

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

6 March 2019

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 Thursday, 14th March, 2019 commencing at 7.30 pm

Yours faithfully

JULIE BEILBY

Chief Executive

A G E N D A

PART 1 - PUBLIC

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------|-------|
| 1. | Apologies for absence | 5 - 6 |
| 2. | Declarations of interest | 7 - 8 |

3. Minutes 9 - 12

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 22 January 2019

4. Any Executive Decisions which have been 'called in' 13 - 14

Matters for Recommendation to the Cabinet

5. The Induction Process for New Members 15 - 18

Review of the process undertaken when newly elected Members are introduced to the Council following the Borough Council Election on 2 May 2019

6. Urgent Items 19 - 20

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

7. Exclusion of Press and Public 21 - 22

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

8. Urgent Items 23 - 24

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 A K Sullivan (Chairman)

Cllr Mrs A S Oakley (Vice-Chairman) and Cllr F G Tombolis (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Mrs J A Anderson

Cllr M C Base

Cllr P F Bolt

Cllr J L Botten

Cllr R W Dalton

Cllr S R J Jessel

Cllr D Keers

Cllr Mrs F A Kemp

Cllr Mrs S L Luck

Cllr M R Rhodes

Cllr Miss S O Shrubsole

Cllr Ms S V Spence

Cllr M Taylor

Cllr Miss G E Thomas

Cllr T C Walker

Mr P J Drury

Mr D Still

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Apologies for absence

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Declarations of interest

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 22nd January, 2019

Present: Cllr A K Sullivan (Chairman), Cllr Mrs A S Oakley (Vice-Chairman), Cllr F G Tombolis (Vice-Chairman), Cllr J L Botten, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr D Keers, Cllr Mrs S L Luck, Cllr M R Rhodes, Cllr Miss S O Shrubsole, Cllr Miss G E Thomas and Cllr T C Walker

Councillors T I B Cannon, N J Heslop and D Lettington were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, P F Bolt, Mrs F A Kemp, Ms S V Spence, Mr P J Drury and Mr D Still

PART 1 - PUBLIC

OS 19/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

OS 19/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 October 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

OS 19/3 REVENUE ESTIMATES 2019/20

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 the Council in preparation of the Budget for 2019/20 within the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the Council's priorities.

Details were given of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement which was relatively positive for Tonbridge and Malling given the removal of the "negative RSG" payment for one year, the fact that the baseline for payment of New Homes Bonus would remain at 0.4%, and the Secretary of State's decision to maintain the threshold for triggering a referendum on council tax increase at the higher of 3% or £5. However, Members were advised that the settlement should be viewed in the context of a lack of information about future years' funding and impact on the funding gap which would have to be revisited in the

light of the outcome of the 2019 Spending Review and Fair Funding Review. In addition, the Kent and Medway authorities' bid for the next pilot in respect of 75% business rates retention had failed despite the success of the previous pilot.

Alongside the provisional settlement, the Secretary of State had published two further consultation papers on the review of relative needs and resources and business rates retention reform. In view of the timescales involved and the programming of meetings, it was suggested that delegated authority be given for a response to be made as appropriate.

The report set out the framework for considering the estimates in terms of the MTFs together with a number of Service specific issues. Attention was drawn to partnership funding pressures on Disabled Facilities Grants, public health initiatives and the Community Safety Partnership which it was suggested should be the subject of reviews by the Committee.

