

Review Committee – 3 February 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **3 February 2015** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr M Hoy
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs T J Capon

Cllr C I Black	Cllr B T Hazlewood
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher	Cllr J L Lawmon
Cllr R R Dray	Cllr Mrs J A Mockford
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn	Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr J D Griffin	Cllr Mrs M H Spencer

VISITING MEMBER

Cllr S P Smith

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs J R F Mason, J C Burton and Mrs A V Hale.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr T E Mountain

OFFICERS PRESENT

Y Woodward	-	Head of Finance
J Raveendran	-	Assistant Director - Resources
M Petley	-	Senior Accountant
P Gowers	-	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
M Power	-	Committee Administrator

20 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 January were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to replacing the sentence 'The Portfolio Holder would encourage Members to approach him if they have any ideas for usage of particular assets that may have been overlooked so the potential can be explored further' on the final page under Minute 5/15 with: 'The Portfolio Holder would encourage Members to approach him if there is any Council asset that they believe there is a better use for.'

21 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2015 – 2020

Members considered the report of the Head of Finance which provides details of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget estimates.

In response to questions, the following information was provided:-

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- In respect of the Mill, Rayleigh, officers would report back with more information on the Mill Tower special items, the budget for which had increased from £1,300 to £9,300. Information was also requested on why there are two separate budget lines for running costs of the Windmill.
- The amount of £500 per annum for licensing of the Windmill in 2014/15 is for one year. The amount of £1,700 to be paid in 2015/16 will cover licensing and information costs in advance for three years. Confirmation of this would be provided to Members.
- Depreciation of the Windmill is based on the last capital valuation and is taken over the period of 30 years.
- There are no direct staffing costs for the Windmill: the cost of support services relates to internal re-charging of staff time. A breakdown of the cost of support services for the Windmill was requested. A breakdown of fees and charges was also requested.
- The value of the Windmill can be considered in terms of being an asset to the town of Rayleigh and to the District.
- The capital expenditure on the Pet Cemetery is incorporated within the Cherry Orchard Park capital budget. Although the facility had not yet generated income, it was hoped a future revenue stream could be generated.
- The cost of the Council's recent legal challenge had come from the 2014/15 budget. The £20,000 in the budget for planning appeals is not necessarily spent each year but is available if needed.
- The Council does not provide cars to its staff. Allowances are paid to essential car users and employees are entitled to make car mileage claims.
- The amount of £50,000 contract contingency in the Parks and Open Spaces budget is to cover issues that may arise in the grounds maintenance contract: this is an accepted and prudent measure to take in respect of a new contract. This amount is written back each year if not used.
- The high increase in the Cherry Orchard Country Park supplies and services expenditure in 2014/15 and 2015/16 is due to comparable grants received in these years (income and expenditure is shown separately).
- Under the Environmental Health budget, it is proposed that the Council provides a pest control service at an additional cost of £40,000 per annum. The service will be offered in respect of pests that threaten public health, as opposed to with pests that constitute a public nuisance only.

There are no plans to offer a shared service with Castle Point Borough Council. The detail of the proposed scheme has not yet been finalised. The cost in 2011/12, when the Council last provided such a service, was in the region of £21,000.

- An amount of £12,000 for Air Quality Review covers the cost of automatic analysis of air quality and the contract with Chelmsford Borough Council to provide an annual progress report.
- Following the recent Council re-design, senior management employee costs are no longer split into service areas but are shown in one cost centre.
- An amount of £30,000 has been included in the 2015/16 budget to allow the Part Night Street Lighting Member Advisory Group to undertake research and analysis around the issue; this will be subject to agreement by Full Council. The budget would cover promotion of the Group, setting up a website, safety audits and public consultation. A request was made that more detail be provided at Full Council.
- The Council is responsible for removal of graffiti from Council property. If it decides to remove graffiti from privately owned property it will endeavour to recover the costs from the landowner.
- The Innovation Fund was agreed as part of 2014/15 budget and resulted in some projects being given the go ahead. The budget had been revised down in December as it would not all be required. Any part of the budget not spent will be set aside to support appropriate projects next year.
- The rise in the budget for elections is due to the general election in 2015/16 and the 'all-out' elections in 2016/17.
- The increase in the budget for emergency planning is due to the cost of the additional payment for emergency on call officers being shown under this budget; the cost had been split previously into different service areas.
- The salary figure for local land charges staff is now included as part of the re-charge by Support Services.
- The figure for repairs and maintenance of leisure premises relates to car parks only; the Council is not responsible for repairs and maintenance of buildings. Members requested a list be provided of buildings on which the Council pays National Non-domestic Rates (NNDR).
- Expenditure on replacement of the fleet of waste vehicles in 2015/16 had been agreed as part of negotiations of the extension of the recycling contract: this capital investment will have revenue savings. The Council is financing the cost of the vehicles, which it hopes to fund from internal

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borrowing.

- It was proposed by Members that the interment fees for children under 12 be removed for 2015/16, as well as fees for under one month and still-born babies. This would be recommended to Full Council.
- There was a suggestion that 'Chatham House rules' be applied to future Budget Awayday discussions. Members of the Committee did not have any further comments to add to this year's budget process.

Resolved

That the contents of the Medium Term Financial Strategy be noted.

22 WORK PLAN

Members considered and approved its Work Plan.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm.

Chairman

Date

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