



## CABINET

**DATE:** Friday, 29 January 2021  
**TIME:** 10.30 am  
**VENUE:** Meeting to be held pursuant to provisions of Statutory Instrument 2020/392. Link to the live stream will be available via <https://www.tendringdc.gov.uk>

**MEMBERSHIP:**

Councillor Stock OBE	- Leader of the Council
Councillor C Guglielmi	- Deputy Leader; Corporate Finance & Governance Portfolio Holder
Councillor P Honeywood	- Housing Portfolio Holder
Councillor McWilliams	- Partnerships Portfolio Holder
Councillor Newton	- Business & Economic Growth Portfolio Holder
Councillor Porter	- Leisure & Tourism Portfolio Holder
Councillor Talbot	- Environment & Public Space Portfolio Holder

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For further details and general enquiries about this meeting, contact Ian Ford Email: [democraticservices@tendringdc.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@tendringdc.gov.uk) or Telephone on 01255 686584.

DATE OF PUBLICATION: TUESDAY, 26 JANUARY 2021

## AGENDA

**7** **Matters Referred to the Cabinet by a Committee - Reference from the Resources and Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee - A.1 - Scrutiny of the Transformation of Digital Services (Pages 1 - 4)**

To enable the Cabinet to consider the comment made by the Resources and Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee following that Committee's scrutiny of the Council's transformation of Digital services.

**10** **Matters Referred to the Cabinet by a Committee - Reference from the Resources and Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee - A.4 - Scrutiny of the Updated Financial Forecast/Budget 2021/22 and Housing Revenue Account Budget Proposals 2021/2022 (Pages 5 - 8)**

To enable the Cabinet to consider the recommendations made by the Resources and Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee following that Committee's scrutiny of the Updated Financial Forecast/Budget 2021/22 and Housing Revenue Account Budget Proposals 2021/2022.

**Date of the Next Scheduled Meeting**

*The next scheduled meeting of the Cabinet is to be held on Friday, 19 February 2021.*

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## CABINET

29 JANUARY 2021

### REFERENCE REPORT FROM THE RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

#### A.1 SCRUTINY OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF DIGITAL SERVICES

(Report prepared by Keith Durran and Ian Ford)

##### **BACKGROUND**

At the meeting of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 December 2020 (Minute 108 refers) the Committee was provided with an overview of the Council's Digital Services Transformation.

It was reported to the Committee that with Councillors having varying degrees of IT expertise the Council had identified an emerging picture whereby:

- ✘ Some councillors were increasingly becoming disengaged - losing the ability to fully/ effectively engage with the range of digital information and services that the council operated.
- ✘ Some councillors were struggling with their IT and asking Council Officers to fix their personal equipment – potentially creating an insurance liability issue.
- ✘ The diversity of different Councillor Applications, all at different versions, was causing Councillors to experience different IT problems causing unnecessary stress and pressures for all concerned.

The emerging digital picture was therefore perceived as an opportunity to assist councillors in their community leadership role. Through providing each councillor with a standard, managed device backed up by IT training and supported via the Council's IT service desk intended benefits and improvements were, and remain, as followed:

- ✓ To assist Councillors to improve their efficiency and access to stored digital information.
- ✓ Strengthen cybersecurity (and cybersecurity awareness) and further reduce any possibility of a data breach and Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) data loss.
- ✓ Enhance Councillors' digital engagement.
- ✓ Enhance mobile working and flexible working capabilities and thereby work/ life balance
- ✓ Further reduce reliance (and the costs) of printed information.
- ✓ Councillor IT equipment standardisation would in turn enable officers council-wide to standardise the range services that they provide which would achieve efficiency savings for both Councillors and Officers.

Members heard how the strategy had been to purchase high quality Microsoft Surface Go tablets during 2019 and at the beginning of 2020 for Councillors to

undertake their council-related duties. With some Councillors struggling with the tablet screen size Officers had additionally offered Councillors: connection hubs, full size keyboards, 24" screens, cabled mouse. This gave Councillors a blend of home-based digital access with the ability to go mobile with their tablets when required.

As a result of COVID-19 and an emerging understanding as to its longevity, officers had become conversant with new face-to-face restrictive working arrangements and the use of virtual Microsoft Skype meetings had become a key 'new working norm'. Likewise, virtual meeting MS Skype capabilities had needed to be extended to Councillors to enable them to perform their duties, which was not an intended original use of the previously purchased tablets.

The Committee was informed that the Council now had a pressing financial, technological and support need to migrate fully from Microsoft Skype to Microsoft Teams. Teams offered a range of additional meeting business functionality benefits over Skype but it was far more demanding in terms of computing processing power. As such, it was close to the limit and was very likely to become beyond the processing capabilities of councillor tablets as Microsoft invested in further enhancing Teams functionality.

With a view to giving Councillors the very best experience possible during multi-party video conference calls, the decision had now been taken to allocate funding to quickly replace Councillors' tablets with the same Lenovo laptops that officers used. Those laptops were tried and tested, high specification devices that had enabled officers to perform the full range of council business demands.

The Committee was also informed in addition, and based upon approaches from several senior Councillors, that providing Members with a council tablet had unintentionally been seen as an 'imposition' by some Councillors, despite Officers' best intentions. Likewise, Officers had now acknowledged Councillors' desire to be increasingly involved in their use of digital technology and how they worked and engaged with council business.

With engagement firmly in mind but reflecting the need to standardise equipment across Officers and Councillors as far as was possible, Councillors would now be asked on an individual basis whether they would benefit more from having a smaller, lighter more portable 13" council laptop, or a larger 15" laptop with a bigger screen and near full-size keyboard. Council provided ancillary devices – keyboards, screens, mice, hubs – would continue to be offered to Councillors and those who already had them would be able to connect and continue to use them with their replacement laptops.

