

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE,
HELD ON THURSDAY, 13TH AUGUST, 2020 AT 7.30 PM
THE MEETING WAS HELD IN ACCORDANCE WITH SI 2020/392. LINK TO THE LIVE
STREAM IS FOUND HERE: [HTTPS://WWW.TENDRINGDC.GOV.UK/LIVEMEETINGS](https://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/livemeetings)**

Present:	Councillors M Stephenson (Chairman), Scott (Vice-Chairman), Alexander, Allen, Barry, Bray, Codling, Griffiths and Morrison
Also Present:	Councillor Carlo Guglielmi (Deputy Leader of Council; Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance & Governance; Deputy Leader of Conservatives Group)
In Attendance:	Richard Barrett (Assistant Director (Finance and IT) & Section 151 Officer), Keith Simmons (Head of Democratic Services and Elections), Tom Gardiner (Head of Regeneration), Keith Durran (Democratic Services Officer), Karen Harges (IT Training Officer), Hattie Dawson-Dragisic (Apprentice (Democratic Services & Elections)) and Emma Haward (Leadership Support Assistant)

69. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

An Apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Harris (with Councillor Alexander substituting).

70. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Thursday 9 July 2020 be approved as a correct record and were be signed by the Chairman.

71. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none on this occasion.

72. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 38

Pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 38, Councillor Griffiths asked the Chairman of the Committee:-

“With reference to the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, on Thursday 13 August, and with reference to Garden Communities Project page 53.

Would it be possible to outline the cost pressures and costings relating to this project?

In relation to

- a) past expenditure and costings*
- b) current expenditure. and costings*

- c) *financial risks and cost pressures relating to recent decisions by Colchester Borough Council, in relation to Garden Communities, and the financial impact and costings of those decision on Tendring District Council”.*

The Chairman responded to Councillor Griffiths’ question as follows:-

“To date, the cost of the project has been met from contributions from the Government and each of the 4 partnering authorities.

In terms of the contributions that this Council has made to the project, these total £950k to date.

The latest position covering the points raised, including the recent decision of Colchester Borough Council was set out in an associated report to Cabinet on 24 July 2020.

As set out in the recommendations of that report, Cabinet noted Colchester Borough Council’s disappointing decision not to approve their partnership contribution to the NEGC project and requested the Leader of Tendring District Council to formally write to Colchester to express its concerns with regard to future working arrangements and seeking clarity around remedying their equal share of project responsibilities.

The letter from the Leader has been sent to Colchester Borough Council with a response still awaited.

An upcoming meeting of the NEGC Joint Scrutiny Panel is scheduled to consider these issues further along with exploring the various options to take the project forward”.

73. REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (FINANCE AND IT) & SECTION 151 OFFICER - A.1 - FINANCIAL OUTFURN 2019/20 AND ALLOCATION OF GENERAL FUND VARIANCE FOR THE YEAR

A report was provided to the Committee of an overview of the Council’s financial outturn for the year 2019/20 and the allocation of the associated General Fund Variance for that year. The reports considered by the Corporate Finance and Governance Portfolio Holder on 17 July 2020 in respect of the Financial Outturn 2019/20 position and by Cabinet on 24 July 2020 (Minute 40 refers) in respect of the Outturn 2019/20 and propose allocation of the General Fund variance for the year were submitted to the Committee to assist it with its scrutiny of those matters.

The Committee was advised that on 17 July 2020 the Corporate Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder had considered the Financial Outturn 2019/20 and made the following decision:-

“That the Corporate Finance and Governance Portfolio Holder:-

- (a) notes the financial outturn position for 2019/20 as set out in this report and appendices;
- (b) approves the financing of General Fund capital expenditure for 2019/20 as detailed in Appendix D;
- (c) approves the movement in uncommitted and earmarked General Fund reserves for 2019/20 set out in Appendix E;
- (d) approves the qualifying carry forwards totalling £17.914m (£9.518m Revenue and £8.396m Capital) as set out in Appendix K;
- (e) agrees that all other carry forwards totalling £0.658m requested by services be transferred to the relevant earmarked reserve pending consideration by Cabinet at its July 2020 meeting;
- (f) that subject to the above, approves that the overall General Fund Outturn Variance for the year of £0.862m be transferred to the Revenue Commitments reserve until Cabinet formally considers the allocation of this funding at its July 2020 meeting;
- (g) in respect of the HRA, approves the movement on HRA balances for 2019/20 including any commitments set out within Appendices H and/or I along with recharges to the HRA from the General fund of £2.808m for the year and the financing of the HRA capital expenditure set out in Appendix I; and
- (h) delegation be given to the Council's S151 Officer, in consultation with the Corporate Finance and Governance Portfolio Holder, to adjust the outturn position for 2019/20 along with any corresponding adjustment to earmarked reserves as a direct result of any recommendations made by the Council's External Auditor during the course of their audit activities relating to the Council's 2019/20 accounts."

