

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL



EXECUTIVE SERVICES

Chief Executive

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NB - This agenda contains proposals, recommendations and options. These do not represent Council policy or decisions until they have received proper consideration through the full decision making process.

Contact: Committee Services
committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk

3 June 2014

To: MEMBERS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
(Copies to all Members of the Council)

Dear Sir/Madam

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held in the Civic Suite, Gibson Building, Kings Hill, West Malling on Wednesday, 11th June, 2014 commencing at 7.30 pm

Yours faithfully

JULIE BEILBY

Chief Executive

A G E N D A

PART 1 - PUBLIC

1. Apologies for absence
2. Declarations of interest
3. Minutes

5 - 10

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 January 2014

4. Any Executive Decisions which have been 'called in'
5. Re-appointment of Co-opted Members

Matters for Recommendation to the Cabinet

6. Corporate Performance Plan 2012/15 - Review and Update 11 - 14

Corporate Performance Plan 2012/15

- Due to its size this has been circulated as a separate document and will be available in hard copy.
- The document will also be viewable on tablet devices as a supplementary paper.

7. Use of Urgency Procedures to Approve a new Capital Plan Scheme to support the Introduction of Individual Electoral Registration 15 - 22

Decisions to be taken by the Committee

8. Future Scrutiny Review Programme 23 - 26
9. Urgent Items

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

Matters for consideration in Private

10. Exclusion of Press and Public

The Chairman to move that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting during consideration of any items the publication of which would disclose exempt information.

PART 2 - PRIVATE

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet

11. Review of Postage and Courier Costs 27 – 32

12. Urgent Items

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

MEMBERSHIP

Cllr Miss A Moloney (Chairman)

Cllr T J Robins (Vice-Chairman) and Cllr Mrs E A Simpson (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr A W Allison
Cllr J Atkins
Cllr Ms J A Atkinson
Cllr Mrs P Bates
Cllr C Brown
Cllr D J Cure
Cllr R W Dalton
Cllr Miss J R L Elks
Cllr Mrs E M Holland
Cllr D Keeley

Cllr Mrs F A Kemp
Cllr S M King
Cllr A G Sayer
Cllr Miss S O Shrubsole
Cllr Ms S V Spence
Dr G Court
Mr P J Drury
Mr D Still
D Thornevell

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 28th January, 2014

Present: Cllr Miss A Moloney (Chairman), Cllr T J Robins (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs E A Simpson (Vice-Chairman), Cllr A W Allison, Cllr J Atkins, Cllr Ms J A Atkinson, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr Mrs E M Holland, Cllr D Keeley, Cllr Mrs F A Kemp, Cllr S M King, Cllr A G Sayer, Cllr Ms S V Spence, Mr P J Drury, Mr D Still and D Thornewell

Mrs J A Anderson, J A L Balcombe, O C Baldock, M A Coffin and N J Heslop were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.12.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs P Bates, C Brown, D J Cure and Dr G Court

PART 1 - PUBLIC

OS 14/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

OS 14/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10 September 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL

OS 14/3 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT

Members received the draft Annual Report on the business undertaken by the Committee over the past year.

RECOMMENDED: That the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual report, attached as Annex 1 to the report, be endorsed.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

OS 14/4 REVENUE ESTIMATES 2014/15

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation 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.

Careful consideration was given to both the Revised Estimates for 2013/14 and the Estimates for 2014/15 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 local government finance settlement together with details of the level of council tax increase above which local authorities would have to hold a referendum. The potential timetabling difficulties for the budget setting process, brought about by the Council not yet having received confirmation of the final grant settlement from Government nor details of the council tax referendum threshold were outlined. An announcement from Government was anticipated on 12 February although the tight timescales made budget setting decisions difficult. In addition, if the Police and Crime Commissioner's budget proposals were not approved next week there were further implications.

Particular reference was made to the New Homes Bonus and concerns as to whether this was sustainable in its current form were set out. It was also reported that any replacement scheme could represent a real risk to the Council which could see its overall grant funding reduce by more than was presently reflected in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

However, the Director of Finance and Transformation was pleased to report that net savings in excess of £1.2 million had been achieved against the target set of £1.1 million. Members were reassured that savings and efficiencies continued to be explored, together with new ways of delivering services and communication taking advantage of new and improving technologies.