It was the intention to engage with Councillors and roll-out the new laptops during December and early January. Following a period of Microsoft Teams training on virtual meetings the Council would migrate to Microsoft Teams on or around January 18<sup>th</sup> 2020.

#### **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS TO CABINET**

During the consideration of this report the Committee made the following:-

**COMMENT TO CABINET:** that the Cabinet be informed that this Committee endorses the principle that Councillors be consulted on the IT kit that is to be provided to them to fulfil their roles as Members.

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET**

**Portfolio Holder Comments**

*"I thank the Committee for their comments, and I am delighted to state that all Members of the Council have now been furnished with a brand new device of their individual choice. The roll out of these during the current lockdown has been carried out impeccably by our IT guys, who going by the comments I have personally received and fed back from colleagues, have done this in safest possible manner, and for which I am very grateful."*

**Recommendations to Cabinet**

That the comment of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted and the comments of the Corporate Finance & Governance Portfolio Holder, in response thereto, be endorsed.

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## CABINET

29 JANUARY 2021

### REFERENCE REPORT FROM THE RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

#### **A.4 SCRUTINY OF THE UPDATED FINANCIAL FORECAST/BUDGET 2021/22 AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2021/2022**

(Report prepared by Ian Ford)

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 14 January 2021 (Minutes 116 and 117 refer) and in accordance with the requirements of the Budget & Policy Framework Procedure Rules scrutinised:-

- (1) the updated financial forecast and proposed budget position for 2021/22; and
- (2) the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2021/22 including the movement in HRA Balances, the level of fees and charges for 2021/22 and the HRA Capital Programme.

#### **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS TO CABINET**

As a result of that scrutiny the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee made the following recommendations to Cabinet:-

Updated financial forecast and proposed budget position for 2021/22

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET:**

- (a) *In respect of future outturn positions on the Council's annual budget, to allocate as a priority any available underspend following permitted carry forwards to extend further the measures to achieve the Back to Business Agenda of the Council.*
- (b) *Further to (a), to establish a Business Roundtable for the District as part of the Back to Business Agenda and to inform that Agenda going forward.*
- (c) *To reassess all the current reserves, provisions and one off sums allocated by the Council to determine whether they were still required, relevant to the Council's Corporate Plan and the associated sum was at the appropriate level and:*
  - (i) *to re-allocate sums such as those for the Clacton Town Centre Fountain and Residents Free Parking (where the cost has been incorporated in the base revenue budget) to more closely align with the Corporate Plan priorities of the Council.*
  - (ii) *to identify the specific intentions for the £1.585M for Business Investment and Growth Projects reserve or otherwise look to reallocate that reserve.*

- (iii) *To allocate a further £56k to resourcing public realm improvements across the District (supplementing and extending the £44k set aside to fund '2 One year fixed term posts to support improvements to the overall appearance of the District') thereby allocating a total of £100k to this initiative in total.*
- (iv) *From the reallocation process, and in recognition of the additional £110k in recycling credits achieved by the Council in 2020/21, to identify £10k to improve recycling bring sites operated by the Council in the District to improve the attractiveness of those sites, signage at and to those sites and thereby further encourage their use and address relevant issues at those sites.*
- (d) *To request that proposals for use of the Tendring Community Fund be developed swiftly so that these can be put in front of a meeting of the Portfolio Holder Working Party on the Tendring Community Fund without delay.*
- (e) *To identify whether existing funding in the revenue budget and reserves, provisions and one-off sums enables the Council to adequately support co-ordinated measures to address the mental health needs of the local population as we ultimately come out of covid-19 pandemic restrictions and if this is found to be insufficient to look to allocate further resources as necessary to address those needs.*
- (f) *To pro-actively assess and monitor the resources required to deliver a dynamic and expansive Tourism Strategy for the District (and the Year 1 delivery plan to accompany that Strategy) to maximise the advantage to the District as soon as covid-19 pandemic restrictions are lifted and extending beyond the normal summer season.*

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2021/22 including the movement in HRA Balances, the level of fees and charges for 2021/22 and the HRA Capital Programme

**RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET:** *To set a target level for reducing void periods in 2021/22 in the housing stock with a view to providing specific focus to those measures.*

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET**

**Portfolio Holder Comments**

Proposed responses against each point raised by the Committee are set out in the table below:

R&S O&S Ref. from above	Response of the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Finance
(a)	The allocation of any favourable outturn position each year will need to take into account a number of issues, including the funding of the Council's priorities, one being the very important back to business initiative. The allocation of this funding will therefore need to take into account the Council's wider financial position at the appropriate time.
(b)	This would be something that I would be happy to support as part of the on-going development of the back to business initiative.
(c)	The assessment of reserves, provisions and one-off budgets form part of the existing financial performance monitoring and budget setting processes throughout the year. They will therefore form part of these activities in 2021, which will include the reallocation of budgets as necessary, where the specific funding allocations put forward by the Committee can also be considered.
(d)	Work is underway to progress this initiative.
(e)	This will be considered as part of the Back to Business initiative, along with the activities set out in the response to (c) above.
(f)	This is currently being considered as part of the 'audit' of the various funded projects and initiatives to ensure their delivery, which must be both timely and effective to maximise value for money for the Council.
HRA	A number of issues / actions were highlighted in the Housing Revenue Account Budget report that was considered by the Committee, which will be monitored as part of the quarterly financial monitoring reports. The overall target is to return to the historic 'stable state' position of 2% over the coming year.

**Recommendation(s) to Cabinet**

**That the recommendations of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted and the comments of the Corporate Finance & Governance Portfolio Holder, in response thereto, be endorsed.**

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