

Minutes

Finance and Resources Committee Wednesday, 14th January, 2015

Attendance

Cllr Aspinell (Chair)	Cllr Hirst
Cllr Lloyd (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Kendall
Cllr Clark	Cllr Le-Surf
Cllr Faragher	Cllr Parker

Substitute Present

Cllr Sleep

Also Present

Cllr Baker
Cllr Mrs Coe
Cllr Kerslake
Cllr Mrs Murphy
Cllr Quirk

Officers Present

Jo-Anne Ireland	Acting Chief Executive
Chris Potter	Monitoring Officer & Head of Support Service
Jean Sharp	Governance and Member Support Officer
Steve Summers	Head of Customer Services
Kim Anderson	Partnership, Leisure and Funding Manager
Ashley Culverwell	Head of Borough Health Safety and Localism
Gordon Glenday	Head of Planning & Development
Helen Gregory	Interim Head of Housing
Chris Leslie	Financial Services Manager
Roy Ormsby	Head of Street Scene
John Parling	Strategic Asset Manager
Philip Ruck	Contracts & Corporate Projects Manager

380. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs McKinlay.

The Chair paid tribute to former BBC councillor Richard Harrison who had recently died and on behalf of the Committee extended condolences to Mr Harrison's family.

381. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the 29.10.14 Finance and Resources Committee meeting were RESOLVED to be a true record with the addition of Cllr Mynott's name to the list of Members also present.

382. In Kind Policy

Members were reminded that the Council's Funding Strategy was agreed at Strategy and Policy Board in November 2013. As part of the implementation of that Strategy officers were asked to develop an 'In Kind Policy' to ensure that future funding and support in this area had clear guidance and had a consistent, transparent and accountable approach to ensure that this supported the Council's priorities and ensured that the support was targeted to those most in need.

There were two key strands to the In Kind Policy: Printing and Parking Permits. Currently these arrangements were provided free to certain organisations, details of which were included in Appendix B of the agenda. Members were advised that the financial support given in relation to postal costs of the annual Fun Run would continue for 2015 and 2016 then assistance would be given to enable on-line enrolment to be undertaken.

Members noted that any lease arrangements that the Council had with Voluntary and Community Sector organisations would be covered in a separate Community Let Policy which would go before Asset and Enterprise Committee on 21 January 2015 for Members to consider. Room hire within the Town Hall would be covered in a separate report which would be reported to a future Asset and Enterprise Committee.

Cllr Lloyd MOVED and Cllr Aspinell SECONDED the recommendations in the report and following a full discussion it was RESOLVED that:

- 1. Members agree to the adoption of the In Kind Policy (Appendix A to the report).**
- 2. The following timelines should apply to the implementation of the In Kind Policy:**

2.1 The revised parking permits (one per person for Members, employees and Voluntary Sector organisations) will commence from April 2015.

2.2 Free parking permits will cease to be issued for Brentwood Library from April 2016 (to allow time for Essex County Council to adjust their budgets accordingly)

2.3 The community rates for printing to be implemented in April 2016 to allow organisations to allocate within their budgets.

(Cllr Kendall declared a non-pecuniary interest under the Council's Code of Conduct by virtue of being a trustee of Brentwood Community Transport, also being a member of the Chamber of Commerce.

Cllr Clark declared a non-pecuniary interest under the Council's Code of Conduct by virtue of being a trustee of Brentwood Citizen's Advice Bureau.

Cllr Mynott declared a non-pecuniary interest under the Council's code of Conduct by virtue of being a trustee of Brentwood Community Transport).

383. Customer Services Transformation - Customer Access Strategy

Members were reminded that the Customer Services Transformation Detailed Business Case setting the Council's approach to offer a modern, high quality and effective customer services was approved at the Strategy and Policy Board on the 20 November 2013.

The Business Case identified that the Council was offering very traditional and outdated methods for customers to access its services. The concept of the Customer Services Transformation was to move away from the traditional reception/telephone service offered by the Council to a new model that offered a wide range of modern and efficient access channels for customers.

In order to progress to the new model of customer services a Customer Access Strategy was required to set out the Council's approach to how it would deliver services to customers in the future. The key aim of the strategy was to improve customer experience and satisfaction and drive down costs through economies of scale and joined up processes.

The Customer Access Strategy provided the overarching framework for the channels (or methods) the Council would use to interact with customers to ensure the successful delivery of our services with the resources available.

The strategy set out the following strategic principles that would be focused upon as improvements were made to customers services:

- Be open to all
- Provide Choice
- Meet Needs
- Deliver First Time
- Provide Satisfaction

Members noted that key to the delivery of the Customer Access Strategy was the High Level Implementation Plan which contained a number of key actions. One of these was the development of a Channel Strategy which would identify the channels the Council would use to deliver services to and interact with its customers. A Channel Strategy would set out how the Council would meet the contact demands of its customers using the resources it had available and bearing in mind the needs of the customer.

In addition, the High Level Implementation Plan had an action to undertake investigations into a suitable Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) to ensure that an appropriate system was selected to meet business needs. Future work would also be required to provide end-to-end transactions that were fully integrated with the Council's back office systems and processes through the use of technology.

The High Level Implementation Plan also included the development of a Customer Portal which would provide residents' online access to manage their accounts/services with the Council.

The Draft Customer Access Strategy and High Level Implementation Plan were before Members.

Cllr Lloyd MOVED and Cllr Aspinell SECONDED and following a discussion it was RESOLVED that the Committee approve the Customer Access Strategy and High Level Implementation Plan.

384. Medium Term Financial Plan Update

Members were advised that 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 were managed effectively in order to meet its

statutory responsibilities and deliver the priorities of the Council, over the medium term.

Cllr Lloyd MOVED and Cllr Aspinell SECONDED the recommendations in the report and Members gave their views on the key areas of the initial budget, ie

- (i) Proposed and Anticipated Savings**
- (ii) Proposed Budget Investment**
- (iii) Working Balance & Reserves**
- (iv) Council Tax**

During the debate Cllr Aspinell referred to paragraph 4.23 of the report which referenced the Council's ability to consider investment in property. In light of recent news he requested that Members support his proposal that officers contact Tesco in relation to their land which Hopefield Animal Sanctuary currently occupied to engage in discussion regarding the future of the Sanctuary and whether there was a possibility of acquiring, renting or leasing the land.

It was RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY that:

- 1. The key areas of the initial budget should be considered by the Audit & Scrutiny Committee, with comments and feedback to be received by this Committee at its meeting on 11 February 2015.**
 - 2. Officers be requested to engage in a dialogue with Tesco in relation to their land currently occupied by Hopefield Animal Sanctuary regarding the possibility of acquiring, renting or leasing the land to protect the Sanctuary.**
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