RECOMMENDED: That the draft Revised Estimates contained in the Booklet be endorsed and commended to Cabinet.

OS 14/5 CAPITAL PLAN REVIEW

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Finance and Transformation which set out progress on the 2013/14 Capital Plan Review.

Attention was drawn to the recent announcement of an increase in Government support for Disabled Facilities Grants in 2014/15 and the outcome of the scrutiny review of Housing Assistance (see agenda item 9). A recommendation to amend the Capital Plan List A budget provisions in respect of these schemes would be incorporated in the budget report to the February meeting of Cabinet.

RECOMMENDED: That the following recommendations of the Finance and Property Advisory Board held on 8 January 2014 be endorsed:

(1) the position of the existing Capital Plan (List A), as summarised in Annex 1 to the report;

(2) the schedule of schemes recommended for addition to List C and deletion from List C, as set out in Annex 2 to the report;

(3) the schedule of List C schemes recommended for evaluation over the following year, set out in Annex 3 to the report;

(4) the schedule of evaluated schemes, set out in Annex 4 to the report, recommended for transfer from List C to List B . A further recommendation, as detailed below, was also endorsed:

1. In the case of the river wall, Wouldham scheme a specific earmarked reserve is established in the sum of £700,000 and that this scheme sits outside the annual allowance of £320,000 with an implementation date for capital plan purposes of 2015/16.

(5) endorsement of the Capital Strategy, as set out at Annex 5 to the report, for adoption and publication on the Council's website.

**OS 14/6 REVIEW OF CONCESSIONARY FEES AND CHARGES -
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW GROUP**

Members considered the report of the Scrutiny Review Group which set out conclusions arising from a recent assessment of concessionary fees and charges.

The Review Group concluded that all concessions operated by the Council should, in future, be linked to recipients of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. It was also recommended that to avoid having to deal with a household's changes in circumstances, and to reduce administration, the discount should be awarded to a qualifying household at the beginning of a financial year.

It was reported that financial and value for money considerations, risk assessments and the impact on potentially vulnerable people had formed part of the review process. The Equalities Impact Assessment recommended that disability/incapacity should also be included as a qualifying criterion should a discount card be implemented in the future.

RECOMMENDED: That the following recommendations be approved:

(1) the current 100% concession for pest control services should be retained;

- (2) the current 100% concession for bulky goods collections should be retained and additional marketing of the service and of the Saturday Household Waste Service should be undertaken;
- (3) a review of the discounts for leisure services/activities be undertaken by the Leisure and Arts Advisory Board to simplify the rates which apply;
- (4) the criteria which govern access to the Council's concessions be made consistent across services and in future be based primarily on those eligible for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme;
- (5) to reflect the finding of the equalities impact assessment disability/incapacity be added to the qualifying criteria for all concessions, should a single discount card be introduced;
- (6) eligibility for access to the concessions should be assessed and reviewed on an annual basis only in order to streamline administration of the concessions scheme;
- (7) the introduction of a single discount card covering all concessions be supported in principle but should be subject to further investigation taking into account examples of best practice; and
- (8) additional marketing and promotion of the discount card scheme should be considered to encourage greater take up by those eligible.

OS 14/7 REVIEW OF DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT CONTRIBUTIONS AND HOUSING ASSISTANCE FUNDING - RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW GROUP

The report of the Scrutiny Review Group presented conclusions arising from the recent assessment of the Disabled Facilities Grant contribution and Housing Assistance funding.

The aim of the review was to evaluate expenditure and value for money surrounding the allocation of Disabled Facilities Grants and Housing Assistance, to establish the opportunity for service improvements and potential savings in light of the Borough Council's overall budgetary position.

It was noted that financial and value for money considerations and risk and equality impact assessments had been undertaken as part of the review process.

Annex 1 to the report showed a revised Housing Assistance budget allocation and the model included money coming back to the Council via repaid grants.

Finally, Members received and welcomed a presentation which provided context for the review, set out objectives and key priorities of Housing Assistance, together with case studies to demonstrate how real people had benefitted.

