

Cabinet

Monday, 4 September 2017

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr David Turner (Chair)

Cllr Leslie Hills (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Gurjit Kaur Bains
 Julia Burgoyne
 Sandra Garside
 Samir Jassal
 John Knight
 Jordan Meade
 Alan Ridgers

Note: Councillors: Lee Croxton, Lenny Rolles, Shane Mochrie-Cox, Brian Sangha,
 Narinder Singh Thandi and Jenny Wallace were also in attendance

David Hughes	Chief Executive
Stuart Bobby	Director (Corporate Services)
Nick Brown	Director (Environment & Operations)
Melanie Norris	Director (Communities)
Sarah Kilkie	Assistant Director (Communities)
Sarah Parfitt	Assistant Director (Corporate Services)
Daniel Killian	Service Manager Operations (DSO)
Sue Hill	(Minutes)

23. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Kevin Burbidge – Director (Housing and Regeneration).

24. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2017 were signed by the Chair.

25. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

26. Delegated Decisions - Cabinet Members

No decisions other than those already circulated had been made.

27. Budget Monitoring Report - Quarter 1 - General Fund and Housing Revenue Account

Members were provided with information on actual performance against the approved Revenue and Capital budgets for 2017/18, including known variances agreed or identified through budgetary control activity. In addition the Cabinet was updated on other key areas of financial performance that may impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, Medium Term Financial Plan, Housing Revenue Account Business Plan or Financial Statements.

Significant variances and the current situation with the various funds were shown in the report and appendices. These included

- A projected underspend of £184,000 in the General Fund Revenue Account, indicating that would need to be a lower draw from working balances than the £1.4m included within the original budget.
- Continued efforts in implementing the bridging the gap activity set out within the MTFs realising savings of £87,000 following implementation of the shared legal service and an additional annual income stream of £160,000 from a recent property acquisition.
- a £70,000 increase overall in expected Business Rates income.
- a projected £6.3 million in General Fund working balances at the end of the financial year.
- An extended General Fund Capital Programme due to decisions taken by Cabinet and Council to extend the Property Acquisition Programme and develop accommodation for the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation.
- A projected transfer to HRA General Reserves at year end of just over £1.5m, with working balances remaining at £3m.
- Ongoing activity to deliver the Housing Capital Programme, with continued focus on the New Build and Acquisition Programme.
- Internally-managed investment balances at the end of the quarter of £25.795m, and the net asset value of Property Fund Investments at £9.89 million.

Cabinet noted the information contained within the report.

28. Corporate Performance Update: Quarter One 2017-18 (April to June 2017)

Cabinet was presented with an update against the Performance Management Framework, as set out within the Council's Corporate Plan 2015-19, for Quarter One 2017/18 (April to June 2017).

10 of the 15 performance measures (target based and established specifically to assess delivery of the key objectives in the Corporate Plan) had achieved the target set. In relation to PM1 – Percentage of waste from households recycled, members were advised that the

40% target is an annual target and the 2.8% increase in recycling during Quarter One gives a good indication of the positive impact of the new waste service given that the changes were only introduced in the last month of the first quarter.

Each Cabinet Committee will be presented with a performance report tailored to its portfolio that provides detailed contextual update outlining what has been delivered and what measures are planned to improve performance. In addition the Performance and Administration Committee will consider improvements to the Performance Management Framework at its meeting in September 2017.

Cabinet noted the information contained within the report.

29. Revenues & Benefits Shared Service

Further to Minute 20 (13 July 2017), Cabinet was updated on progress being made with the shared service for Revenues and Benefits and formally requested to delegate authority for the responsibility for the delivery of the Revenues and Benefits Service to Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, with this taking effect when the service was ready to be launched (currently anticipated to be July 2018).

The Chief Executive advised Members that there were already successful shared service schemes in place and that these not only brought about savings to the authorities concerned but also allowed services to their customers to be enhanced. Although implementation would not be without difficulty members were reassured that staff and customers alike would not suffer as a result.

The Operational Sub Group of officers, meeting for the first time next week, would take these issues and those of a more technical nature into account and report back on their proposals.

A briefing session for all Members was scheduled for the 4 December 2017.

