

Review Committee – 5 February 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **5 February 2013** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs J R Lumley

Cllr B T Hazlewood
Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr T E Mountain

Cllr Mrs C E Roe
Cllr I H Ward

VISITING MEMBER

Cllr Mrs J E McPherson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs A V Hale.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	- Chief Executive
C Cox	- Financial Services Manager/Chief Accountant
M Yolland	- Community Safety Co-ordinator
P Gowers	- Overview and Scrutiny Officer
S Worthington	- Committee Administrator

ALSO PRESENT

Insp J Appleby – Essex Police

16 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17 ROCHFORD DISTRICT COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

(Note: Cllr Mrs J E McPherson declared a non pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of chairing the local Joint Community Safety Partnership and representing the Council on the Police and Crime Panel. Mr P Warren declared a non pecuniary interest by virtue of chairing Safer Essex and providing advice to the Police and Crime Panel. Cllr Mrs J R Lumley also declared a non pecuniary interest by virtue of being a trustee of Young Carers.)

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Community Services providing an update of the achievements of the Rochford District Community Safety Partnership.

Officers provided a brief update on progress with respect to the Partnership's key priorities for 2012/13 since production of the report. In the period from

April – December 2012 there were 814 more recorded crimes than in the same period the previous year. There were 82 recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour, ie, an increase of 7% on the same period the previous year. There was an increase of 5 repeat incidents of domestic abuse, ie an increase of 2% compared to the same period last year and there were 6 more domestic burglaries recorded for the period April to November when compared to the same period last year. However, it was emphasised that the recorded All Crime rate in the District was the lowest in the county; there was an overall increase in Essex of around 41% during this period.

In response to Member questions, the following points were noted:-

- The increase in the number of recorded crimes in Essex and nationally may be attributable to the recession. There was a marked increase in serious acquisitive crime, including domestic burglary, theft from vehicles and shoplifting.
- The majority of acquisitive crime cases involve prolific offenders, often related to drug and alcohol dependency. Work is being undertaken via an integrated offender management system focusing on supporting such offenders with rehabilitation and reintegration into work.
- The Police, via Operation Pepper, are working with the business community to try to minimise instances of repeat shoplifting at retail premises. Stores often display luxury goods at the store entrance to entice shoppers in, but this often results in opportunistic shoplifting; the Police are working with stores on ways to make the store layout more immune to this kind of shoplifting. The Police have had some success in apprehending shoplifters via the retailers' CCTV footage.
- The Police budget has now been formally agreed; the precept will be 3.49% for 2013/14. It was anticipated that the level of funding available for Community Safety Partnerships would be the same as last year, however it was not yet known how that funding would be distributed. It was also possible that there may be conditions around how funding should be spent and there may be changes around accountability for spending.
- The Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) funding proposals are currently based on the existing Police Blueprint, which is seeking a reduction in Police expenditure of approximately £43 million over four years. The PCC will be taking over the Police budget, the budget for Community Safety, victim support, drugs and alcohol, etc. Information on the Police budget is available on the PCC website.
- As with other public services, overall funding from Central Government is declining. Work will therefore need to be undertaken around public perception/expectations, given the continuing decrease in funding.

- The Domestic Abuse Reduction Officer post is partly funded from income received from the delivery of domestic abuse training courses, the crime and disorder reserve and by the Council. Alternative sources of funding are also being sought for this post.
- Victims of domestic abuse were predominantly women; however there were also many male and child victims of such abuse.
- There are 3 Neighbourhood Constables within the Rochford District who have dedicated community policing roles and are supported by Police Community Support Officers. Since the Police implementation review, the response times by the Crime Team, managed by CI Cummings, to crime-related incidents have been quicker and the list of outstanding jobs has decreased.
- It was not yet known whether any monies would be forthcoming from the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) for community safety related issues, such as domestic abuse and drugs and alcohol. Much would depend on what is included in the plans they are developing.
- Approval is now awaited from the Police and Crime Commissioner for the formal merger of the Rochford District and Castle Point Community Safety Partnerships. This will, however, have the effect of formalising arrangements that are already in place, rather than creating anything different.
- Rochford District Police falls within the Essex Police South Local Policing Area (LPA) that includes Castle Point, Southend and Basildon. There are differences in crime within these different areas; however joint working happens when it is practicable to do so. Joint Rochford District and Castle Point sub groups have been operating for some time.

