

CABINET

1 DECEMBER 2010

Present :- Councillor Martin Hunt (the Deputy Leader) (Chairman)
Councillors Nick Barlow, Lyn Barton, Tina Dopson,
Beverley Oxford, Paul Smith and Tim Young

Also in Attendance :- Councillor Kevin Bentley
Councillor Pauline Hazell
Councillor Sue Lissimore
Councillor Laura Sykes
Councillor Colin Sykes

42. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2010 were confirmed as a correct record including the not for publication appendix to minute 41.

43. Call in of Car-Parking Charges at Highwoods Country Park

Councillor Lissimore attended and addressed the Cabinet to explain that she had called the decision in as she felt that this decision could become the blueprint for future decisions to increase revenue. Whilst the need for revenue increases was accepted, the impact of such decisions on residents needed to be thoroughly and accurately investigated before they were taken. In respect of this decision, she would await the outcome of the consultation.

Councillor Dopson, Portfolio Holder for Communities, indicated that a consultation on the proposals with local residents would begin shortly. The consultation would also be available online. The consultation would be open until end of February/March 2011. It was stressed that car-parking charges were mooted in the Management Plan for Highwoods Country Park so the introduction of charges should not have come as a surprise.

44. Colchester Housing Asset Management Strategy

The Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix A to these minutes in the Minute Book.

RESOLVED that:-

(a) the Housing Asset Management Strategy be accepted as the basis for long term planning, provision and sustainability of Colchester Borough Council's housing assets.

(b) The Procurement Strategy contained within the Housing Asset Management Strategy be the basis for procuring Housing related planned works, improvements,

responsive and void works and cyclical maintenance.

(c) The Asset Management Strategy be regularly reviewed but not less than once a year.

REASONS

(a) Following cessation of the Inspace contract it was necessary to review the procurement approach. There was a need to procure works to protect the interests of the Council and its customers to enable the housing stock to be well maintained and brought up to the Government's Decent Homes Standard while providing Best Value.

(b) The procurement strategy needed to be set against a clear method of delivery, reflecting the objectives of the Council by continuously improving the service, dealing with issues of customer service, satisfaction, quality of service and effective programming.

(c) Members will be aware of the contracts which have subsequently been procured to deliver the Capital Improvement Programme (Decent Homes) together with other contracts but importantly the Deed of Variation. The Deed was collaboratively developed with Colchester Borough Homes (CBH) and is now used as the framework for CBH Property Services to deliver our responsive, voids and adaptations service.

(d) The Deed of Variation apart from setting out the contractual working relationship also required Colchester Borough Homes to draft a proposed Asset Management Strategy for the Council's consideration. This strategy was developed by CBH using the guidance of Ridge (Property and Construction Consultants).

(e) The draft Asset Management Strategy was subsequently jointly agreed between officers at CBH and Colchester Borough Council and now requires the approval of Cabinet.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Reject the Strategy and choose not to work in the context of a long term delivery environment. This would make the allocation and prioritisation of resources increasingly difficult.

45. Fundamental Service Review of Street Services

The Head of Street Services submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix B to these minutes in the Minute Book together with draft minute 20 of the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting of 16 November 2010.

Pam Donnelly, Executive Director, and Matthew Young, Head of Street Services, attended to assist the Cabinet and made a presentation to the Cabinet about the benefits to customers that would result from the Fundamental Service Review business

case and the savings that would be achieved.

Councillor Hunt, Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services, thanked all officers who had been involved and affected by the Fundamental Service Review for the professional way they had approached the review and for their enthusiasm in embracing the changes that were proposed. Recommendations (ii), (iii) and (iv) from the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel, were accepted. In respect of recommendation (i), he did not consider that it was necessary or practical for all members to be involved from the outset of a Fundamental Service Review or to set out in a formal, structured way how all members of Council should be involved. All members would be involved where appropriate and where relevant.

Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Business, welcomed the proposals in the business case, which were a move towards area working. This made the zones very important, although he noted that the boundaries of the zones were not yet finalised. He also welcomed the involvement of resident's associations within the proposals.

