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Resources and Services Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

17 February 2020

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, HELD ON MONDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2020 AT 7.35 PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, THORPE ROAD, WEELEY

Present:	Councillors M Stephenson (Chairman), Scott (Vice-Chairman), Barry, Bray, Griffiths, Morrison and Turner
Also Present:	Councillors P Honeywood (except Minutes 52 - 56), Talbot and Wiggins
In Attendance:	Keith Simmons (Head of Democratic Services and Elections), Richard Barrett (Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits Services & Section 151 Officer) (except Minutes 54 - 56), Tim Clarke (Head of Housing and Environmental Health) (except Minutes 53 - 56), Katie Wilkins (Human Resources and Business Manager) (except Minutes 53 - 56), Jonathan Hamlet (Street Scene Officer), William Lodge (Communications Manager) and Katie Sullivan (Committee Services Officer)

46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allen and Codling (with no substitutes).

47. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on Monday 16 December 2019, Monday 6 January 2020 and Wednesday 8 January 2020 were approved as a correct record and were then signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to Members and Officers who had attended the meetings that were held on 6 and 8 January 2020 and for all their hard work and participation at those meetings; in what was a very narrow timeframe.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Bray and Turner declared for the public record in regards to agenda item 7 (A.2 - Future use of Spendells House, Walton-on-the-Naze) that this matter had been considered by Frinton and Walton Town Council and that they and other Town Councillors had considered the matter at meetings of that Town Council.

49. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 38

On this occasion no Councillor had submitted notice of a question.

50. RECOMMENDATIONS MONITORING REPORT

The Committee had before it the current Recommendations Monitoring Report. The Committee were aware that this report outlined any recommendations it had made to the Cabinet, the Cabinet's response and any relevant updates.

The Council's Head of Democratic Services and Elections (Keith Simmons) informed the Committee that the report outlined one update to the item considered previously at the last meeting of the Committee on 8 January 2020 (minute 45 refers) with regards to the General Fund Budget and the HRA Budget.

In response to a question from a Member, the Council's Head of Finance, Revenues & Benefits Services (Richard Barrett) advised that in the coming weeks consideration would be given to a range of matters to support the delivery of the corporate plan and these scheme may overlap with some of the suggestions made at the 6-8 January 2020 meetings of this Committee. As such, there would be an opportunity for the Committee to consider the extent to which items it had identified were recommended for approval or whether other schemes were to be pursued.

After some deliberation it was **RESOLVED** that the Committee notes the contents of the report and the response provided. The issue was now marked as completed within the Recommendations Monitoring Report.

51. REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR (OPERATIONAL SERVICES) - A.2 - FUTURE USE OF SPENDELLS HOUSE, WALTON-ON-THE-NAZE

Further to the decision of the Committee on 16 December 2019 (Minute 39 refers), the Committee was scheduled to undertake an enquiry into a forthcoming decision of the Cabinet in relation to the future use of the Spendells House, Walton-on-the-Naze. This was in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 13.

A briefing note prepared by the Council's Head of Housing and Environmental Health (Tim Clarke) was circulated at the meeting (having been emailed to Members earlier that day). The Head of Housing and Environmental Health introduced the report.

Councillor P Honeywood, Portfolio Holder for Housing, was welcomed to the meeting for this item.

The Committee was informed that the closure of Spendells House as a Sheltered Housing Scheme in March 2018 had been an inevitable but unfortunate consequence of low demand and occupancy for this type of accommodation outside of town centres. Whilst it had remained empty only basic maintenance and security provision had been in place. Overall the building remained in good condition and provided a good basis for development of the site for use as temporary accommodation for those who were homeless. The Committee was further informed that the options that had been explored for the future use of the site had focused on either outright disposal or re-purposing to provide alternative housing provision such as the temporary accommodation scheme now proposed.

