

AGENDA ITEM NO. x

Minutes of the meeting of the Regulatory and Support Services Committee
held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely
on Monday 11th January 2016 at 4:30pm

P R E S E N T

Councillor Anna Bailey (Chairman)
Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith
Councillor David Ambrose Smith
Councillor Mike Bradley
Councillor Peter Cresswell
Councillor Julia Huffer
Councillor Carol Sennitt

OTHERS PRESENT

John Hill – Chief Executive
Jason Johnson – Building Control Manager
Liz Knox – Environmental Services Manager
Emmanuel Orekogbe – Accountant (Treasury Management)
Angela Parmenter – Housing Options Manager
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer
Hetty Thornton – Performance Management Officer

62. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions received from members of the public.

63. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sue Austen and Jo Webber and from the Director (Regulatory Services).

64. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

Councillor David Ambrose-Smith joined the meeting at this point, 4:31pm.

65. MINUTES

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7th December 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Christine Ambrose-Smith joined the meeting at this point, 4:32pm.

66. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman informed the Committee that as Members would be aware, a restructuring of the Financial Services Team was concluded in November resulting in the formal appointment of Andy Radford as Chief Financial Officer and the Financial Services Team reporting directly to the Chief Executive rather than to the Director Support Services. As a result, a realignment of Committee reporting responsibilities was required in order that the Finance Team reported to the Corporate Governance & Finance Committee, rather than the Regulatory & Support Services Committee, and also that the Anglia Revenues Partnership Joint Committee reporting arrangements, which were associated with the Finance function, also report to Corporate Governance & Finance Committee.

Whilst this realignment was undertaken under the officer delegation previously given to the Monitoring Officer to make minor amendments to the Constitution, it is appropriate that this change to reporting arrangements for the Service Delivery Plan for Financial Services and the minutes and issues relating to Anglia Revenues Partnership Joint Committee is drawn to the attention of the Members of the two relevant Policy Committees.

67. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRESS**

It was resolved:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the item no. 7 because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Categories 1 & 3 Part 1 Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as Amended).

68. **APPOINTMENTS, TRANSFERS AND RESIGNATIONS**

The Committee received an exempt report (Q160, previously circulated) which provided details of staff appointments, transfers and resignations for the period 1st to 31st December 2015.

The Chief Executive gave the Committee an update on staffing issues and, in response to Members' questions, explained the seasonal nature of some jobs and the effect on staff turnover.

It was resolved:

That the content of the information report be noted.

The following items were open to the public.

69. **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – SIX MONTHLY MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee received a report (Q161, previously circulated) which provided an update on progress made against the Council's Corporate Priorities, including the Corporate Plan, in the first two quarters of 2015/2016.

The Chairman pointed out that the Committee should be aware that after the despatch of the agenda the Legal Services report had been withdrawn, as it needed a lot of updating, and would be considered at the next Committee meeting. Revised reports for both Environmental Services and Licensing Services had been circulated prior to the meeting. A revised recommendation, taking account of those changes, was tabled.

The Performance Management Officer advised the Committee that the report assessed progress against the Corporate Priorities and Plan for Quarters 1 and 2. To ensure that these were met and monitored, it had been agreed to report half-way through the year and at the end of year, highlighting any significant under and over performance. Emerging issues would also be stated.

Building Control was undergoing a review of their current service, including an option for a potential transfer to the new Local Authority Trading Company.

At this point the revised recommendations were duly proposed and seconded.

Councillor Anna Bailey asked the Performance Management Officer to note that the tables used for the update reports should tally with the Service Delivery Plans to help Members better understand the information presented.

Building Control

The Building Control Manager advised the Committee that since the last Committee meeting the previous manager had left and the present Building Control Manager had stepped up. Currently the service was operating with one member of staff down and would not be recruiting until the service review was completed. The service was on course to meet its targets and this had been achieved by slightly changing the working practices by using home working, where access could be achieved at home. It did have an impact on those left in the office, so additional hours had been needed to keep to the targets set.

Income targets had been exceeded by around 12%, but a possible three 'bad' months were anticipated so it was expected that over the year the budget would be met. The administration side had also exceeded their targets and had been helped by the recruitment of a full-time person, which allowed other officers to go out on site visits.

Councillor Mike Bradley asked if home working had produced a positive outcome. The Building Control Manager confirmed it had, as it allowed officers to spend time pouring over technical drawings without being disturbed. Doing this work was better at home, for which the officers were monitored, and overall it benefited the service.

Councillor Peter Cresswell was very impressed with the performance, but questioned whether it was anticipated that the budget would be break even at year end. The Building Control Manager stated that this was weather dependent. Usually the service did very well over the summer months but things slowed down during the winter.

