

The Executive – 22 July 2009

Minutes of the meeting of **The Executive** held on **22 July 2009** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr T G Cutmore
Vice Chairman: Cllr Mrs M J Webster

Cllr Mrs L A Butcher
Cllr Mrs T J Capon
Cllr K J Gordon

Cllr K H Hudson
Cllr P F A Webster

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr M G B Starke.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	- Chief Executive
R J Honey	- Corporate Director (Internal Services)
G Woolhouse	- Corporate Director (External Services)
Y Woodward	- Head of Finance, Audit and Performance Management
Sarah Fowler	- Head of Information & Customer Services
R Evans	- Head of Environmental Services
J Bostock	- Committee Services Manager

179 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

180 PERFORMANCE REPORT TO MEMBERS ON KEY PROJECTS FOR THE PERIOD APRIL TO JUNE 2009

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Finance, Audit and Performance Management on progress against the key policies and actions for 2009/10 up to 30 June 2009 and the progress on decisions schedule.

Members concurred with the observation of the Chairman that, to assist public understanding, the Performance Report should contain full definitions rather than acronyms.

In response to questions about the Rayleigh Grange Community Centre (minute 363(3)/07), the Corporate Director (External Services) advised on the background to the detailed completion of identified repair works. It was understood that all identified works had now been completed (and this was in the process of being confirmed by the Council's Asset Manager).

The Executive concurred with the observation of the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation, Cllr K H Hudson, that it would be of value to investigate the most appropriate way of ensuring that safety certificates (such as electricity, gas, fire alarm and emergency lighting) are available in respect of Council owned buildings that are leased.

During discussion on the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park (Minute 21/09), Members concurred with the observation of the Portfolio Holder for Service Development, Improvement and Performance Management, Cllr Mrs M J Webster, that, in terms of optimising opportunities for grant funding, it would be appropriate to replace the term 'Visitor Centre', with 'Educational and Environmental Centre'.

Resolved

That the progress against key projects for the first quarter of 2009/10 and the progress on decisions schedule be noted subject to:-

- An investigation into the most appropriate way of ensuring that safety certificates are available in respect of Council owned buildings that are leased.
- Replacement of the term 'Visitor Centre' with 'Educational and Environmental Centre' under Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park proposals. (HFAPM)

181 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) 2009/10 – UPDATE

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Finance, Audit and Performance Management on the current position on the MTFS, renewal of the Information Communication Technology (ICT) contract and proposals relating to organisational structure.

It was noted that a recent Local Government Association conference had highlighted the economic pressures on the public purse.

The Portfolio Holder for Service Development, Improvement and Performance Management referred to the positive nature of the ongoing negotiations in relation to the proposed extension of the ICT contract. It was agreed that the proposal should be endorsed in principle, the final decision to be made by the Portfolio Holder for Service Development, Improvement and Performance Management subject to that Portfolio Holder being satisfied with the outcome of the remaining negotiations.

Resolved

- (1) That the current position on the MTFS and progress in bridging the budget gap for 2009/10 be noted.
- (2) That the post of Environmental Enforcement Officer be included on the permanent establishment and recruited to.

- (3) That the proposal for the extension of the ICT contract with Sungard PS for a two year period be endorsed in principle, the final decision to be made by the Portfolio Holder for Service Development, Improvement and Performance Management subject to that Portfolio Holder being satisfied with the outcome of the remaining negotiations.
- (4) That the organisational changes suggested in the report be agreed in principle so that, following consultation with staff in the early autumn, detailed changes can be brought forward for Member approval.
(HFAPM)

182 ACCESS TO SERVICES – UPDATE

The Executive considered the update report of the Head of Information and Customer Services on the Access to Services Strategy.

Members endorsed the observation of the Portfolio Holder for Service Development, Improvement and Performance Management that the report recommendations could be commended as a means of aligning service provision with the needs of residents. Specific thanks were extended to staff in the reception areas at both the Rochford and Rayleigh Offices for the high standard of public service provided and maintained.

With regard to customer feedback statistics for 2009/10, it was noted that internal structures and how/whether to record this type of information varied between authorities. This meant that it can be difficult to make like for like comparisons. The system being used to measure new National Indicator 14, GovMetric, will mean that elements of information from different authorities will be available.

Resolved

- (1) That the trial of the extended opening hours at reception be discontinued.
- (2) That the Council's main reception be open from 8.30am to 5.30pm for personal visitors and phone callers (8.30am to 5.00pm Friday), with staff hours starting from 8.00 am.
- (3) That the customer feedback statistics for 2009/10 be noted. (HICS)

183 CAPITAL PROGRAMME – MONITORING REPORT FOR QUARTER ONE OF 2009/10

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Finance, Audit and Performance Management on the progress in completing the General Fund Capital Programme for 2009/10.

Resolved

That the update on the progress in completing the General Fund Capital Programme for 2009/10 be received. (HFAPM)

184 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR QUARTER ONE OF 2009/10

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Finance, Audit and Performance Management on the Financial Management Report for Quarter One of 2009/10.

The easy to understand layout of the report was endorsed.

It was noted that Hackney Carriage Vehicle licensing was a seasonal activity and that the budget would need to be monitored over a period to see if it needed revising down.

During discussion, reference was made to the gas works being undertaken in Rayleigh Town Centre. It was disappointing that articles in the local media could give the impression that shops were not trading. The Council's own 'Shop Local' campaign should bring some positive publicity for the Town.

Resolved

That the contents of the Financial Management Report for Quarter One of 2009/10 be noted. (HFAPM)

185 BUSINESS RATES – WRITE OFF

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Community Services on the writing-off of business rates in respect of a premises in Hockley that had ceased trading.

It was noted that the extensive background activity associated with endeavours to recover outstanding rates in cases such as this could mean there is a relatively long period between a potential problem being identified and a recommendation that outstanding rates are written-off. It was also noted that the debt could be written back for further collection activity if circumstances changed.

Resolved

That the outstanding Business Rates in respect of 8-11 Eldon Way, Hockley, in the sum of £20,927.03 be written off as irrecoverable. (HCS)

The meeting closed at 8.14 pm.

Chairman

Date

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