

## **Cabinet**

**Tuesday, 3rd November, 2015 at 5.30 pm in the Committee Suite, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn**

### **9. MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET FROM OTHER BODIES (Pages 2 - 10)**

To receive any comments and recommendations from other Council bodies which meet after the dispatch of this agenda. Copies of any additional comments made will be circulated as soon as they are available.

- Resources and Performance Panel – 27 October 2015
- Joint Regeneration & Development and Environment and Community Panels – 28 October 2015

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET ON 3 NOVEMBER 2015 FROM AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 OCTOBER 2015**

AR61 **Cabinet Report: Mid Year Treasury Report**

The Assistant Director reminded Members that the Committee received the following reports:

- Treasury Strategy – March of each year.
- Closedown of Account – July of each year (which related to the previous 12 months).
- Mid Year Treasury Report (which related to the current financial year).

In presenting the report, the Assistant Director explained that the Council had formally adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (2011) and remained fully compliant with its requirements.

The Committee was informed that one of the primary requirements of the Code was:

Receipt by Council of an annual strategy report (including the annual investment strategy report) for the year ahead, a mid year review report and an annual review report of the previous year.

The Assistant Director explained that the Mid-Year Review Report had been prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice, and covered the following:

- A review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy 2015/2016.
- The Council's Capital Expenditure (Prudential Indicators).
- A review of the Council's investment portfolio for 2015/2016.
- A review of the Council's borrowing portfolio and debt rescheduling for 2015/2016.
- An economic update for the first six months of 2015/2016 – Appendix 2.

Members' attention was drawn to the Summary of Key Points as set out below:

- The Treasury Management Strategy Statement was still fit for purpose.
- The Council was in compliance with its Prudential Indicators.
- Interest rates were predicted to rise by 0.25% in March 2016.
- The Council held £30.80m of investments as at 30 September 2015.
- The average rate of return on investments was 1.03% as at September 2015.
- The Council held £13.3m of external debt as at 30 September 2015.
- The Council was paying an average rates of 3.38% on its external debt.
- During the first six months of the year, no debt rescheduling was undertaken.

- Council officers were continuing to investigate alternative options for investment where opportunities became available as an alternative to traditional investments. To date none of those investments had been taken up.

In response to questions from Councillor Morrison on the average rate of return of investments being low, the Assistant Director explained that overall there would be no impact on the Council's current Financial Plan. The Assistant Director advised that Capita, the Council's Treasury Advisers would provide an indication on interest rates which would be used as guideline when setting estimates.. This report had concluded that the Council had received a slightly better return on its investments than anticipated.

The Chairman, Councillor Humphrey referred to the Council's investment portfolio on page 34 and commented that the Council appeared to perform better than the benchmark. The Assistant Director explained that the Council held £30.80m of investments as at 30 September 2015 and the investment portfolio yield for the first six months of the year was 1.03% against a benchmark 0.35%.

Councillor Devereux asked when the Borough Council had taken out the Barclays loans. The Assistant Director explained that the loans had been taken out in 2007 for a period of 70 years with a first break clause in 2017.

In response to questions from Councillor Collop on alternative investment options e.g. non-traditional investments, the Assistant Director explained that one alternative option was property investment funds as well as other options whereby the Council would develop itself, for example, by building a hotel. It was noted that some other Councils did pursue non-traditional investments.

The Chairman, Councillor Humphrey referred to page 34, the table setting out the Council's investments and that there were no end dates for some investments. The Assistant Director undertook to email the information to the Committee.

**RESOLVED:** The Panel support the recommendation to Cabinet as follows:

Cabinet is asked to note the report and the treasury activity.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET ON 3 NOVEMBER 2015 FROM RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE PANEL HELD ON 27 OCTOBER 2015

### RP70 **Cabinet Report: Customer Services and Channel Shift**

The Customer Information Manager reminded the Panel that a presentation had been given at the previous meeting on the Channel Shift Programme.

