

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 18th 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 16TH 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 11th 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 (£672k) 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. Strategy and Resources Committee had agreed to mitigations and contingencies that would cover the project overspend. It would, however, remain important and necessary for the Committee to consider mitigations within its remit.

The savings target for the Committee budget was £177k. £157k was considered to be achievable, with £20k in relation to the mechanical sweep 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 was preferable and officers were negotiating with the waste contractor. 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 'Locality') 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 which inform decision the direction of travel. A Council wide resource had also been approved at Strategy and Resources Committees on 29 September for a Finance Business Analyst post to support the identifying of financial information and data to enable full benchmarking. Officers would look at requesting detailed invoices from contractors.
- 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

Question submitted under Standing Order 30 by Councillor O'Driscoll

There were several instances of large events causing inconsiderate parking across the District over the summer. Attendees of a music festival in Newchapel parked dangerously in the middle of the carriageway on the A22 between Newchapel and Blindley Heath caused the road to be closed by police for several hours.

Another incident saw attendees of a car festival on Kenley Aerodrome parked inconsiderately on neighbouring roads in Caterham on the Hill, causing traffic around Buxton Lane and Ninehams Road. My residents are concerned that if measures to counter this aren't taken, we could see a repeat of these incidents elsewhere in Tandridge.

What steps can this Council take to work with our parking enforcement contractor to reduce these instances of inconsiderate parking across our District and will this Council consider funding a number of wardens to start attending hotspot areas for illegal parking in off peak hours?

Response from the Executive Head of Communities

Those events have this year have caused disruption.

Sevenoaks District Council carry out parking enforcement on behalf of Tandridge District Council. The contract covers 5 days per week split over Monday to Saturdays with Sundays worked as required for specific events such as the Caterham Carnival. One month's Notice needs to be given for these ad hoc events.

A parking plan included in an Event Management Plan and Risk Assessment is considered through the multi-agency Safety Advisory Group (SAG) meetings. All enforcement agencies can view, make comment and raise any specific concerns. Traffic Management falls under the remit of Surrey County Council (SCC) Highways who are also involved in the SAG and are able to raise any concerns.

Unfortunately, this is only an advisory group so if there any specific issues at an event then the relevant enforcing agency (Police or Highways) would need to take action. In the case down in Blindley Heath the Police did step in.

The Safety Advisory Group will review the events and consider whether future events could have additional action requested, such as use of traffic cones for which permission would be required from SCC Highways Authority. SCC would take into consideration any concerns from Surrey Police before making a decision.

If the cars are parked on unrestricted roads they can't be enforced, the event organiser may choose to cone the roads surrounding the venue, to deter parking but this can't be enforced.

The car festival was an event which fell under the London Borough of Croydon for the event management. We will request these events are better communicated in the future.

Significant traffic disruption as was seen at Blindley Heath is not common and we do not consider that the current enforcement contract needs to change so we would not want to fund additional wardens. For future events where sufficient Notice is available, we will seek to recover any charges for additional services required.