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# Cabinet Issues

## 1. 2011/12 Budget

The Cabinet considered a report by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation Programme concerning the process for the development of the corporate business plan, and the provisional revenue and capital budgets for 2011/12 and beyond, and seeking agreement to the proposed 2011/12 budget and to the draft 2012/13 budget.

Cabinet's deliberations are reflected in the recommendations to Council in the separate agenda item on the Budget and Corporate Business Plan.

## 2. Working Better Together

Cabinet agreed that the County Council should sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Braintree District Council and Brentwood Borough Council: "Working Better Together".

All three authorities have expressed an interest in examining how they can work more closely together to achieve mutually beneficial savings and improve outcomes and services for residents. The MOU will ensure that there is a clearly understood framework to collaborate effectively and a Joint Leader's Board has been established to explore opportunities in four areas:

- Regulatory services
- Procurement
- Asset Management
- Back office services – Finance, Human Resources and Information Technology.

It is intended that formal agreement in principle from each Council to proceed with the Memorandum of Understanding will have been reached by April 2011.

## 3. Library Service – Revised Service Arrangements

Cabinet has given its approval to a review of Library Service arrangements with the intention of making savings of £4 million over the two financial years 2011/12 and 2012/13. To achieve savings of £1.957 million in 2011/12 Cabinet has agreed to reviews of staffing levels, opening hours and mobile library routes and fleets, and a reduction in the stock resource fund, focusing on delivering value for money whilst ensuring that no libraries are closed down.

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An internal consultation with staff began in January 2011 and will be ongoing, with an external consultation on local preferences for opening hours running from 14 February until 27 March 2011.

**4. Review of the Operation of the Recycling Centre for Household Waste Service**

Cabinet approved the implementation of changes to the scope and operation of the Recycling Centre for Household Waste (RHCW) Service in response to changes in public usage and need. Cabinet noted the work that had been undertaken to date in relation to the scope and study of options for the future delivery and proposed consolidation of the service.

Use of the RHCW sites by Essex residents has declined over several years as a result of increased use of kerbside collection services. The proposed operational changes will tackle service inefficiency by reducing overall capacity and opening hours, with any adverse impact minimised by ensuring other sites within the local area are available for use. Total estimated savings as a result of the review are between £700,000 and £1.38 million.

**5. Commissioning Strategy – Home to School Transport – Travel Subsidy to Faith Schools**

The Home to School Transport Policy provides the framework for the Council's approach to home to school transport. A significant review has been undertaken to ensure that the current policy is equitable, supports the most vulnerable and provides the best value for money.

Decisions taken by Cabinet in December will result in total savings of £5.8 million by the financial year 2016/17. Cabinet has now agreed, subject to undertaking a formal consultation period, to the removal of the subsidy for travel to faith schools, whilst retaining it for low income families. This will impact on all new entrants to both the primary and secondary phase with effect from September 2012. It will not affect the eligibility of pupils attending faith schools who have a statutory entitlement to free transport, by way of it being their nearest school and being over the statutory walking distance or pupils' entitlement under Special Educational Needs policies.

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## **6. Fee Rates in the Registration Service**

Cabinet has approved a new pricing regime for the Registration Service with effect from 1 April 2011. The proposed fee increases will bring the service in line with the benchmark fees of neighbouring and other authorities whilst also ensuring that charges remain competitive and support the Registration Service moving towards financial self-sufficiency.

## **7. Civil Parking Partnership Arrangement**

Cabinet has approved a new partnership operating model for civil parking which will execute the Council's statutory duty for on-street parking and waiting restriction enforcement and remove over the next two years the current £900,000 annual deficit support payment that the Council makes to district and borough councils.

The model provides for the delegation via a strategic commissioning agreement to two parking partnerships comprising district and borough councils, one in the North of the County and one in the South, of:

- the Council's statutory responsibility for the enforcement of on-street waiting / parking restrictions;
- the making of relevant traffic regulation orders; and
- procurement of installation and maintenance of signs and lines relating to on street enforcement.

Peter Martin  
Leader of the Council