The Chief Executive reminded the Committee that the service worked in a very competitive environment. When the previous manager left an attempt was made to recruit some of the surveyors here, but the current manager had succeeded in retaining all those officers.

The Chairman thanked the Building Control Manager as the set of figures were fantastic.

Environmental Services

The Environmental Services Manager advised the Committee that the figures on page 7 of the revised Environmental Services report were not aligned properly on the printed page.

Care & Repair

Since Care & Repair had been retained in-house it had gone from strength to strength. It continued to work well with Sanctuary Housing, who provided income which aided achievement of the income target. That service was on target relating to disabled facilities grants (DFGs) and minor works. The demand for DFGs was outstripping funding, so there was currently a 12 month waiting list. This was recognised by the County Council who were looking to increase their funding for this.

Commercial Section

Despite a recruitment issue, the programme of inspections had been covered with 100% of the A and B rated food premises expected to be covered by the end of the year. C and D rated food premises had a higher turnover, so more inspections would be needed, but the target was expected to be achieved. A survey was being conducted to look at improving the service for businesses, to see how the service could help them. This could lead to some consultancy for businesses for which a charge could be made. A free seminar had been held for food businesses to help them improve their scores and to gauge interest. Another could be held for which a charge could also be made.

Domestic Section

All programmed inspections had been completed, except permitted industrial processes inspections as none had been completed during the first half of the year. These would be done by the end of the year.

There was a problem with air quality assessment, as the County Council were replacing lamp posts, some of which had monitoring tubes attached which were now disappearing.

180 days was given to resolve complaints on complex issues. The service was reaching those targets, so they could be revised for next year by either reducing the number of days for a resolution or pushing up the targets.

Internal consultations had to be completed, including for licensing, and the responses so far had been pleasing.

A county group had negotiated hard for energy efficiency installations (under the 'Green Deal') and they were on track for 100 installations this year. Kayleigh Maguire, Energy Efficiency Officer, should be commended for her work with residents on this and to Thrift for providing an excellent service. Thanks were also offered to the Service Delivery Champion, Councillor Carol Sennitt, for her support and enthusiasm.

Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith was very concerned about the delays in obtaining DFGs for older people living with problems. These people were less able to support themselves, whereas children usually had young parents to help them.

Councillor Anna Bailey informed the Committee that there was hope for more funding through the Better Care Fund. However, something was wrong with the process in how cases were prioritised. It appeared that children's cases were taking precedence.

The Environmental Manager explained that the Occupational Therapists took the decisions and urgent cases took priority. Those on a non-urgent list would still be dealt with.

Licensing Services

The Environmental Services Manager advised the Committee that the new look Licensing team was working well. The new Senior Licensing Officer had brought experience and skills to running the service. This had resulted in the tackling of larger work, for example, working more with the taxi trade. A consultation of the level of taxi fees was due to go to the next Licensing Committee. New 3-year and 5-year licences had already be implemented, as had the updating of the website to make it more accessible plus income had increased by around £9,000 more than the budget.

Councillor Anna Bailey would have liked to see more numbers to give a context about the volume of work being done. Since the appointment of the Senior Licensing Officer, the department had been gone through two large-scale reviews of policies, which was great to see.

Performance Management

The Performance Management Officer advised the Committee that over the last six months the jobs had changed. For the Transformation Programme, sessions had been held for staff to get involved and a Performance Management Toolkit had been produced. This had been cascaded to all staff. Attempts were being made to recruit Project Managers for the Transformation

Programme and to find out how staff wanted their skills to be developed. Support had been given to all Service Leads, particularly the new ones, to set out SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Reasonable, Timely) outcomes.

Councillor Anna Bailey thought the staff sessions had been very good and the Toolkit excellent.

Councillor Mike Bradley, in acknowledging a good job had been done, warned that improvements should not stop and needed to keep going.

It was resolved:

- (i) To note the Performance Management (Quarters 1 and 2) Performance Updates detailed below and specifically, the progress made against the priorities of the Council and where performance had been outstanding and under achieving:
 - Building Control Services
 - Environmental Health Services (revised)
 - Licensing Service (revised)
 - Performance Management
- (ii) To note the emerging issues and challenges moving forward.

70. **UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENT GYPSY AND TRAVELLER POLICY**

The Committee received a report (Q162, previously circulated) which provided details of a new Council policy relating to unauthorised gypsy and traveller encampments.

