

## 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 18 October 2022 at 7:30pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Wren (Chair), Swann (Vice-Chair), Bilton, G.Black, Caulcott, S.Farr, Lee, North, O'Driscoll, Pinard, Shiner and Moore (Substitute) (In place of Allen)

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors C.Farr, Sayer and N.White

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors Allen

#### 143. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 JUNE 2022

These minutes were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

#### 144. QUESTION SUBMITTED UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

The Executive Head of Communities responded to a question from Councillor O'Driscoll, details of which are provided at Appendix A.

#### 145. OVERVIEW OF GRANT ALLOCATIONS AND SUPPORT FOR THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

A report was presented in connection with the Committee's budget for allocating grants to voluntary sector organisations, including:

- details of the grants currently provided and updates from some of the organisations concerned
- the question of whether the current arrangements remain appropriate and whether an element of the budget should be utilised to cover relevant management and administration costs
- a suggestion that a scoring matrix be introduced for assessing the suitability of future grant allocations.

The Committee raised a number of questions about the funding provided to organisations in 2022/23. Members explained that the organisations provided useful services to residents and there may be a knock on effect to the Council in terms of increasing service provision if these organisations were not able to deliver their services. It was important that the Council received information from these organisations as part of the grant award process, but the information required must not place unnecessary burdens on the organisations. The process should consider if the right organisations received funding, and that they have planned sufficiently for inflationary increases.

Councillor Swann, seconded by Councillor S. Farr, proposed, in place of recommendation C, that: *"authority be delegated to the Executive Head of Communities, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, to establish a Member/Officer Panel to consider the management and administration of the Committee's community grants budget."* Upon being put to the vote, this motion was carried.

Councillor O'Driscoll, seconded by Councillor Lee, proposed that, recommendation D be amended to: *“a scoring matrix for future grants to assess suitability of the grants and allow transparency, similar to the rental grant subsidy policy which was agreed at the Strategy and Resources Committee in January 2022, be introduced.”* Upon being put to the vote, this motion was carried.

**RESOLVED** – that:

- A. the current levels of funding allocations for 2022/23 be noted;
- B. the level of future funding be reviewed as part of the budget setting process for 2023/24;
- C. authority be delegated to the Executive Head of Communities, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, to establish a Member/Officer panel to consider the management and administration of the Committee's community grants budget; and
- D. a scoring matrix for future grants to assess suitability of the grants and allow transparency, similar to the rental grant subsidy policy which was agreed at the Strategy and Resources Committee in January 2022, be introduced.

## **146. REVIEW OF THE HACKNEY CARRIAGE (TAXI) MAXIMUM TABLE OF FARES**

The local taxi trade representative group had requested an increase in the maximum table of fares for Hackney Carriages licensed by the Council to operate from ranks within the District. This request was in light of increasing fuel prices and the cost of living in general.

The report before the Committee set out both the current and proposed fare tables. Members were informed that Hackney Carriage drivers licensed by the Council had been consulted and 96% were in favour of the proposed fees. The last revision of the maximum far had been in 2018.

Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 required taxi licensing authorities to give public notice of proposed variations to the table of maximum Hackney Carriage fares.

In response to questions from Members, it was confirmed that:

- The Council did not set a maximum number of taxis that were licenced. However, there were rigorous tests applicants had to undertaken prior to a licence being issued.
- Discussions between officers had taken place about moving licensing functions, currently the responsibility of the Committee, to the Licensing Committee. A report would be presented at a future meeting of the Committee.

**RESOLVED** – that

- A. the proposed variation to the Hackney Carriage table of maximum fares, as put forward by the taxi trade representative group as set out in section 3 of the report, be approved in principle;

- B. arising from A above, the variation be advertised in the local press allowing 14 days for comments to be submitted to the Council; and
- C. subject to no objections being received during the consultation period, the variation will come into effect on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

In accordance with Standing Order 25(3), Councillor O'Driscoll wished it recorded that he abstained from voting on the resolutions.

## **147. QUARTER 1 2022/23 BUDGET MONITORING - COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

A budget monitoring report for the first quarter of the current financial year (i.e. to 30th June 2022) was presented. This concerned expenditure against the Committee's 2022/23 revenue (£4,051k) and capital (£1,839k) budgets. Officers explained the budget monitoring position would be reported to the four policy committees on a quarterly basis.

