

## Review Committee – 2 February 2021

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **2 February 2021** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J C Burton  
Vice-Chairman: Cllr D J Sperring

Cllr C C Cannell	Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr R R Dray	Cllr R Milne
Cllr Mrs J R Gooding	Cllr Mrs C A Pavelin
Cllr N J Hookway	Cllr Mrs L Shaw
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr P J Shaw
Cllr Mrs J E McPherson	Cllr M G Wilkinson

### **VISITING MEMBERS**

Cllrs Mrs D L Belton, D S Efde, Mrs C E Roe, S P Smith, C M Stanley, A L Williams and S E Wootton.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

M Harwood-White	- Assistant Director, Assets & Commercial
N Lucas	- Assistant Director, Resources
S Worthington	- Principal Democratic & Corporate Services Officer
J Stacey	- Emergency Planning & Business Continuity Officer
L Morris	- Democratic Services Officer

### **11 CAPITAL AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021/22**

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Resources setting out the Council's capital and treasury management strategy for 2021/22 and seeking the views of the Committee on the approach proposed in the strategy before being presented for approval to Council on 16 February.

In response to a Member question as to whether the Council had plans in place for any funds held in accounts that might be at risk in the future due to the possibility of zero or negative interest rates, including alternative forms of investment, officers emphasised that the priority was always the security of funds that the Council invests, then liquidity, and thirdly yield. Once the first priority is met, the Council then sought to optimise its yield within its strategy and relevant authorisations. The Council has a relatively low risk appetite, so balances are predominantly in bank accounts and low risk money market funds. Interest rates had dropped significantly over the course of the year; the Council was not therefore projecting any interest returns on any of its investments for the next year because interest rates were currently very low to zero. The Council did, however, have sufficient funds open to it that meant it had no issues in placing its cash balances but officers would continue to monitor this closely.

Responding to a Member question on paragraph 5.4 on page 6.6 of the report as to how many leased premises this involved, officers advised that the

requirement for the Council to adopt this particular accounting standard had been deferred to 2022/23 financial year. This standard would apply to any operating leases that would form part of the Council's revenue budgets year on year and had to be capitalised onto the Council's balance sheets and could potentially have an impact on capital expenditure. Leases were already reported on within the Council's financial accounts; section 12A of the 2019/20 financial accounts set out the leased properties and values from the Council. The overall financial value of the leases held by the Council would not be affected by this future change in accounting standards; however, some would be shown on the Council's balance sheet rather than in its revenue budget so was essentially an accounting adjustment and would not impact on the Council's financial position.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the capital and treasury management strategy statement including the investment instruments, indicators, limits and delegations contained within the report, be noted.
- (2) That the capital expenditure forecasts be noted.
- (3) That the operational and authorised limits for external debt, as laid down in the report, be noted.
- (4) That the contents of the report be recommended to Council. (ADR)

## **12 EMERGENCY PLANNING AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY REVIEW**

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director, Assets & Commercial setting out emergency planning information previously requested by the Committee.

In response to a Member question on paragraph 4.3 of the report relating to emergency planning training for Members, officers confirmed that details as to when this would be included within the training programme for 2021/22 would be provided to Members outside the meeting.

Responding to a question on paragraph 11.3 of the report as to who undertook audits of emergency planning and when the last audit had been completed, officers confirmed that audits were conducted by the Council's Internal Audit team and reported to the Audit Committee; any actions identified by such audits had been completed. Details of the date of the last such audit would be provided to Members outside the meeting.

In response to a request from the Chairman for officers to advise the Committee how the Bellwin Scheme worked, as detailed in paragraph 10.2 of the report, officers advised that funds could be drawn down from the Council's General Fund during emergencies, claims for which could be made to government via the Bellwin Scheme; further details would be provided to

Members outside the meeting.

Responding to a Member question as to whether all Parish Councils had emergency plans in place and, if so, whether they were published anywhere, officers confirmed that the Emergency Planning & Business Continuity Officer had offered in the past to work with Parish Councils to support them with their emergency plans; emergency arrangements for the Parish Councils were focused on what worked for them; not all of them published their plans as they tended to be more for internal use as the key focus tended to be having details of relevant points of contact in case of emergencies and there were issues around publication of that level of detail. District officers would continue to offer support for the parishes, however, and would encourage them to publish plans wherever possible.

In response to a Member question about how many out of hours calls had been received in the past 12 months, officers advised that there were different categories of calls dealt with. Those calls that were dealt with successfully by the out of hours team were not logged. Other calls that needed action were logged and passed on to the Council. Indicatively, around 2 calls per evening were dealt with; however, more precise details of the numbers of calls received would be provided to Members outside the meeting.

Responding to a Member enquiry as to whose responsibility it would be to declare a major emergency, officers confirmed that a major incident could be declared by any agency and would be defined as an incident that was beyond their capacity and resources to deal with and were thus requesting mutual aid. The most recent case was the response to Coronavirus by the hospitals who were overwhelmed, thus asked for assistance from other agencies; a major incident was accordingly declared through the Essex Resilience Forum Strategic Co-ordinating Group. In response to a supplementary question from another Member as to whether the out of hours contact details were advertised via the Council's social media channels, officers advised that the contact details were also advertised at the Council offices and work had also been done so that the details came out in, e.g., Google searches. There was not an opportunity to advertise the details on social media per se, unless in relation to a particular emergency incident.

In response to a Member enquiry as to whether the District Council had a store of inflatable sandbags for residents' use before any anticipated flooding, officers confirmed that the Council did not have a stock of sandbags or staff to deploy them. The emergency services would lead on assisting residents and the District Council would do what it could to support through its rest centre procedures if any residents needed to be evacuated. A multi agency approach to flooding is taken and meetings of the Flood Forum are held which are attended by the different agencies for the purposes of prevention and protection from flooding. Members made the point that there were likely to be stocks of sandbags held by some Parish Councils, including Rayleigh Town Council and Stambridge Parish Council.

Another Member made the point that the Council was aware of areas at risk of flooding and requested that the issue of the provision of sandbags be referred to the next meeting of the Flood Forum. In response to a supplementary question as to when the next Flood Forum meeting was due to take place and stressing the need for this to be arranged as soon as practicable, officers advised that contact had already been made with the external partners that week to co-ordinate a date for the next meeting; this was still in the process of being co-ordinated.

A request was noted from the Chairman that future iterations of the report to the Committee contain more statistics, eg, the number of calls received to the Careline service, how many calls went on to be actioned and how often the service was being used and the results of that; officers confirmed that the requested data could be included in future reports.

Responding to a Member question about the contract with Tendring for out of hours calls and specifically as to the duration of the contract, the renewal date of the contract and whether the Council was satisfied with the service provided, officers confirmed that this had been part of a formal procurement process. The contract was monitored by the Emergency Planning & Business Continuity Officer. The contract would be put out to tender again towards the end of the year and the service provided was satisfactory.

### **Resolved**

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

## **13 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT**

### **10/20 – Waste Collection & Street Cleansing Contracts**

In response to a Member enquiry, it was confirmed that the report to the Executive was based on the waste management strategy that had been presented to the Review Committee; however, formalisation of government requirements in some areas was still awaited.

### **11/20 – Voluntary Sector Grant Allocations**

Members would be advised outside the meeting as to whether a Member Advisory Group would be set up to consider applications made for grant funding.

## **14 WORK PLAN**

Officers noted a request from Members that the Committee's Annual Report be circulated to the Committee at the earliest opportunity.

## Review Committee – 2 February 2021

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It was further noted that once the Open Spaces Management Working Group was provided with the outstanding reports from officers a meeting of the Working Group would be scheduled.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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