

Cabinet

Monday, 7 November 2016

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr David Turner (Vice-Chair in the Chair))

Councillors: Julia Burgoyne
Sandra Garside
Leslie Hills
Samir Jassal
Jordan Meade
Alan Ridgers
Anthony Pritchard

Note: Councillors John Burden, Lee Croxton, Susan Howes, David Hurley, Brian Sangha and Narinder Singh Thandi were also in attendance.

David Hughes Chief Executive
Stuart Bobby Director (Corporate Services)
Nick Brown Director (Environment & Operations)
Kevin Burbidge Director (Housing & Regeneration)
Melanie Norris Director (Communities)
Sarah Parfitt Assistant Director (Corporate Services)
Sarah Arding Committee Services Officer

40. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gurjit Kaur Bains and John Cubitt.

41. To sign the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October were signed by the Chair.

42. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

43. Delegated Decisions - Cabinet Members

There were no decisions to report.

44. Service Review Options: Economic Development and Public Health & Communities

Further to minute 38 (10.10.2016) Cabinet considered a report from the Director (Communities) and Director (Corporate Services) detailing further information on the proposals they were minded to progress from the Service Review process for Economic Development & Town Centre Management and Public Health & Communities.

Resolved that subject to any necessary staff or public consultation, as outlined within the report, the following proposals be implemented:

Economic Development & Town Centre Management:

1. The Council will refocus its Tourism, Town Centre Management and Arts and Heritage activities by combining the respective teams of officers and delivering the refocused service from the newly-refurbished Market.
2. The Council will change the way in which the pedestrianisation of key town centre routes is maintained, with a view to ceasing the use of gatekeepers.

It is anticipated that the changes to the Economic Development & Town Centre Management function will enable the Council to deliver annual budget savings of £293,000.

Public Health & Communities

1. An online facility for the booking of sports pitches will be introduced and the Youth Council responsibilities will move to Committee Section to allow leisure officers to devote more time to sports development.
2. Funding for projects to support Older Persons and Younger Persons will be retained, albeit at a reduced level.
3. Funding for support for the Neighbourhood Forums will be retained, albeit at a reduced level.
4. The Council's programme of events will continue, albeit funding will be reduced and therefore some events will be on a smaller scale in the future.
5. The Council's annual fireworks display will be maintained, although the Council will investigate ways of reducing the cost without affecting the quality of the show.
6. Public Health commitments, including safeguarding support, will continue to be provided through existing resources.

It is anticipated that the changes to the Council's Public Health and Communities functions will see the Council deliver annual budget savings up to £194,000, subject to ongoing work regarding the annual fireworks display.

In addition, it was agreed that the Chief Executive be authorised to take all necessary financial, legal and practical actions in relation to implementation of the savings proposals, with the necessary budget amendments being incorporated into the revenue and capital estimates for 2017-18 and beyond.

45. Service Review Options: Parking & Amenities, Revenues, Benefits and Services

Cabinet considered a report from the Director (Corporate Services) and Corporate Change Manager outlining the options identified through the Service Review process for Parking & Amenities, Revenues & Benefits and Regulatory Services.

Parking & Amenities

In relation to the Parking & Amenities Service, Cabinet is minded to consider the following proposal at this time, and request that officers provide more detail as to how this might be deliverable, what timescales would be reasonable, and how the targeted level of savings can be delivered:

Officers therefore be requested to carry out a strategic review of car parking and public convenience provision within the Borough with a view to identifying opportunities for generating additional income or reducing expenditure and to present these options to the next meeting of the Cabinet.

Target level of savings: £225,000.

Revenues & Benefits

In relation to the Revenues & Benefits Service, Cabinet is minded to consider the following proposals at this time, and request that officers provide more detail as to how these might be deliverable, what timescales would be reasonable, and how the targeted level of savings can be delivered:

A firm commitment to the delivery of a fully shared service for the Revenues and Benefits service, in line with Cabinet's original authority to explore this option provided in 2015.

The introduction of a comprehensive customer access platform (a MyAccount solution) to deliver a paperless solution to many functions delivered by the Revenues and Benefits team, and therefore generate the maximum efficiency savings in relation to printing, postage and processing of paper documents, together with facilitating the delivery of a fully shared service.

That further research be undertaken in relation to the payment channels made available for the payment of Council Tax, Business Rates and other charges raised by the organisation, with a view to moving away from more expensive payment channels to those that provide cheaper means of collecting payments on a regular basis.

Target level of savings: £200,000 (note: £100,000 of these savings will count towards the Shared Services savings target within the Medium Term Financial Strategy).

Regulatory Services

In relation to Regulatory Services, Cabinet is minded to consider the following proposals at this time, and request that officers provide more detail as to how these might be deliverable, what timescales would be reasonable, and how the targeted level of savings can be delivered:

Consideration of a shared service arrangement with another local authority for the Environmental Health function, supported by a strategic review of activities and working practices.

Consideration of fee structures in relation to licensing activity.

Explore opportunities for reducing the annual cost of the CCTV service, by way of embracing technological developments and exploring alternative operating models for the service.