With homelessness levels showing no signs of reducing (both nationally and locally) temporary accommodation costs could be reduced by taking action to generate additional supply of temporary accommodation either via the private sector or by the Council directly.

Given the projected demand for accommodation, it was inevitable that there would be a need for Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless the supply of less costly options

became available. Therefore Officers were now exploring the cost of bringing Spendells House back into use as temporary accommodation for those who were homeless.

Members were informed that the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA18) came into force in April 2018 with the aim of reducing homelessness. The act increased duties on local authorities to assess an applicant's needs and to prevent and relieve homelessness by:

- Improving advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness;
- Extending the period of threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days. An applicant is now assessed as threatened with homelessness if they are likely to become homeless within 56 days.
- Introducing new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible people, regardless of priority need and intentionality.
- Introducing assessments and personalised housing plans, setting out the actions housing authorities and individuals will take to secure accommodation.
- Encouraging public bodies to work together to prevent and relieve homelessness through a duty to refer.

Despite the extra advice and duties brought in by the Homelessness Reduction Act, the lack of affordable housing and private rented properties had meant that the use of temporary accommodation had increased.

In 2013/14 temporary accommodation placements had cost the Council £22,368 whereas by 2018/19 the cost had increased to £459,265. Unless the Council used its own housing stock the cost of temporary accommodation over that covered by Housing Benefit subsidy had to be covered by the General Fund.

Following the verbal update Members were given the opportunity to ask questions.

In considering the expectations of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 13 for the Committee to fully enquire into a proposed decision of the Cabinet, the extent of the information now provided, the intended date for the Cabinet to determine this matter (20 March) and the date of this Committee's next meeting (23 March), the Chairman informed the Committee of the options available to it as he saw them:

- 1) Request that Cabinet delay their decision in order for the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to conduct a pre decision scrutiny; or
- 2) Conduct a post Cabinet decision scrutiny.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that the Committee would authorise the Chairman of the Committee to liaise with Officers and the Portfolio Holder for Housing to arrange for plans, information on costs and the arrangement of a site visit in order to undertake the pre-decision enquiry of the future use of the Spendells House, Walton-on-the-Naze. If such an enquiry was not possible in the available time-frame envisaged in the notice of forthcoming decisions, the Committee would agree not to undertake the

enquiry envisaged under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 13 and, instead, undertake a post scrutiny decision of the item.

**52. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PEOPLE, PERFORMANCE & PROJECTS - A.3 -
PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 3 2019/20**

The Committee had before it a report of the Head of People, Performance & Projects which presented the Performance Report for Quarter Three (October to December 2019) including the Corporate Plan 2020/2024 and Priorities and Projects 2019/2020.

The Committee was aware that the purpose of the report now before it was to submit the relevant performance data so that it could undertake scrutiny of it in so far as:

“(a) Is the performance monitoring system capturing the right level of data to support delivery of the Corporate Plan and its priorities and projects – and to make recommendations thereon?”

“(b) Is there performance as identified in the monitoring data that warrants scrutiny of an activity – and to determine whether and how that scrutiny should take place; including it as appropriate in the work programme?”

It was reported that the Quarter 3 position demonstrated that of the 22 indicators and projects where performance was measured, 21 (95%) were on, or above, their expected target, 1 (5%) was not currently in line with expected performance.

Members were informed that any feedback from this Committee would be presented to a future meeting of the Cabinet as a separate reference report.

The Council’s HR and Business Manager (Katie Wilkins) provided the Committee with a verbal update in respect of the indicators and projects with particular focus on those indicators where there had been movement in the proposed delivery timetable.

Officers responded to questions raised by Members on various topics within the report and appendices and where an answer was not immediately available, the Human Resources and Business Manager undertook to respond to Members as soon as possible after the meeting.

After some deliberation by the Committee, it was moved by Councillor Stephenson, seconded by Councillor Scott and **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that:

- a) the Committee notes the contents of the Performance Report Quarter 3 October – December 2019; and
- b) the Manningtree Underpass project Performance Target Indicator should be submitted to the Council’s Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee; in addition to this Committee.