As far as revenue was concerned, the key headline was a projected £200k overspend on the waste management contract due to the impact of inflation. It was explained that when the budget was set, inflation was estimated at c.4% but was now approaching 10%. The projected overspend contributed to a total Council overspend forecast of £573k. The report to Strategy and Resources Committee had included mitigations and contingencies that would cover the project overspend. It would, however, remain important and necessary for all four Committees to consider mitigations within their remit.

The savings target for the Committee budget was £177k. £157k was considered to be achievable, with £20k in relation to the mechanical sweeper considered to be at risk. Officers were working to realise this saving.

At this stage, the capital programme (c.22% of which had been spent at Q1) was considered to be deliverable.

There were two revenue risks relating to the waste contract and the trees programme budget.

In response to comments from Members, it was confirmed that:

- There was no external grant funding available for tree works, but the Council would be considering applications for funding for a woodland management plan. The budget pressure for dealing with ash dieback had been identified for the 2023/24 budget.
- There was the potential to release provisions set aside as corporate contingencies to mitigate against the projected £200k waste contract overspend. However, mitigations based on in year spending were preferable, including discussions with providers. Inflationary pressures were being factored into the 2023/24 budget.

***RESOLVED*** – that the Committee's forecast revenue and capital budget positions as at quarter 1 / M3 (June) 2022 be noted.

## **148. COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – FUTURE TANDRIDGE PROGRAMME UPDATE - SEPTEMBER 2022**

As part of the Future Tandridge Programme ('FTP'), each service had undergone a review process to consider opportunities for improvements, different delivery models and savings needed to address the Council's significant budget gap in 2023/24.

A report was considered regarding progress to date for the services within the scope of the Community Services Committee. Waste collection and Operational Services (including 'Localities') had been the subject of a single consolidated review, an outline business case for which was presented.

The recommendations from the service reviews were to initiate an internal improvement programme and to undertake a market readiness assessment. The assessment would inform a future recommendation to the Committee regarding future service delivery.

Members discussed the need to ensure unintended consequences of changes to service delivery were considered, and officers had the necessary skills in relation to relationship, contract and performance management.

In response to questions from Members, it was confirmed that:

- The Council was continuing to support the Westway Centre, particularly in relation to lease arrangements.
- The RAG rating for the operational activities to deliver internal savings would be given an amber status.
- Additional resource had been brought in to identify meaningful data to inform a decision on the direction of travel. A Council wide resource had also been approved at Strategy and Resources Committees on 29 September for a Business Analyst post to support the identifying of financial information and data to enable full benchmarking. Officers would look at the level of information provided by contractors on invoices for work provided.
- The vehicle maintenance service supported a range of functions, and the operating structure would be updated to reflect that.
- Soft market testing would be undertaken before the Committee were asked to consider service delivery models.
- Work on the grounds maintenance dataset was progressing, and that specific examples of savings would be provided to Members as soon as available.
- Officers would consider adapting the residents survey in order to capture data on anti-social behaviour.

**RESOLVED** – that:

- A. the direction of travel for Operational Services, including the twin track approach as set out below, be approved:
  - (i) Internal Improvement Programme - to initiate a programme to deliver better service outcomes, achieve savings and mitigate operational risks and issues – this will include the redesign of Operational Services, the development of service specifications and associated performance metrics, improvement in technology and an interim restructure of services
  - (ii) Market Readiness Preparation – to undertake early market engagement to assess the market readiness and appetite to deliver Operational Services, in whole or in part;
- B. it be noted that the additional resources required to deliver the above activities had been approved by the Strategy & Resources Committee on 29th September;
- C. the savings opportunities, risks and key planned milestones included within the outline business case for Operational Services and the service review summaries for Regulatory Services and Community Partnerships (contained within

Appendix 2 to the report and which are subject to further detailed analysis as part of budget considerations for 2023/24) be noted; and

- D. it be noted that a recommendation for decision on the future direction of Operational Services will be presented to the Community Services Committee on either 10th November 2022 or 23rd January 2023.

Rising 9.04 pm