

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 18th January, 2011

Present: Cllr D W P Evans (Chairman), Cllr C P Smith (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Ms V Branson, Cllr Mrs B A Brown, Cllr D J Cure, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr D Keeley, Cllr Miss A Moloney, Cllr M R Rhodes, Cllr H S Rogers, Cllr A K Sullivan, Cllr D Thornewell and Cllr L A Withey and Mr D G Still (co-opted Member).

Councillors Aikman, Mrs Anderson, Baldock, Balfour, Dobson, Luker and Worrall were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No. 15.21

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lancaster and Ms Spence.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

PO 11/001 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

PO 11/002 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy Overview Committee held on 19 January 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

PO 11/003 REVENUE ESTIMATES 2011/12

The report of the Director of Finance referred to the responsibility of the Cabinet under the Constitution for formulating initial draft proposals in respect of the Budget. Reference was made to the role of the Committee in assisting the Cabinet and Council in the preparation of the Budget.

The report set out the framework for consideration of the Revised Estimates for 2010/11 and the Estimates for 2011/12 within the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Council's priorities.

Attention was drawn to the key messages arising from the provisional grant settlement and the 28% cut, in cash terms, over the next two years. Members were reminded of the commitment to undertake a fundamental review of the Borough Council's overall finances along with a detailed re-examination of the objectives set out in the Medium

Term Financial Strategy. It was noted that some work had already been undertaken leading to a remodelling of the Strategy over a ten-year period setting the minimum general revenue reserve balance at £2m.

The Director of Finance advised that based on the provisional local government finance settlement for 2011/12 and 2012/13 and an assumption about the further likely cut in general government grant in 2013/14 and 2014/15, current projections suggested a budget funding gap of £2m. This was recognised as a significant financial challenge and Members were reassured to note that the existence of a robust Medium Term Financial Strategy afforded the Borough Council time to take a constructive and considered approach to budgetary pressures, including dividing the savings target into three tranches. Additionally, advantage would be taken of savings opportunities and efficiencies throughout the period.

RECOMMENDED: That

(1) the draft Revenue Estimates contained in the booklet be endorsed and commended to Cabinet for its special meeting on 1 February 2011, subject to deferral of the transitional increase in Members' Allowances as recommended by the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel and the removal of the increased provision of £32,550 from the 2011/12 estimates; and

(2) the Council formally move to a Medium Term Financial Strategy covering a ten-year period and setting a minimum general revenue reserve balance of £2m.

**PO
11/004**

CAPITAL PLAN REVIEW 2010/11

Consideration was given to the report of the Management Team which reviewed progress on the 2010/11 Capital Plan Review and requested endorsement of recommendations made to Cabinet by the Finance and Property Advisory Board on 5 January 2011.

A concern was expressed about disabled facilities grant expenditure and if the funding provision allocated in the Capital Plan would be sufficient to meet future needs and tackle any increase in demand. In response, the Chairman referred to an answer received from the Director of Health and Housing prior to the meeting which outlined the Borough Council's approach in maintaining its own level of funding towards this mandatory service; pressing Government for more realistic levels of funding; and negotiating with registered providers to secure a financial contribution from them towards the costs of schemes for their tenants.

In summary, the Director of Health and Housing acknowledged that the

measures outlined might not meet the overall future demand for disabled facilities grants and emphasised the need for the Borough Council to know what the funding allocation from Government would be before implementing anything.

RECOMMENDED: That the following recommendations of the Finance and Property Advisory Board held on 5 January 2011 be endorsed:

(1) the Capital Plan (List A) provisions as summarised in Annex 1 to the report be adopted;

(2) the schemes listed in Annex 2 to the report be added to List C;

(3) the schemes listed in Annex 2 to the report be deleted from List C with the exception of the Environmental Improvements to Watergate/Chequers Lawn, Tonbridge; Mereworth Village Entry Enhancements; and Watlington Conservation Area;

(4) the schemes listed in Annex 3 to the report be selected for evaluation over the following year, with the document management system scheme being selected for fast track evaluation;

(5) the transfer of the following schemes from List C to List B:

- § Tonbridge Swimming Pool: Disinfection System
- § Larkfield Leisure Centre: Energy Saving Measures
- § Public Open Spaces Site Improvements
- § Tonbridge Memorial Garden Improvements
- § IT Initiatives: Homeless Management System

(6) a contribution of £120,000 in this year to the revenue reserve for capital schemes using unallocated Local Authority Business Growth Scheme monies and as a result of the better than expected budget position be approved;

(7) the draft Capital Strategy as attached at Annex 5 to the report be endorsed for adoption by the Council and publication on the Council's website.

**PO
11/005**

ANTI-FRAUD POLICIES

The Director of Finance presented an updated Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and an updated Housing and Council Tax Benefit Anti-Fraud Policy for approval. It was noted that the main changes

related to the inclusion of the principles and definitions introduced by the recent Bribery and Corruption Act 2010 and the Housing and Council Tax Benefit Sanction and Prosecution Policy.

RECOMMENDED: That subject to consideration of any proposed changes by the Audit Committee of 24 January 2011, the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and the Housing and Council Tax Benefit Anti-Fraud Policy, set out in Annexes 1 and 2 of the report, be endorsed and commended for adoption by the Council.

**PO
11/006**

REVIEW OF ANTI MONEY LAUNDERING POLICY

Members gave consideration to two minor administrative amendments to the Council's Anti Money Laundering Policy and supporting Guidance Notes and noted that no further updates were required at this time.

RECOMMENDED: That the minor administrative changes noted in the report be endorsed and commended for adoption by the Council.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

**PO
11/007**

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 1955 hours