

FINANCE AND RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2013 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllrs. Mrs. Bayley, Brookbank, Mrs. Davison, Edwards-Winser, McGarvey, Ramsay and Scholey

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Cooke, Mrs. Dibsdall and Walshe

Cllr. Mrs. Sargeant was also present.

1. To elect a Chairman for the Committee for the ensuing municipal year

Resolved: That Cllr. Ramsay be appointed as Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

(Cllr. Ramsay in the Chair)

2. To elect a Vice-Chairman for the Committee for the ensuing municipal year

Resolved: That Cllr. McGarvey be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

3. Minutes

Officers tabled a response to the actions from the minutes of the Finance Advisory Group meeting held on 23 April 2013.

With regard to the review of the Big Community Fund guidelines a Member requested clarification of who was responsible for the work involved, if it was not the delivery organisation.

Action1: That the Group Manger – Finance email the Member with the information requested.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Finance Advisory Group held on 23 April 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

5. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Chairman, who was the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, updated the Committee on his work. He indicated that some matters had fallen under his previous Portfolio of Finance and Value for Money. He had held regular meetings with Officers.

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He highlighted that spending in the financial year 2012/13 was below budget and Council Tax collection rates had been maintained in that year. Dartford Borough Council had agreed to contribute a higher fee for the Revenues and Benefits Partnership because of the larger workload arising from their Council. There was greater diversity in the investment strategy, utilising money market funds and lending to other local authorities.

The Chairman had encouraged the selling of property, particularly non-operational property and any public toilets, with the exception of the public toilets at Sevenoaks bus station. Space within the Argyle Road offices had been rented out to Moat Housing, Kent County Council and Kent Police.

Long term absence among staff was being managed through greater involvement from line managers, including interviews with the staff involved.

It was noted that the role of the new Committee was still evolving. The Chairman would discuss with Officers the role the Committee could play in talking to Heads of Service regarding budgets and savings. Cabinet would remain the decision making body.

6. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)

There were none.

7. Scope of Officer Responsibilities

The Group Manager – Finance and the Head of Information and Customer Services gave a presentation to the meeting regarding their areas of responsibility and which of these areas came within the remit of the Committee. They also explained which matters they considered would be key upcoming issues.

Within Financial Services the rolling 10-year budget was brought to the Committee's attention as a key issue. The budget could be affected by the Government's upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review (on 26 June 2013), the recent Business Rates Retention Scheme, the Council Tax cap and by Treasury Management interest rates. It was expected the Committee would consider budget monitoring reports and Members would be sent Treasury Management updates from Sector. Other key issues would include the financial impact from the upcoming welfare reforms. Financial Services also had to be aware of any further legislative changes.

Within Information and Customer Services there firstly was an ongoing task to improve IT by gaining efficiency through integration, reducing manual data input and by seeking more self-serving opportunities for customers. Secondly there was the aim to generate and maintain income. Key sources of income had been the print studio, renting out office space and sharing IT systems. Thirdly there was a constant need to maintain and improve the Council's assets.

The Committee also had within its terms of reference Legal Services, partnership working and procurement.

Officers responded to Members' questions. Although other organisations shared the Argyle Road offices the responsibility for Moat and KCC's IT ended at the point they

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connected to their own systems while Kent Police had their own IT system completely, for security purposes. All assumptions in the 10 year budget were being reviewed. The existing 4-year savings plan was finishing soon but another plan would be produced if a budget gap was identified.

8. Provisional Outturn 2012/13 and Carry Forward Requests

The Finance Manager introduced the item and stated there was a favourable variance of £294,000 and that this was an improvement on the February forecast outturn variance of £136,000. It was pleasing that despite all the changes within year the figures were both favourable and close to the forecasts by Heads of Service.

Members noted that Vehicle Replacement Fund was a rolling programme and had been taking place over a number of years. Some savings had been made but the funds were still assigned for the replacement of vehicles. Members requested a schedule of vehicle replacements for clarification on how the sums would be accounted.

Action 2: The Finance Manager to provide a schedule of vehicle replacements to Members of the Committee.

Members agreed all three carry forward requests were appropriate.

Resolved: It be recommended to Cabinet that:

- (a) the Revenue 'carry forward' requests totalling £35,066 as set out in paragraph 13 of the report be approved; and
- (b) the capital carry forward requests totalling £572,102 as set out in paragraph 15 of the report also be approved.

9. Financial Performance Indicators 2013/14 - to the end of April 2013

The Vice-Chairman commented that the indicator targets for the previous financial year were not displayed in the graphs. He felt they would be helpful.

The figures for sundry debts had been skewed in 2012/13 by a few large debts from other local authorities. Officers clarified that 21 days was the point at which the first reminder was sent. Council sundry debts came from a variety of sources including Licensing, Building Control and rent invoices.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

10. Work Plan

The Chairman tabled a draft work plan for the Committee to consider.

It was proposed that a Members' IT Working Group be established to consider the Council's IT Disaster Recovery Plan, which was expiring soon. A similar IT working group had previously reported to the Services Select Committee, which no longer existed. The Working Group would be tasked to consider this item only. The Plan was part of the Council's overall Disaster Recovery Plan and risk would be managed through that

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process. The Working Group would then wind-up if the Advisory Committee were satisfied with its proposals.

Resolved: That

- (a) a Members' IT Working Group be constituted for the consideration of the IT Disaster Recovery Plan in order to advise the Finance and Resources Advisory Committee; and
- (b) the membership of the IT Working Group be Cllrs. Abraham, Ayres, Mrs. Dibsall, Piper and Scholey (Chairman).

The Chairman advised that Cllr. Brookbank would be the Deputy Portfolio Holder for property, while Cllr. Scholey would be Deputy Portfolio Holder for IT and Facilities.

Although the Work Plan had suggested moving the meeting scheduled for 23 July 2013 to 3 September 2013 it was agreed that further negotiations would be held to find an alternative date.

On 12 November 2013 the Committee would be considering Service Plans and Service Change Impact Assessments for 2014/15. It was clarified that it would only be those SCIA's which were directly within its remit.

Members agreed that the Committee should consider shared services and a provisional date of 12 November 2013 was proposed for this item. It was noted that it may be delayed depending on when the Committee considered options for the future of the White Oak Leisure Centre. The Shared Services Annual Report would be added to the Members' Portal once published.

The Chairman confirmed that further items could be added to the work plan if Members felt concern at particular matters and that the Committee should consider them.

Many items which were "for information" only would be published on the Members' Portal rather than brought to Committee. The meeting requested that links be sent to Members when an item was published on the Portal. The Head of Information and Customer Services confirmed that the way the Portal worked was currently being reviewed.

The Work Plan, as amended, was agreed.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.15 PM

CHAIRMAN