & Operational Risk Review**

This report updated members of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee on new, closed or changes to risks. The Committee also agreed to add to the Strategic Risk Register, monitoring of Council operations and Democratic Services, with particular noting of outsourcing arrangements.

#### **Review of Appointment of Representatives on Outside Organisations**

The Committee received a report of a Members Working Group who had considered the current process and possible future options. The Committee agreed to recommend to the Councils Constitutional Working Group that the Constitution was amended so that the appointment of outside representatives was undertaken by Ordinary Council in June each year.

#### **Work Programme 2016/17**

The Committee considered its work programme for the coming year and following discussions a revised programme was agreed.



## **Report to the Council - 25 January 2017**

**Committee: Community, Health and Leisure Committee**

**Chair: Councillor Keith Parker**

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### **Community Services Update**

#### **Leisure Strategy**

4Global, the consultants appointed to undertake the Value for Money review and options appraisal of the Council Leisure and Cultural services will present a report to a special Community, Health and Leisure Committee on 27 February 2017.

#### **Youth Essex Assembly**

Local elections were held across Essex to elect members to the Young Essex Assembly. The Young Essex Assembly (YEA) was established in 2003, it is an elected body for young people aged between 11-19 years old who live, study or work in Essex. This forum gives a voice to young people on both a local and national level to influence decision making and lobby on issues that impact on the whole community of Youth across the county.

In Brentwood there were 6 candidates contesting four seats, this mirrors the number of adult ECC elected councillors. The winning candidates who will be representing Brentwood are Adam Chinnery, Jonta McConnaughie, Ursula Moncrieff and Thomas Higgins. They will start their term of office in January and complete on a training programme during February Half Term.

They will be invited to become a member of the Brentwood Youth Strategy group which will give the the opportunity to work directly with County and District Councillors who will encourage and support them in their work. They will work with the other 71 YEA members from across Essex to develop a strategy for the next 2 years and also vote to elect their United Kingdom Youth Parliament representatives.

#### **Active Brentwood**

There is also a networking event at Orsett Hall on 3 March 2017 from 9am – 1pm which provides an opportunity to network with other sports and health organisations. The main focus of the event will be on health and the links to the Clinical Commissioning Group for Brentwood and Basildon and the Health and Wellbeing Board priorities.

There is also a programme of club workshops which will be running up to April 2017. A new six week walking football programme will be launched on 12 January at the Brentwood Centre between 1 and 2pm for older people getting back into fitness. This will be followed by a six week walking netball programme. Work is also starting on a new Sport and Health Strategy for Active Brentwood to be published by 1 April 2017.

A new Active Brentwood apprentice, Michael Cox started in October who is supporting Active Brentwood initiatives over the next year.

### **North East London Foundation Trust Meeting**

An update was provided by NELFT regarding the children and young people's mental health service in Essex in November 2016. Representatives from Essex County Council Commissioners, NELFT, the voluntary sector and local schools discussed the current position of the service, the issues and its future direction.

### **South Essex Children's Partnership Board**

A presentation was delivered by Dan Stoten, current chair of the South Essex Children's Partnership Board. The purpose of the LCPB is for partners to work together to locally determine needs, identify priorities and develop action plans to secure better outcomes for children and young people in the [district/borough] through multi-agency collaborative working. There are six key objectives: Protect the most vulnerable; close the gap for the most vulnerable; promote resilience and positive choices; achieve better from the use of collective resources; maximise the use of community assets; development the system's workforce and culture.

### **Community Events**

Lighting Up Brentwood and Shenfield Christmas Fayre were successfully delivered in November and December 2016. The draft event plan for 2017/18 was agreed at Community Health and Leisure Committee which is still subject to the budget setting process.

### **Community Safety Update**

**Community Safety Partnership Website** – The new CSP website was launched towards the end of last year. This new website has been updated using a modern design. It is built using the latest web technologies to provide a fresh look and feel. Its responsive framework has been built to be mobile friendly and available on all devices. It uses a sophisticated content management system that makes it very simple to add features and sections to the website. It also ensures that only dedicated users can alter information and data.

It has a site wide search facility so users can find what they need simply and quickly.