Resolved that delegated authority be given to the Director (Corporate Services), in consultation with the Leader of the Executive and Portfolio Holder for Performance & Administration, to enact the delegation of responsibility for the provision of Revenues and Benefits services on behalf of Gravesham Borough Council, to Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, at such time that the shared service is ready to be launched; (currently anticipated to be July 2018).

30. Development of a shared service for the delivery of HR Services

Cabinet was advised that recent changes in the personnel team at Gravesham had led to capacity issues. In view of the good working relationship between the two authorities, this had been dealt with in the short term by Medway providing cover for 2 days per week. More recently Medway had recruited a full time HR professional to work solely on Gravesham Borough Council issues. This post had been funded by Gravesham.

Although further analysis of operational and technical issues was required, it was proposed that a fully shared service be implemented as soon as practicable as it was not only expected to provide substantial cost savings but also provide the opportunity for both authorities to

- Add resilience
- Give easy access to specialist skills
- Share best practice
- Expand the knowledge base of individual officers

Resolved that

1. the progression of a fully shared HR Service with Medway Council be agreed.
2. delegated authority be given to the Director (Communities), in consultation with the Director (Corporate Services), the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and HR, and the Monitoring Officer to take all necessary practical, financial and legal actions required to enable the arrangement to be put in place.
3. delegated authority be given to Medway Council to provide the HR Service on behalf of Gravesham Borough Council, through a shared service arrangement.

Note: Members welcomed the suggestion that a member of the Committee Team be trained in the use of the salaries system and, to act as a Member champion offering assistance to them when required.

31. Housing Repairs Topic Review (Part 2) Update

Cabinet was updated on improvements being made to the Repairs Service following a period of intensive work by officers and progress against the recommendations of the Overview Scrutiny Committee.

- A review of the skills needed to return much of the repair and maintenance work in-house had been undertaken.
- Staffing levels (including the recruitment and training of trade apprentices) would be increased.
- Staff knowledge and awareness was being increased following the implementation of a shadowing programme for members of the Repairs Administration Team and those in Housing Management and Housing Income teams.
- Repairs staff were being supported to study for a CIH qualification and a training scheme for Housing and Sheltered Housing Officers and the Sheltered Housing team was being developed by the Asset Manager.

In addition to bringing about changes and improvements in the last 12 months with repair issues, new terms and conditions for the workforce and the implementation of a new job scheduling system, officers had taken the opportunity to review the Responsive Repairs Policy (renamed the DSO Building Management, Repairs & Maintenance Policy) and the Rechargeable Repairs Policy. The improved policies had been drafted to ensure they gave clear guidelines to tenants and staff alike about responsibilities of the each party and what repairs the Council as landlord would actually undertake. It was envisaged that the new policies would reduce the number of complaints received and enable the Council to recover costs where appropriate.

Resolved that the updated DSO Building Management (Repairs & Maintenance and Rechargeable Repairs Polices be adopted.

32. Conversion of the Kings Farm Estate Office

Cabinet considered a report that sought authority to award a build contract for the conversion of the vacant Kings Farm Estate Office to provide a 4-bed wheelchair compliant home, following a tender process through the South East Consortium (SEC) framework, of which the Council was a member.

Cabinet was advised that analysis of the Council's housing stock had shown there was a clear need for 4 bedroom accessible accommodation. A survey of the former estate office had shown that it would be possible to convert the building to provide this.

Resolved that

1. The Kings Farm Estate Office be converted to provide a 4 bed wheelchair compliant home with parking to the front and gardens to the side/rear.
2. A build contract be awarded to the successful contractor arising from the South East Consortium Framework selection process.
3. 30% of the overall cost of the conversion be financed by the use of retained Right to Buy receipts.

33. Kent Healthy Business Awards

Cabinet was reminded that the Kent Healthy Business Awards had been introduced by Kent County Council in 2013/14 as a means of promoting the improvement of the health of those in the workforce of a business and as a way of that business obtaining recognition of its efforts in this regard.

Gravesham had not only recently been awarded a certificate of excellence in promoting Health and Safety but had also been notified that it had achieved this rating for its efforts in the area of Leadership and Smoking and Tobacco related issues.. Work to improve the health and wellbeing of staff was ongoing and the next tranche of initiatives would concentrate upon their mental health and wellbeing.

Cabinet noted the information contained within the report.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8.12 pm