

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATE MANAGEMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**HELD ON 28 OCTOBER 2013 AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
COUNCIL OFFICES, WEELEY**

Present: Councillors Steady (Chairman), Miles (Vice-Chairman), Bucke, Griffiths, V E Guglielmi, Platt and Wood.

Also Present: Councillors Honeywood (Portfolio Holder for Housing, Benefits and Revenues and Sports Facilities) and Turner (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Coast Protection).

In Attendance: Corporate Director (Paul Price), Corporate Director (June Clare), Accountancy Manager (Richard Bull), Democratic Services Manager (Colin Sweeney), Democratic Services Officer (Michael Pingram), Sports Facilities Business Manager (Jeanette Thomasson) and Street Scene Manager (Tim R Clarke).

33. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Wood to this, his first meeting of the Committee since his recent appointment to serve on the Committee in place of Councillor Watling.

The Chairman also explained that there was a different meetings layout that had recently been agreed at a meeting between the Leader of the Council and the Chairmen of the Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Caines and Nicholls (with Councillor Griffiths substituting).

35. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 16 September 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none declared.

37. THE COUNCIL'S WASTE AND RECYCLING CONTRACT

The Chairman invited Councillor Turner (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Coast Protection), the Council's Corporate Director for Public Experience and the Council's Street Scene Manager to update the Committee as to the success so far of the Council's waste and recycling contract.

Councillor Turner started by informing the Committee that the Council was statutorily obliged to collect waste and recycling from every rate paying property in the District and that Essex County Council was equally obliged to dispose of said waste and recycling. Councillor Turner further explained that the basis of the contract was twelve boroughs in the County forming as part of an Inter Authority Agreement (IAA).

He then said that the contract, for seven years, had been signed two years ago and that the Council had the option to sign-up for a further seven years. Councillor Turner was delighted to announce that the contract had saved the Council £450,000 per annum on the previous contract. There were initial problems, he said, but assured the Committee that the Council had a good working relationship with Veolia and used the storm that had hit the District that day as an example of this as Veolia had braved the conditions to collect as normal. He also explained that the Council had set Veolia a target of not missing collection at more than 18 houses in every 100,000, which they were close to achieving.

He further explained that there were 26 different types of plastic but the Council only collected types one and two as these had a greater financial value. He said that the recycling in Tendring was the best in the County for purity which, in turn, gave the Council better credits.

Councillor Turner said that recycling had not quite gone as well as hoped and targets were not being met but pointed out this was an issue nationwide. He explained that the Council had received a grant from Government of £624,500 to help with recycling and had paid for two vehicles and had allowed the Council to hire two members of staff who had been able to analyse data to see where the Council was doing least recycling.

In discussions, Members of the Committee asked what had been learnt from the experience of being able to negotiate such a better deal for the Council, due to the previous deal being at a high cost, in order to avoid this happening again. The Council's Street Scene Manager explained that it could be achieved by remaining alert of any changes to the market.

It was also discussed that the public might not understand the recycling process. Councillor Turner felt there had previously been a certain level of deceit where people thought they were recycling when they were not. He said that the Council was constantly and continually looking at ways to offer a better recycling service to residents.

The Chairman asked what the plans were moving forward to incorporate garden waste. Councillor Turner said that the Council was looking into this and a pilot scheme was planned for March 2014 where residents could opt in to pay a yearly fee to have their garden waste collected on a fortnightly basis. Furthermore, if a certain number opted-in to the scheme, the Council would not only break-even but also generate extra income. However, it was also explained that generating extra income was seen for the long-term as initial set up costs would make this difficult in the short-term.

It was **AGREED** that the Committee make a **COMMENT TO CABINET** to welcome Councillor Turner considering the matter of the green waste collection (pilot) initiative and urges the introduction of the garden waste disposal in terms of income per tonnage and reduced traffic flow to civic amenity sites.

38. CORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE WORKING PARTY – EFFICIENCY SAVINGS AND INCOME GENERATION

The Chairman invited Councillor Honeywood (Portfolio Holder for Housing, Benefits and Revenues and Sports Facilities) and the Council's Sports Facilities Business Manager to update the Committee on where the Council was with regard to Leisure Services fees and charges.

The Sports Facilities Business Manager explained that she was looking at key areas of growth and one area that had been promising was swimming lessons. Considerable time, she said, had been spent looking into this area to see why the lessons had not been filled. From this, lessons were cut back and condensed to ensure maximum attendance for each lesson and reducing costs of instructors in the process. Participation in swimming lessons had been improved due to a targeted marketing campaign that included full page adverts in the local paper, friend referral discounts and a new mascot which was being created with the children deciding the name via a competition. She then explained that there were plans for more branding on items such as swimming pool bags and t-shirts.