**Senior Safety Roadshow** – The roadshow continues to grow from strength to strength. It's a real partnership project involving Essex Police, Essex County Fire & Rescue Service, NHW, Home Instead and Age UK. The partnership delivered a road show to a nursery and a group with disabilities. The partnership will also be visiting victims of burglary and supplying information and advice.

**Domestic Abuse Awareness** – 16 Days of Domestic Abuse Campaign started on the 25 November. The campaign began a soft launch in June with a till roll campaign in Argos. The till roll contains messages on domestic abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation and elder abuse and signposts victims to the services available. An awareness day took place on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December in Brentwood High Street. The day saw agencies come together to talk to the public and advise what support services are available. Domestic Abuse training was provided to staff and partners in May.

**Firebreak** – A firebreak course for 12 students took place in October. The 12 students are from 4 different schools and the Pass Out Parade was on Friday 7 October from 1pm.

**Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) & Trafficking Conference** – The Conference took place on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October. The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner Jayne Gardener opened the event. This short awareness session was developed in association with Brentwood Borough Council and Essex Police, specifically for taxi drivers, licensed premises and hotels/B&Bs. It raised awareness of CSE and trafficking, illustrated the key and vital role taxi drivers and licensed premises play in identifying CSE and trafficking, and promoted confidence and understanding in reporting concerns.

**Staff Training** - Staff received 2 days training on Anti-Social Behaviour and will be using the new Corporate ASB Policy to ensure consistency across the Council. Mallard Consultancy delivered training on neighbour nuisance which as hosts the Council received 10 free places.

**Gang Prevention Work** – We have successfully obtained money to deliver a bespoke gang awareness sessions in local secondary schools as well as a new young person intervention post who will provide 1-2-1 support to young people and their families as well as ensuring appropriate referrals are made and any gaps in service delivery are identified in order to allow for potential commissioning of services.

**PREVENT** - Online training will be available for staff in the new year. This will continue on from training received last year.

**Local Assessment Process** – LAPS were introduced by the Home Office as part of the toolkit for Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV) the national strategy to tackle gangs and serious youth violence. The process took place last year and assisted us in terms of building a bigger picture of the problem locally and increase our intelligence. It will help us explore the issues in more detail, identify effective practice, highlight barriers to local understanding and implement an effective response.

**Life Choices** – Life Choices is set to take place by spring this year. Reach Every Generation has been funded to lead on the project seeing students from Brentwood schools taking part. The course tackles issues in relation to gangs, sexual health, ASB, drug and alcohol and more.

**ASB issues** – There has been some excellent work by the CSP and Essex Police to deter anti social behaviour and driving in Sainsbury's car park. There is more work going on to help deter this behaviour occurring in William Hunter Way car park as well. Various warning letters and notices have been sent out and will continue to be sent out if anyone else causes issues in these areas.

**Drink Drive Campaign** – A drink drive campaign took place in Brentwood High Street on Thursday 8 December. Partners took to the High Street with the Community Wheels vehicle and a Brentwood vehicle that was involved in a RTC. The partners involved were the CSP, Essex Police, NHW and Essex Fire and Rescue services

### **Health and Wellbeing Board - Basildon and Brentwood Public Health Partnership Strategic Plan**

The updated Strategic plan has three main priorities: Aging Well, Tackling Obesity, Mental health and Wellbeing.

Progress continues to be made in a number of key areas for Brentwood as follows. Resources are now being allocated from Essex County Council to support a number of these.

The Brentwood Cycling Furtherance Group has now cycle grid mapped 2/3 of Brentwood Borough. The grid includes safe road and off-road sections. Essex County Council Highways and Rights of Way Officers, plus Planning Services are actively working together to make the grid a reality. Brentwood is currently submitting ten cycle routes to Essex County for feasibility studies where £70,000 has been allocated. Brentwood is intending to become part of the Dementia Action Alliance along with its partner Basildon. The Head of Paid Service has been requested to give approval to join. This would result in all front facing staff receiving training to recognise dementia and accommodate those with it more effectively.

Brentwood is to adopt Braintree's Live Well Branding which will direct residents to local activities and healthy lifestyle behaviours within the Borough.

Resources have also been allocated to support the wider Essex Mental Health Prevention Strategy which aims to increase access to mental health services, promote access to employment and physical activity which contribute to good mental health. The Great Outdoors Project currently being forwarded by Basildon Council will be adopted by Brentwood. This makes the most of existing community assets such as parks to provide additional physical activities and facilities for residents.

