

Minutes

Finance and Resources Committee Wednesday, 11th February, 2015

Attendance

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

Also Present

Cllr Baker
Cllr Kerlake
Cllr Quirk

Officers Present

Ashley Culverwell	Head of Borough Health Safety and Localism
Jo-Anne Ireland	Acting Chief Executive
Chris Leslie	Financial Services Manager
Chris Potter	Monitoring Officer & Head of Support Service
Philip Ruck	Contracts & Corporate Projects Manager
Jean Sharp	Governance and Member Support Officer
Rick Steels	Revenue and Benefits Manager
Steve Summers	Head of Customer Services

447. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

448. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED to approve as a true record the minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee meeting held on 14 January 2015.

449. Performance Indicators - Third Quarter 2014-15

Members were reminded that the Corporate Leadership Board (CLB) met with a cross party group of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members in January 2014 to discuss performance management.

It was agreed that key strategic performance indicators for 2014/15 would be reviewed focusing on monitoring the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and service plans. These were reviewed by CLB on a quarterly basis and reported to Members by exception.

The key Strategic indicators were to be measured annually and would involve a customer satisfaction survey to gauge how residents and businesses rated the Council's performance.

The report before Members detailed the Operational Performance Indicators agreed for 2014/15 and gave performance details for the third quarter of 2014/15.

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

- 1. The Committee notes the Operational Performance Indicators for 2014/15.**
- 2. The Committee notes the performance and contextual information against the Third Quarter Key Performance Indicators 2014/15.**

450. Medium Term Financial Plan Proposals

Members were reminded 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.

At its meeting on 14 January 2015, the Finance and Resources Committee received information on initial funding and proposals for the MTFP. In accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework, these initial proposals were presented to Audit & Scrutiny for their consideration. The report before Members considered and responded to the feedback from Audit & Scrutiny. The report also updated the figures for changes made since January which were a direct result of the on-going work by the Finance Team to review and refine the MTFP figures.

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

- 1. Members note the updated position of the MTFP.**
- 2. An outline Strategy be prepared to support final budget proposals to Council, which provides information on how the funding gaps will be addressed.**
- 3. Finance and Resources support the proposal from Audit & Scrutiny for them to commence their Budget Review work in September to include a service review of existing budgets.**
- 4. Members consider the financial position of the Council when proposing a level of Council Tax for 2015/16.**

451. Rent Setting and Service Charges

The report before Members considered the proposed new rent levels for 2015/16, together with the service charge proposals for tenants and leaseholders.

The report included the consideration of the Housing and Health Committee with regards to the proposed rent levels for 2015/16, and sought the recommendations of the Finance and Resource Committee to Ordinary Council on 4th March 2015.

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

- 1. Members agree to increase Rent to CPI plus 1% from April 2015.**
- 2. Members agree to freeze the proposed Service Charges for 2015/16 for tenants, however any decrease to service charges will be passed onto the tenant.**
- 3. Members agree that Leaseholder Service Charges be calculated in line with the current reconciliation policy.**
- 4. Members agree to applying the formula rent to all new tenancies from April 2015/16**

452. Equality Duty

Members were reminded that a report was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29 February 2012 which set out the new Equality Act

2010 and the implications for Brentwood Borough Council (BBC). The Borough Council had a duty to comply with the Equality Act 2010 as part of the Public Sector Duty. The report before Members provided an update on this previous report about how the Council was currently complying with the Equality Act and also set out how BBC would look to meet its Equality Objectives which were set out in Appendix B of the report.

Cllr Aspinell MOVED and Cllr Lloyd SECONDED the recommendations in the report and following a discussion it was RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY that Members agree to:

- 1. Note the updated report on how the Council is currently complying with the Equality Act in Appendix A to the report.**
- 2. Officers developing an action plan by April 2015 to ensure the Council meets its Public Sector Equality and Diversity Objectives in Appendix B to the report.**

453. Revenues and Benefits - Shared Service Partnership

Members were reminded that, as outlined in the 'New Ways of Working' business case presented to Members in February 2013, it was agreed that efficiency reviews of Council services would be considered. As part of this initiative officers had been investigating a number of options for the improvement and delivery of the Revenues & Benefits Service at reduced cost.

It was anticipated that the introduction of Universal Credit would generate savings for the Council and change working structures and practices. However, there had been a number of problems with the implementation of Universal Credit and whilst this was now due to be introduced in Essex from March 2015 on a small scale, there was no definite timescale for full implementation.

The options for the transformation of the Revenue & Benefits service had included exploring internal in house transformation, sharing the service delivery with neighbouring Councils and outsourcing.

Following consideration of the above options officers had recognised that the shared service model could engender both savings and improved service delivery in the short to medium term.

Cllr Aspinell MOVED and Cllr Lloyd SECONDED the recommendations in the report and it was RESOLVED that:

- 1. Delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer to sign the Revenues & Benefits Shared Services Partnership Agreement between Brentwood Borough Council and Basildon Borough Council.**

2. Approval be given for funding to implement this shared service arrangement as set out in 4.12 of the report.

3. A review of the Revenues & Benefits Shared Services Partnership be undertaken by the Audit & Scrutiny Committee 12 months after the agreement comes into effect.

454. Legal Services Review

The Vice-chair advised the Committee that this item had been withdrawn at the request of the Monitoring Officer.

The report would be the subject of an independent investigation and as such it was not appropriate for Members to discuss either the report or the investigation at this time.

455. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.