Mrs Thomasson then went on to say that memberships were a massive area of concentration due to the level of income it generated for the Leisure Centres in the District. She said that, since being appointed to her role, she had hired a group marketing manager and now targeted marketing for all Centres rather than individual ones. This had proved, she said, effective when marketing for refer a friend discounts and stated that 65-70% of new members were from referrals and said that new customer visits were up 10% on this time last year. From this, Mrs Thomasson said she hoped they would refer friends and these figures would steadily increase further.

With regards to pricing, Mrs Thomasson then argued that due to increasing income compared to last year and a reduction in subsidy it would make sense not to raise prices. She also argued that although the Council was looking to be more commercial it was still a local authority there to provide a service to the public.

The Chairman congratulated the Sports Facilities Business Manager as she had explained at the recent Working Parties that she had planned to generate income rather than cut expenditure and now she had shown this had been achieved.

In discussions, the Committee suggested looking at the weights equipment at the gyms as weightlifters may not join due to the equipment not being heavy enough. Mrs Thomasson said that this accounted for a small percentage of users at the Centres and she didn't want to crowd the gym as it could intimidate other users. It was further suggested to promote open days, a return to the free to user swimming for under 16's and over 60's and free swimming in off-peak times of the year.

The Committee then asked for an update on the refurbishment of the Frinton and Walton Swimming Pool. The Council's Corporate Director of Life Opportunities said that Cabinet had set aside money for this but until the work on the Dovercourt Swimming Pool was complete and the full costs of that scheme were known, the Council couldn't commit to it.

Furthermore, the Committee asked if there had been an increase in school usage of the swimming pools in light of the recent changes to the curriculum. The Council's Sports Facilities Business Manager stated that usage from schools had slightly reduced in light of the schools becoming academies but said the Council would keep the situation under review.

It was **AGREED** that the Committee make the following **COMMENTS TO CABINET**:

- a) To ensure that refurbishment of Walton Pool goes ahead, and on time;
- b) Urge talks, or consultations with Town and Parish Councils to alleviate any shortfalls;
- c) Applaud the work of the Council's Sports Facilities' Business Manager in marketing initiatives and welcomes the new commercial approach to advertising public services;

- d) Register the Council's concerns about academies pulling out of swimming and urge the Council to talk to the academies about what prices they were willing to pay.
- e) Look to work with local academies to encourage continuing with swimming lessons/use and recommend that contact be made with Essex boys clubs via Gill Burden and her team.

39. THE LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

The Chairman invited Councillor Honeywood (Portfolio Holder for Housing, Benefits and Revenues and Sports Facilities), the Council's Accountancy Manager and the Council's Corporate Director for Life Opportunities to update the Committee on the proposed revisions to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS) for Tendring, for implementation for the year 2014/15.

The Council's Corporate Director for Life Opportunities explained that the report may seem confusing due to timing issues and said he was keen to ensure the Committee had an input into the proposed revisions before it was to be considered by Cabinet as the Committee had been integrally involved in the development of the LCTSS for the year 2012/13.

Mr Price said that, currently, targets were being met in terms of the Council's finance, based on the projected estimates, and that a consultation exercise had been undertaken with the results shown in an attached appendix. He explained that although there was a poor level of response, those that did respond favoured a decrease in Local Council Tax Support from the current 90% to 80%. Mr Price said that he felt the Council should adopt a more prudent approach due to fears that a higher rate of Council Tax could lead to significant increases in Council Tax collection which could mean the Council would need to raise the price of Council Tax. In summary, he said he felt the proposed changes were more a tweaking of the current scheme rather than a revision and that the aim was to reduce from a 90% funded scheme to 85%.

In discussions, the Committee shared its concerns with the consultation and felt the survey was confusing for residents and could explain why the response was low. Due to this low response, it was difficult for Members to take much from the results as it had not reflected enough of the population. Mr Price agreed with this but explained that it would be difficult to make the survey easier as it was a complex system, and said that because of the low response officers had proposed to go against the surveys views.

Furthermore, the Committee discussed the Council Tax exemptions and discounts for 2014/15 on Page 9 of the agenda. It was considered that, with regards to Class D properties, those unoccupied and unfurnished and requiring major repairs or alterations, rather than them receiving a 100% discount, they could either receive a 95% discount or whatever the break-even figure would be. This, it was suggested, would tell the Council if the property was active. It was felt there was potential for this to be considered but fears were expressed about whether it would be cost effective to administer.

It was **AGREED** that the Committee **RECOMMENDS TO CABINET** that it gives consideration to reducing the 100% discount to 95%, or the break-even figure, in respect of Class D properties.

40. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee noted the new item relevant to the terms of reference of the Committee contained in Forward Plan No.144.

41. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

There were none.

The meeting was declared closed at 9.42 p.m.

Chairman