RECOMMENDED: That the following recommendations be approved:

(1) the existing level of capital plan funding for Disabled Facilities Grants should be retained for the time being but reviewed again when changes to the funding regime take place in 2015; and

(2) the capital plan budget for discretionary housing assistance be set at £90,000 and part funded by way of grant repayments as detailed in paragraph 1.6 of the report.

DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE

OS 14/8 FUTURE SCRUTINY REVIEW WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Chief Executive set out a new review programme for future topics. 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 memberships/subscriptions and postage/courier costs.

RESOLVED: That informal Review Groups be established to investigate Memberships/subscriptions and Postage/courier costs

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

OS 14/9 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 June 2014

Report of the Leader and Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet

1 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PLAN (2012/15) - REVIEW AND UPDATE

A report to invite Members to consider and recommend adoption of the Council's updated Corporate Performance Plan for 2012/15 (separate document). The Plan includes a review of progress after the first two years of its three year term, with further progress expected this year.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Our Corporate Performance Plan for 2012/15 was approved at full Council on 10 July 2012. It is based on the following seven key priorities, previously approved at full Council, on 17 April 2012:

- Continued delivery of priority services and a financially viable Council.
- A clean, smart, well maintained and sustainable Borough.
- Healthy living opportunities and community well-being.
- Children and young people who are safe, involved and able to access positive activities.
- Low levels of crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime.
- A continuing supply of homes, including affordable housing to buy and rent, and prevention of homelessness.
- Sustainable regeneration of Tonbridge town centre and economic development in communities across the Borough.

The Plan, published in July 2012, promised a review of progress and update at the end of each financial year of its three-year term.

1.2 Review of progress (2012/14)

1.2.1 The updated Plan shows extremely good progress during the first two years. This is based on:

- progress against the improvement themes,
- assessment of performance indicator results against targets, and
- comparison of year on year indicator results.

1.2.2 Progress over the first two years against the 62 improvement themes listed in the Plan is shown in the following table:

Progress against improvement themes			
Excellent	Good	Some	None
15	26	21	0

Annex 1 to the Plan shows progress against each of the projects that underpin these improvement themes. In reviewing progress against each improvement theme we take account of the nature, importance, progress and impact of the underlying projects. Sometime considerable work is needed at the project level, evaluating options for example, to achieve some progress at the theme level.

1.2.3 Regarding the indicators included in the Plan:

- Trend performance, where available, is shown in the following table:

Improving	Declining
20	12

- Performance for those indicators with targets is shown in the following table:

Indicators: target achieved	
Yes	No
23	14

1.3 Updates for 2014/15

1.3.1 Encouragingly, looking ahead, the Plan has required limited updating for the remaining year of its three-year term:

- The seven key priorities are unchanged.
- The improvement themes are unchanged.
- The indicators are also unchanged. Targets have been updated where warranted to ensure they remain both challenging and realistic.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 There is no longer a legal requirement to produce a corporate performance plan. However as the Plan forms part of the Council's Policy Framework, it must be approved at a full Council meeting.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 Our corporate performance plan is a principal means of driving performance improvement and delivering value for money. It communicates clearly to everyone within the Council, and to our stakeholders, our key priorities, how we are working to achieve these priorities, where we are looking to improve and our performance targets.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 Our corporate performance plan has a wide circulation within and outside the Council. A well presented plan and achievement of our priorities and targets are important to the credibility of the Council.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report.

1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 We **recommend** that Overview and Scrutiny Committee supports the Plan's adoption by the Council.

Background papers:

Nil

contact:
Bruce Hill

Nicolas Heslop
Leader of the Council

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	Equalities issues may need to be addressed in undertaking regular activities and implementing improvement actions, not at this stage of approving the updated Corporate Performance Plan.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	As above
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?	N/A	

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 June 2014

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet

1 USE OF THE URGENCY PROCEDURE TO APPROVE A NEW CAPITAL PLAN SCHEME TO SUPPORT THE INTRODUCTION OF INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

