

The Executive – 17 June 2020

Minutes of the meeting of **The Executive** held on **17 June 2020** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr M J Steptoe
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs C E Roe

Cllr D S Efde
Cllr S P Smith
Cllr I H Ward

Cllr M J Webb
Cllr A L Williams
Cllr S E Wootton

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs A H Eves, Mrs J G Gooding, M Hoy, G J Ioannou, Mrs J R Lumley, Mrs C M Mason, Mrs L Shaw, C M Stanley and Mrs C A Weston.

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Scrutton	-	Managing Director
A Hutchings	-	Strategic Director
M Harwood-White	-	Assistant Director, Assets & Commercial
M Hotten	-	Assistant Director, Environment & Place
A Law	-	Assistant Director, Legal & Democratic
N Lucas	-	Assistant Director, Resources
S Worthington	-	Principal Democratic and Corporate Services Officer
M Power	-	Democratic Services Officer

67 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2020 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed in due course by the Chairman.

68 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Mrs J R Lumley declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 8 of the Agenda by virtue of being an Essex County Council Member, with a town centre in her Division.

69 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM COUNCILLORS

The Proper Officer reported that, pursuant to Executive Procedure Rule 3.1, the following Member questions had been received:

- (1) From Cllr Mrs C M Mason to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Cllr S P Smith:-

“Please confirm the amount received from central government to assist with the Coronavirus situation and advise how it is being allocated.”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance responded as follows:-

The table below sets out a breakdown of how the Council is currently anticipating its grant allocation of £902,370 will be used, based on the financial return to MHCLG in May (which was previously circulated to all Members). This represents the Council's best projections of income losses/costs over the course of 2020/21 but will be subject to review and refinement as the financial year progresses and the figures crystallise.

Pressures/Income Loss	Amount (£)
Mitigation against loss of Car Park Income	540,675
Additional Temporary Accommodation costs	123,106
IT resilience/ 24 hour availability costs	102,000
Mitigation against expected loss of Building Control income	51,619
Mitigation against expected loss of planning income	28,125
Leaflets to publicise Community Hub	13,412
Mitigation for Leisure services income	12,670
Mitigation against expected loss of Licensing income	13,108
Additional Waste collection costs	5,000
Software related to business grants	4,500
Business Grants Admin Costs	3,780
Facebook advertising campaign for business grants	2,000
Emergency Food Parcels	1,000
IT server works	1,000
Other	375
Total Allocation Received (Tranches 1 and 2)	902,370

(2) From Cllr M Hoy to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Cllr S P Smith:-

"On page 7.15 of item 7 – Financial Outturn 2019/20 - Item PR025 (payment to local suppliers within 10 days) is indicated as Red with only 56.4% paid within that time compared to the target of 90%. The year to date figure is 62.7% to the same target.

This is very disappointing to see as cashflow is of the utmost importance to small businesses, particularly as this was leading into the shutdown of many businesses due to the Virus. The reason is given as staff changes; however, a good system should not allow this to happen.

What has been done to rectify this to bring the payments to the target of 90% or above? Have the payment times improved since this report?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance responded as follows:-

The Council only has one officer who deals with payments and this role is currently being covered by a temporary member of staff who unfortunately was not made aware that local suppliers should be prioritised for quick payment.

The officer is also dependent on the rest of the Council raising and receipting orders in a timely fashion to allow prompt payment. The officer is now aware of the PI, and we therefore expect payment times to improve in future. In addition, the processes/structure of the team are planned to be reviewed shortly, which will include ensuring the roles and responsibilities of individual officers are set out clearly and appropriate performance monitoring carried out.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance added that the target of achieving 90% of payments to local suppliers within 10 days was not prescribed centrally but was a target set by the Council. It was noted that 'local suppliers' applies to companies in the Castle Point and Southend Boroughs as well as the Rochford District. Actions would be put in place to ensure a significant improvement is seen in the next quarter's figures.

70 FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2019/20

The Executive considered the report of the Assistant Director, Resources providing details of the provisional outturn position against the 2019/20 revenue budget.