On 24 July 2020, Cabinet considered the Outturn 2019/20 and the Proposed Allocation of the General Fund Variance for the Year and made the following decision:-

"That Cabinet:

- (a) agrees that the total of £0.658m requested by Services can be retained by them via the associated carry forward requests, as set out in Appendix A to item A.6 of the Report of the Corporate Finance and Governance Portfolio Holder; and
- (b) approves the allocation of the General Fund Variance for the year of £0.862m as set out in Table 1 of the Portfolio Holder's report and repeated below:-

Proposed Allocation	Amount	Portfolio Holder's Comments
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<p><i>'Back to Business' Initiatives and associated activities</i></p>	<p>£0.862m</p>	<p><i>"It is proposed to allocate the full uncommitted General Fund variance to this major initiative and associated regeneration and economic activities.</i></p> <p><i>As elsewhere in the country, the Tendring District has been hit hard by the COVID19 crisis. Therefore it is important that this Council establishes a clear focus and determination in supporting the district and the economy to not only recover as quickly as possible but to also strengthen and embed a level of resilience that will undoubtedly be required going forward. This approach will provide a solid foundation along with complimenting all of the Council's overall prioritised and strategic objectives.</i></p> <p><i>As already discussed by Members, there should be no constraints to the range of projects and initiatives that are put forward for consideration to support the whole district or perhaps more locally at ward level.</i></p> <p><i>In agreeing the carry forwards of £0.658m set out earlier on in this report, along with other existing projects and actions, there will be an overlap with direct back to business activities going forward to make this initiative a success.</i></p> <p><i>In terms of this success, it is also acknowledged that local businesses must have a strong influence in terms of how the Council can help and support them through what has been and will continue to be a very challenging time for them and our residents.</i></p> <p><i>The 'Back to Business' initiative will continue to be developed over the coming weeks and further</i></p>
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That Cabinet be **RECOMMENDED TO:**

- (a) Implement the invitation from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Governance to convene a meeting with the Chairman of this Committee, and other interested Councillors, to examine in detail the financial reserves and provisions to look at progressing further and speedier with those schemes or releasing the funds with a view to the outcome of that meeting being reported to the meeting of this Committee to be held on 21 September 2020;
- (b) Note this Committee endorses the decision to allocate £862k from the 2019/20 General Fund Outturn variance to 'Back to Business' Initiatives and associated activities; and
- (c) Consider establishing a corporate dedicated project completion resource, with project management skills, with a direction to progress projects and

priorities of corporate significance to the Council, support delivery milestones for those projects and unlock capacity and other issues that could frustrate delivery of those projects and priorities.

It was also **RESOLVED** to consider the measures to assist with the delivery of corporate projects and priorities following the meeting referenced in recommendation (a) above.

**74. REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (GOVERNANCE) - A.2 - TENDRING
BACK TO BUSINESS PRIORITIES AND PROJECTS 2020/21**

The Committee had before it a report of the Assistant Director of Governance regarding the development of 'Priorities and Projects' that was incorporated as part of the Council's Back to Business and Recovery Plan, and Performance Management framework for the Council for 2020/21 in advance of any decisions by Cabinet/Council on those matters. The report included an Appendix prepared by the Assistant Director of Finance which drew together the numerous proposals and concepts arising from a survey of businesses locally, from individual Councillors and from Officers to help the District to build back better following the economic and social impact locally of the lockdown associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chairman of the Committee expressed his appreciation for the work of the Deputy Leader in launching the initiative to gather ideas to address locally the challenges arising from the lockdown.