In accordance with the Council's constitution this report seeks retrospective approval to the addition of a new Capital Plan scheme to purchase hardware necessary for the implementation of Individual Electoral Registration. Scheme costs are met in full by government grant.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Members will be aware that Individual Electoral Registration (IER) launches on 10 June 2014. This introduces considerable change in the way in which residents will register to vote, and represents a new way of working at every level and in every part of the process.
- 1.1.2 The Government, through the Cabinet Office, have committed to fully fund the transition to IER. This includes funding for 2014/15 to cover the additional costs associated with the new processes, which are considerable.
- 1.1.3 In December 2013, the Minister announced that the new statutory forms for registering to vote must be printed on A3 rather than the current A4. As a result, they are releasing funds to cover the additional costs associated with the change in paper size. This was expected initially to cover printing and scanning.
- 1.1.4 However, within this authority we undertake all printing and mailing for all electoral processes in-house. This gives a greater level of security, control and accountability than outsourcing major statutory mailings to third parties.
- 1.1.5 As a result, we advised the Cabinet Office that our hardware requirements will include a folding and an enveloping machine. Having discussed with the supplier of the machines currently in use within TMBC, the existing units do not meet the required hardware specification.
- 1.1.6 Under IER, we are required to send out a hugely increased volume of paperwork. This will include forms to households and to individuals, as well as reminders,

each with a business reply-paid envelope. The legislation requires that all the forms will be A3 in size, which we will fold down to fit in A5 envelopes (saving postage costs). Through IER, we will also be required to send acknowledgment letters at various stages of the process, resulting in yet more paperwork being posted to residents.

- 1.1.7 In order to facilitate the work, we will require a number of pieces of equipment – to help with the mailings out, and the processing of forms when they return. The Council’s Management Team considered the hardware requirements on 18 March 2014, and agreed that these purchases are necessary and that they constitute a new capital scheme.
- 1.1.8 As a new capital scheme, it is recognised that formal Member approval is required. Given the timing of the purchases urgent approval was sought pursuant to section 14.2 of the Financial Procedure Rules from the Leader and the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. In addition, for greater transparency, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation & Property, the Chairman of the FIP Advisory Board and the Leader of the Opposition Group were also invited to consider the request. Approval was granted by all recipients, noting that the Chief Executive would subsequently report the approval to this Committee. A scheme evaluation template has been completed and is provided at **[Annex1]**.

1.2 Hardware required

1.2.1 2 x A3 scanners

- These will be used for scanning all forms. The make and model have been recommended by our software supplier. These will be needed in place before the elections start this year, to enable postal vote scanning to take place on a stable platform. Two scanners are required to ensure resilience should one fail. The existing MFDs are not able to scan to our software and, given the volumes of scanning involved, would be ineffective for the work.

1.2.2 1 x Folding machine

- This machine will take the A3 forms and fold down to A4. This is required as no single machine can fold direct from A3 down to A5 and then insert into an envelope. For major mailings, such as the one due in July 2014, the printroom will be involved in the printing and folding. However, on a daily basis where smaller volumes will be printed locally, folding will take place locally within electoral services.

1.2.3 1 x Inserter

- This machine will take the pre-folded sheet and fold again to A5, insert into an outbound envelope along with a business reply envelope and

information sheet or second form where required. This will be required both for the major mailouts and for daily use. The existing machines within TMBC cannot undertake these tasks.

1.2.4 1 x Opener

- Until this year, the traditional canvass has allowed us to send A4 forms to each household. Where returned on paper, we used a 'fold-and-tuck' option, so the returned forms only needed to be unfolded to be opened. However, under IER the forms are larger (A3) must follow the statutory design, and must be supplied with a business reply envelope. Therefore, returned forms will be returned in envelopes. The existing envelope opener cannot handle the volumes expected during busy periods, and a new machine will dramatically reduce the time taken to manually open envelopes. As an indication, the most recent canvass (completed in February 2014) saw 22,000 folded paper forms returned, and there is no indication this will reduce under IER.

1.2.5 By way of context, the equipment will be used both for the major mailings of 50,000 to 100,000 items once per year and reminders (up to 30,000 items per mailing), and on a daily basis for smaller mailings.

1.2.6 By comparison, the cost for outsourcing the work to a major print and mailing company is 3-5 times the cost of producing the materials in-house and so would cost at least £20,000 more per year.

