

Minutes

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

27th January 2016



Present

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
C Bailey	Yes	Mrs S Paul	Apologies
K Bowers	Yes	R Ramage	Yes
J Goodman	Apologies	F Ricci	Yes
P Horner	Yes	B Rose	Yes
D Hufton-Rees	Yes	P Schwier	Yes
D Mann (Vice-Chairman)	Yes	C Siddall (Chairman)	Yes

Cabinet Members Councillors Butland, Mrs W Schmitt, Mitchell, Lady Newton, Mrs L Bowers Flint, T Cunningham, Mrs J Beavis and Tattersley attended the meeting for Agenda Item 5, Scrutiny of the Council's Priorities for 2016-17 and Initial Budget Position.

Also in attendance were Councillors Abbott, Mrs Allen, Banthorpe, Baugh, Dunn, Hensman, O'Reilly-Cicconi, Mrs Pell and Mrs Wilson.

27 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: There were 12 interests declared.

Councillor Abbott declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5, Scrutiny of the Council Budget for 2016-17 Update, as a Member of Rivenhall Parish Council and as a Member of Essex County Council.

Councillors Bailey, Horner, Ramage and Rose declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda Item 5, Scrutiny of the Council Budget for 2016-17 Update, as Members of Witham Town Council.

Councillor Mrs Beavis declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5 Scrutiny of the Council Budget for 2016-17 Update, as a Director of the Braintree Museum Trust Limited.

Councillor Butland declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5, Scrutiny of the Council Budget for 2016-17 Update, as a Member of Great Notley Parish Council and as a Member of Essex County Council.

Councillors T Cunningham and Ricci declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda Item 5, Scrutiny of the Council Budget for 2016-17 Update, as Members of Great Notley Parish Council.

Councillor Lady Newton declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5, Scrutiny of the Council Budget for 2016-17 Update, as a Member of Essex County Council.

Councillor Mrs Pell declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5, Scrutiny of the Council Budget for 2016-17 Update, as a Member of Halstead Town Council and as a member of the Community Centre Charitable Company.

Councillor Siddall declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5, Scrutiny of the Council Budget for 2016-17 Update, as a Director of Ignite Business Enterprise and as a Director of Warner Textiles Limited.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct all Councillors remained in the meeting for all items and took part in the debate and decision thereon.

28 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the Minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25th November 2015 and 9th December 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked or statements made.

30 **SCRUTINY OF THE COUNCIL BUDGET FOR 2016-17 UPDATE**

INFORMATION: Members received a presentation from Councillor Butland, Leader of the Council on the Council's Priorities for 2016-17 and Budget Position update.

The presentation slides can be viewed at:

http://www.braintree.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/825/overview_and_scrutiny_committee

Cabinet Members provided the following information in response to questions raised by Committee Members and other Members present:

- The new Clinical waste service is chargeable to the District Council, but not to customers at this stage. The cost of the service is difficult to estimate as demand is hard to gauge and £30,000 had been allocated to this service.
- The New Homes Bonus reserves would only be used as a last resort to close a funding gap that could not be filled by any other means. Future allocations of Business Rates and New Homes Bonus between the different tiers of Government were not yet known as they would both be subject to consultation.
- Services reviews were on an ongoing basis and this task had been set for officers throughout the Council to put forward ideas to identify savings or generate additional income. Outcomes would be reported back to Cabinet as required.

- The Asset Management team had been looking at potential assets to acquire. If an appropriate property arose inside or outside of the district which would provide a sound return for the tax payers then this would be looked in to.
- The numbers displayed from the Preserved Right to Buys was a conservative figure and it was hoped that these figures would be higher.
- The District Council has had an allocated £0.5million in capital budget every year for grant subsidies to housing associations to enable them to deliver affordable homes. The Planning and Housing Bill, that had been working its way through Parliament, indicated that it was going to be extremely difficult to provide affordable homes for rent. The Council would continue to look at innovative ways to deliver affordable homes for rent.
- Only upper tier authorities such as the County Council and unitaries would be able to increase their Council Tax by an additional 2% for Social Care. This would not apply to District, Borough and City Councils.
- The proposed suspension of green waste would be monitored very closely to assess costs and benefits and impact on grey bin waste; reduced carbon emissions were commented on too.
- With regards to fees and charges, an agreement had previously been made to revise car parking charges every three years. It was agreed in last year's budget that the increase to allotment charges would be brought in over 3 years, this was the second year of the increase.
- With regards to National Insurance contributions, currently the employer had paid a contracted-out rate which was less than the full National Insurance rate. In the 2013 Budget, the Government had announced that this would be taken away from Local Authorities which would cause an estimated increase of £216,000 on the budget for next year. The contracted-out reduced rate was also being withdrawn for employees and there would be an increase in National Insurance contributions.
- There were exemptions already in place for empty properties that were subject to probate. The figure of 271 empty properties in the District did not include properties that were still subject to probate. Probate had to be determined before any additional charges could be applied.
- The Councillor Grant Scheme that would replace the Mi Community scheme would run initially for two years with a review at the end of this period.
- There was a provisional earmarked reserve for the Braintree Swimming Pool as a result of issues with the contractor with regards to tiling. It was not known whether this would need to be called upon and the Council had been in negotiations with the contractor to discuss responsibility. The Council had set aside monies, but would be seeking to claim this back from the contractor if spent. Once the issues have been resolved the Council will know whether the money can be returned to the unallocated balance.
- The provision of funding for planning appeals had been increased when it was agreed to embark on the provision for a new Local Plan. .

- The Essex Business Rates Pool was being administered by Essex County Council. The pool would be allocated before the Member authorising the Pool at the end of the financial year according an agreed formula. Any interest earned on the balance during the year would be taken in to account. There would be small administration costs from ECC. The overall account would be allocated in full.

DECISION: That the report be noted and recommended to Cabinet.

31 **COUNCILLORS' CAPITAL PROGRAMME BIDS**

INFORMATION: One Councillor Capital Programme Bid had been received. The bid had been submitted by Councillor J Abbott and it regarded to the extension of Silver Street Pavilion, Silver End to enable the facility to be used for multiple purposes rather than the current restricted use, predominantly at weekends, for football changing/occasional football events.

A motion was put forward by Councillor Schweir to refuse the Councillor Capital Programme Bid and this was seconded by Councillor Ricci. After being put to the vote the motion was lost.

DECISION: That the Capital Programme Bid received from Councillor Abbott be recommended to Cabinet for inclusion in the Council's Capital Programme for 2016/17.

REASON FOR DECISION: To have independent scrutiny of Councillors' Capital Programme Bids for inclusion in the Council's Budget.

32 **VERBAL UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUPS**

INFORMATION: Members were advised that the work of the Task and Finish Group Review in to Buses and Community Transport had held its second meeting on 2nd December 2015. Officers were working with the Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group to secure a representative to attend the next meeting of the Task and Finish Group, but were yet to secure a date.

The Task and Finish Group for Apprentices in the Braintree District had held its second meeting on 26th January 2016, where representatives from Essex County Council, Colchester Institute and Braintree District Council were in attendance. The Group were intending to hold their next meeting on 23rd February 2016 where recommendations for inclusion the in final report would be looked at. Members of the Task and Finish Group also hoped to meet with Apprentices and Local Businesses in the forthcoming weeks.

33 **DECISION PLANNER**

DECISION: That the Decision Planner for the period 1st February 2016 to 31st May 2016 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.44pm.

Councillor C Siddall
(Chairman)