Councillor T. Young, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety, also welcomed the proposals and thanked officers. He considered that the Fundamental Service Review process worked well and that the involvement of all members at too early a stage could potentially compromise the process. Discussions on the zones were ongoing, but there was no need for these discussions to delay the approval of the business case.

Councillor Dopson, Portfolio Holder for Communities, highlighted the work of the Community Alarms Team.

RESOLVED that:-

(a) the business case resulting from the Fundamental Service Review of Colchester Borough Council's Street Services be approved.

(b) The recommendations from the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel be accepted, subject to the amendment of recommendation (i) to read:

"(i) For all future Fundamental Service Reviews that affect all or most of the residents of the Borough, all members of Council will be involved where appropriate and where relevant."

RECOMMENDED to Council that the projects identified in paragraph 9.3 of Head of Street Services report be added to the Council's Capital Programme.

REASONS

(a) The Council's Street Services has contact with all 75,000 households in the borough every week through its recycling and waste services. It offers a wide and diverse range of services to 177,100 residents, 20,000 businesses and 4.4 million visitors a year, and these services have an impact on daily life in the borough 365 days a year.

(b) The Council's vision as set out in its Strategic Plan is of "Colchester: a place where people want to live, work and visit." This vision is supported by three objectives - to listen and respond, shift resources to deliver priorities, and be cleaner and greener - and by nine priorities for action to improve the quality of life in the borough. The business case will deliver across the Strategic Plan's vision, objectives and priorities as Street Services are key to achieving them.

(c) The world is changing – as is Colchester with an increased diversity in the borough's population, an understandable expectation of efficiency, fairness and consistency in service delivery; the move to online transactions; and the need to promote a sense of community pride. This is especially the case around recycling, litter, street cleanliness and parking charges - despite many improvements in service performance and key performance indicators.

(d) Along with everyone else, the Council is also facing economic pressures. We all need to think differently and take action to address future challenges. This review has considered the demographic, economic and policy-related pressures facing the Council's street-based services. The proposals in this business case address these issues, and establish a way forward that maintains and improves services whilst reducing costs.

(e) With such a significant contribution, both strategically and operationally, to this number of residents, businesses and visitors, the service is keen to take this opportunity to further shape its delivery around the three drivers of Fundamental Service Reviews: an improved customer experience, efficiencies in the way that services are delivered and effectiveness in achieving results.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Not to approve the business case or to ask for changes to be made to the proposals set out in the business case. In either scenario, the delivery of improved customer excellence, and greater efficiency and effectiveness in Street Services could be delayed or not delivered. The business case is the result of considerable research, analysis and consultation on the part of a core project team and other staff in the services.

46. Funding of Phase 2 Carbon Management Programme Projects

The Head of Corporate Management and the Head of Resource Management submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix C to these minutes in the Minute Book.

Councillor Barton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Sustainability, reported that all Phase 1 projects had now been delivered, except the replacement of the cremators which was scheduled for January 2011. Phase 2 would deliver the bulk of the balance of the Council's carbon reduction target.

RESOLVED that the four Phase 2 Carbon Management Programme (CMP) projects be funded from capital receipts.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the four Phase 2 Carbon Management Programme projects be added to the Council's capital programme.

REASONS

The Council is committed to reducing its CO2 emissions by 25% by 2012 compared against the baseline financial year 2006/07, as outlined within the Council's CMP Strategy and Implementation Plan (SIP) adopted by Cabinet in March 2008.

Phase 2 CMP projects are required to deliver the bulk of the balance of the Council's carbon reduction target.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The sourcing of grant funding has been explored for Phase 2 CMP projects. The funding arm of the Carbon Trust, Salix, is currently receiving no new funding from Government and the majority of other grants substantial enough to fund Phase 2 CMP projects (such as the Low Carbon Buildings scheme) have been removed. In their place are two new initiatives, the Renewable Energy Feed-in Tariff and the forthcoming Renewable Heating Incentive. However, the criteria for these schemes are different and Phase 2 CMP projects cannot benefit from them as they do not meet the required new criteria. Therefore the Council has limited options and is unlikely to obtain grants of a sufficient size to deliver or indeed part fund the projects.

