

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 11th June, 2014

Present: Cllr Miss A Moloney (Chairman), Cllr T J Robins (Vice-Chairman), Cllr J Atkins, Cllr Ms J A Atkinson, Cllr Mrs P Bates, Cllr D J Cure, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr Mrs E M Holland, Cllr D Keeley, Cllr S M King, Cllr A G Sayer, Dr G Court and Mr D Still

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, M A Coffin, N J Heslop, B J Luker and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs E A Simpson (Vice-Chairman), A W Allison, Mrs F A Kemp, Ms S V Spence and D Thornewell (Co-opted Member).

PART 1 - PUBLIC

OS 14/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

OS 14/11 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 January 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

OS 14/12 RE-APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS

RESOLVED: That pursuant to Article 6.05 of the Council's Constitution, Dr G Court, Mr P Drury, Mr D Still and Mr D Thornewell be co-opted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the current municipal year.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

OS 14/13 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2012/15 - REVIEW AND UPDATE

The joint report of the Leader and Chief Executive invited Members to review the Borough Council's updated Corporate Performance Plan for 2012/15. The Plan included a review of progress after the first two years of its three year term, with further progress expected this year.

It was reported that the updated Plan showed extremely good progress during the first two years based against the improvement themes,

assessment of performance indicator results against targets and comparison of year on year indicator results.

Annex 1 to the Plan showed progress against each of the projects that underpinned the 62 improvement themes.

It was noted that the Corporate Performance Plan was a principal means of driving performance improvement and delivery for money. It communicated clearly to Members, staff, stakeholders and residents the Borough Council's key priorities and targets, how the priorities and targets were achieved and where the Borough Council was looking to improve.

Members agreed that it was important that the Borough Council continued to monitor and review performance and key indicators.

Finally, Members asked that their thanks to the Improvement and Development Manager for his contribution be recorded.

RECOMMENDED: That the Corporate Performance Plan be adopted.

OS 14/14 USE OF URGENCY PROCEDURES TO APPROVE A NEW CAPITAL PLAN SCHEME TO SUPPORT THE INTRODUCTION OF INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

In accordance with the Borough Council's constitution the report of the Chief Executive sought retrospective approval to the addition of a new Capital Plan scheme to purchase hardware necessary for the implementation of Individual Electoral Registration (IER). It was reported that scheme costs would be met in full by Government grant.

IER introduced considerable changes to the way in which residents would register to vote and represented a new way of working at every level and in every part of the process. In order to facilitate the work associated with mailings out and the processing of forms when they returned a number of pieces of equipment were required. A scheme evaluation template setting out the hardware requirements was provided at Annex 1 of the report.

Members were pleased to note that the Cabinet Office had approved the Borough Council's bid for grant funding and had met the costs in full. It was also noted that the purchase of new hardware, including maintenance cover, represented good value for money compared to outsourcing the mailing work. In addition, the equipment would be used for as many other corporate functions as possible to support all areas of service delivery.

Finally, Members asked that their thanks to the Elections and Special Projects Manager for his contribution be recorded.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the purchases required for the implementation of Individual Electoral Registration, set out in the report, be endorsed; and
- (2) the grant funded scheme be added to the Capital Plan.

DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE**OS 14/15 FUTURE SCRUTINY REVIEW PROGRAMME**

The report of the Chief Executive set out proposals for further topics to be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

It was suggested that the next two issues to be addressed by informal review groups, drawn from the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, should deal with the capital plan renewals process and the actions undertaken to return empty residential properties to active use.

The focus of both reviews was outlined in the report and supported by Members. Particular reference was made to the importance of challenging processes, especially regarding capital renewals, to improve budget accuracy and to avoid significant underspends on capital renewals budgets and potential impacts on the Medium Term Financial Strategy. In addition, assessing the scale of empty private sector housing in the borough and reviewing the processes and support in place had the potential to address the negative impact on a locality and encourage them back into active residential use.

RESOLVED: That two informal Review Groups be established to investigate the capital plan renewals and empty homes processes on the terms set out in the report.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**OS 14/16 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chairman moved, it was seconded and

RESOLVED: That as public discussion would disclose exempt information, the following matters be considered in private.

PART 2 - PRIVATE**MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET****OS 14/17 REVIEW OF POSTAGE AND COURIER COSTS**

(Reason: LGA 1972 – Sch 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of any particular person)

The report of the Management Team established the existing expenditure on postage, possible alternatives to Royal Mail and also looked at the current cost of the Borough Council's courier service and possible options to disseminate information more cost effectively.

Potential annual savings had been identified and the potential options for change were outlined in the report. Changes in demand and new technologies made it possible for the Borough Council to review its work processes and Members were reassured that any adjustment in working practices would not disadvantage residents.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the Borough Council use Royal Mail accredited accounts for the majority of its postal needs, pursue all possible options for savings with Royal Mail and the use of the franking machine be discontinued;
- (2) the guaranteed early delivery postal service be discontinued;
- (3) any cheaper and appropriate alternatives to the use of Royal Mail be investigated in the longer term;
- (4) that the current courier service be discontinued; and
- (5) that, in the interim, a reduced courier service be introduced using existing caretaker staff until all such information is able to be delivered via electronic means, in line with the business transformation agenda.

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm