

# Minutes

---

## Finance and Resources Committee Wednesday, 29 October, 2014

### Attendance

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

### Substitute Present

Cllr Barrett (substituting for Cllr Le-Surf)

### Also Present

Cllr Baker  
Cllr Mrs Davies

### Officers Present

Jo-Anne Ireland	Acting Chief Executive
Steve Summers	Head of Customer Services
Ashley Culverwell	Head of Borough Health Safety and Localism
Helen Gregory	Interim Head of Housing
John Parling	Strategic Asset Manager
Philip Ruck	Contracts & Corporate Projects Manager
Carole Tatton-Bennett	Electoral Services Manager

### 222. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Le-Surf.

### 223. Minutes from previous meeting

The Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 June 2014 and they were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### 224. Cycling Provision for BBC

Offering a cycle to work scheme would allow the Authority to provide benefits to staff whilst lessening the environment impact of staff members travelling by car.

The proposed scheme offered tax incentives that enabled staff to enjoy savings on the price of a new bicycle and related accessories such as safety equipment. The Council purchased the bicycle and the employee leased the bicycle via a tax-efficient salary sacrifice scheme.

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

- 1. To agree to the Council registering with Cyclescheme, offering employees the benefits of the scheme.**
- 2. To agree to the provision of cycle racks at the Town Hall and to the investigation of further provision of changing areas and/or showers as part of the Town Hall development.**

#### **225. Half Year Budget Review 2014/15**

The report provided the Finance and Resources Committee with an update of the Council's revenue and capital position for the half year ending 30 September 2014, projected to the year end.

Members were reminded that the Council began the current year with a General Fund (GF) balance of £4.5m.

The projected outturn for the GF was a potential surplus of £90k compared to an original estimate of £81k surplus. After taking account of this projected surplus and the £1.2m earmarked for the William Hunter Way project the projected year end GF working balance was £3.4m.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was projecting a potential deficit of £19k compared to an original estimate of £86k surplus. This gave a projected HRA working balance of £1.6m. The HRA was a ring-fenced account and could not make or receive contributions to/from the GF.

The projected capital spend at 30 September 2014 stood at £6.7m for 2014/15 compared to an original budget of £11.1m. Capital budgets could not contribute to the GF revenue position although officers ensured that all appropriate capitalisations occurred.

**Cllr Aspinell MOVED and Cllr Lloyd SECONDED the recommendations in the report and after a full discussion a vote was taken on a show of hands and it was RESOLVED that Members:**

- 1. Note the projected half year outturn position for 2014/15 of the Council's GF revenue budget at 30 September 2014, as detailed in paragraph 4 of the report;**
- 2. Note the half year position for the HRA at 30 September 2014, as detailed in paragraph 5 and of the report; and**

**3. Note the projected half year outturn position for 2014/15 of the Council's capital budget as at 30 September 2014, as detailed in paragraph 6 of the report.**

**226. Treasury Management Mid -Year Review Report 2014/15**

Members were reminded that the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2014/15 was approved by Council on 5 March 2014.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) issued a Code of Practice for Treasury Management. The Code suggested that Members should be informed of Treasury Management activities at least twice a year, but preferably quarterly. This report therefore ensured this Authority was embracing best practice and meeting the statutory requirements. The legal status of the Code was derived from regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 which required local authorities to "have regard to guidance that the Secretary of State may by regulations specify." The Code and the CIPFA Prudential Code fell into this category.

**Cllr Aspinell MOVED and Cllr Lloyd SECONDED and it was RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

- 1. To note the treasury activity for the period 1 April 2014 to 30 September 2014.**
- 2. To approve changes to the credit methodology where viability, financial strength and support ratings will not be considered as key criteria in the choice of investment counterparties.**

**227. Performance Indicators - Second Quarter 2014/15**

Members were reminded that the Corporate Leadership Board (CLB) met with a cross party group of O&S 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 would be reviewed by CLB on a quarterly basis and reported to Members by exception.

The key Strategic indicators would 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 detail for the second quarter of 2014.

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

**1. The Committee notes the Operational Performance Indicators for 2014/15**

**2. The Committee considers and notes the performance and contextual information against the Second Quarter Key Performance Indicators 2014**

**228. Election Review**

Members were reminded that the Representation of the People Act 1983 required every non-metropolitan county council to appoint an officer of the Council to be Returning Officer for elections of councillors and ensure borough and parish elections were conducted in accordance with rules made by the Secretary of State.