The Cabinet could borrow money to fund phase 2 CMP projects. The projected energy savings would cover the costs of borrowing, but this would remove the ability to reinvest these savings elsewhere.

The Cabinet could decide not to deliver Phase 2 CMP projects. However, this would result in the Council failing to achieve its CO2 savings target.

Councillor Tim Young (in respect of his spouse's membership of Essex County Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Martin Hunt (in respect of holding a concessionary fares pass) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

47. 2011/12 Revenue Budget, Financial Reserves and Capital Programme

The Head of Resource Management submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix D to these

minutes in the Minute Book.

Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Diversity, introduced the report, highlighted the challenging budget position and the efforts that were being made to meet the budget gap. The Council faced a number of difficult decisions and it was inescapable that there would be some impact on services. However, protecting frontline services would be a priority. Reserves were being maintained at a prudent level, but unlike some authorities, funds were not being held back to maintain greater reserves than was necessary. Information about the final settlement from central government was still awaited and it would not be received on 2 December, as originally hoped. The timing of payment from the Hew Homes Bonus was still unclear, but no funds would be released this year and the position on funding of the Concessionary Fares Scheme was also unclear at this stage.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the current 2011/12 revenue budget forecast which at this stage shows a budget gap of £711,000 and the forecast variables and risks be noted.
- (b) The action being taken to close the budget gap be noted.
- (c) The recommended level of revenue balances be set at £1.5m for 2011/12 as set out in the Risk Analysis subject to consideration of outstanding issues as part of the final budget report in January 2011 (Appendix B of the Head of Resource Management's report).
- (d) The current budget forecast for 2010/11 as set out at paragraph 11.6 of the Head of Resource Management's report be noted.
- (e) The position on the capital programme be noted.
- (f) In respect of second homes the Council Tax discount applied be retained at 10% as set out at paragraph 14.5 of the Head of Resource Management's report.
- (g) In respect of long term empty properties the discount be retained at nil as set out at paragraph 14.5 of the Head of Resource Management's report.

REASONS

The Council is required to approve a budget strategy and timetable in respect of the year 2011/12 and this report sets out the latest a budget update and a review of the capital programme.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

There are different options that could be considered and as the budget progresses changes and further proposals will be made and considered by Cabinet and in turn Full Council.

48. Calendar of Meetings 2011-12

The Head of Corporate Management submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix E to these minutes in the Minute Book.

RESOLVED that the Calendar of Meetings for the 2011-12 municipal year appended to the Head of Corporate Management's report be approved.

REASONS

(a) The Calendar of Meetings needs to be determined so that decisions for the year can be timetabled into the respective work programmes and the Forward Plan.

(b) Advance notice of the Calendar of Meetings needs to be made available to external organisations, parish councils and other bodies with which the Council works in partnership and to those members of the public who may wish to attend meetings of the council and make representations.

(c) The meeting rooms also need to be reserved as soon as possible so that room bookings can be made for private functions by private individuals, external organisations and internal Council groups.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The Calendar of Meetings has been devised based on the current meeting structure and frequency. It would be possible to devise alternative proposals using different criteria.

49. Appointment of Deputy Mayor 2011-12

Consideration was given to the appointment of the Deputy Mayor for the Municipal Year 2011-12.

Councillor Bentley attended and addressed the Cabinet to propose Councillor Arnold as the Conservative group's nomination for Deputy Mayor for the 2011-12 Municipal Year

Councillor Hunt nominated Councillor Arnold as Deputy Mayor for the 2011-12 Municipal Year and Councillor T. Young indicated his support.

RECOMMENDED to Council that Councillor Arnold be nominated for appointment as Deputy Mayor for the Borough of Colchester 2011-12 Municipal Year.

50. Progress of Responses to the Public

The Head of Corporate Management submitted a progress sheet a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix F to these minutes in the Minute Book.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Progress Sheet be noted.

REASONS

The progress sheet was a mechanism by which the Cabinet could ensure that public statements and questions were responded to appropriately and promptly.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

No alternative options were presented to the Cabinet.