

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE,
HELD ON MONDAY, 13TH JANUARY, 2025 AT 7.00 PM
IN THE TOWN HALL, STATION ROAD, CLACTON-ON-SEA, CO15 1SE**

Present:	Councillors P Honeywood (Chairman), M Cossens (Vice-Chairman), Bensilum, Doyle, Goldman, Harris, S Honeywood, Newton and Steady
Also Present:	Councillor Andy Baker (Portfolio Holder for Housing & Planning; Deputy Leader of the Tendring Independents Group), Councillor Gina Placey (Portfolio Holder for Partnerships) and Councillor Mark Stephenson (Leader of the Council; Portfolio Holder for Finance & Governance; Leader of the Tendring Independents Group) (except items 72 (part) and 73 (part))
In Attendance:	Richard Barrett (Director (Finance and IT) & Section 151 Officer), Gary Guiver (Director (Planning & Communities)), Tim Clarke (Assistant Director (Housing and Environment)), Andy White (Assistant Director (Building and Public Realm)), Keith Simmons (Head of Democratic Services and Elections & Deputy Monitoring Officer), Katie Wilkins (Head of People), Ian Ford (Committee Services Manager) and Bethany Jones (Committee Services Officer)

68. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

In relation to members of the Committee, there were no apologies for absence submitted nor substitutions made on this occasion.

The Committee was informed that the Portfolio Holder for the Environment (Councillor Smith) who had been due to attend the meeting was unable to do so due to illness.

69. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was moved by Councillor M Cossens, seconded by Councillor Goldman and:-

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 17 December 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In relation to any possible discussions of the Careline service at this meeting, Councillors P B Honeywood and S A Honeywood both declared an Other Registrable Interest insofar as a member of their family was a customer of Careline.

The Monitoring Officer (Lisa Hastings) had decided, prior to the commencement of the meeting, that as Councillors P B Honeywood and S A Honeywood were not Decision Makers on the future of the Careline service, she had consented to grant them both a Dispensation in order to allow them to remain in the meeting.

71. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 38

No Questions on Notice pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 38 had been submitted for this meeting.

72. **REFERENCE FROM THE CABINET - A.1 - EXECUTIVE'S INITIAL BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2025/26 (GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT)**

The Committee scrutinised the Executive's initial budget proposals for 2025/26 in respect of both the General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for in accordance with the provisions of Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rule 3 of the Council's Constitution.

Members were aware that reports relating to the Executive's initial GF and HRA Budget proposals for 2025/26 had been considered by Cabinet on 20 December 2024, with the comments of the Committee now requested as part of developing the Executive's final budget proposals for presenting to Full Council in February 2025.

The following sets out each report in turn:

1) Appendix A - Updated General Fund Financial Forecast / Budget 2025/26

At its meeting on 20 December 2024 (Minute 98 referred), Cabinet had:-

"RESOLVED that –

- a) *the updated Financial Forecast and proposed budget position for 2025/26, as set out in item A.5 of the Report of the Corporate Finance & Governance Portfolio Holder and its appendices, be approved; and*
- b) *the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee's comments be requested on this latest financial forecast and proposed position for 2025/26."*

2) Appendix B - Updated Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and Budget Proposals 2025/26

At its meeting on 20 December 2024 (Minute 104 referred), Cabinet had:-

"RESOLVED that -

- a) *the updated HRA 30-year Business Plan, which includes the proposed revised position for 2024/25 along with budget proposals for 2025/26, be approved; and*
- b) *the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee's comments be requested on this latest HRA financial forecast."*

The Committee recalled that, at its meeting held on 17 December 2024 (Minute 67 referred), Members had considered, inter alia, the Committee's approach to budget scrutiny at this meeting and it had been resolved:-

(c) *“agrees that its approach to budget scrutiny to be undertaken at its meetings on Monday, 6 January (informal) and Monday, 13 January 2025 in respect of the draft General Fund and draft Housing Revenue Account budgets for 2025/26 and beyond will be as follows:-*

- (1) at its informal meeting on 6 January, the Committee will receive a presentation from the Director (Finance and IT) on the latest budget position and will then look to decide which Portfolio Holders will be required to appear before the Committee on 13 January;*
- (2) on 13 January, the Committee will consider the highlights and general overview of the budget but will particularly focus on how costs are built from the ground upwards with an eye to the implications of LGR;*
- (3) that the meetings on 6 January and 13 January will both commence at 7.00 p.m.; and*
- (4) that the members of the Cabinet be requested to hold the evening of Monday 13 January 2025 in their diaries in case they are required to appear before the Committee.”*

At the informal meeting of the Committee held on 6 January 2025 Members had decided that the following members of the Executive would be required to appear before the Committee:-

Councillor Mark Stephenson (Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance & Governance);

Councillor Andy Baker (Portfolio Holder for Housing & Planning);

Councillor Gina Placey (Portfolio Holder for Partnerships); and

Councillor Adrian Smith (Portfolio Holder for the Environment & ICT).

