

Minutes

Cabinet

9th March 2020



These minutes principally record decisions taken and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decisions. A webcast of the meeting is available at www.braintree.gov.uk.

Present:

Portfolio	Cabinet Member	Present
Leader of the Council	Councillor G Butland	Yes
Deputy Leader of the Council Economic Development and Infrastructure	Councillor T Cunningham	Yes
Communities Culture and Tourism	Councillor F Ricci	Yes
Corporate Transformation	Councillor J McKee	Apologies
Environment and Place	Councillor Mrs W Schmitt	Yes
Finance and Performance Management	Councillor D Bebb	Yes
Health and Wellbeing	Councillor P Tattersley	Yes
Homes	Councillor K Bowers	Yes
Planning	Councillor Mrs G Spray	Yes

Also present as invitees of the Leader: Councillor Mann, Leader of the Labour Group and Councillor Mrs Pell, Leader of the Halstead Residents Group.

Councillor Schwier was also present.

51 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

INFORMATION: There were no interests declared.

52 MINUTES

DECISION: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 10th February 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

53 QUESTION TIME

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked, or statements made.

PRESENTATION BY GREENFIELDS COMMUNITY HOUSING ASSOCIATION

INFORMATION: Prior to the presentation, the Chairman welcomed the visitors present at the meeting as well a number of new officers who had commenced their employment with the Council; these included Ms Clare Pattinson, Interim Head of Governance and Acting Monitoring Officer, and Mr Dominic Collins, Corporate Director for Growth.

The Chairman invited Ms Emma Palmer, Chief Executive at Greenfields Community Housing Association (Greenfields), to make her verbal address to the Chamber. Ms Palmer explained that the key aim of Greenfields' proposed merging with Colne Housing was to create one housing association responsible for approximately 12,000 homes. There was a commitment that the community gateway model adopted by Greenfields would be retained following the merge, and the key priorities would be minimal disruption to service delivery and benefits for residents. It was reported that the merger process had been divided into three stages: the aims of the discussions between Greenfields and Colne Housing (Colne) were to be agreed in the first instance, followed by the completion of an outline business case which had now been approved by both boards. The third stage related to a period of consultation with both residents and other stakeholders to inform a final, comprehensive business case that would be presented to both boards concerned on 16th April 2020. The merger would then take place on 1st July 2020, subject to the approval of the business case.

The importance of clear, tangible gains for residents of both Colne and Greenfields as a result of the merger was stressed, although there would be a degree of variance between both sets of gains; for example, the partnership would seek to improve the cycle of major home components (e.g. such as kitchens) for Greenfields' residents that Colne Housing's residents already experienced. Colne's residents would receive an improved repair service, which Greenfields' residents already received. In undertaking the merger, it was also important that there was no deterioration of service delivery for either set of residents; the outline mobilisation plan ensured that this would remain a priority going forward. By bringing such services in-house, there would also be monetary gains (e.g. such as no VAT paid on labour costs). Larger savings would be in the form of borrowing and procurement, which neither Greenfields nor Colne would be able to achieve as separate organisations. Through these savings, the partnership would also be able to commit to an additional 1,300 homes over the first five years of the merger. Furthermore, there would be a commitment to increased community investment, with an increase in local labour and apprenticeships as part of this as well.

Consultation continued to take place with the District's residents, and it had emerged from feedback received thus far that there was some anxiety associated with the potential impact on service delivery following the merge. As such, staff were doing their utmost to reassure residents of both housing associations that disruption to normal service would be minimal and where this did occur, effective mitigation would be employed. The branding of the future partnership had also been discussed with residents; a formal decision had not yet been reached in respect of this. The consultation would continue until 22nd March 2020.

Further to the presentation, there followed a general discussion by Members. Councillor K Bowers, Cabinet Members for Homes, supplemented Ms Palmer's presentation by adding that the proposed new organisation would be a single

community benefit society with a charitable status and the constitutional protection of the Community Gateway Resident Membership Model. The new organisation would also become the largest gateway association in the country. The merge would help to ensure that Greenfields and Colne could help the Council discharge its duty to people who were homeless, continue to administer the housing register and manage the way in which social housing was allocated, as well as oversee how the District's social housing stock grows as the number of homes increases. The merge would also help to ensure that the offer was improved and as effective and efficient as possible for residents. The Council would seek to work positively with the new organisation and embrace the new opportunities that emerged as a result.