In presenting the report, the Customer Information Manager explained that the Council had embarked on a channel shift programme which aimed to reduce the cost of delivery of council services by shifting the channel used by customers to contact the Council to the most efficient and appropriate for that service.

The Panel's attention was drawn to the following proposals set out in the report:

- Agree the withdrawal of a drop in service for enquiries at King's Court and to offer pre-booked appointments to customers who were unable to resolve their enquiry by telephone or online.
- Agree to reduce the opening days at the Downham Market Office to 2 days per week (Monday and Friday).
- Agree to reduce the opening days at the Hunstanton Office to 2 days per week (Tuesday and Thursday).

The Customer Information Centre Manager explained that more digital services would be launched over the new few months.

The development and implementation of digital services, together with the need to make budget savings had resulted in a review of our existing model of service delivery with a view to managing demand for services.

Members were informed that the Customer Information Centre offices at King's Court, Downham Market and Hunstanton operated a walk in enquiry desk facility, 7 members of staff were needed on the ground floor of King's Court and one at each area office to respond to customer enquiries. Staff were required to be trained in every service offered so that they could respond to any enquiry which was presented. It was highlighted that this was challenging for the Customer Information Centre to manage rotas, annual leave and sickness and often resulted in staff being moved between the contact Centre and the Enquiry Counters during the day.

The Panel was informed that although the number of visitors to the Council's main reception had increased, this was due to the sale of food waste bags, introduced in 2013. Overall, general enquiries had reduced, although personal visits in relation to Planning and Licensing had increased.

The Customer Information Manager explained that over the next few months, more improvements would be made to the Council's services, as set out below:

- A new, fully responsive design council website would be launched.
- Online benefit change in circumstance form.
- Online Revenue forms (change of address, set up direct debit, apply for a single occupier discount, apply for an exemption and report a change in circumstances).
- Launch of an online customer account enabling customers to view, submit and track service requests as well as viewing personalised account information.
- Applications to join the Housing Register would be available online.
- The launch of an internal programme of service transformation encouraging all staff and managers to review their processes to assess what could be made available online to customers, where this was the most appropriate channel.

Members were informed that in order to continue to meet the Council's customer needs, but to realise savings and greater efficiencies from its digital services, it was proposed to cease the drop in service for enquiries at King's Court and to offer customers who were unable to resolve their enquiry by telephone or online an appointment with a trained advisor who would be able to assist them with their enquiry at a pre-arranged time.

It was noted that introducing pre-booked appointments for customers would be a major change for the Borough Council, but it was standard practice in most sectors. The Department of Work and Pensions, GP's, opticians, banks, hairdressers and most other services all operate appointment to manage the customer demand on services and to avoid customer waiting long periods of time to be seen.

The Customer Information Centre Manager explained that an appointment system was intended to improve the service to customers. It was highlighted that currently, a customer would wait in excess of 1.5 hours to see an advisor at busy times. This was because it was impossible to predict the number and nature of enquiries the Borough Council received. Some enquiries were straightforward and would take just a few minutes. Others were complex, often with elderly or vulnerable people which required time to resolve. By providing the customers with an appointment at a time convenient to them, they could be assured that they would be seen at their allotted appointment time and would not have to waste time waiting to be seen.

The Customer Information Centre Manager informed Members that the main reception at King's Court would continue to have two members of staff at all times, together with at least One Online Support Officer. Housing Options would have a Duty Officer available to deal with

customer enquiries. The Planning Department would have a Duty Planner available to respond to customer enquiries every weekday until 1 pm.

The Panel was advised that an Equalities Impact Assessment had been produced and the Corporate Equalities Group had not identified any major issues. A communications plan would be drafted to advise customers of the proposed changes.

In conclusion, the Customer Information Centre Manager explained that the It was proposed to start the new arrangements from 1 April 2016, allowing time for a comprehensive communications plan to be put in place to advise customers, partners and stakeholders of the changes. The Customer Information Manager advised that as the channel shift and other transformation projects progressed, it was anticipated that budget savings would be made.

