

Review Committee – 14 April 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **14 April 2015** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr M Hoy
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs T J Capon

Cllr J C Burton	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr R R Dray	Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr B T Hazlewood	Cllr Mrs M H Spencer
Cllr J L Lawmon	

VISITING MEMBER

Cllr M J Steptoe

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs L A Butcher, Mrs H L A Glynn, J D Griffin and Mrs A V Hale.

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Scrutton	-	Director
J Bridge	-	Assistant Director, Community and Housing Services
P Gowers	-	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
M Power	-	Committee Administrator

71 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

72 CAR PARKING TARIFF

The Committee considered the report of the Director on the options proposed by the Committee for adjustments to the car parking tariff.

During discussions, the following was noted:-

- The estimated £10,000 cost for changing a car parking order (new signs, advertising, changing meters) is the same regardless of whether there are one or more changes to the order.
- It was felt that existing opportunities for Blue Badge holders to park were adequate and that offering free parking all day was not appropriate.
- The cost of changing the parking order that allows free parking on the four Saturdays before Christmas to add the two Saturdays after Christmas would be minimal. Introducing free parking on the two Saturdays after

Christmas would result an estimated £4,000 in reduced income.

- Extending the free parking from 7 pm to 6 pm might encourage people to come into the towns in the District to use restaurants, etc. This change would result in an estimated £20,000 reduction in annual income.

Considering all four options, on a show of hands, it was:-

Resolved

That the contents of the report be noted and that the following items relating to changes to the car park charging tariff be put forward for consideration during the preparation of the 2016/17 Budget.

- Free parking after 6 pm
- Free parking all day on the first two Saturdays following Christmas.
(ADRS)

73 HOMELESSNESS

The Committee considered the responses to the questions raised at the last meeting of the Committee.

- At the last Review Committee meeting, it was suggested that it might be useful to ask for the views of the Portfolio Holder for Community on homelessness in the District and what she would like to improve. The response from the Portfolio Holder could be reported back to the Committee.
- It was suggested that it might be useful for some Members of the Review Committee to spend time with the Council's Homelessness Team to see how homelessness matters are dealt with on a day to day basis.
- Central Government legislation (Homelessness Act) sets out the key principles in respect of dealing with homelessness, which can be adjusted to suit local needs. When compared with other authorities there are likely to be similarities.
- The Council's Housing Strategy sets out details of the arrangements to meet housing need.
- In terms of homelessness applications, an assessment is undertaken in each case and, where the Council does not have a duty to provide housing, the resident is provided with housing advice and details of other agencies that may be able to help.
- The majority of the temporary and bed and breakfast accommodation is available only outside of the District and there needs to be a proactive approach to sourcing this type of accommodation within the District, which

is difficult given the nature of the housing in the District.

- It was requested that statistics be provided that show how many applications have been made to Essex County Council for transport costs so that the children of families who have been relocated can remain at the same school and how many of these applications have been successful.

Resolved

- (1) That the Portfolio Holder for Community be invited to give her views on homelessness and what other actions she would wish to take on homelessness and that it be requested that a note of these thoughts be communicated to the Review Committee.
- (2) That statistics be provided relating to how many requests Essex County Council has received for funding to enable children who have been re-housed in different areas to remain at the same school and how many of these requests have been successful. (ADCHS)

74 REVIEW OF THE OPERATION OF THE ICT CONTRACT

The Committee considered the report of the Review Committee project team.

The report had been sent to the Portfolio Holder for People and Technology so that she has sight of it before it is presented to Executive. No comments have been received from her.

Members should report any IT issues they experience to the Capita Helpdesk.

Recommended to the Executive

- (1) That the user survey included with the incident closure e mail is stopped.
- (2) That no generic profiles be used for future installs of software on the Councillor iPads.
- (3) That the issues around various apps appearing on Councillor iPads be referred to the Standards Committee so a full investigation can be undertaken.
- (4) That the option of the issue of a Crypto Card be offered to Members who wish to access their Councillor emails other than by the use of an iPad.
- (5) That any built-in increases in the contracts in respect of third party software should, where possible, be linked to CPI.
- (6) That the use of the CMIS software provided by Astech is examined to see if there are additional benefits that could be obtained.

Resolved

- (1) That the Review Committee looks at the situation again in the new Municipal Year to see if it has been possible to reduce the third party software costs by 20%.
- (2) That the third party review be extended to include contracts costing less than £4,000. (ADLS)

75 KEY DECISION DOCUMENT

The Committee received the Key Decision document and noted its contents.

01/15 Commercial Use Car Parks Charging Policy. NHS Breast screen vans would receive a substantial discount on standard charges.

02/15 Housing Allocations. This deals with arrangements for dealing with the housing list and the allocations. It was felt that this information could usefully have been provided to the Committee as part of its review of homelessness.

03/15 Empty Shops Strategy. The Council intends to put the strategy in place to provide a more proactive approach to empty shops in the District. There will be liaison with Town Teams and Chambers of Trade in this respect.

04/15 Empty Homes Strategy. In 2014 there were over 1000 properties empty in the District: the purpose of the strategy is to reduce this number. Landlords/property owners will be contacted to see if properties can be brought back into occupation. There is no longer dispensation in Council tax in respect of empty property.

05/15 Homes Strategy. The Strategy provides an update to the Council's 2014 Housing Strategy. The strategy seeks to influence key partners and promote the provision of quality, affordable housing in the District, and promote the creation of sustainable communities for residents.

06/15 Advice Services Commissioning. Currently the Council grant funds the Rochford and Rayleigh CAB on an annual basis to provide an advice service in the District. Under the proposed arrangements the Council will commission advice services for three years.

76 WORK PLAN

The Committee considered and approved its Work Plan.

The following was noted:-

'Pot Holes' and 'Building Control' reviews had not been undertaken during 2014/15. A review of the Council's Housing Strategy would be suggested as a topic for review by next year's Review Committee. Review Committee

Members can email the Overview and Scrutiny officer if they have any other suggestions for future reviews.

77 ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the draft Annual Report on its workings, which would be submitted to Full Council.

During discussion, it was suggested that a review of 'Homelessness' could be undertaken by the Review Committee in 2015/16.

Resolved

That the annual report be submitted, with the amendments detailed above, to Full Council.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm.

Chairman

Date

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