The Committee was invited to identify its collective view on the themes and activities that should be key strands of work to focus on helping the district recover and included restarting the local economy, keeping residents and visitors safe and harnessing the power of the voluntary sector to deliver much needed services and improve the quality of life locally.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Cabinet considers the following as it formulates its back to business strategy and the content of that strategy:

- In considering business development and encouragement, there should be an element that recognises the enduring and ongoing need for a range of service trades (such as plumbing, engineering, building and carpentry) – support for those business should not be overlooked and there should be engagement with other agencies to support training opportunities locally in the skills and competencies to work in those service trades.
- Similar to the above, there was an opportunity to look at opportunities to support skills development and business location associated with the off shore wind farm industry and green initiatives to lower energy usage and costs associated with that energy use (around heating, insulation and cooling) and providing services to other businesses to harness the same energy reduction measures.
- The District had tremendous potential for tourism. But this needed to harness the separate and distinct elements across the District. Branding around the opportunities and attractions of the Tendring Peninsula were critical to this to avoid visitors just visiting one town or village and not benefitting from the richness

that the wider District has to offer. Part of this would be about developing and maintaining up to date directories of places to go and enjoy, to look early at promoting events to be held in 2021, to harness and reflect national and international interest such as in the years of the Olympic Games to promote related activities locally, but also to look at events and activities to try to appeal to potential visits throughout each month of the year. Increasing access to information about points and walks of interest, including facilitating elements of sampling digitally those walks, would increase interest in the Tendring peninsula going forward. This would also positively contribute to encouraging local people to take more walks and thereby improving the health of the population.

- There was a need to address the needs of our communities and provide, perhaps limited at first, but opportunities for the public that are in Clacton-on-Sea to safely come into the Town Hall so that they can be sign-posted to services that they require. In addition, the Council should review its spending power to ensure that it was as sustainable in energy terms, it supported training opportunities for local people (including apprentices) and that local businesses had every opportunities to secure work from the Council and therefore recirculate public money locally where this represented good value for money.
- The Council was in a powerful position, subject to the review of its own spending referenced earlier, to deliver a consistent message around the benefits to the community of buying locally to boost the local economy, to encourage local businesses to succeed and through success to employ more locally and develop that virtuous circle of spending.
- To provide tangible support for business a dedicated Covid-19 resource would be beneficial to help businesses access the latest advice speedily and to assist those businesses to identify practical measures to deliver services safely. The capacity of local businesses and the opportunity for new start-up businesses could be assisted by providing pop-up style facilities and market stall facilities. And engagement with businesses and providing them with an opportunity to build local supply chains and attract new entrants/apprentices was vital and could be facilitated through existing and new business to business clubs and a jobs fair.
- There was an urgent imperative to support super-fast broadband provision locally and end the blight for communities, individuals and businesses that prevented them from making the most of the digital environment. As part of the dedicated Covid-19 resource referenced above, there should be an element that encourages and enthuses businesses locally to embrace fully the opportunities of expanding their customer base globally through using digital commerce tools effectively.
- There was an opportunity to support a shift to assist individuals to make healthier life choices, to look at expanding the outdoor gym class provision, to implement early the learning from the pilot project around transitioning inactive people to some form of activity and encouraging the slightly and moderately active to increase their activity levels. To look at embracing the opportunities for the District to be a cycling attraction and thereby encourage local individuals to enjoy this leisure activity; perhaps through the London style free bike pick up and drop off scheme along stretches of the coast, by providing outdoor community gym style sites at intervals along the coast and elsewhere and sign posting people to multi-

use games areas (MUGAs). These measures would also help to expand the attraction of the area to a wider range of visitors and tourists. Measure to encourage healthier eating habits and opportunities to 'grow your own'.

[Note: The Committee agreed that its proposed response to the Cabinet on this matter would be circulated to the Committee Members for confirmation. In the event that there was a need, the Committee would reconvene to formally endorse that response.]

75. AGENDA ITEMS FOR SEPTEMBER MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee was advised that this meeting, and the Committee's meetings in June and July, were extraordinary meetings and had concentrated scrutiny and overview work on particular themes. The remaining meetings of the Committee in 2020/21 were to be ordinary meetings for which a new work programme would be required.

The Committee noted that, further to Minute 73 above, it was envisaged that its meeting on 21 September 2020 would consider further the issue of projects and priorities (and delivery of those) and the related financial reserves and provisions. The Committee had also determined at its meeting on 17 February 2020 (Minute 54 refers) that there should be a further report from the Portfolio Holder for the Environment on the ambition/vision for the waste and recycling service in the District (including improving recycling levels further over the remainder of the current contract with Veolia).

The work programme for the period October 2020 to April 2021 would also be considered at the 21 September 2020 meeting.

The meeting was declared closed at 9.25 pm

Chairman

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SECTION 1 - COVID – 19 Business Support and Recovery Survey Analysis

The recent survey undertaken was designed to collect the views of the local business community on TDC's current business support offer, and the impact that the COVID-19 crisis continues to have as lockdown begins to ease for many – 92 responses were received with a summary of the headline figures set out below.