Resources have been allocated to the provision of Outdoor Gyms which can be used by the community within existing park areas.

Social prescribing is currently being piloted at the Tile House Surgery in Brentwood.

## **Health and Wellbeing**

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Resources have been allocated to the Time to Change Hub which supports the wider Essex Mental Health Prevention Strategy which aims to increase access to mental health services, promote access to employment and physical activity which contribute to good mental health.

The Great Outdoors Project currently being forwarded by Basildon Council will be adopted by Brentwood. This makes the most of existing community assets such as parks to provide additional physical activities and facilities for residents. Resources have been allocated to the provision of Outdoor Gyms which can be used by the community within existing park areas.

## **CCTV Code of Practice**

At the meeting of the Community, Health and Leisure Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> December Members approved the revised Brentwood CCTV Code of Practice. This now reflects the guidance issued by the Surveillance Camera Commissioner and the Information Commissioner to protect the privacy of individuals and ensure that surveillance cameras in the Borough are operated to meet the objectives to assist in the detection, and to reduce the level, of crime in the Borough in partnership with the Police and other stakeholders.





## **Report to the Council – 25 January 2016**

**Committee: Environment and Housing Management**

**Chair: Councillor Hossack**

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### **HOUSING MANAGEMENT**

#### **Development of Council Garage Sites**

As you will be aware the Housing department has been working towards the development of affordable housing on two of our disused garage sites in Fawters Close and Magdalen Gardens, the first new properties built in many years. This will consist of 4 single storey one bedroom properties for residents over the age of 65, and 3 three bedroom family homes.

The garages at Fawters Close have been deconstructed and a new boundary wall between surrounding residents in Fawters Close and Cedar Road, and the garage site itself erected.

Site security was also put in place to ensure security for all residents whilst their boundaries were open. This work was completed on 31<sup>st</sup> October and the site was cleared, ready for the chosen contractor.

Magdalen Gardens is also ready to be handed over to the contractors after planning conditions were met to remove a stag beetle habitat from the site to a suitable location.

The tender for the construction of the new houses closed on 30<sup>th</sup> September, and we received eight returns from various building companies. These tenders were then evaluated by members of the development team, and the top three competitors were invited in for interview on 14<sup>th</sup> October.

The contract for the build was awarded to Borrás Limited, a construction company based in St Albans. Borrás demonstrated good value for money and the relevant expertise in their tender application, and have lots of experience in this type of project, working for other Local Authorities and Housing Associations to develop small garage sites. We are looking forward to working with them.

The two sites are due to be over to Borrás with a construction programme that is currently under review.

#### **Stock Condition Survey**

A list of non-access addresses has been received from Pennington's. A 2<sup>nd</sup> letter has been sent by BBC reinforcing the need to allow access and to arrange an appointment. In addition we have set up a dedicated project team within Housing to assist Pennington's to arrange appointments and also carry out an audit of the actual surveys carried out by

attending a percentage of appointments on site with Pennington's. The non-access is continuing to impact on the delivery date but will not prevent the collected data being analysed as we will be able to forecast data based on an 85% percent completion and a report of future works produced.

The results of the survey will inform the Council HRA business plan over the coming years.

### **Parking at Gibraltar House, Mayflower House & The Keys**

Members and residents raised concerns over the lack of parking at the above schemes end of 2015 caused by parking spaces being used by workers of local businesses during the day.

Following a meeting held with residents and business owners on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2016 to consult them on proposed options, it was agreed by the Head of Housing and Chair of Housing Cllr Hossack that the below will be implemented once formal consultation has taken place.

	Type of Car park Measure to be implemented	Number of permits per resident	Cost per permit for residents	Number of Permits per business	Cost per permit for businesses
Gibraltar House	Resident only permit parking between 8am and 8pm	2 per household	Free for the first 12 months then £34 per permit per year *Lost/stolen/change of details that require a new permit will incur a £10 administration fee	N/A	N/A
Mayflower House	Resident only permit parking between 8am and 8pm	2 per household	Free for the first 12 months then £34 per permit per year *Lost/stolen/change of details that require a new permit will incur a £10 administration fee	N/A	N/A
The Keys	Limited stay 2 hours no return within 4 hours Permit holders all day	2 per household	Free for the first 12 months then £34 per permit per year *Lost/stolen/change of details that require a new permit will incur a £10 administration fee	Unlimited	Free for the first 12 months then £34 per permit per year *Lost/stolen/change of details that require a new permit will incur a £10 administration fee

The legal notice was advertised in the local paper on the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and notices put up around the car parks at Gibraltar House, Mayflower House and The Keys.