Resolved

That the contents of the report be noted. (HCS)

18 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT, ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY STATEMENT 2013/14

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Finance detailing the Council's treasury management strategy for borrowing and investment.

Responding to a Member question relating to paragraph 2.5 of the report referring to treasury management training for Members, officers confirmed that there has been previous Member training, with further training scheduled for July 2013. It was further noted that this Committee will in future be responsible for systematically scrutinising treasury management strategy in advance of this being reported to Council. This Committee was responsible

for reviewing the policy and assessing whether it is fit for purpose.

Officers advised, in response to a Member query around paragraph 5.3 of the report relating to the ratio of financing costs to the net revenue stream, that the investment income that the Council will receive will be higher than the financing cost and therefore a net income.

In response to a concern expressed by a Member about the likelihood of RBS being forced to pay a large fine for rate fixing, following Barclays Bank's large fine for rate fixing last year, officers stressed that the Council receives daily 'Credit Watch' notifications and officers closely monitor individual financial institutions and make a judgment as to whether or not to take money out of individual institutions.

Responding to a further concern raised by a Member about the potential risk of the UK losing its triple A rating, which would inevitably lead to a significant reduction in investment sources for the Council, officers confirmed that in this event there could be a need to amend the Council's policy, which would need to be approved by Full Council.

Officers stated, in response to a Member enquiry relating to paragraph 10.13 of the report, that a definitive investment profile had not been brought to this meeting. However, there were three investments placed for 364 days maturing at various points in the year, and the majority of the remainder was in call accounts. It was emphasised, in response to a supplementary query, that the Council was unable to place all its finances in 364-day investments as it was necessary to have immediate access to some funds in order to fund precepts, etc. Officers confirmed that examples of profiles of the Council's investment institutions would be provided during the course of the July 2013 Member training.

In response to a Member questioning why the Council did not use the CIPFA approach for determining credit worthy counter parties, officers confirmed that the Sector service used by the Council, while using a risk weighted scoring system, also provided the opportunity for greater yield.

Officers confirmed, with respect to references on page 6.15 of the report to the Bank of England bank rate, that they would verify whether this should be replaced by references to 'base rate'.

Members concluded the discussion by making particular reference to the merit of inviting the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources to future meetings of the Committee when the Council's performance against the treasury management strategy would be scrutinised.

Resolved

- (1) That the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy including the investments instruments, indicators,

limits and delegations contained within the report be noted.

- (2) That the Capital Expenditure Forecasts be noted.
- (3) That the minimum revenue provision policy for 2013/14 be noted.
- (4) That the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for external debt, as detailed in the report, be noted.
- (5) That the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources be asked to attend future Review Committee meetings that will be scrutinising the Council's performance against the treasury management strategy. (HF)

19 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT

The Committee considered the Key Decisions Document and noted its contents. It was noted that the Corporate Plan would be considered by Full Council at its meeting in April and that it was possible that a further report relating to the recent Peer Review would be made to the Executive in March.

20 WORK PLAN

The Committee considered its work plan. It was noted that there was one addition since the last meeting, relating to 16 April 2013, following a request from a Member to receive an emergency planning presentation. During debate it became apparent that this had been prompted by a specific out of hours incident, full details of which were unclear. This issue would be investigated outside the meeting, but Members concurred that this item should be removed from the work plan for 16 April 2013, as there was Member training scheduled for the early part of the new municipal year relating to emergency planning.

Resolved

That the work plan be approved, subject to removal of emergency planning on 16 April 2013. (HLEMS)

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm.

Chairman

Date

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