

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Tuesday 29 October 2019

Present

Councillor Mike Mackrory (Chairman)	Councillor Valerie Metcalfe
Councillor Malcolm Buckley	Councillor Ron Pratt
Councillor Penny Channer (substitute)	Councillor Andrew Sheldon
Councillor Mike Garnett	Councillor Anne Turrell
Councillor Ian Grundy (substitute)	Councillor Julie Young
Councillor Stephen Hillier (substitute)	

Apologies

Councillor James Abbott	Councillor Malcom Maddocks
Councillor Graham Butland	Councillor John Moran
Councillor Michael Hardware	Councillor Mike Steptoe

Richard Buttress, Democratic Services Manager was supporting the meeting.

1. Membership, apologies and declarations

Apologies were received from:

- Councillor James Abbott
- Councillor Graham Butland
- Councillor Michael Hardware
- Councillor Malcolm Maddocks (substituted by Stephen Hillier)
- Councillor John Moran (substituted by Councillor Ian Grundy)
- Councillor Mike Steptoe (substituted by Councillor Penny Channer)

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 24 September 2019 were approved by the committee as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Questions from the public

No questions from members of the public were received.

4. 2019/20 Financial Overview as at the half year stage

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Gagan Mohindra, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Housing and Kevin Mitchell, Senior Finance Business Partner, to the meeting.

Councillor Mohindra introduced the item and brought the committee's attention to the following:

- The budget is currently on track for 2019/20.

The committee asked several questions and received the following responses:

- Currently a lot of ECC's investments are focused outside of Essex. The new Commercial Investment in Essex Places reserves creates opportunities to invest within Essex, with the aim of producing a return on investment and to help develop high streets across the County.
- School transport remains a national issue and a burden on spend. Officers within the education department are looking for ways to remedy the issue.
- Better planning is needed to ensure that capital investments are working and that Essex County Council (ECC) are doing better commercially.
- ECC are custodians of tax payers' money and the best way to spend is always considered.
- There was not a delay in the blue badge scheme, rather the budget has not yet aligned.
- The three sites bought by ECC are all on target, if not exceeding their targets in terms of yield and this is related to the Commercial Property Investment fund, which has been placed on hold.
 - There has been a reduction in printing activity and has therefore not delivered the expected savings.
 - As a result of a clause in the sale agreement, Cllr Mohindra was unable to disclose the figure for which EES for schools was sold for.
 - The £881,000 transferred from Technology Services to the Performance, Business Planning and Partnerships RSSS portfolio was due to the level of vacancies carried forward.

Actions:

1. Has Essex County Council paid off and cleared its commitment regarding Tendring PFI?
2. What is the reason for the increase in placement costs relating to the number of children in residential homes and external fostering placements?
3. Confirmation of who covers the costs of County Council elections?
4. What proportion of the Tech Services budget does the £881,000 reduction represent and what is the driver?
5. What is the A127 Air Quality capital scheme funding?

5. Work Programme

The current work programme was noted by the committee.

6. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 26 November 2019 at 2:00pm.

7. Urgent business

No urgent business was received.

8. Budget Scrutiny

The committee received report CPSC/11/19.

Exclusion of the Press and Public

On the proposal of the Chairman, the committee resolved that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting since it is likely that if members of the public were present during the remaining items of business, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information falling within paragraph 3 schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended.

9. Urgent exempt business

No urgent exempt business was received.

The meeting closed at 11:50am.

Chairman