No legal objections were received therefore the Parking Order will go live in early February 2017.

Signage arrangements have been specified and currently being reviewed and the Depot will erect the signage in all areas. Letters will be issued to all residents advising them of the new permit arrangements with effect from the 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

### **Drake House**

The renewal of the heating, cold and hot water systems is now complete. All infrastructure pipework has been installed to all levels.

There is some minor works still ongoing which include boxing in, making good and wiring in energy meters in the individual flats.

The anticipated completion date is the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017.

### **Three Arch Bridge Estate**

The 8 blocks left unfinished by the previous contractor have been completed.

The majority of the work remaining to the 7 blocks is due to be finished by the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017, there was a slight delay as some of the work required, such as Asphaltting and rendering had been affected by the low temperatures. The anticipated final completion date is the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017, weather dependent.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **Waste Strategy Group update**

The Waste Strategy Group (WSG) last met on 4/10/16 – the next meeting is scheduled Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2017. The group in the past had concentrated on primarily on the waste side of the business but the next few meetings would concentrate on issues such as; enforcement matters, quality inspections, mobile camera strategy, impact on monitoring recycling centres changes, reducing the reactionary requests and possible staff rewards for innovation.

### **Christmas Recycling Road shows**

Officers from The Depot run five “Recycling Road shows” during December advising and assisting residents with what could be recycled or reused after the Christmas festivities, helpful tips, information about hiring garden waste bins, and stocking up on free recycling sacks and food waste bags.

Further recycling events will be organised to hand out recycling sacks prior to the annual sack delivery due March/April time.

### **Recycling Sites**

The recycling site in Warley had been enhanced and includes bins for recycling, glass, small WEE, textile books etc and has CCTV on site. The sites at the Town Hall and Rayleigh Road were open until after Christmas and closed week commencing 9<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

### **Environmental Health**

Performance on environmental health investigations is reported to each Committee, with particular emphasis on the investigation and enforcement of flytipping incidents in the Borough, which has resulted in a 600% increase of prosecution and fixed penalty receipts compared to last year. We are also working closely in partnership with the Police, Environment Agency and other authorities in Essex to improve intelligence sharing and enforcement activities.

Work to improve our work on Empty Homes in the Borough is being promoted through the Committee, with a further report due to be taken to the next Committee to outline powers available and resource implications to reduce the number of long-term empty properties in the Borough.

## **Report to the Council - 25 January 2017**

### **Committee: Planning and Licensing Committee**

#### **Chair: Councillor Roger McCheyne**

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Since the last report Brentwood staff have continued to work with the team from Thurrock to implement a number of modifications and improvements to work processes, focusing on efficiency and consistency. Performance against a range of key measures has improved in this period, for example relating to the speed of determining applications and the backlog of requests for preapplication advice service has been addressed. Engagement with members and agents will continue to be important in improving the deliverability of the service. Thurrock Council has been providing strategic management of Brentwood's planning development management team and day to day management and decisions on planning applications remain with Brentwood officers. The decisions of the Brentwood team have been well supported by the Planning Inspectorate in the appeal process – so far 77% of 62 appeals have been dismissed (national performance for the years 2010/16 averages 67%; Essex average for 2015/16 was also 67%). A second phase of actions is now being embarked upon and a restructure of the department will also be implemented.

The planning enforcement team has recorded its first successful prosecutions in a number of years, with the magistrate's court awarding damages and costs to the Council. Enforcement notices have also been upheld by the Planning Inspectorate demonstrating the team's commitment to thorough investigative processes and correct choice of enforcement tools. Planning enforcement continues to be a challenging area of work balancing the need to reinforce public confidence in the planning system while seeking a proportionate response to breaches of planning regulations. However, the number of historical enforcement complaints has been reduced to the lowest in the last 5 years, and the team are now in a strong position to go into 2017 with the confidence that they are able to investigate and resolve complaints within desired timeframes.

