

The Executive – 17 July 2013

Minutes of the meeting of **The Executive** held on **17 July 2013** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr T G Cutmore
Vice Chairman: Cllr K H Hudson

Cllr K J Gordon	Cllr M Maddocks
Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr Mrs J E McPherson	Cllr M J Steptoe

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	–	Chief Executive
Y Woodward	–	Head of Finance
S Fowler	–	Head of Information and Customer Services
R Evans	–	Head of Environmental Services
N Khan	–	Principal Solicitor
J Bostock	–	Member Services Manager

133 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

134 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2012/13 – UPDATE

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Finance on the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

It was noted that confirmation had been received that the Government would fund councils to freeze council tax on the basis of an increase of 1% in tax each year over the next two years (2014/15 and 2015/16).

Responding to questions, the Head of Finance advised that:-

- In previous years public consultation on the budget had involved questions on the rating of services by priority. Consultation was undertaken via the Council's newspaper and website, libraries, partner organisations and the 'Have your Say' group of residents. There was usually in the region of three to four hundred respondents. The Portfolio Holder would be considering a different approach to questioning this year.
- The business rates multiplier is set nationally and the Council has no say in this. A discretionary rate relief policy is being considered as part of the new economic growth strategy.

Resolved

- (1) That the current position of the Medium Term Financial Strategy be noted.
- (2) That the outline timetable for the 2014/15 budget process, as set out in the report, be agreed.
- (3) That the latest position on the forecasts for local government financing be noted.
- (4) That public consultation in preparation for the budget process be conducted.
- (5) That work on developing a county wide pool be supervised through the Essex Strategic Leaders Finance Group.
- (6) That the Grants to Voluntary Organisations be set by Full Council on 17 December 2013.
- (7) That the Council Tax discounts and exemptions, as set out in the report, be recommended to Council.
- (8) That Option 1 on page 6.16 of the report be the preferred option for the funding of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme. (HF)

135 ICT SECURITY POLICY AND PRACTICE

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Information and Customer Services on approval of the updated Corporate Information Security Policy, a standardised approach to the use of IT by Members and remote access to IT systems by officers.

During discussion it was noted that:-

- Needs associated with access to wi-fi would be considered on a case-by-case basis as the project rolled out.
- Whilst it is understandable that some Members may question the need for an additional electronic device, proposals had been developed to accord with a Government directive. Single multi-function devices can be costly.
- The 'Good' software to be installed on the iPads would provide a notably secure environment, facilitating remote lock-down. Each iPad would contain a 'find me' tracking application to assist should it be mislaid.
- It is likely that savings would be associated with a move to more paperless activities.

- Parish and Town Councils are not affected because their service areas do not require interaction with the Government secure network.

Resolved

- (1) That the updated Corporate Information Security Policy and Personal Commitment Statement, as attached to the report, be approved.
- (2) That a standard approach to the use of IT by Members, as set out in paragraph 3.14 of the report, be implemented.
- (3) That the Portfolio Holder for Service Development, Improvement and Performance Management be authorised to approve a specific procedure note around Members' use of IT, as set out in paragraph 3.15 of the report.
- (4) That the Head of Information and Customer Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Service Development, Improvement and Performance Management, be authorised to implement a system of remote access to IT systems by officers should this be necessary once the Council's IT security submission has been assessed by the Cabinet Office. (HICS)

136 POLICY ON MEMORIALS IN PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Environmental Services on the adoption of a policy for memorials in parks and open spaces.

Resolved

- (1) That the Policy for Memorials in Parks and Open Spaces, as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report, be adopted.
- (2) That a memorial feature be constructed within the Pet Memorial Area of Cherry Orchard Country Park in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for the Environment, Leisure, Arts and Culture. (HES)

137 DISABLED FACILITY GRANT WORKS UPDATE

The Executive received the report of the Head of Community Services on factors that impact on the time taken to complete disabled facility grant works.

During discussion the Portfolio Holder for Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Strategic Housing Functions referred to the fact that, whilst further work was required, the timeframes associated with processing disabled facility grants had been reducing over the last two years with rigorous targets in place. As previously identified some factors, such as associated legislation not being fit for purpose, were outside the control of the Council.

Responding to questions the Portfolio Holder confirmed that more frequent performance reporting to Members could be introduced as appropriate. Detail

on the total number of applications received over the last year would be circulated to the Executive.

Members noted that some projects comply with permitted development whereas others may require planning consent. The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Heritage would be provided with specific detail on any planning related cases.

It was agreed that it would be useful for Members of the Executive to have sight of the recently published District Council Network report on Disabled Facility Grants.

Resolved

That, given concerns in relation to the time taken to complete disabled facility grant works, a further update report be submitted to the next meeting of the Executive. In the meantime, the recently published District Council Network report on disabled facility grants be circulated to Members of the Executive. (HCS)

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

138 ACACIA HOUSE

The Executive considered the exempt report of the Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services on further exploring proposals for Acacia House.

During discussion Members felt that a number of factors pointed to it being appropriate for the building to be marketed for disposal, thereby realising a capital receipt.

The costs and complexities associated with introducing a viable commercial residential scheme run by the Council would be high compared with likely revenue from what would be a modest enterprise. There would also be on-going implications for the officer resource.

It was observed that the merits of going to auction should be part of any disposal considerations.

Resolved

That, given associated financial considerations, Acacia House now be marketed for disposal with planning permission for residential in the most advantageous way. (HLEMS)

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.

Chairman

Date

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