The Leader thanked Ms Palmer for her presentation and added that the Council would finalise its response to the proposed merger at the meeting of the Full Council on 23rd March 2020.

55 **CORPORATE STRATEGY 2020-2024**

INFORMATION: The Chairman expressed his thanks to Councillors and officers alike for their hard work and commitment to bringing the Corporate Strategy 2020-2024 into fruition; particular thanks was given to Miss Tracey Headford, Business Solutions Manager, for her hard work in regard to the Strategy's composition.

It was explained that the Corporate Strategy 2020-2024 set out the Council's priorities for the next four-year period, and served to inform the organisation's Annual Plan and Business Plans for each service. Consultation was carried out in the summer of 2019 to identify what was important to the District's residents and local businesses and the feedback from this helped to inform the priorities. Further consultation was undertaken in December 2019 on the new set of corporate priorities. The consultations were complemented by an evidence base compiled from performance information, customer and business feedback, emerging issues both locally and nationally and research materials gathered both internally and externally.

Members were informed that although there was a degree of continuity associated with the Strategy, the Council's political and executive structures would be reviewed by the Leader, in conjunction with the Chief Executive, in order to ensure that the organisation could successfully deliver on its corporate priorities. It was expected that proposals in relation to the Council's future political and executive structures would be made at the Annual General Meeting on 20th April 2020.

DECISION: That the Corporate Strategy for 2020-2024 be recommended to Council for approval.

REASON FOR DECISION: To set the Council's priorities for the next four years and inform the Annual Plan and Business Plans.

56 **THIRD QUARTER PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT 2019/20**

INFORMATION: The Chairman invited Councillor D Bebb, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance Management, to introduce the report.

In respect of performance indicators, Members were informed that as at the end of December 2019, eight projects had been completed and a further 45 were on track.

Eleven performance indicators had met or exceeded their target and four had missed target, of which one was missed by more than 5% and three were missed by less than 5%. Areas of positive performance included the number of hazardous fly-tips on public land cleared within 24 hours of being reported at 100% (153 cleared), and the delivery of 104 affordable homes. The Council had also retained its Customer Service Excellence Accreditation.

Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Environment and Place, was invited to comment on one particular area of underperformance; the percentage of household waste sent for re-use, recycling and composting, which achieved 47.63% against the target of 60%, as set by the Essex Waste Partnership (EWP). It was stressed that the target was an aspirational one, and that the decrease in rates reflected a national trend. Officers within the Council worked hard to try and encourage as many residents as possible to recycle, as exemplified by the Council's issuing of recycling calendars that made use of graphics to make them as user-friendly as possible. Any concerns that residents had in respect of recycling could be reported via the Council's website or telephone call. The majority of residents did comply with recycling procedures, with only a small percentage that failed to do so. It was added that the target of 60% set by the EWP was a County-wide target that was under constant review, and as such could change in future.

In regard to the Council's financial profile, it was advised that an overall positive variance was projected for the year of £530,000 against the budget. Staffing budgets were forecast to be underspent by £327,000, which, after allowing for the corporate efficiency target of £200,000, resulted in a net projected underspend of £127,000. Other expenditure was projected to be slightly over budget by £7,000, income was projected to be overachieved by £410,000. It was relayed that the overall forecast variance for the year had changed adversely by £185,000, which gave a projected positive variance of £715,000; the change was attributed to the forecast additional expenditure of £199,000, a reduction in projected income of £92,000 partially offset by an increase in the projected underspend on staffing of £106,000.

Further to the report and discussion, the Chairman proposed a slight addition to the wording within the recommended decision, as follows: "...as at the end of the calendar year," as opposed to "...as at the end of the year." Members subsequently agreed to the amendment.

DECISION: Cabinet noted and endorsed the Council's performance as at the end of the calendar year.

REASON FOR DECISION: To inform the Cabinet of the performance of the Council.

57 **CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS MADE UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

DECISION: That Cabinet noted the delegated decisions.

PURPOSE OF DECISION: The reasons for the decision can be found in the individual delegated decision.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.00pm.

COUNCILLOR G BUTLAND
(Leader of the Council)