The Assistant Director, Resources advised that the report covered last year's figures only; there was no impact on the figures of the Covid-19 pandemic issues at that point. It was important to note that the Council had been in a strong position to deal with the issues arising from the pandemic because of its efficient financial management. The situation would be monitored in 2020/21 and the Council was in the strong position of having a healthy level of reserves, which was important because of the ongoing pandemic.

Members were advised that this was another successful financial year for Rochford District Council and, as a result of economies and staff working both dynamically and innovatively, there was a surplus at the end of the year. The underspend on the capital programme was due to the fact that not all projects had been able to be delivered during 2019/20. The situation would be reviewed during the first quarter of 2020/21 to ensure that using the funding carried forward from 2019/20 to undertake the planned programme remained achievable. There may be a need to reprofile.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance added that a significant proportion of the Council's finances were ring fenced and could not be spent elsewhere. It was important that the Council maintained its reserves, continued to carry on its day to day business, progressed initiatives and delivered projects for the benefit of the community.

Resolved

- (1) That the provisional outturn position against the 2019/20 revenue budget, as contained in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.3, be noted.
- (2) That the Council's 2019/20 Statement of Accounts are still being prepared and will be subject to audit by external auditors EY; it is therefore possible

that changes may be made to the accounts during this period which could alter the position presented within this report be noted.

- (3) That the transfer from the Business Rate Smoothing reserves of £600,410, set out in paragraph 2.3 (Non-Service Specific Expenditure), be approved.
- (4) That the transfer from the Pensions reserve of £63,000 set out in paragraph 2.3 (Finance Portfolio) be approved.
- (5) That £233,887 of revenue carry forward requests, as set out in Appendix 3, be approved.
- (6) That £359,610 of revenue grant funded carry forward requests, as set out in Appendix 3 be approved.
- (7) That the earmarked reserves closing balance at 31 March 2020, including those rolled forward as grant funded and ring-fenced projects, as per Appendix 1 be noted and approved.
- (8) That the final outturn capital position against the 2019/20 capital budget, as contained in paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5 and shown in Appendix 2 be noted.
- (9) That £1,768,185 of capital project carry forwards for those schemes deemed outstanding at the end of 2019/20 into 2020/21 for completion, as detailed in Appendix 2, be approved.
- (10) That the final 2019/20 position on the Council's key performance indicators, as shown in Appendix 4, be noted. (ADR)

71 REOPENING HIGH STREETS SAFELY FUND

The Executive heard from the Portfolio Holder for Enterprise on a proposed spending plan for the Council's Reopening High Streets Safely Grant Funding Agreement.

Members thanked the Assistant Directors of Place & Environment and Assets & Commercial, the Council's Economic Development team and local suppliers for their support in delivering this programme.

The Deputy Leader thanked Environmental Health officers on behalf of Rayleigh Town Council for their help with the Rayleigh market situation.

The Portfolio Holder for Enterprise stated that Parish and Town Councillors had worked in partnership with the Council. The possibility of introducing a 20mph speed limit restriction in Rayleigh High Street in the future for Rayleigh residents' safety would be reviewed. Reference to other parts of the District would be included in the action plan and updated on the Council's website. The Assistant Director, Place & Environment advised that there had been a large-

scale risk assessment of the District undertaken to identify areas of higher priority. The Action Plan would be in place by the end of this week.

Resolved

- (1) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director, Place & Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Enterprise, to enter into a RHSS Grant Funding Agreement with the Cities and Local Growth Unit (CLGU). CLGU is a joint unit between the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
- (2) That the proposed spending plan for the Council's RHSS grant allocation of a maximum of £77,836 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be agreed.
- (3) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director, Place & Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Enterprise, to award contracts for the delivery of the RHSS Grant Funding Agreement, in line with the proposed spending plan.
- (4) That the decision be taken as a matter of urgency and not subject to call-in because of the need to ensure that outcomes can be delivered to meet the initial deadlines of the majority of shops re-opening in the week commencing 15 June 2020. (ADPE)

The meeting closed at 8.14 pm.

Chairman

Date

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