Target level of savings: £150,000

46. Delivering Affordable Warmth - A Fuel Poverty Strategy for Kent (and Medway)

Cabinet considered a report from the Assistant Director (Housing) regarding the proposed Delivering Affordable Warmth – A Fuel Poverty Strategy for Kent (and Medway). This Strategy is an action point requirement under the Kent Environment Strategy previously adopted by the Council. The Strategy seeks to reduce fuel poverty by working in partnership with all Kent Local Authorities and relevant partners to co-ordinate actions and objectives and links to national outcomes and targets and identifies local targets (outlined in the revised Kent Environment Strategy and Climate Local Kent).

Resolved that

- 1) the *Delivering Affordable Warmth – A Fuel Poverty Strategy for Kent (and Medway)*, including the priorities and action plan be adopted.
- 2) Cabinet commits to supporting the action plan which sets out to reduce fuel poverty in Kent in line with national targets.

47. Corporate Performance Update: Quarter Two 2016-17

A report from the Director (Corporate Services) was presented to Cabinet together with an update against the Performance Management Framework, as set out within the Council's Corporate Plan 2015 - 2019, for Quarter Two 2016/17 (July to September 2016). The report presented statistical data for Quarter Two 2016/17 and a summary of performance against target in the last reporting Quarter. It was highlighted that 7 performance measures had met their set target and 8 performance measures had not met their set target. For those performance measures where the set target had not been met an exception note was contained within the Review.

Resolved that the update against the Performance Management Framework for Quarter Two be noted.

48. Scrutiny Topic Review Report - Kingdom Enforcement Contract

Cabinet was presented with a report from the Corporate Change Manager presenting the Topic Review report for the Review of the Kingdom Enforcement Contract, as considered and approved by Members of the Overview Scrutiny Committee. Members reviewed the findings and recommendation and considered whether to task the Director (Environment & Operations) and Assistant Director with progressing the options through the tender specification.

Resolved that the specification for the tender of the new contract be expanded to include additional services and not just littering offences.

49. Budget Monitoring Report 2016/17 - Quarter Two

Cabinet considered a report and oral update from the Assistant Director (Corporate Services) providing information on actual performance against the approved Revenue and Capital budgets for 2016/17, including known variances agreed or identified through budgetary control activity. It was noted that Council had agreed the multi-year settlement offer (06.10.2016) but uncertainty remained pending Autumn Statement announcements. The following points were highlighted:

A projected underspend on the General Fund for the year of £149k.

Quarter One anticipated actual investment income to be some £300k lower than budgeted due to delay in achieving property fund investment. Quarter Two projections represent a slight improvement with anticipated variation of some £286k.

Business Rates income anticipated at some £121k more than originally budgeted and an additional projected surplus of £116k as a result of the favourable position arising from the Kent Pool arrangements, giving an overall surplus of £237k.

The year-end forecast position for Working Balances is £5.5m.

Minimum General Fund Working Balances - £1.25m.

An additional General Fund Reserve as per MTFS - £2m.

Useable Working Balances as a year-end of £2.2m to be utilised to support budget setting.

General Fund reserves movements in the year resulting in a net reduction in reserves of £314k, balance of £6.8m at the beginning of the year to £6.5m at year-end.

The General Fund Capital showed spend to the end of Quarter Two at £4.7m, the majority relating to the purchase of Network House at Gillingham.

At the end of Quarter Two the income and expenditure of the Housing Revenue Account is balanced with a projected transfer to reserves at year end of £208k. The year-end position for Working Balances stood at £3.2m and there was a net decrease in reserves of £1.0m.

The Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme indicated a programme of £12.1m with a spend to the end of Quarter Two at £3.2m.

Resolved that the Quarter Two Budget Monitoring Report 2016/17 be noted.

50. Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2017/18

Cabinet considered a report from the Service Manager (Revenues & Benefits) regarding the proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for 2017/18. Members considered the detailed results of the consultation into options for review of the current CTRS and findings of the second stage equality impact assessment.

When determining the options to be taken forward to Cabinet Members took into account the comments from the Overview Scrutiny Committee and a letter received from the KCC Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement.

Recommended that options 1a, 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13 and 14 be recommended to Full Council for adoption with effect from 1 April 2017, and that options 1b, 4, 6, 8, 9 and 10 are not adopted at this time. The introduction of a discretionary Exceptional Hardship Scheme (Option 14) will help to mitigate the impact that any of the recommended changes will have on our residents.

51. Enhancement of the Garden Waste Collection Service

Cabinet considered a report from the Director (Environment & Operations) detailing a proposal for the enhancement of the existing garden waste collection service to incorporate the introduction of a small 140 litre wheelie bin and a paper sack collection service for residents who are unable to have one of the large 240 litre wheelie bins available within the current service. The enhanced service will make the garden waste collection service more accessible to a wider range of residents across the Borough.

Resolved that the garden waste collection service be enhanced to include a 140 litre wheelie bin option and a paper sack collection service.

52. Any other business which by reason of special circumstances the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

There were no items to be considered as a matter of urgency.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 7.54pm