

TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes and report to Council of the meeting of the Committee held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Station Road East, Oxted on the 5 November 2024 at 7:30pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Shiner (Chair), Black (Vice-Chair), Bolton, Case, Cline, Evans, Chris Farr, Killick, Mark, Patel, Sharp, Sowambur and Windsor

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Sue Farr, Sayer, Allen and Horne

ALSO PRESENT (Virtually): Councillors Fowler and Gaffney

148. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 SEPTEMBER 2024

The minutes were signed and confirmed as a correct record.

149. COMMUNITY SERVICES - FUTURE TANDRIDGE PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee received a report which provided the financial context and an overview of the Future Tandridge Programme's 2-year savings plan. Upon approval, this report would form the basis of a draft budget which would be proposed at the Strategy & Resources Committee in November. Individual budgets would then be proposed at the Strategy & Resources Committee in January 2025 and Full Council in February 2025.

The financial context of the Council had been discussed at the previous Strategy & Resources Committee in September and Full Council in October. The principles approved at these meetings had been used to develop the 2-year savings plan. Officers highlighted that it was unclear how much the Council would receive following the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement. A settlement from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to provide clarity on how the Statement would affect the Council was expected in December, therefore, the financial context of the Council outlined in the report remained the same.

For the Council overall, the savings plan detailed a saving of £4 million over 4 years. This would involve £1 million in savings in the first year and an additional £1 million saved each year in years 2, 3 and 4. The savings plan looked at more difficult areas where savings could be located within Community Services. Officers highlighted key areas of the savings plan and explained that:

- a key principle of the plan was to avoid impact on services to residents. Savings were being located in areas that would not impact residents. However, this had not been possible in every area, so some changes within the savings plan would have an impact.
- the structure of the savings plan involved 3 key groupings: finance, which would involve a corporate review of the budget, to locate areas of improvement; services, which would involve a review of current spend on services and transformation which would involve long-term changes to provide future savings.
- an initial 2025/26 target was set in April and was updated in October. The target demonstrated that the Council could achieve the £2 million savings in 2 years. The main

method to achieve the target had been with the finance led approach. £300,000 worth of savings had been located for 2024/25 from reviewing areas of the budget where savings could be made that would have a low level of impact.

- revenue generation would be considered in 2 main parts, identifying savings toward fees and charges. Officers explained a session would take place with Members in December to discuss fees and charges. The savings plan assumed the Council would receive an inflationary increase of 2% on charges the Council do not have control over and 5% on Council controlled charges. The Garden Waste Club service would then generate a higher increase at 6.5%. This would generate £14,000 additional revenue for the Council. Together, the increase would result in an additional revenue of more than £150,000 for 2025/26.
- commercial and revenue opportunities had been located for the waste and cemetery areas, with improvement in these areas to be further developed.
- £225,000 of savings had been allocated to service-led initiatives, forming part of the £1m target for 2025/26.
- the digital programme would be important for the overall transformation savings. Officers reported that the MyAccount portal had now opened for the public regarding Revenues and Benefits with further implementation to take place in December for the Waste and Operations service.
- the savings plan would deliver a reduction of £400,000 in discretionary spend, which would result in a 30% reduction in the net budget over the 2-year period. The 2-year savings plan detailed indicative targets and would move from asset investment to asset transfer by locating leaseholders or Parish Councils who would take on this responsibility. Officers explained a discussion with Parish Councils at the Parish Assembly had been positive, with many Parish Councils keen to work with the Council toward asset transfer or support.

In response to Member questions, Officers explained that further discussions would take place with Parish Councils on playgrounds regarding asset transfer. This would be developed further upon report approval; however, individual responsibilities would be decided on a site by site basis developed from discussions with Parish Councils. Officers noted that as long as an agreement would be made, any obligations or previous agreements, such as through Lottery funding, could be passed over to the Parish Council.

RESOLVED – that:

- A) the financial context and progress in the development of the 2025/26 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) be noted.
- B) the budget principles, approved by Full Council, which underpinned the approach to the 2-year savings plan and which the Committee is required to operate in be noted.
- C) the savings targets in Section 3 of the paper, subject to details of how the savings would be made in the January Community Services Committee papers be approved. The targets would form the basis of the development of the 2025/26 Community Services draft budget to the Strategy & Resources Committee.

150. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY

The Committee received a report which detailed the Council's draft policy on Anti-Social Behaviour. The new policy would provide information to staff and residents about the Council's approach to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the community. The Policy would emphasise the commitment to protecting residents' quality of life, safety, and their environment. Whilst the Policy was aimed at all residents, it would also highlight the Council's commitment to a multi-agency approach toward the prevention and reduction of Anti-Social Behaviour. The draft policy contained details on the types of Anti-Social Behaviour as well as non-legal measures available to reduce and prevent them. The policy was developed in alignment with national legislation and reviewed by an independent Anti-Social Behaviour specialist.

Once approved, Officers would progress with the project to deliver a dedicated website page and new reporting form for residents. This would allow officers to report numbers and trends regarding Anti-Social Behaviour on a quarterly basis at future Community Service Committees.

The Committee was introduced to the Council's new Anti-Social Behaviour Officer who would be working with both Housing and Community Safety teams.