In response to questions from Councillor Devereux regarding consultation arrangements, the Customer Information Centre Manager explained that if customers were asked about the proposed changes the majority would answer that they preferred to see the service remain as it was currently. Members were provided with an example of when the Council decided to close the three cash offices in 2011 which provided a saving of £100,000. The Communications Plan had set out the reasons for the closure and no major problems had been experienced. With the continuing pressure on the Council's budgets, the Council had to look at ways of delivering its services more cost effectively. The Chairman, Councillor Humphrey advised that the proposed changes would be implemented in April 2016.

In response to questions from Councillor Wareham on booking appointments, the Customer Information Centre Manager explained that customers could book appointments by telephone, online or face to face. However, if a customer visited the Council offices requiring immediate urgent assistance then an officer would be available to deal with the situation. With the pre-booked appointments service the customer would be seen at the booked time and not have to wait up to 1.5 hours in the Customer Information Centre waiting to see an adviser.

Councillor Middleton asked if the Council had considered inter-active work stations to enable customers to access the Council's services. In response, the Customer Information Manager advised that all Customer Information Centres had self service stations – 5 in King's Court, and 1 in both Hunstanton and Downham Market offices. In Downham Market, there was an internet connection in the library. The Panel was advised that the Council was looking at a kiosk based approach.

In response to questions from Councillor Collop, the Customer Information Manager explained that there would be a duty officers located at King's Court to deal with licencing, planning and homelessness enquiries. However, within the satellite offices there would be no duty officers, but visiting officers were available to carry out home visits for those customers not able to visit the offices or access the Council's services online. When

the Hunstanton and Downham Market offices were closed the customer could telephone the Borough Council when trained advisers would be able to assist and direct the customer to the service required. Emergencies could also be dealt with via the Council's out of hours service.

The Customer Information Manager explained that there would be staff available to assist customers to self serve services as well as helping, for example, to complete benefit forms.

Councillor Devereux expressed concern on the potential impact on elected members and highlighted the importance of Members being equipped with a communications pack to provide an understanding of which communication channels to utilise. The Chairman, Councillor Humphrey advised that all Members would receive the necessary information and training.

The Chairman, Councillor Humphrey asked if the Council had to sell caddy liners now that they were readily available in supermarkets. In response, the Customer Information advised that the Council had chosen to sell caddy liners when the food waste collection was introduced. The Customer Information Centre provided an overview of the recent work recently undertaken relating to the recycling credits.

In response to further questions from Councillor Collop regarding caddy liners and the Council increasing the price, the Customer Information Manager advised that this was subject to a further report.

Councillor Collop wished it to be recorded that he did not support the recommendations set out below.

**RESOLVED:** The Panel supported the recommendations as set out in the Cabinet report, together with the following additional recommendation:

Members wished to receive assurance that adequate consultation and communications arrangements would be put in place prior to implementation in April 2016.

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 3 NOVEMBER 2015 FROM THE JOINT MEETING OF THE REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY PANEL MEETING HELD ON 28 OCTOBER 2015**

RD&EC76      **CABINET REPORT - REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING FEES**

The Barrister presented the Cabinet report explaining that the Deregulation Act 2015 had introduced changes to hackney carriage and private hire legislation. Changes included the duration of hackney carriage and private hire driver's licences to three years, the duration of private hire operator's licences to five years and the ability for private hire operators to sub contract bookings to a private hire operator licensed by another local authority.

The Barrister explained that the introduction of the new licence durations required a fee to be set. The last review of fees was in 2011 so the Licensing Department had reviewed all hackney carriage and private hire fees at the same time. The proposed fees and how they had been calculated was set out in the report.

The Barrister referred to the appendices contained within the report which included objections from members of the trade in relation to the increase in fees.

The Chairman thanked the Barrister for her report and invited questions and comments from both Panels, as summarised below.

Councillor Smith commented that he had read through all of the correspondence and felt that a lot of the objections could have been avoided if information had been made available at the outset on how the figures had been calculated.