In view of a number of revisions to timescales for a range of items identified in the Performance Report, the Committee also **RESOLVED** to add to its Work Programme for 2020/21 an item to review how the Council was performing on major projects (from initiation, finalisation, approval, delivery, completion and evaluation).

53. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE, REVENUES & BENEFITS SERVICES - A.4 - ANNUAL CAPITAL AND TREASURY STRATEGY SCRUTINY FOR 2020/21 (INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL AND TREASURY INDICATORS)

The Committee's comments were sought on the Annual Treasury Strategy for 2020/21 (including the Prudential and Treasury indicators).

It was reported that on 7 February 2020, the Corporate Finance and Governance Portfolio Holder had agreed the Annual Treasury Strategy for 2020/21 (including the Prudential and Treasury Indicators) for consultation with the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members were aware that the Local Government Act 2003 and supporting regulations required the Council to set out its treasury strategy for borrowing, and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy (as required by Investment Guidance subsequent to the Act) that set out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments, "having regard" to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice. Revised editions of both those documents had been issued in December 2017.

The Committee was informed that the revised guidance issued in 2017 also required the Council to update its Capital Strategy annually. Rather than produce two separate documents and as they were closely linked the Capital Strategy had been combined with the Treasury Strategy in one document.

It was reported that the Capital Strategy element of the combined document covered the various elements surrounding capital investment decisions and the key criteria that investment decisions should be considered against.

Similarly, the Treasury Strategy element of the combined document covered the various elements that satisfied the requirements of the various codes that governed the borrowing and investment activities of the Council and had been prepared in the light of advice received from the Council's Treasury advisors and reflected the latest codes and guidance.

Members were advised that under the Prudential Code the Council had freedom over capital expenditure as long as it was prudent, affordable and sustainable. The Prudential Indicators either measured the expected activity or introduced limits upon the activity, and reflected the underlying capital appraisal systems and enabled the Council to demonstrate that it was complying with the requirements of the Prudential Code.

The Committee was reminded that the Council's investments would be undertaken in accordance with its Treasury Management Practices. Those had been expanded to include use of non-specified investment in property to yield both rental income and capital gains from 2016/17. If credit ratings remained at their current low levels it was likely that a significant proportion of the Council's investments would continue to be in Government securities such as Treasury Bills or with other Local Authorities. The Council was also exploring the use of property investment funds as part of its wider investment portfolio from 2020/21, but due to risks, such as the potential impact on

revenue resources from the accounting treatment that may be required, any associated decision would be subject to advice from the Council's external advisors and a separate Member decision. Other 'quality' investment opportunities would also be explored in consultation with the Council's external advisors in order to maximise returns on investments within a continuing and overall risk-averse approach.

A copy of the report submitted to the Portfolio Holder together with the proposed Annual Capital and Treasury Strategy for 2020/21 (including the Prudential and Treasury Indicators) was attached as an appendix to item A.4 of the Report of the Finance, Revenues & Benefits Services.

Members were given the opportunity to ask any questions, which in turn were responded to by the Council's Head of Finance, Revenues & Benefits Services.

Following discussion, it was moved by Councillor Turner, seconded by Councillor Griffiths and **RESOLVED** that the Committee both notes the contents of the Annual Capital and Treasury Strategy for 2020/21 and agrees that it does not need to submit any comments for the Cabinet's consideration.

**54. REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR (OPERATIONAL SERVICES) - A.1 -
SCRUTINY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW WASTE AND RECYCLING
COLLECTION SERVICE**

The Council's Street Scene Manager (Jonathan Hamlet) was in attendance and provided the Committee with an overview of the roll out and service implementation of the Council's new waste and recycling service.

Veolia's Contract Manager (Michael Riches) and Regional Manager (Chris Smiles) were also in attendance for this item.

