

The Executive – 27 September 2022

Minutes of the meeting of **The Executive** held on **27 September 2022** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr S E Wootton
Vice Chairman: Cllr Mrs C E Roe

Cllr Mrs D L Belton
Cllr D S Efde
Cllr D J Sperring

Cllr I H Ward
Cllr M J Webb
Cllr A L Williams

NON MEMBERS ATTENDING

Cllr S A Wilson

OFFICERS PRESENT

J Stephenson	- Chief Executive
P Drane	- Director of Place
M Hotten	- Director of Environment
T Lilley	- Director of Communities & Health
A Law	- Assistant Director, Legal & Democratic
N Lucas	- Assistant Director, Resources
S Worthington	- Principal Democratic Services Officer
H Boyd	- Civic Officer

186 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

187 MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE AND REPORTS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Report from the Overview & Scrutiny: Litter Strategy 2022-2025

In introducing the report, Cllr S A Wilson advised that the strategy, which was evolving, had been positively received by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The three main themes within the strategy reflected the National Litter Strategy 2017 and the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse. One of the main concerns raised by the Committee related to the scale of fines for fly tipping which were considered too low and would not act as a deterrent given that the fines were lower than the cost of, e.g., hiring a skip.

In response to a Member question relating to the siting of litter bins, officers advised that the issue of bin infrastructure and methodology for informing placement of bins needed to be reviewed.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft litter strategy be approved, as set out in the appendix.

- (2) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment, to oversee the design and layout of the document and make minor changes to the litter strategy in advance of publication.
- (3) That sponsorship from local businesses be investigated.
- (4) That detailed proposals regarding enforcement and costs of implementation be brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for scrutiny. (DE)

(This was unanimously agreed.)

188 QUARTER 1 2022/23 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT

In introducing the Quarter 1 2022/23 Financial management report, Cllr Mrs C E Roe advised that the pay award was yet to be agreed nationally. There were many financial risks which could not currently be accurately quantified including the outcome of the #OneTeam Transformation Project strategic partnership recruitment. The financial position would need to be monitored closely and the inflationary pressures would make budget setting even more challenging than usual going forward.

It was noted that the cost of living crisis was already having an impact, not just on individuals, but businesses too. The report clarified that the Council would signpost residents and businesses to partners best placed to provide assistance and support.

It was emphasised that, as a result of fast paced changes in the cost of living crisis, the addendum to the report was out of date since its publication including, e.g., at paragraph 3.8 the Bank of England base rate had subsequently risen to 2.25%, at paragraph 3.7 the cost of diesel had now reduced and at paragraph 3.10 there was no longer going to be a change in national insurance.

Officers stressed the critical nature of these issues and the need for the Council to remain focused on the support that the Council could offer. A key priority was to promote the cost of living website page which would be updated regularly to keep pace with the fast paced changes in this area.

It was noted that the draft cost of living crisis action plan would be tweaked as necessary by means of a working group with representation from, e.g., a number of community groups, Police and the Fire Service. It would be a living document which would be regularly reviewed by the Executive and could be adapted to include any data required by the Executive.

The action plan would focus on the warm spaces/warm hubs, mapping what support was already available.

In response to a Member question relating to support available for working residents who would also be significantly affected by the cost of living crisis, officers confirmed that the guidance on the website page and provided by officers was aimed at everyone; work was being undertaken to remove the perception that the crisis impacted only those on low incomes. The Council was already working independently on mapping warm spaces/warm hubs, rather than waiting for the County Council to undertake mapping.

In response to Member concern that working families would need to budget to ensure their more limited income was most effectively spent, officers stressed that there was a need to be agile; financial issues needed to be addressed and Council staff would also need to be supported. It was likely that during the crisis some staff might leave the Council for better paid jobs.

Officers advised, in response to a Member question relating to support and guidance for those residents who did not have access to the internet, that leaflets had been considered; however, given that information was changing at pace it was considered more appropriate to use community and outreach groups to ensure that the most accurate and current information was communicated to those who needed it. This issue had also been raised with the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Responding to a Member observation that although there was reference to funding, no specific figures were included on the action plan, officers advised that they had consulted with partners to identify where funding would make the biggest difference and had also discussed with the County Council funding that was available.

Members expressed concern that there were many who were too frightened to switch the heating on due to escalating costs and also made reference to the importance of getting a message out to residents about the importance of heating their homes. Officers further advised that the Fire Service was also concerned about the potential increased use of camping stoves and disposable BBQs indoors, which could lead to more house fires and an increase in carbon monoxide poisoning.

In response to a Member suggestion that signposting be done to potential cafés and pubs, etc that residents could visit in order to stay warm, officers confirmed that this was, in effect, warm hubs and the intention was to include a list of accredited venues on the website page.

It was noted that the Executive should receive monthly update reports in order to monitor developments and information going out to residents and businesses while the crisis developed.

Resolved

- (1) That the Quarter 1 2022/23 Financial Management Report be noted.
(ADR)

- (2) That a cost of living crisis action plan be produced by officers and that the action plan be reviewed, updated and reported to the Executive at all scheduled Executive meetings. (DCH)

(This was unanimously agreed.)

189 SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY UPDATE

In introducing the report, the Portfolio holder for Climate and Economy advised that the carbon neutral deadline was approaching. The sustainability survey had now closed and a draft Sustainability Strategy would be brought to Full Council in October/November.

She further advised that REBA had been launched; this aimed to help businesses start their journey to carbon neutrality and also to help residents with bills in a sustainable way during the cost of living crisis.

Officers confirmed that this was a District-wide strategy. The Council was not able to do this alone; it needed to work with influence businesses and others to establish a firm network.

Members observed that the UK was very reliant on gas/petrol/diesel. It was noted that the transitional period before energy sustainability was achieved would be difficult and there would be a need to look at a mixed economy.

Officers confirmed, in response to Member questions, that Essex County Council would be one of the Council's partners and that the ECC Transport Strategy would also be included.

Resolved

- (1) That the progress being made to deliver and finalise the draft sustainability strategy be noted. (DE)

The meeting closed at 7.56 pm.

Chairman

Date

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