The Housing Options Manager reminded the Committee that the Council had a statutory duty to cater for all residents in the district, including gypsy and traveller communities. It currently did not have a specific policy in place for unauthorised encampments and this had been brought to light due to a recent event in Witchford, where a large number of travellers turned up unexpectedly. The proposed policy set out how the Council would act and what it would do in response to a similar event in the future, including completing a post-site clear-up. Travellers would be tolerated for a while but would be moved on through negotiation. The policy would also allow court action to be taken if needed. This happened very rarely, as generally travellers just passed through the district.

Councillor Anna Bailey thought the Witchford event had been handled incredibly well with no trouble and no publicity. The Housing Options Manager declared this had been because of a co-ordinated multi-agency approach.

Councillor David Ambrose Smith thought private landowners should be charged for such events, as they would need help with such occurrences. Clearing these sites was similar to clearing fly-tipping for which landowners were charged. That should be included in the policy. Councillor Anna Bailey queried the contribution of landowners and also thought that it might be included in the

new policy. The Committee were reminded that the Council could not move travellers on if they were on private land, though it would still be obliged to carry out welfare checks and would undertake negotiations. The legal position over charging landowners would have to be checked, to see if a charge could be made to cover costs. Photographs of the sites, before and after, would be taken and the Council would still have to arrange waste collections.

Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith was very impressed with the performance but was concerned over the education and health care of traveller children. To help, more well organised permanent sites would be needed. Although this would be unpopular, travellers did have rights. The Housing Options Manager agreed and said that the Council worked closely with the health authorities. On the Council's other sites, the children did attend school.

Councillor Anna Bailey noted a few minor discrepancies within the draft policy and proposed that it be approved subject to amendments agreed in consultation with the Committee Chairman. This was duly seconded and this revised recommendation agreed.

It was resolved:

That the Council's Unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller Policy be approved, subject to amendments agreed in consultation with the Committee Chairman.

71. **BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee received a report (Q163 previously circulated) which updated Members on the Committee's financial position for 2015/16, based on current predictions for both revenue and capital expenditure.

The Accountant (Treasury Management) advised the Committee that the projected spend had gone from an over-spend to an under-spend and was due to additional incomes from the homelessness prevention grant and planning applications. The capital outturn had been increased by a further £20,000 due to the Council's wi-fi project.

Councillor Mike Bradley thought that the housing benefits figure should be balanced and wondered why a difference was shown. Did this indicate that the Council had overpaid some of these benefits? The Accountant confirmed that an overpayment had been made. The Chief Executive felt that the explanation may be that the Government did not pay full coverage on these benefits, as it was based on an estimated figure. The Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) managed to recover some of the overpayments.

Councillor Anna Bailey then asked how the Council could have an impact on the Government's estimated figure. The Accountant stated that the estimate came via ARP after the last quarter. The Chief Executive thought a more detailed response to this was required and this would be circulated, by the Accountant, to the Committee.

Councillor Anna Bailey declared that the Committee was very concerned about not being aware of issues beforehand and about what could be done this year, and in the future, to obtain a better estimate and how much was within the gift of this Council to stop overpayments. These issues needed to be considered at a future meeting. The monitoring report itself should have reported on the changes from the last report, as requested. There were a number of queries including relating to land charges administration where formerly it showed a variation of £69,000 but was now showing a zero balance. Another issue related to post entry training, that had previously shown a £13,000 saving but which had now disappeared. There was a similar situation about planning. The problem was there was no commentary within the report to explain what had happened to these figures.

The Accountant stated that the report was more of a projection for the end-of-year situation. The land charges issue mentioned had changed as a result of the receipt of a grant from Government plus money transferred from the reserves.

The Chief Executive acknowledged that the report had to be clearer and needed to reflect the changes from previous reports. A commentary was also needed about those changes. The Chief Financial Officer would be informed about the comments made.

Councillor Peter Cresswell thought that the Committee ought to make a formal decision on this to clarify its views, as this was relevant to all such similar reports across the Council and should be recommended for all Committees. Subsequently a further recommendation was made by the Chief Executive and this was agreed upon by the Committee. The recommendations, as revised, were then also agreed by the Committee.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the projected under spend of £59,212 compared to its approved revenue budget of £6,254,889 be noted;
- (ii) That the projected capital outturn of £755,000 be noted;
- (iii) That the Chief Financial Officer be instructed to ensure that any future reports brought to Committee detail the changes from the previous report to Committee and are reflected in Appendix 1 of those reports by inclusion of an additional column in the table within that Appendix.

72. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Committee received its Forward Agenda Plan.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the six monthly update on Legal Services would be considered at the 29th February 2016 meeting. The agenda plan, with this change, was duly noted.

The meeting closed at 5.45pm

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