A Returning Officer held office in an individual capacity which was not linked to the position held as an officer of the Council. This gave him/her an independent status to make decisions without interference as they were only answerable to the courts in terms of the way in which they conducted their official duties. This was a personal, not Council appointment.

The Secretary of State could make provision for combining elections. Where a local government election was combined with the poll at a further electoral event, one Returning Officer or Counting Officer would take on responsibility for the combined electors of the poll including the provision of polling stations, combined postal votes and verification of ballot papers with the support of the Local Returning Officer of the council.

The report before Members outlined issues relating to the election process raised in the Finance and Resources Committee of 30 June 2014.

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

- 1. The Council noted the election processes as prescribed in legislation and criteria set by the Electoral Commissions performance standards.**
- 2. The Returning Officer for the combined elections in 2015 considers any changes in legislation and the recommendations of the Council, elected members and political parties.**
- 3. The Council and Returning Officer recommend the Council goes out to consultation on the implications of commencing the Borough count on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014 and Parish count on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2014.**
- 4. Funding for voter encouragement subject to the identified resources (£5,100) being agreed as part of the 2015/16 budget setting process.**

**5. A report would be made to the 10 December 2014 Ordinary Council meeting on the consultation and findings.**

**229. Subscriptions and Membership Review**

Members were reminded that Officers were requested to conduct a Council wide review of subscriptions and memberships with a view to ascertaining which were essential i.e. legally required or of vital business need and which were non-essential.

Heads of Service had reviewed their own departments and produced business reasons for each subscription/membership and lists of those considered non-essential and essential were before Members.

Subscriptions and memberships considered to be non-essential by officers were recommended for cancellation.

**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 cancel all subscriptions and memberships considered non-essential producing an annual saving of £7,680 as shown in Appendix A.**
- 2. Members agree that officers identify any further subscriptions and memberships for deletion.**
- 3. Members agree to maintain all subscriptions and memberships considered essential by officers at an ongoing cost of £82,587.39 annually as shown in Appendix B.**
- 4. Members agree that officers be requested to review the subscriptions and memberships list on an annual basis.**

**230. Residents Survey Report**

The report provided Members with the results of a Residents Survey undertaken by Westco on behalf of the Council between 9<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> July 2014 and options for future engagement with residents.

The Council had not undertaken a comprehensive residents' survey since the 2008/09 Place Survey and the current survey was commissioned to measure and understand residents' satisfaction and views about the Council, its services and the local area. The main headlines from the results with the comparable Place Survey results in brackets were provided for Members' information.

**Cllr Aspinell MOVED and Cllr Lloyd SECONDED the recommendations in the report and following a discussion a vote was taken on a show of hands and it was RESOLVED that:**

1. **Members note the results of the 2014 Residents Survey.**
2. **The results are used to inform development of the Council's service and delivery plans.**
3. **The Council develops a Residents e-Panel for future satisfaction surveys and a number of other engagement and consultation projects and also considers other engagement methods as appropriate to enable satisfaction responses to be received on an ongoing basis.**

- 231. Urgent Business - NNDR Pool** (The Chair accepted this item as Urgent Business since Local Authorities who intended to pool for the financial year 2015/16 must notify DCLG by 31 October 2014).

A report presented to Policy and Resources Board on 13 December 2012 outlined the changes to the distribution of business rates income with effect from 1 April 2013.

Members were reminded that, under the Business Rates Retention Scheme, Local Authorities were able to voluntarily form a business rates retention pool. Local Authorities within a pool were treated as a single authority with all Tariffs and Top-Ups being combined and a single levy rate being applied.

The report considered the concepts and implications of joining an Essex Wide Pool in 2015/16 and sought a decision on whether Brentwood Borough Council should be included.

At its meeting on 9 October 2013 the Performance and Resource Committee had agreed not to join the Essex Wide Pool in 2014/15 since the initiative was untested and the outcomes uncertain.

**Cllr Aspinell MOVED and Cllr Lloyd SECONDED the recommendation included in the report and following a discussion a vote was taken on a show of hands and it was RESOLVED that the Council joins the Essex Wide Pool for business rates in 2015/16.**

- 232. Termination of Meeting**

During the preceding item, in accordance with Rule 28 of Part 4.1 – Council Procedure Rules, the business of the meeting not having concluded by two hours after its start, Members voted and agreed to continue with the meeting for a further 30 minutes.