Councillor Talbot, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Public Space, was welcomed to the meeting.

Members were aware that in June 2019 the Council implemented a new waste collection service, changing from a weekly black sack collection (with no restriction on the number of black sacks collected from a property) to a fortnightly 180L wheeled bin service and as such represented a significant service change.

The Committee had before it a Report of the Corporate Director (Operational Services) which provided information on the following areas:

Planning

- Communications;
- Procurement;
- Property audit and route planning; and
- Service roll out.

Implementation

- Bin delivery;
- Waste and Recycling Collections Veolia;
- Customer support;

- Waste Team; and
- Communication.

Results

- Residual waste;
- Food waste;
- Paper/cardboard;
- Plastic/cans;
- Glass (banks); and
- Recycling rate.

Overview

- Failure to complete collection rounds;
- Difficulty in contacting the Council / Officers; and
- Missed assisted collections / Remote properties.

Learning Points

- Commence the process of evaluating the contract options at an earlier stage;
- Recruitment of the temporary posts to start at an earlier stage, combined with the fixed term contracts being of a longer duration;
- Quicker at feeding operational issues up to the communications and support teams; and
- Reduce the reliance upon the local knowledge held by individual operatives for the collection rounds.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions which were responded to by the Portfolio Holder, the Council's Street Scene Manager and Veolia's Contract Manager and Regional Manager.

Veolia's representatives advised that it needed to implement revised collection route rounds at the same time as the roll out of the wheeled bin change as the previous collection route rounds would not work under the new arrangements. They reported that under the black sacks scheme a team could collect from 2,000 properties a day and with wheeled bins that reduced to 1,300 properties a day.

Members considered the current recycling of plastics through the waste collection service and the impact of contamination of those plastic types with other plastic products or other items. It was reported to the Committee that it was intended to arrange for Members to visit recycling facilities nearby in order to develop the knowledge of Members about the processes involved and thereby enable them to address enquiries from Members of the public and to encourage policy development.

The extent of the increase in recycling rates within 2019/20 was commented upon. In April 2019, prior to the roll out commencing, recycling rates were at 28% and in October (after the roll out) they were at 41%. Figures for November 2019 onwards were not available to the Committee. The Committee asked about the appropriate targets for 2020/21. Notwithstanding that, it was reported that the budget for 2020/21 included an addition £60K of recycling credits for the Council.

Separate figures on recycling rates among those still on the black sack service, for instance those in flats, were not kept by the service. However, the incentive to recycle by limiting waste collection to a fortnightly 180L amount was not there for those households. Some flats had red and green wheelie bins in their communal bin areas following a request to recycle from one or more residents there. In addition, green canvass carry bags were available for residents in those flats to carry recyclables to the communal bin areas.

Veolia's representatives responded to a question to indicate that if a plastic bottle deposit and return scheme were to be introduced it would have a significant impact on its services. The likely impact would though need to be assessed for each separate contract it had with local authorities.

Glass recycling had increased locally and a question was asked about the provision of further recycling points in response to that increase. The whole range of recycling bring sites in the District was to be looked at including whether options to provide more opportunities on existing or new sites was to be considered; the Committee was advised.

In respect of the Council's green waste collection service, the Committee was advised that the amount of waste collected had risen since 2017/18 from 297 tonnes to 3000 tonnes per year and was continuing to grow. Veolia was now introducing a third collection round due to the expansion of the scheme. The charge levied locally appeared to be about right when considering the charges levied elsewhere in Essex and the known movement in those charges in the coming period.

In respect of Clinical Waste, the Committee was advised that the service had been in operation for about one year, although by GBH and not by Veolia. Those self-medicating and who needed to dispose of sharps and dressings with bodily fluid that would be dangerous to add to the general waste would be able to use the clinical waste service provided. Nappies and incontinence pads would normally be able to be disposed of in general waste.