At that informal meeting, the Committee had also agreed a set of questions that would be put to the aforementioned Portfolio Holders. Those questions had been duly circulated to those Portfolio Holders and formal answers obtained. Those questions and answers were as set out in the Appendix to these Minutes. At the meeting Committee members asked supplementary questions. Those supplementary questions and the responses thereto were indicated in red in the Appendix.

Following the question-and-answer session the Portfolio Holders were thanked for their attendance.

The Committee then proceeded to determine whether it had any comments or recommendations it wished to make or put forward to the Cabinet.

Councillor M A Cossens moved and Councillor S A Honeywood seconded that:-

- (a) the Committee has recorded that it felt that it was not in a position to comment on the robustness of the budget plans for 2025/26 and beyond and, in this regard, it noted that:*

- (i) in respect of the General Fund, the Forecast Risk Fund (used to smooth deficits in particular years) would be exhausted within 2028/29 and (as at the day of the meeting) there were no specific plans to address the full savings/income generation necessary up to that point to support a balanced budget from that point;*
- (ii) in respect of the Housing Revenue Account, there were not the written plans to move it to a sustainable position; and*

(b) Cabinet be informed of the above and requested to address the issues raised.

Councillor Bensilum then moved and Councillor Steady seconded that Councillor Cossens' motion be amended by the addition of a sub-section (iii) to paragraph (a) to read as follows:-

- (iii) through the papers submitted and statements made to the Committee, it was understood that plans to address (i) and (ii) were being worked upon;*

In accordance with the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 16.6, Councillor Cossens, with the consent of Councillor S A Honeywood, altered his motion to incorporate the text of Councillor Bensilum's amendment.

Councillor Cossens' motion, as altered, was put to the vote and it was unanimously:-

RESOLVED that -

- (a) the Committee has recorded that it felt that it was not in a position to comment on the robustness of the budget plans for 2025/26 and beyond and, in this regard, it noted that:-
 - (i) in respect of the General Fund, the Forecast Risk Fund (used to smooth deficits in particular years) would be exhausted within 2028/29 and (as at the day of the meeting) there were no specific plans to address the full savings/income generation necessary up to that point to support a balanced budget from that point;
 - (ii) in respect of the Housing Revenue Account, there were not the written plans to move it to a sustainable position;
 - (iii) through the papers submitted and statements made to the Committee, it was understood that plans to address (i) and (ii) were being worked upon; and
- (b) Cabinet be informed of the above and requested to address the issues raised.

73. REFERENCE FROM THE CABINET - A.2 - EXECUTIVE'S INITIAL HIGHLIGHTS PRIORITIES PROPOSALS

Earlier on in the meeting as detailed under Minute 70 above and in relation to any possible discussions of the Careline service at this meeting, Councillors P B Honeywood and S A Honeywood had both declared an Other Registrable Interest insofar as a member of their family was a customer of Careline.

The Monitoring Officer (Lisa Hastings) had decided, prior to the commencement of the meeting, that as Councillors P B Honeywood and S A Honeywood were not Decision Makers on the future of the Careline service, she had consented to grant them both a Dispensation in order to allow them to remain in the meeting.

The Committee scrutinised the Executive's initial proposals for highlight priorities in 2025/26.

Members were aware that a report relating to the Executive's initial proposals for highlight priorities for 2025/26 had been considered by Cabinet on 20 December 2024, with the comments of the Committee now requested as part of developing the Executive's final proposals.

Appendix A – Delivering against the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-28 – Initial Proposals for Highlight Priorities for 2025/26

At its meeting on 20 December 2024 (Minute 96 referred), Cabinet had:-

“RESOLVED that -

- (a) the initial highlight priorities for 2025/26, as set out at Appendix B to the report (A.3), be approved for consultation;*
- (b) all Councillors, other partners and the public be invited to consider the initial priorities referred to in (a) above; and*
- (c) the outcome of the consultation referred to in (b) above be reported to Cabinet on 21 February 2025 in order that Cabinet can formally adopt its finalised highlight priority actions for 2025/26 with relevant milestones during that year.”*

At the meeting of the Committee the following questions were asked to which the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and others, when appropriate, responded.