Headline Figures

- Most respondents (15%) were from the Retail sector, followed by Hospitality (10%).
- 56% had been based in Tendring for over 10 years, and 75% had between 0 and 5 employees.
- 60% described their business as 'surviving' during COVID-19, but 37% described that they are in 'crisis'.
- 41% have made use of the Staff Retention (furlough) Scheme, with the next most accessed support being the Small Business Grant (40%) and Bounce Back Loan (30%). However, the question is phrased 'Have you secured or applied for any Government support.....' and so having applied for these schemes cannot be taken as guaranteed all respondents have actually benefitted from or been eligible. 18% of respondents have not accessed any of the listed schemes.
- The most frequent ways that respondents are preparing for reopening is changing the layout of their premises to enable social distancing and providing appropriate PPE, both with 65%. This may relate to the high number of retail and hospitality businesses which responded.
- 88% of respondents have never accessed a business support service, but in follow up questions regarding what types of business support they feel they would benefit from, 42% of respondents stated they would choose workshops/webinars on business basics including writing a business plan, social media and financial planning.
- 52% of respondents state that they need further information about available support, with 41% also stating that lack of time prohibits them accessing business support opportunities.
- Beyond the current crisis, accessing finance was the biggest obstacle to business growth (34%) as well as lack of suitable premises (23%).
- 60% of respondents are already subscribed to TDC's business ebulletins.

Responses in Free Text Sections of the Survey

Opportunities for free text throughout the survey, as might be expected, resulted in a range of responses, many focussing on the current crisis and the eligibility criteria for different support schemes, whilst others focussed on the atmosphere and environment of the District's town centres.

Word Clouds, below, show some of the most highlighted concerns (the larger the word, the more often it was mentioned):

Question 12: What specific business support / other services would you find useful if they were available to you? (wordcloud formed from responses to 'other')

access_{find} business_{costs} grant_{rates} support_{pay}
help_{etc} funding_{running} work

Question 13: What obstacles, if any, do you face in accessing business support? (wordcloud formed from responses to 'other')

works_{bills} business_{payment} support

Question 14: Thinking beyond the current pandemic, what are the key factors that are affecting the growth of your business? (wordcloud formed from responses to 'other')

allowed_{business} LACK_{school} restrictions_{None} town
PEOPLE AREA_{time} need_{support} back_{students} MANY will

SECTION 2 – Back to Business Initiative

Following the All Member briefing back in July and the follow up email from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Governance, Members have submitted a range of ideas for consideration as part of the Back to Business Initiative. A similar exercise was also undertaken with Senior Managers within the Council.

The initiative is also about helping the district recover, which is wider than just its economic recovery, with responses therefore including various items and themes within this context.

A summary of the responses is set out below. Clearly some of these will overlap with action plans already in place or are being developed as part of wider strategies and initiatives.

To provide a framework against which the ideas and responses can be considered, they have been grouped in 3 'blocks' – short, medium and long term actions in the table below:

	Responses	Additional Comments
SHORT TERM	Introduce 'Pop Up' Shops in Town Centres	This could include the direct provision of temporary 'shops' or via working with partners e.g. where there are empty units in Town Centres.
	Upgrade Clacton skate park	This would support local young people both physically and mentally and could also be used to promote a key message such as a 'Thank You NHS Park'
	'Shop Local' and 'Trade Local' Campaign	<p><i>Ideas include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold regular events such as a 'Shop Local Week' or 'Small Business Saturday' • Offer free town centre parking • Making our high streets more attractive which could include working with ECC and promoting a regional message. <p>The Council could also review its own procurement processes to ensure as much money as possible is spent locally rather than outside the district. If there are reasons to spend money outside of the district then companies could be requested to utilise supply chains and labour within the district as much as possible when delivering services / contracts.</p> <p>The above could also be complimented by accelerating the delivery of existing schemes and projects.</p> <p>The use of art in advertising could also be explored, working with local schools for example. This could include posters/street art such as advertising on car parking spaces</p>