Following discussion, the Committee **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:**

a) To note, based on experience locally from the previous major change in waste collection arrangements, this Committee appreciated that the 2019 roll out of the wheelie bins/new waste service was always going to have some pain. However, that pain was more than it should otherwise have been. What contributed to this included:

- Insufficient/overloaded communication channels in to the Council to report problems and timely responses to those enquiries.
- Problems with staffing in the team and particularly recruitment to temporary contract posts.
- The consequences of the route changes implemented by Veolia (the Council's contractor) to accommodate the changed waste collection service.

However, the Committee acknowledges the hard work of Officers to address and overcome those issues and to achieve the current position, which is one the Committee

wishes to record as moving positively to the good standard expected. Cabinet is recommended to seek to capture learning from this roll out for the delivery of future major change in service delivery.

b) To request the Portfolio Holder for Environment to write to Essex County Council in an effort to address the continuing issue of the littering from waste being moved from the waste transfer stations by or on behalf of the Waste Disposal Authority and the related cleansing of that litter on the A120 around that waste transfer station.

c) To consider this Committee's disappointment at the limited statements provided to it as to the Portfolio Holder's future ambition for the service; including improving recycling levels further over the remainder of the contract and to request that a report on this ambition/vision be submitted to this Committee in September 2020.

d) To arrange for the submission of proposals for revised targets for recycling rates in the District for 2020/21, as part of the Council's Performance Monitoring System, to this Committee's meeting on 23 March 2020 (and that comparable recycling rates be reported to the Committee from the other Districts in Essex and any appropriate commentary on the prospect of such rates being achieved in Tendring where the rates are higher than locally).

e) To pursue the stated intention of arranging a site visit for all Councillors to waste and recycling centres as part of developing understanding by Councillors of these activities and this site visit should be organised prior to September 2020.

f) That the clear information should be provided to residents on the recycling processes of material collected from homes in the District, further information be provided on practical waste minimisation measures for residents and that, in time, a summary of the Council's Climate Reduction measures be provided to all households (perhaps with the annual Council Tax Notification).

[Note: In accordance with the decision of Council of 10 September 2019, Minute 59 refers, the outcome of this scrutiny review is also to be reported to the next following meeting of the Council.]

55. SCRUTINY OF PROPOSED DECISIONS

Pursuant to the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 13, the Committee reviewed any new and/or amended published forthcoming decisions relevant to its terms of reference with a view to deciding whether it wished to enquire into any such decision before it was taken. The relevant forthcoming decisions were before the Committee.

The Committee noted the submitted list of published forthcoming decisions.

56. REVIEW OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee had before it the latest Work Programme 2019/20 that outlined the scrutiny to be undertaken by the Committee in the remainder of the municipal year. In presenting this work programme to the Committee, it was invited to determine whether the programme needed to be adjusted, including items covered, the scope of the programmed reviews and whether Portfolio Holders or others were to be invited to

present to them. Specific information requirements of Councillors to undertake the programed reviews should also be identified as should any 'Councillor Development' requirements.

The Committee **RESOLVED** that the following be added to its Work Programme accordingly:

- 1) Review how the Council was performing on major projects (from initiation, finalisation, approval, delivery, completion and evaluation) – to be determined;
- 2) Proposals for revised targets for recycling rates in the District for 2020/21, as part of the Council's Performance Monitoring System, (and comparable recycling rates from the other Districts in Essex and any appropriate commentary on the prospect of such rates being achieved in Tendring where the rates are higher than locally) - 23 March 2020 meeting;
- 3) The Portfolio Holder for the Environment's future ambition for the waste collection service; including improving recycling levels further over the remainder of the contract – September 2020 meeting; and
- 4) The review of the proposed cemetery extension should be expanded to include the Crematorium site provision of resting arrangements and memorials (including vaults and mausoleums).

The meeting was declared closed at 10.36 pm

Chairman