The report indicated the factors to be taken into account when updating the MTFs and Savings and Transformation Strategy (STS). Progress was reported on savings achieved and the current funding gap. It was noted that the MTFs would continue to be updated as more information became available and the targets and timescales within the STS would be revisited and realigned with the latest projected funding gap during the budget setting process.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the proposed increase in the minimum General Revenue Reserve balance from £2.0m to £3.0m be noted and endorsed;
- (2) the response made to the provisional local government finance settlement 2019/20, as set out in Annex 1 to the report, be noted;
- (3) delegated authority be given to the Director of Finance and Transformation, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property, to respond to the two further papers published alongside the provisional settlement as detailed at paragraph 1.3.10 of the report;
- (4) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be asked to review the service areas Disabled Facilities Grants, Public Health and Community Safety Partnership, as detailed at paragraph 1.7 of the report;
- (5) the draft Revenue Estimates contained in the Booklet be endorsed for consideration by the Cabinet at its special meeting on 14 February 2019; and

- (6) the Savings and Transformation Strategy be updated to reflect the latest projected “outstanding” funding gap as part of the budget setting process.

OS 19/4 CAPITAL PLAN REVIEW 2018/19

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Finance and Transformation which set out progress on the 2018/19 Capital Plan Review and sought endorsement of recommendations to the Cabinet. Particular reference was made to the three schemes added to List A during the year and those recommended for fast-track evaluation and transfer to List B.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the recommendations of the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board of 9 January 2019, as set out at paragraph 1.3 of the report, be endorsed; and
- (2) the Capital Strategy, as set out at Annex 5 to the report, be endorsed for adoption and publication on the Council’s website.

OS 19/5 BREXIT PREPAREDNESS

The report of the Management Team set out a range of initiatives being pursued to ensure the Borough Council was prepared to maintain business continuity in the light of possible disruption related to Brexit issues. It was noted that the key concern for Tonbridge and Malling was potentially major traffic congestion affecting the M20/A20/M26 corridor and surrounding roads in the event of severe delays at Kent ports.

Reference was made to the Council’s involvement with the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) including preparation and management of all current draft Brexit related plans (Operation Fennel). The report set out proposed actions in respect of a range of issues including the need for remote working of staff, impact on key Council services, options for decision making if Members and staff were unable to attend council meetings due to congestion, any disruption to the local government elections on 2 May, communications and call-handling, and funding for strengthening staff resources in a number of areas.

Members were advised that a bid had been made to the Brexit Contingency Fund, managed by Kent County Council, for funding the purchase of laptops for officers to work from home to maintain essential services. The Chief Executive indicated that the report aimed to reassure Members and the community that the Council had made appropriate contingency arrangements in response to the possible impact of Brexit and for other reasons such as severe weather or the current M20 smart motorway works.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the report be noted and further updates be provided as more information becomes available; and
- (2) the current urgency provisions in the Council's Constitution and Policy Framework be extended to include "arrangements for decision making during a period of serious and/or unexpected disruption".

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**OS 19/6 SCRUTINY REVIEW PROGRAMME 2019/20**

The joint report of the Chief Executive and Chairman of the Committee set out proposals for future reviews to March 2020. The Committee was advised that the review of the Gibson Building was awaiting a response from Kent County Council in respect of the covenants on the building and would be scheduled into the programme as soon as it had been received. Members were invited to submit other suggestions for reviews to the Scrutiny and Partnerships Manager.

RESOLVED: That the report be received and noted.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**OS 19/7 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.46 pm

Agenda Item 4

Any Executive Decisions which have been “called in”

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 March 2019

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet

1 THE INDUCTION PROCESS FOR NEW MEMBERS

To review the process undertaken when newly elected Council Members are introduced to the Council, following the Borough Council Election on 2 May 2019.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 As with previous elections, we are aware that there is likely to be a number of new Councillors elected on 3rd May. We therefore need to prepare a programme to introduce them to the administrative and statutory functions of the Council and the responsibilities and expectations of representing their ward.

1.1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is therefore invited to assist with development of the induction process for 2019. At the end of 2018, we asked those Councillors, who were newly elected at the previous election in 2015, to provide any feedback on the induction process or comment on their own experience of this process. We have received feedback that the biggest issue in 2015 was having too many induction meetings too quickly and this was difficult for Members to absorb all the information.

1.1.3 We are grateful for the responses received, which have helped to shape the following suggestions for consideration by this Committee.