1.3 Costs

1.3.1 The list price of the hardware procured is £34,800. Through supplier discounts and negotiation, we were able to purchase all the necessary items including a three-year maintenance agreement for £30,000. It is expected that the hardware will require replacement every six years at a cost of £25,850 (£4,300 per annum to be provided for within capital renewals provisions) and a new maintenance agreement will be required from year four at an estimated cost of £1,400 per annum (to be provided for within future revenue budgets).

1.4 Cabinet Office contribution

1.4.1 As noted above, the Government committed to fully fund the cost of the transition to IER. However, at the time of obtaining approval from the Leader and Chair of Overview & Scrutiny, the Cabinet Office had not formally approved our bid. This was due to this authority undertaking major mailings in-house and therefore being more unusual than other authorities. However, I am pleased to advise that after presenting our business case to them, the Cabinet Office have approved our bid and have met the costs in full.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council is legally required to provide the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) with any resources required to enable her to complete the job of registering electors in accordance with the legislation. The implementation of Individual Electoral Registration represents a significant change in electoral registration processes, and the introduction of a large increase in the number, type and size of mailings the ERO must send out. As such, the hardware identified in this report is necessary for the delivery of IER.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 The purchase of new hardware at an effective annual cost of £5,700 per annum including maintenance represents good value for money compared to outsourcing the mailing work, which would cost around £20,000 per year. In addition, the initial purchase of hardware has been funded by the Cabinet Office.
- 1.6.2 Consideration was given to sharing equipment with neighbouring authorities. However, the business processes and software in place in those organisations is significantly different to those in place at TMBC, and the timings of major mailings will coincide in all authorities, making the sharing of equipment and resources in this area unviable.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 There is a risk that, without the identified hardware, we would not be able to deliver IER.

1.8 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.8.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.9 Recommendations

- 1.9.1 That the purchases required for the implementation of Individual Electoral Registration documented above are endorsed and Cabinet is invited to add the grant funded scheme to the Capital Plan.

Background papers:

contact: Richard Beesley

Nil

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

CAPITAL PLAN LIST C – EVALUATIONS

	Project	Electoral Services – Individual Electoral Registration hardware	
	1	Specification:	
	(i)	Purpose of the scheme	To provide the hardware necessary to support the mailing out and receipt back of new paper forms required under Individual Electoral Registration from when it launches nationally on 10 June 2014.
	(ii)	Relevance to National / Council's Strategic Objectives	(a) National: Individual Electoral Registration is a national scheme, launching on 10 June 2014. The processes, type of forms, mailing instructions and guidance are all set out in legislation and statutory guidance. (b) Council: The delivery of a successful electoral registration service is fundamental to the smooth running of local and national democracy.
	(iii)	Targets for judging success	(a) Ability to continue to manage all mailings and receipt of documents in-house. (b) Continued ability to manage costs and minimize expense of such mailings.
	2	<p>Description of Project / Design Issues: Individual Electoral Registration (IER) is being introduced in June 2014. This will see considerable change in the way in which residents will register to vote, and represents a new way of working at every level and in every part of the process. The Government, through the Cabinet Office, have committed to fully fund the transition to IER. This includes funding for 2014/15 to cover the additional costs associated with the new processes, which are considerable.</p> <p>In December 2013, the Minister announced that the new statutory forms for registering to vote must be printed on A3 rather than the current A4. As a result, they are releasing funds to cover the additional costs associated with the change in paper size. This was expected initially to cover printing and scanning. However, within this authority we undertake all printing and mailing for all electoral processes in-house. This gives a greater level of security, control and accountability than outsourcing major statutory mailings to third parties.</p> <p>As a result, we advised the Cabinet Office that our hardware requirements will include a folding and an enveloping machine. Having discussed with the supplier of the machines currently in use within TMBC, the existing units do not meet the required hardware specification. There was an expectation that the Cabinet Office would release confirmation of funding, along with procurement rules, some weeks ago. Whilst the Cabinet Office have confirmed our business case is robust they cannot yet state that the purchases will be fully funded by them until the Minister has agreed it. However, without the equipment listed it will not be possible to deliver IER. Having considered the alternatives, such as outsourcing the work, purchasing new hardware and continuing to deliver in-house gives the most cost effective option. They have also now advised that no procurement rules will be distributed. The hardware is required before the introduction of IER, sooner for the scanners, and so urgent approval is required.</p>	