	Establish open air or covered markets along with supporting appropriate street trading activities	<p>These could be in Town Centres or along the coast or other key areas.</p> <p>This could be extended to food vans who could use Council owned sites such as car parks.</p> <p><i>This could also include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better use of outdoor / pavement spaces • Better utilisation of Christmas Tree Island in Clacton for market or small entertainment functions • Be organised around seasonal activities. • Local artists and craft makers
	Establish a Tendring Business Club	<p>Providing members with discounts and support information.</p> <p>Also a dedicated space could be provided on the Council's website for small businesses to advertise etc.</p>
	Establish a dedicated COVID 19 Support Service / Team and maximise use of existing resources	<p>To provide essential advice and support to local people and businesses to access help that may be available from the Government or other organisations</p> <p>A request could also be made to the Police to increase the presence of uniformed officers along with using our own ASBO.</p> <p>This could extend to an emergency taskforce to support people facing redundancy. This could include targeted support for young people and school leavers whose plans and opportunities have been affected by Covid-19.</p>
	Supporting Events and Festivals	<p>This could include the Council directly organising events or working with local partners to 'grow' existing events or develop new ones.</p>
	Reopen the Town Hall Reception	<p>In our role as a community leader, to consider the reopening of the Town Hall reception as a place where local people can seek general help and support rather than for any wider operational requirements at this stage.</p>
	Offer unused office space to other organisations	<p>Encourage key service providers who do not currently have a presence in the District to come to Tendring.</p>
	Engage with Town and Parish Councils	<p>To support recovery action with input at a local level.</p>

	Understand high risk businesses	To work with partners such as ECC to understand key metrics such as those business with the greatest risk of having to make redundancies / business failure in the short to medium term. This could be monitored on an on-going basis. TDC could play a key influencing role to signpost people who are unfortunate to be made redundant to learn new skills in economic growth areas.
	Explore opportunities to use Tendring Community Fund Budget of £450k	This was set up to support community groups and organisations that in turn support residents and local communities across the district. This could therefore be reviewed in light of the back to business initiative such as prioritising Community Halls etc.
	Support local schools with IT equipment	The last few months has seen a demand for IT kit for disadvantaged children to enable them to take part in remote lessons etc. Although schools are expected to reopen in the Autumn, supporting schools by providing IT kit could contribute to the Council's key influencing role in education.
	Revisit Long Term Financial Forecast	Opportunities could be explored to deliver flexibilities that a long term plan could bring such as the potential to defer savings targets until later years and extending the economic cycle.
	Review of waived rent under CAROS	Rent due under the existing CAROS scheme was waived for the first 3 months of 2020/2021. Opportunities to extend this could be considered.
	Contributions to support Mental Health within the district	Work with existing partners to identify how the Council can continue to support mental wellbeing in the district. which could include increased contributions to the Mental Health Hub or supporting work within schools etc.
	Revisit SME Growth Fund	Explore opportunities to revise this existing local grant scheme to support local businesses in areas such as safeguarding / creating local jobs.
	Redirect / refocus community safety and enforcement activities	Explore opportunities to use existing funds to directly support the back to business initiative.
Medium Term	Develop a rural place / attraction encompassing a permanent sales space	To support suitable businesses and individuals either producing, manufacturing or selling creative products or to demonstrate particular products which are service related. Such an attraction could also act as a 'draw' to people outside of the district.

	Maximise opportunities from the Coast	<p><i>This could include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with partners to make fishing a major contributor to the local economy. • Working with wind energy suppliers to make assets into an 'attraction' such as light shows on wind turbines etc. • Establishing pleasure boat trips
	Organising business networking events	<p>Bringing together business people to explore opportunities of working together etc.</p> <p>This could include events where banks are encouraged to come and speak directly with businesses.</p>
	Establish a Tending Business Directory	The key benefits could be two fold – to build a database to understand the local economy better which could drive more focused support along with it acting as a directory advertising the goods and services of local businesses which could also use social media channels.
	Introduce a reusable nappies campaign	Look to work with key manufacturers and partners to encourage the use of reusable nappies which could be made available from local shops.
	Create an In-house Energy Efficiency Team	<p>To explore external funding opportunities and take forward the Council's ambitions including the promotion of this initiative within the wider business sector.</p> <p>To work in collaboration with other Council's.</p>
	Apprenticeship Scheme	Explore opportunities to increase apprenticeships within the district.
Long Term	Establish a skills, jobs and enterprise board	To be made up of key people / organisations within the district to start to establish stronger links between these major strands of the local economy.
	Promotion of the district as a sporting / cycling destination	Activities could include the promotion of cycling holidays and organised triathlons.
	Explore opportunities for an outdoor swimming pool and boating area	Sites by Clacton Pier were highlighted.
	To explore opportunities to encourage tourism	This could include reviewing opportunities for a hotel or theme park and take advantage of the outdoor activities available within the district.

	Back to Business Lottery	Explore opportunities to launch a local lottery with money being reinvested directly in associated back to business activities.
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