

Review Committee – 5 July 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **5 July 2016** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J C Burton
Vice-Chairman: Cllr B T Hazlewood

Cllr N L Cooper	Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr R R Dray	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr Mrs J R Gooding	Cllr Mrs L Shaw
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr C M Stanley
Cllr M J Lucas-Gill	Cllr A L Williams

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr N J Hookway.

OFFICERS PRESENT

M Howlett	-	Principal Environmental Health Officer
M Petley	-	Senior Accountant
A Paddon	-	Senior Environmental Health Officer
P Gowers	-	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
M Power	-	Committee Administrator

149 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

150 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW 2015/16

The Committee considered the report of the Section 151 Officer seeking the views of the Committee on the information presented in the report, before it is presented for approval by Full Council on 19 July 2016.

Members were advised that, following the result of the European referendum and the immediate effect this had had upon the UK economy, there was one update to the report. Paragraph 4, Investment Performance for 2015/16, stated that current forecasts for the Bank of England base rate to remain at 0.50% until April 2017, and then rise to 0.75%. This forecast had since been changed. The base rate is now expected to drop to 0.25% in July 2016 and not rise until April 2018.

In response to Member questions, the following was noted:

- The Council's investment strategy for 2016/17 is to remain as risk free as possible, with its investments in relatively safe funds. Most of the accounts in which the Council invests will move in line with the base rate. The

estimated income from investment for 2016/17 is likely to be in the region of £30,000 because of the current uncertainty in the market.

- Members requested clarification in respect of paragraph 2.2 of the officer report that, rather than Executive decisions on borrowing, investment or financing being delegated solely to the Section 151 Officer, decisions are made in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.
- The best rate that the Council is likely to achieve is 0.85% with Lloyds Bank on a 12 month deposit. The favourable rates for savings advertised in the press will generally relate to personal bank accounts, rather than corporate accounts.
- Council approved the 2016/17 Treasury Management Strategy on 19 April 2016, which stated that Rochford District Council would only invest in counterparties with a sovereign rating of AA+ or better. Following the European Referendum, and the vote in favour of leaving the European Union, the United Kingdom's credit rating has been reduced to AA, from AAA. Upon discussion with our Treasury Management advisors, Capita Treasury Services Ltd, the S151 Officer seeks approval to remove the United Kingdom from this stipulation of credit rating criteria. Capita have advised that it would be very unlikely for a UK institution to be allowed to default, given the Government's robust financial backing and the consequences this might have on the industry as a whole.

Resolved

- (1) That the Treasury Management Annual Review Report 2015/16 be recommended to Full Council.
- (2) That the covering report to Full Council includes the request for approval to enable Rochford District Council to continue to invest in UK institutions despite the sovereign rating downgrade from AAA to AA.
- (3) To note the change in Bank of England Base rate forecast. (S151)

151 BUDGET PROCESS/CONSULTATION

The Committee heard from the Senior Accountant with respect to the budget process and consultation with residents.

The Senior Accountant advised that there had been 344 responses by Rochford District residents to the budget survey undertaken in 2015, from a population of 83,000, which equates to 0.55%. Three other local authorities that undertake budget consultations had had even lower response rates. Essex County Council does not undertake budget surveys.

During discussion the following suggestions were made in respect of how future budget consultations should be conducted:

- That the method adopted by Southend Borough Council whereby a draft Budget approved by Full Council is put out for consultation to residents be considered. This would provide residents with the opportunity of responding to Council's budget proposals for the forthcoming year.
- That resident consultation be built into the process when determining the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- That a more effective method of communication of the survey be employed and that Parish/Town Councils be engaged. (Historically, the budget survey has been included in the Council's newsletter, Rochford District Matters. However, this will no longer be available in print, only on-line.)
- The questions in the survey should be more relevant and specific than they are currently and they should include more information, for example, information on the costs of contracts/services and real alternatives available.

It was confirmed that the cost of the survey would be in officer time.

Resolved

That the comments of the Committee be fed back to the S151 Officer and that the Committee be provided with information on different options for improving resident engagement in the budget process. (S151)

152 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT

The Committee considered the Key Decisions Document and noted its contents.

4/16 Environmental Health Service Plan. At its meeting in June, the Committee had requested more information on the Service Plan. The Principal Environmental Health Officer and Senior Environmental Health Officer gave a presentation to Members.

In response to questions, the following was noted:

- The Food Plan is available on the Council's website.

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- Most of the restaurants in the District have received food hygiene ratings of either 4 or 5 out of a possible 5. The Environmental Health (EH) team will work with establishments to assist them in improving their score where necessary.
- Burger vans are classed as mobile caterers and are included in the inspection process. They are inspected both where they are registered (that is, where the wagon is stored overnight) and also where trading takes place. The EH team will work with other authorities as necessary in this respect. The frequency of inspections is dependent on the risk rating attached to the business.
- The majority of the work undertaken by the EH team relates to inspections. It is almost exclusively a statutory service and inspections are undertaken within the national scheme: annual reports are submitted to the relevant Government bodies. The Council has a duty to investigate nuisance complaints.
- The EH team will make more frequent visits to those establishments where there have been issues. Businesses will be asked to resolve the issues within a specified time.
- Although it is incumbent on new businesses to register with EH a minimum of 28 before they open, the Council does not enforce this if the business is not classed as 'high risk'. The Council aims to support businesses so that they can open and trade as soon as possible: the business will be classed as 'awaiting inspection' in the interim period.
- The inspections undertaken by the EH team are unannounced. In extreme cases, the Council has the power to close premises immediately: the case will then be referred to Magistrates Court, to be heard within three days.
- The Council's procedure for dealing with nuisance complaints is based on best practice of other authorities. The Food Law Code of Practice details the standard operating procedures that must be followed and this information is included in the Food Plan.
- Copies of the presentation will be circulated to Members of the Committee.

153 WORK PLAN

The Committee considered its Work Plan. The following was noted:

ECC Highways re speed limits. The Deputy Cabinet Member for Essex County Council has agreed to attend a meeting of the Committee and has requested that the areas that the Committee wishes to discuss be provided to him in advance of the meeting.

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Suitability and relevance of the Constitution. The Assistant Director, Legal Services will be undertaking a review of the Council's Constitution. The Committee would like to request that she makes a presentation to the project team explaining how she plans to undertake the review. Members will then be in a position to decide whether they review the Constitution in its entirety or focus on specific parts of it. The review would provide Members with the opportunity of providing input.

It was agreed that each political group on the Council should be represented on the project team. The project team was agreed: Cllrs J C Burton, N L Cooper, R R Dray, Mrs J R Gooding, M J Lucas-Gill, Mrs C M Mason and C M Stanley.

The meeting closed at 9.02 pm.

Chairman

Date

If you would like these minutes in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.