1.2 Prior to, and immediately after, the election:

1.2.1 Letters will be sent to all nominated candidates early in the process prior to the election. This will detail when and where the count is taking place and sets out details of the process to be followed after the count is complete, for example, the requirement to have their picture taken, notify the Monitoring Officer of certain financial interests and to sign their Acceptance of Office if elected. In addition, a Welcome Pack will be provided to all new councillors which will include an introductory letter from the Chief Executive, a Summons and Agenda for the Annual Council meeting to be held on 14th May along with a list of Council meetings and an invitation to an initial induction meeting to be held on 8th May.

1.3 Induction Meeting Prior to Annual Council

1.3.1 Rather than having one lengthy initial induction meeting, Members will be invited to a series of shorter induction meetings including the following:

1. **Headline Meeting with Management Team on 8th May 2019:** This will be a concise meeting of introduction and will include information in relation to the Constitution, the Code of Conduct, Allowances and some practical issues including use of emails, using pigeon holes, a tour of the Civic Suite and meeting protocols. Members will receive their building access pass at this meeting.
2. **I.T. and Tablets:** Tablets will need to be issued as early as possible to allow Members to access committee papers etc. It is suggested that new Councillors be invited to book from a number of available timeslots to receive their equipment subject to available IT resources.

1.4 Service Specific Meetings

1.4.1 It is suggested that a series of shorter induction meetings could be spread throughout May/June. It is proposed that a short 10 minute briefing will be given at the start of each Advisory Board/Committee meeting setting out the role of that Board/Committee. Annual Council is due to be held on 14 May, so all Councillors will know by this point which boards and committees they will be undertaking. New Councillors will be encouraged to attend all of these meetings to ensure they understand the wide range of issues that each Board/Committee deal with.

1.4.2 It is recognised that some service areas may require more than one short briefing. For example, the complexities of Local Government finance issues would probably require a number of discreet briefings at the start of each meeting of FIP.

1.4.3 In addition, specific briefings will be needed to cover the following:

An introduction to the Local Plan: As this is a significant issue, a strategic briefing will be held to go through the detail of the Local Plan process;

Area Planning Committees: As with the Advisory Board Meetings, a briefing session will be held ahead of Areas 1, 2 and 3 which will cover the necessary training required to enable new Councillors to understand complex planning laws and processes. It will be emphasised that in order to take part and vote at these Committees, Members will be required to undertake this training.

Licensing and Audit: Formal training will be required for any new Members to enable them to take part in licensing and appeals panels and to understand the formal role of the Audit Committee.

Other Additional Training: including Safeguarding, Prevent and the role of the Community Safety Partnership/Community Safety Unit.

1.5 Possible Additional training and assistance

- 1.5.1 Members are invited to consider whether a Coach trip to strategic sites for new Councillors would be worthwhile. Such tours did take place in the past but were not undertaken in 2015. The Committee is invited to consider whether a tour should be organised to enable new Councillors to have a full picture of the Borough as a whole, including key sites and proposed new developments.
- 1.5.2 New Councillor 'buddy system': we have in the past put in place a buddy system whereby new Councillors are allocated a nominated Senior Council Officer to assist them informally with any issues or concerns during their first 2/3 months at the Council. The Committee is invited to consider whether this should be re-introduced.
- 1.5.3 The above suggestions hopefully cover the issues that have been raised, we will of course be happy to accept any additional suggestions that this Committee may raise.

1.6 Legal Implications

- 1.6.1 N/A

1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.7.1 N/A

1.8 Risk Assessment

- 1.8.1 N/A

1.9 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.9.1 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.

1.10 Recommendations

- 1.10.1 That Members **BE INVITED** to consider the above proposals and **AGREE** the Member Induction Process for 2019.

Background papers:

contact: Gill Fox

Nil

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

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Agenda Item 6

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

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Agenda Item 7

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.

**ANY REPORTS APPEARING AFTER THIS PAGE CONTAIN EXEMPT
INFORMATION**

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Agenda Item 8

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

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