Committee Member asking the Question	Question (summary form)	Individual giving the response (Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, unless otherwise indicated)	Response (Summary form)
Paul Honeywood	In relation to Careline and the former contract with 'YourStride', has there been a financial re-evaluation of the viability of Careline in the light of the ending of this contract i.e. what		Officers are working on this and a report will be submitted to Cabinet in February which will set out that impact.

	has been the financial impact?		
Peter Harris	In relation to Careline, is the Council considering the social impact of any cessation of the service as well as the financial aspects?		Yes, it is alongside other matters such as recruitment problems, value for money and quality of service and whether TDC is still the best service provider given the increase in alternative providers in the marketplace.
Graham Steady	In relation to Careline, was all of that service's debt caused by the Your Stride contract?	Gary Guiver (Director for Planning & Communities)	That's one of the things that Officers are looking at and it will be covered in the report to Cabinet in February. The intention of the report to Cabinet in February is to revisit the five options previously reported to Cabinet and the financial assumptions around those. That will provide a projection of the expected financial performance resulting, in part, from the termination of the 'Your Stride' contract and the removal of its 9,500 external customers.
Peter Harris	In relation to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy, and the		It was recognised in around 2019 that something extra was needed at Harwich as their

	<p>cost to TDC of £25,000 for a PCSO at Harwich, why is TDC paying for this when there is not one in other areas such as Clacton and the Council is looking to cut costs?</p>		<p>crime figures were second to Clacton and Harwich did not have the bespoke crime prevention campaigns that existed in Clacton. So hence the decision to joint fund with Harwich Town Council the PCSO which was renewed last year. Going forward this will be part of the grant funding review so it is not guaranteed to be renewed. It was felt prudent to carry on for the time being with this funding last year.</p>
<p>Mark Cossens</p>	<p>Is there a possibility of the Harwich PCSO becoming a Special Expense given that it is being done in parts of the District and not in others for example Frinton & Walton Town Council funds three PCSOs?</p>	<p>Richard Barrett (Director (Finance & IT) and Section 151 Officer)</p>	<p>I do not believe so but I will investigate that further.</p>
<p>Peter Harris</p>	<p>In the event that the Cabinet continues to fund the PCSO in Harwich would it look at similar requests from other parts of the District to part fund their PCSOs?</p>		<p>Cabinet has previously decided that any consideration whether to continue to part fund the Harwich PCSO post 31 March 2025 will be undertaken following the Council's new</p>

		<p>Mark Stephenson (Leader of the Council)</p>	<p>arrangements for the consideration of any external funding requests. So anybody can apply for anything but there is no guarantee that it would be granted when matched against the grant funding criteria.</p> <p>This was originally a response by the previous administration to very high crime figures in Harwich. This was done in consultation with Essex Police who have significant crime initiatives in place in Clacton (the highest crime area). We are not offering this out to other areas. It was felt to be a good proposal at the time to joint fund with Harwich Town Council an extra Officer in Harwich. Other parish/town councils in the District solely fund their own PCSOs. This matter along with all other external grants are now under review.</p>
<p>Paul Honeywood</p>	<p>In relation to the CCTV Project, what permissions do we need from ECC Highways and do we have them?</p>	<p>Andy White (Assistant Director (Building and Public Realm))</p>	<p>A small number of the camera locations require Highways Act Section 50 Agreements for cabling et cetera. Those applications</p>

			have been submitted and whilst consents have not yet been granted discussions are ongoing.
Paul Honeywood	What is the projected timeframe to complete this project given the end date for the funding of 31 March 2025?	Andy White (Assistant Director Building and Public Realm))	Construction phase begins on 17 February and the bulk will be installed within March. There will be a phase of testing, commissioning and troubleshooting going on until 10 April 2025. We understand that the Police, Crime and Fire Commissioner for Essex does not intend to withdraw funding but we will be seeking to confirm that.
Paul Honeywood	Will the planning applications for the CCTV project need to go before the Planning Committee and will this be in February?	Gary Guiver (Director for Planning and Communities)	Yes, that is the plan.

Following that question-and-answer session the Portfolio Holders were thanked for their attendance.

The Committee then determined whether it had any comments or recommendations it wished to make or put forward to the relevant Portfolio Holder or the Cabinet.

After a discussion, it was moved by Councillor M A Cossens, seconded by Councillor S A Honeywood and unanimously:-

RESOLVED that -

- (a) Cabinet be recommended to urgently address: (1) the projected General Fund savings/income generation requirements to 2028/29 to support a balanced budget

from that point; and (2) to move the Housing Revenue Account to a sustainable position; and

- (b) further to (a), Cabinet engage swiftly with the Committee with sufficient details in respect of the necessary plans concerned to enable the Committee to perform its overview and scrutiny role as a critical friend to the Cabinet.

The meeting was declared closed at 10.20 pm

Chairman