Councillor Smith referred to the legislation which allowed for operators to sub contract out to operators licensed by another local authority. He asked if the operators would have to adhere to the Borough Council's standards and if there was a difference in the standards set between different local authorities. The Barrister explained that there would be variations in the requirements of different local authorities, but they should all follow the same standard requirements such as the fit and proper test and take account of the guidance available and case law.

The Chairman commented that one of the differences could be the age and mileage of vehicles which were allowed to be licensed.

The Barrister explained that any complaints received would be considered and action could be taken against the driver if required.

The Chairman reminded those present that this was a new piece of legislation and Members would have to monitor its impact. If significant problems arose, Members could lobby the relevant Minister and Local MP's.

The Chairman reminded those present that the recommendations set out within the report were to approve the new fee structures. The ability for private hire operators

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 3 NOVEMBER 2015 FROM THE JOINT MEETING OF THE REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY PANEL MEETING HELD ON 28 OCTOBER 2015**

to sub contract bookings to a private hire operator licensed by another local authority was set out in legislation so had been included within the report for information.

Councillor Bubb asked why the fees had increased as a longer duration licence should take no more time to administer. The Barrister referred to the report which set out the reasons why the fees had increased.

Councillor Smith requested that the Panel be kept updated on the impact of the new fees be provided to the Panel in 12 months' time.

Councillor Kunes suggested that the metre rates could be increased which would cover the increase in fees. The Portfolio Holder for Community, Councillor Lawrence explained that there needed to be a balance and not all members of the trade may want to see the metre rate increased as they could lose business.

Councillor Mrs Squire asked if there were statistics available on the amount of new licenses granted in the last 12 months and the Barrister agreed to circulate the information.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That an update on the ability for private hire operators to sub contract to another local authority operator be provided to the Panel in 12 months time.
- (ii) That the Regeneration and Development & Environment and Community Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet as follows:

1. The Council approves the new fee structure for drivers of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles;
2. The Council approves the new fee structure for private hire operators.
3. The Council approves the new fee structure for vehicles and other sundry matters attached in the fee structure.

**RD&EC77      CABINET REPORT - GAMBLING ACT POLICIES**

The Barrister presented the Cabinet report and explained that the Gambling Act 2005 required all local authorities to publish a Statement of Principles each three year period. The Borough Council's current policy was approved by Full Council on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

The report set out the organisations and individuals who had been consulted on the revised Statement of Principles and the Barrister explained that the draft Statement had been available on the website and comments had been invited.

The changes to the Policy were set out in the report and related to Local Area Profiling and Small Society Lotteries.

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 3 NOVEMBER 2015 FROM THE JOINT MEETING OF THE REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY PANEL MEETING HELD ON 28 OCTOBER 2015**

The Barrister explained that the consultation had ended on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2015 and no responses had been appended to the report.

The Chairman thanked the Barrister for her report and invited questions and comments from the Panels, as summarised below.

Councillor Smith referred to Local Area Profiling and asked if the Council carried out checks to ensure that they were mitigating risks. The Chairman explained that checks would be carried out.

**RESOLVED:** That the Regeneration and Development & Environment and Community Panel supported the recommendation to Cabinet as set out below:

That the Council be invited to adopt the Statement of Principles in accordance with the requirements of the Gambling Act 2005.

RD&EC78      **CABINET REPORT - LICENSING ACT POLICIES**

The Barrister presented the Cabinet report and explained that Section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003 required licensing authorities to prepare and publish a statement of licensing policy every five years. A review of the statement had been carried out, taking into account new revised guidance issued by the Secretary of State for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and guidance issued by Local Government Regulation.

Proposed changes to the policy were set out in the report. The Panel was informed that before determining the policy the Act stated that the Council must consult with certain individuals and organisations. The details of the review were also published on the Borough Council's website.

The Chairman thanked the Barrister for her report and invited questions and comments from the Panels. There were no questions from the Panel.

**RESOLVED:** That the Regeneration and Development & Environment and Community Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet as set out below:

That the Council be invited to adopt the revised Statement of Licensing Policy in accordance with the requirements of the Licensing Act 2003.