CAPITAL PLAN LIST C – EVALUATIONS

	3	<p>Consultation: The paper forms we must send out are prescribed in legislation, and confirmed by the Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission. We have reviewed a range of hardware suppliers, as well as considering outsourcing the process to either local or national mailing companies. We have chosen the most cost-effective solution. If we were to outsource the process, the costs would be around £20,000 per year compared to an effective cost of £5,700 per year in purchasing this equipment.</p>
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CAPITAL PLAN LIST C – EVALUATIONS

4

Capital Cost:

The capital costs associated with the procurement of necessary hardware are as follows. The maintenance costs of £4,150 for the first three years, are being funded from revenue budgets.

a. 2 x A3 scanners

These will be used for scanning all forms. The make and model have been recommended by our software supplier. These will be needed in place before the elections start this year, to enable postal vote scanning to take place on a stable platform. Two scanners are required to ensure resilience should one fail. The existing MFDs are not able to scan to our software and, given the volumes of scanning involved, would be ineffective for the work.

Model selected: Fujitsu fi6670

b. 1 x Folding machine

This machine will take the A3 forms and fold down to A4. This is required as no single machine can fold direct from A3 down to A5 and then insert into an envelope. For major mailings, such as the one due in July 2014, the printroom will be involved in the printing and folding. However, on a daily basis where smaller volumes will be printed locally, folding will take place locally within electoral services.

Model selected: TFf-245

c. 1 x Inserter

This machine will take the pre-folded sheet and fold again to A5, insert into an outbound envelope along with a business reply envelope and information sheet or second form where required. This will be required both for the major mailouts and for daily use. The existing machines within TMBC cannot undertake these tasks.

Model selected: TFi-85Custom

d. 1 x Opener

Until this year, the traditional canvass has allowed us to send A4 forms to each household. Where returned on paper, we used a 'fold-and-tuck' option, so the returned forms only needed to be unfolded to be opened. However, under IER the forms are larger (A3) must follow the statutory design, and must be supplied with a business reply envelope. Therefore, returned forms will be returned in envelopes. The existing envelope opener cannot handle the volumes expected during busy periods, and a new machine will dramatically reduce the time taken to manually open envelopes. As an indication, the most recent canvass (completed in February 2014) saw 22,000 folded paper forms returned, and there is no indication this will reduce under IER.

Model selected: TF0-3050

CAPITAL PLAN LIST C – EVALUATIONS

	<p>The total hardware cost is £25,850. As an indication, the list price for these items is over £34,800. A three-year maintenance agreement has also been negotiated at a cost of £4,150.</p> <p>I am pleased to advise that after presenting our business case to them, the Cabinet Office have approved our bid and have met the costs in full. It is expected that the hardware will require replacement every after six years at a cost of £25,850 (£4,300 per annum to be provided for within capital renewals provisions), and a new maintenance agreement will be required from year four at an estimated cost of £1,400 per annum (to be provided for within future revenue budgets).</p>					
5	Profiling of Expenditure					
	2014/15 (£'000)	2015/16 (£'000)	2016/17 (£'000)	2017/18 (£'000)	2018/19 (£'000)	2019/20 (£'000)
	30 (grant funded)					
6	<p>Capital Renewals Impact: It is anticipated all items will need replacing every 6 years at a cost of £25,850 (£4,300 per annum).</p>					
7	<p>Revenue Impact: From year 4, maintenance agreements will be funded from revenue budgets. This is expected to be around £1,400 per year.</p>					
8	<p>Partnership Funding: The Cabinet Office funded the initial purchase. Contributions in future years are not expected.</p>					
9	<p>Post Implementation Review: Twelve months after completion.</p>					
10	Screening for equality impacts:					
	Question			Answer	Explanation of impacts	
	a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?			No	No impacts. These purchases support the ability to deliver individual electoral registration to all members of the community.	
	b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?			No		
	c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?					
11	<p>Recommendation: Transfer from List C to List B.</p>					

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 June 2014

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Delegated

1 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

To set out suggestions for further topics for review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

1.1 The Work Programme

1.1.1 There is a need to identify further topics for future review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. As with many previous reviews, these new topics need to be carefully selected to ensure there is scope for each to generate positive outcomes and, where appropriate, help contribute to the Council's wider transformation agenda. In general terms, such reviews should aim to lead to recommendations for improved service delivery, and/or, given the need on-going requirements of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), to identify scope to make further financial savings.