In response to Member questions, Officers explained that:

- the Council would focus on cases regarding issues within the Council's powers. However, cases would be dealt with on a case by case basis and shared with police and other partners such as Housing Associations when necessary. The level of risk from the case would be considered in every situation and assigned to the appropriate team. Members were concerned toward the potential cost of the new Policy; however, officers explained the Council had a statutory duty within Section 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act, Environmental Protection Act and Crime and Policing Act to reduce and protect its residents from Anti-Social Behaviour. Other partners such as the police and Housing Associations had their own powers and duties under Anti-Social Behaviour legislation, so the Council would only focus on cases they had powers over and would signpost cases elsewhere when required. Many reports of Anti-Social Behaviour would require the Council to work in conjunction with the police and other partners. Therefore, the new policy would allow the Council to be a first point of contact for all residents experiencing Anti-Social Behaviour.
- the Council already had measures in place for reports on issues such as fly-tipping and nuisance bonfires. These reports would remain in place to avoid the duplication of work.
- the new website and reporting tools would be developed to ensure they would be easy to use for residents. Officers emphasised they would aim to make the process simple for residents in line with the Council's Digital Transformation Programme.
- the Council's tenancy officers currently respond to cases of Anti-Social Behaviour. The new Anti-Social Behaviour Policy would take the pressure off this team. The Council's new Anti-Social Behaviour Officer was involved with reports of Anti-Social Behaviour.

RESOLVED – that the anti-social behaviour policy, attached in the report as Appendix 'A' be approved.

151. QUARTER 2 2024/25 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND RISK REGISTER - COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

The Committee received a report that contained data on the key performance indicators (KPIs) and risk register for Quarter 2 2024/25. Officers drew the Committee's attention to:

- the number of safeguarding cases had increased in Quarter 2 from 16 to 32. The largest reason for the increase was self-neglect and psychological abuse.
- following a recent Childrens Safeguarding board self assessment (known as a Section 11) the Council had received feedback that the Board was reassured by the Council's policies and procedures and a more detailed report would follow in early 2025.
- following the implementation of the new Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) cases would be reported at future Committees.
- Biffa continued to meet contract KPIs for waste and recycling. A Surrey-wide benchmarking report based on common KPIs between local authorities within Surrey, reported that for the 12th month rolling period of Q1 of the 2024/25 financial year, the Council was the top performing local authority within Surrey for recycling.
- street cleanliness improved at approximately 90%. This was the result of the service being able to access a driver from the previous cesspool service and the high reliability of temporary staff.
- all outstanding tree inspections on the previous risk register in Q1 were now completed with minimal work required to keep the trees safe. Parish Councils would continue to be notified when tree works were contentious or if a tree was felled. Signage for tree works was being developed and would be used for contentious tree works. Work would be taking place within 2024, at a few locations, including railway line and ash die back work.

Members expressed their gratitude toward the street cleaning team on their recent work in Whyteleafe.

Members also asked a number of questions, and Officers responded as follows:

- the street cleaning team were completing leafing work to remove dead leaves from the streets and drains. Additional leaf blowers had been ordered to assist the situation.
- fees and charges for the garden waste collections would be decided by the Council. The Council had reviewed charges at other local authorities in outer London and the South East, with these local authorities charging higher or lower rates for the service. More information would be provided to Councillors in the future.
- one of the existing street sweepers had been sold. There was currently a new sweeper and a back-up sweeper in place. Drivers had been taken from the previous cesspool service, however due to driver unavailability, only 1 sweeper was currently in use. It was expected that both sweepers would be running by early 2025.

RESOLVED – that:

- A) the Quarter 2 2024-2025 performance indicators for this Committee be noted.
- B) the most critical risks for this Committee be noted.

152. QUARTER 2 2024/25 BUDGET MONITORING - COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

The Committee received a report which outlined the financial position of the Committee's 2024/25 Revenue budget as of Quarter 2. Officers stated that the overall financial position of the Council would be taken to the Strategy & Resources Committee on 28 November 2024 and would show a largely balanced outturn for 2024/25. The Community Services budget was currently forecasting a £203,000 underspend. It was explained that the underspend was due to savings on salaries. This was a result of the cessation of the cesspool service, the Handyman service changing model from an employee to a contract and vacancies within the Environmental Services team. Officers also highlighted that:

- £50,000 had been released from the tree budget. This was due to a full programme of works having already been completed for the year.
- the Committee was on track to achieve all savings trackers by the end of the financial year.
- there was no variance against the Capital budget. The Community Services spend was currently at £487,000, or 23% of the Capital budget.

In response to Member questions, Officers explained that the Handyman service had been managed by a Tandridge District Council employee but had recently been contracted to Millbrook Healthcare Ltd who already managed Disabled Facility Grants (DFG). It was expected the model change would result in some savings for the Housing General Fund and Community Services budget.

RESOLVED – that the Committee's Revenue and Capital budget forecast positions at Quarter 2 / M6 (September) 2024/25 be noted.

153. PAVEMENT LICENSES - NEW LICENSING FEE - DECISION TAKEN UNDER URGENCY POWERS (SO35)

The Committee received a report that detailed an Urgency Decision made on new Pavement Licence fees. It was explained that during the Community Services Committee on 3 September 2024, members considered a report which contained information from the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, and guidance issued by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The recommendation to set a new fee for Pavement Licences was agreed and resolved, however, the actual fee could not be determined. An Urgency Decision was made under Standing Order 35 of the Council's Constitution on 9 October 2024. The Urgency Decision set the fee of a grant for a Pavement License at £500 and a renewal at £350. The new

fees would be implemented on 1 January 2025 and licences would remain at £200 for a 2 year licence until 31 December 2024.

RESOLVED – that the contents of the Report be noted.

Rising 8.27 pm