

**MINUTES of the meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee
held on 31 January 2013 at 6.00pm**

Present: Councillors Richard Speight (Chair), Barry Johnson (Vice Chair)
Wendy Curtis, Martin Healy, Terry Hipsey and Tunde Ojetola
(substituting for Charlie Key)

In attendance: M. Hone – Director of Finance & Corporate Governance
S. Clark– Head of Finance
J. Hinchliffe – Head of HR OD & Customer Strategy
I. Rydings – Head of Asset Management
M. Boulter – Principal Democratic Services Officer

25. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

a) Interests

Councillor Healy declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue that he sat on the working party that is overseeing the Grays Beach project.

Councillor Ojetola declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue that he sat on the Board of Trustees for Impulse Leisure.

Councillor Curtis declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue that she was the Council representative for the Thameside and also that she sat on the shadow management team for the Ockendon Community Hub project.

b) Whipping

No interests were declared.

27. BUDGET 2013/14- 2014/15 SAVINGS AND CAPITAL PROPOSALS

Four Yearly Elections

Officers clarified that no savings could be made in the 2013/14 year but there could be an implementation of four yearly elections in 2014/15. There would be an additional cost of running a full election in that year but the subsequent two years would make a saving of £120,000.

Members expressed a desire for a public consultation to be widespread and comprehensive as it would need to inform and capture the views of elderly people among others. Members acknowledged by elections would cost additional funds if they were held.

The Committee agreed the proposal on the basis that further work, either through a task and finish group or another appropriate committee would be undertaken.

Replacing Automatic Pay Increments

Officers confirmed that it was not feasible to make savings in the next two years. The Council had frozen the cost of living wage increase for the past three years and performance based increments within staff bands was a contractual obligation for the council.

Councillor Ojetola felt the Council could be prudent in the current financial climate and seek to freeze increments and reduce the cost of awards. Officers confirmed that this was not possible as increments were a contractual right, they explained that the performance management process for awarding staff increments was rigorous and had been reviewed last year.

Councillor Ojetola felt that the public would see the Council in a bad light as it was making redundancies and service reductions but paying its staff more money. Councillor Healy highlighted that there could be opposite views in that the public could see council staff as deserving of that pay increase for the work they did. It was clarified that just under 80% of staff lived in Thurrock.

The Committee did not agree with this proposal but expressed a desire to actively take part in future work on this area. Councillor Ojetola's opposing viewpoint was noted.

Implementing Community Hubs

The implementation of any saving relating to this required further detail on the number of hubs and the services they would provide. Councillor Johnson registered his disappointment that the Council would choose to invest money into shared services that had no fixed saving figure rather than community based initiatives such as this one.

The Committee agreed the proposal.

Community Services through Precepting Bodies

The saving proposal would be cost neutral to begin with as the Council could not be competitive at the start of this project but simply budget for the cost of services that other organisations or companies might provide.

Conservative Members confirmed that they did not have any specific savings figure in mind relating to this proposal but they were again disappointed that the Council was not eager to invest in such a programme as opposed to shared services, both projects of which had uncertain savings outcomes. Conservative Members felt the community and organisational infrastructure was available in Thurrock to sustain this project.

Officers recognised that this was a different way of providing services for the future that the Council may well need to consider.

The Committee agreed the proposal and noted that it needed further investigative work.

RESOLVED: that

- i) The Committee notes and reviews the additional proposals for budget savings and capital bids set out in the report.**

The meeting was adjourned at 6.55 pm.

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIRMAN

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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or alternatively e-mail mboulter@thurrock.gov.uk**