

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee: Cabinet**

**Date: 18 December 2012**

**Subject: Finance and Technology Portfolio**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor Syd Stavrou**

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**Recommending:**

**That the report of the Finance & Technology Portfolio Holder be noted**

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## **Accountancy**

Unfortunately, the publication deadline for this agenda means this report is being written before the Chancellor's Autumn Statement on 5 December and the date of the meeting itself is before our grant figures are likely to be confirmed. However, if there is either something of particular significance in the Autumn Statement or our grant figures appear earlier than anticipated I will provide an oral update.

I am aware that many colleagues on Town and Parish Councils are anxious about the new regulations for the introduction of local support for Council Tax and the effect that this will have on their tax bases and the amount of Council Tax they charge. It was a surprise that the Department for Communities and Local Government chose to ignore the majority of consultation responses and impose this burden on Town and Parish Councils. However, I can provide some limited assurance about the extent of the impact. Since the announcement officers have been able to produce an initial assessment of the effects. The Council has been advised of an indicative figure for Council Tax Support and the amount that we have been told is sufficient to off-set the reductions in tax base for both this Council and our Town and Parish Councils. The final figure will only be confirmed with our other grant figures, but as long as there is not a significant reduction it will be possible to ensure that Town and Parish Councils are no worse off because of these changes.

Because of the late announcement of the settlement figures and the need for Cabinet to agree the sharing of the Support Grant with Town and Parish Councils I have asked officers to look at scheduling an additional Cabinet meeting as early as possible in January.

## **Benefits**

Later on the agenda we have the final version of the Council's scheme for Local Council Tax Support. This is very similar to the version adopted by Cabinet on 22 October but now contains all of the detailed references to the legislation and regulations that were not previously available. It is a very lengthy document but it is important that the scheme in its entirety is presented to and adopted by Council.

## **Revenues**

The agenda also contains a report on the Technical Reforms of Council Tax. The recommendations are more complex than usual but this is because the course of action to be pursued is still subject to the conclusion of satisfactory negotiations with Essex County Council and the other major preceptors. In working through all the changes to the systems of local government finance there has been good co-operation across the county and I am confident that I will be able to update Council on a positive outcome to the negotiations.

## **Performance Management**

### **(a) Key Objectives 2012/13 and 2013/14**

Mid-year progress against the Council's Key Objectives for 2012/13, was reported to the recent meetings of Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The objectives reflect national and local priorities, specific service challenges, and provide a statement of the authority's plans for the year.

Proposals for Key Objectives for 2013/14 are currently being developed by service directors and portfolio holders, and these will initially be considered at a joint meeting of Cabinet members and Management Board on 12 December 2012. The Key Objectives will be formally considered by the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, early in 2013.

### **(b) Key Performance Indicators 2012/13**

A range of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for 2012/13 was adopted in March 2012, and a target was set for at least 70% of the indicators to achieve target performance by the end of the year. The six-month position with regard to the achievement of target performance for those KPIs monitored on a quarterly basis, was as follows:

- (a) 16 (59.26%) indicators achieved the second quarter performance target; and
- (b) 11 (40.74%) indicators did not achieve the second quarter performance target.

Detailed performance reports for each KPI were considered by the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 20 November 2012. Cumulative KPI performance reports for the third quarter of the year will be considered by the Scrutiny Panel in March 2013, alongside proposals for KPIs for 2013/14, which will be developed alongside the Key Objectives for 2013/14.

### **(c) Value for Money**

The Council is committed to delivering value for money services. In order to show that its costs compare well with others, reflect priorities and policy decisions, and are commensurate with service delivery, performance and outcomes, the Audit Commission's 'Value for Money Profile' has been used to see how the Council compares with other local authorities facing similar challenges.

The Council's external auditors must be satisfied that the authority has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of

resources, and issue a value for money 'conclusion' as part of their audit work each year.

An analysis of the Value for Money Profile has been produced as a point of reference for a range of comparative value for money data, and to allow the identification of value for money indicators or issues that should be subject to further in-depth review. Members have been requested to suggest proposals for further action, analysis, investigation or report in respect of particular areas of concern in relation to the value for money data presented in the analysis.

Progress against the action plan for the Council's current Value for Money Strategy has recently been reviewed by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee and Scrutiny Panel.

## **Technology**

### **(a) Wireless Broadband**

A free business seminar organised by One Epping Forest will be taking place on Tuesday 18 December at 18:00 at Epping Forest College, Loughton. Businesses will be able to find out about all the options available to them, including the recently launched FibreWiFi Superfast Wireless Broadband offered by Buzcom. The Council has been able to facilitate this service as a beneficial side effect of the disaster recovery project.

### **(b) Telephone switch replacement project**

The first stage of the project involved market research and specifying the Council's requirements. These requirements are then formalised in an Invitation to Quote (ITQ). The ITQ is nearing completion and it is anticipated that it will be published later this month. The ITQ will be issued using the Government Procurement Service (GPS) framework, which delivers savings to the UK public sector by aggregating spending power and avoiding the need for separate procurement exercises compliant with the European regulations.