1.1.2 Your Management Team has therefore carried out a thorough review of potential service areas that may be suitable for review and have also re-visited previous suggestions made by Members and ideas for financial savings made by staff.

1.1.3 On the basis of this review, two topics are now recommended by the Management Team for review by this Committee:

- A review of the capital plan renewals process;
- A review of the actions undertaken to return empty residential properties to active use.

1.2 Capital Plan Renewals

1.2.1 Financial provision is currently made in the Council's Capital Plan to provide for the renewal of equipment over a rolling programme. Financial provision which is made is currently significant, amounting to an average £900K worth of provision each year covering renewals in planning and transportation services, environmental health services, leisure services and corporate services. Members

will be aware that the costs of these capital renewals are currently met from capital funds. However, with those funds now reducing over time, given the general financial constraints facing the Council, such renewals will need to be met via revenue funding in the future.

- 1.2.2 The focus for this review will therefore be on re-assessing the current assumptions being made about the 'life' of that equipment and the scale of risk which may arise if, for example, these assets are not always replaced on such a frequent basis. Detailed decisions on each item included on the Council's asset schedules will need to be made. There is also a need for the review to address the issue of budget accuracy and to ensure this is improved in future years. This is to avoid any significant underspends on capital renewals budgets as this has an adverse impact on the assumptions adopted in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

1.3 Empty Properties

- 1.3.1 The Borough Council works to ensure that empty private sector housing in the Borough is brought back into active residential use both to increase the stock of available housing and to address the negative impact empty houses can have on a locality. Kent County Council's 'No Use Empty' initiative is the primary means to help support owners of empty housing. This provides advice on matters such renovation issues, property letting and energy efficiency. Interest-free loans to owners may also be offered up to a maximum of £25,000 to assist with renovation costs.
- 1.3.2 Members will recall that the financial aspects involved in this topic were covered by a previous review undertaken by this Committee relating to Housing Assistance budgets. The Committee agreed a new set of priorities for this budget, including work to return empty homes into active use, and also recommended a revised capital funding programme to ensure this remained sustainable in the longer term. On that basis, this further review does not need to revisit these financial issues.
- 1.3.3 The suggested focus for this review will therefore be on:
- Assessing the scale of the empty homes problem in the borough and the issues which lead to properties becoming uninhabited
 - Reviewing the current caseload and the processes involved in addressing empty homes issues including use of available incentives and penalties
 - Reviewing the support which is currently in place, including that provided by the No Use Empty initiative
 - Assessing how successful current initiatives are in tackling the problem
 - Identifying the scope to review and improve the current approaches, if needed.

1.4 The Review Process

- 1.4.1 As with some previous reviews, the 'weight' of the two topics now suggested indicate that detailed analysis of the options available will need to be undertaken. On this basis, it is suggested that two informal Review Groups are established, each chaired by the two Vice-Chairmen. The following memberships are suggested:

Capital Plan Renewals Review Group: Cllr Trevor Robbins (Chairman), Cllrs Brown, Allison, Keeley, Mrs Pam Bates, Kemp, Sayer, Miss Sophie Shrubsole;
Co-optees: Gordon Court and Derek Still.

Empty Homes Review Group: Cllr Liz Simpson (Chairman), Cllrs Cure, Mrs Jean Atkinson, Atkins, Miss Jessica Elks, Mrs Elizabeth Holland, King, Sarah Spence,
Co-optees: David Thornewell, Paul Drury.

- 1.4.2 If any Members wish to change groups, then they are invited to contact Mark Raymond to discuss options.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 To be dealt with as part of each review.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 As above.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 As above.

1.8 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.8.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

1.9 Recommendations

- 1.9.1 That two Review Groups **ARE ESTABLISHED** to undertake reviews of the capital plan renewals process and of empty homes on the terms as set out above.

Background papers:

contact: Mark Raymond

Nil

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	N/A	This is a scoping report only.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?		
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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