### **Strategic Planning & Local Development Plan**

Dunton Hills Garden Village was selected by Government to receive support from the garden village, towns and cities programme. The announcement earlier this month that funding and technical support to be provided by the Homes and Communities Agency is welcomed as we progress towards the final stages of a new Local Development Plan for the borough. This follows our expression of interest made in Summer 2016, of which 14 Garden villages were selected from 51 total bids. Feedback received set out that the submission was impressive because of the genuine garden village potential that Dunton Hills presents. Dialogue is now ongoing with the Homes and Communities Agency to work through next steps as we look to take forward the proposal for to a new sustainable garden village community as part of the LDP.

Good progress is being made on the Brentwood Town Centre Design Plan project. The Council appointed urban design specialists Levitt Bernstein to assist prepare the plan. Several workshops have been held with the project team, including attendance from the cross-party steering group. Draft proposals are being prepared to consider key development opportunities as a whole rather than isolated sites. A development brief for William Hunter Way car park will soon inform the vision for redevelopment of the site. Stakeholder consultation is due to take place shortly presenting outputs so far.

The Council recently undertook public consultation on the first stage of the Community Infrastructure Levy process. Comments are now being considered and will inform one further stage of consultation before the document is submitted for examination alongside the LDP. At the same time significant work has gone into preparing an Infrastructure Delivery Plan, a key piece of technical evidence that will inform both the LDP and CIL. All this is essential as we are to identify Infrastructure needs and secure funding to mitigate the impacts of development.

Whilst all this shows great progress over the past few months it also means we have taken the opportunity to step back and consider the Local Development Plan programme. It is imperative that a project of this significance stands the best chance of being found sound at examination so it can be adopted by the Council. In light of this, and informed by technical and legal opinion, a revised LDP timetable is published as an agenda item this evening.

The LDP Member Working Group reconvened in late 2016 to again discuss elements of the plan and related work. This cross-party group plays an important part in steering the project and will be integral to delivering next stages according to an agreed programme.

### **Licensing**

The Licensing Committee recently approved the increase in the Taxi Tariff, which is the charge applied by taxis on their meter when carrying passengers, this revised Tariff came into effect on the 1st December 2016. All hackney Carriage vehicles have had their meters tested and inspected by the licensing team to ensure that they are accurate in terms of distance and rate charged.

In October 2016 a large number of Brentwood taxi drivers attended the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) conference held in Brentwood. The conference provided information on how taxi drivers can spot signs of CSE, how nationally taxis are often unknowingly involved in cases of CSE, and how drivers can report concerns they may have. Further sessions are being planned for early 2017, with the view to ensure that all taxi drivers are trained.

A review of many of the Authorities Licensing Policies is planned for this year, which will include all the taxi policies and conditions, the Gambling statement of principles and the street trading policy.

## **Report to the Council - 25 January 2017**

**Committee: Policy, Finance and Resources**

**Chair: Councillor Louise McKinlay**

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### **Council Tax Support Scheme – 2017/18**

The report reviewed Brentwood's Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2017/18 and recommended that no changes be made to it. It stated that People of pension age continue to be protected from any changes in Local Council Tax Support; therefore the scheme has to be devised for people of working age only.

Public consultation on revised scheme options was undertaken from 7<sup>th</sup> September 2016 to 19<sup>th</sup> October 2016. A total of 38 responses to Brentwood's consultation were received. Whilst this was a limited response, it was similar with the consultation held last year and mirrored the levels of most responses received across Essex. Of these responses there was general agreement to the main principles of the scheme and did not highlight any issues that would give cause to alter the proposed scheme.

The Brentwood Borough Council scheme continues to be prepared within the framework of an Essex-wide scheme with local variations. For the last three years Brentwood's scheme has remained virtually unchanged and the report was not proposing any changes to the 2017/18 scheme.

### **Transfer of Housing Revenue Account Shops (HRA) to General Fund (GF).**

This report sought approval for the transfer of the shops portfolio, including any flats above the shops, from the HRA to the GF. The portfolio comprises of 28 shops which are no longer used for the housing purposes for which they were originally acquired.

The reason for the transfer was because International Financial Reporting Standards require that these properties are categorised according to the purposes for which the Council holds them. Where the purpose for holding a property is not related to the provision of housing under Part II of the Housing Act 1985, the property cannot be held within the HRA. If a property is currently held in the HRA, usually as a result of being originally acquired or constructed under Housing powers, it must be transferred to the GF.

The shops have remained in the HRA as a result of being acquired using housing powers. The shops were originally provided as part of neighbourhood development but no longer contribute to the achievement of a housing objective and are now let on a purely commercial basis. Some of the leases include the flats above the shops. The right to buy

policy means that an increasing proportion of properties on the Council's housing estate are occupied by leaseholders or private tenants of leaseholders rather than Council housing tenants which was the case when estates were originally built. This means that the shops are no longer supplied solely for the neighbourhood of the housing tenants.

The transfer of these assets from the HRA to the GF implies that the rental income will be accounted for in the GF. The approximate revenue impact to the GF could be a net gain of £54k.

## **Budget Monitoring Mid Year Review and Medium Term Financial Plan**

The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) set out the key financial management principles and budget assumptions. It was then used as the framework for the detailed budget setting process to ensure that the Council's resources are managed effectively in order to meet its statutory responsibilities and deliver the priorities of the Council, over the medium term.

The report provided the Committee with an update on the Council's:

- I. Revenue and capital projected outturn position as at the end of September 2016, including the review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy.
- II. Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2017/18 to 2019/20.

General Fund (GF) - Projected Revenue Outturn 2016/17. The 2016/17 GF budget was agreed at the Council Meeting on 2 March 2016 that it would need funding of £285k from reserves, as planned, in order to break even for the financial year. Table 1 of the report summarised the projected GF spending position as at 30 September 2016 which was that the outturn position was in line with the original budget agreed at Council on 2 March 2016. An analysis of the key variances by service with explanations were provided in Appendix A.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) - Projected Revenue Outturn 2016/17. The HRA was currently forecasting to have a surplus of £207k in 2016/17. The budget was originally set with a projected surplus of £293k. This indicated that there is projected reduction in the surplus of £86k. The position was summarised in the Table 2 of the report and an analysis of the key variances by service with explanations was provided in Appendix B to the report.

Capital Programme - Projected Outturn 2016/17. The current projection for the capital programme was that it would spend £8,696m against the budget of £11,674m. An analysis of the capital programme with explanations for variances was provided in Appendix C to the report.

Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy - 1 April 2016 to 31 October 2016. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2016/17 was approved by Council on 2 March 2016. The Council has adopted the Code of Practice for Treasury Management issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and



Accountancy (CIPFA). One of the requirements of the Code is that members should receive a mid year review report and this part of the report, which covered the first seven months of the 2016/17 financial year, was presented in accordance with this requirement.

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20. At the Council meeting on the 2 March 2016, Council approved the budgets for 2016/17 for the General Fund, HRA and Capital. The capital programme was amended for any carry forwards at the Council meeting on 21 June 2016. This part of the report discussed the impact of the 2016/17 finance settlement which showed a significant reduction in the Revenue Support Grant and the New Homes Bonus. The updated information identified through the Half Year Budget Review process identified a potential funding gap of around £5.7m over the next 3 years. As this was clearly not financially sustainable, the Council is currently considering a detailed medium and longer term strategy to reduce costs and generate significant income to the Council in order to bridge the funding gap. Additional details would be brought to the next P,F&R Committee, which will form part of the budget proposals.

### **Procurement Strategy - 2016 to 2019**

This report asked Members to approve the Council's Procurement Strategy for 2016 to 2019 which was attached as Appendix A.

With the current economic climate constantly presenting challenges to officers responsible for undertaking and managing significant procurement exercises, it was felt that there was a need to think differently and develop new ideas and strategies in all stages of the commercial cycle in order to increase efficiency and maximize savings.

Therefore, as part of its commitment to obtaining best possible value the Council commissioned the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) to conduct a review of all the Council's Procurement activities. EELGA's partner, SPS Consultancy Services Ltd, was brought in to conduct the review, which included a workshop where officers were able to discuss their views, and, in individual private interviews, highlight any issues they felt needed addressing. The results from this exercise of listening to those working in the field were coupled with modern thinking around procurement to produce a new, up-to-date, and forward-looking Procurement Strategy that will direct the Council's procurement activities over the next three years.