

Agenda item 11

# Cabinet Issues

## 1. Lower Thames Crossing – Submission of the County Council’s Response to Department of Transport Consultation

The Government has opened a consultation on three potential route options for additional Thames Crossings. A map showing the options is attached below. The Cabinet has agreed to support Option C, connecting the M2 with the A13 and the M25 between junctions 29 and 30.

Cabinet also agreed in supporting option C, the Council should request in its formal response that, in addition to the provision of a new crossing, the Department for Transport must also evaluate the impact that this nationally important link has on the local trunk and county strategic road network. Improvements to the junctions of the A13 and A12 with the M25, the A127 with the A130 and the A130 with the A12 all need to be considered as part of a wider package of measures to ensure that journeys in the vicinity of the Crossing are also reliable on the busy trunk and county strategic network.

## 2. Essex BDUK Broadband Project

Cabinet has agreed to award the Essex BDUK Project contract to the preferred bidder in line with the BDUK framework contract, subject to concluding due diligence and successfully passing the Alcatel period without any objections.

In 2010 the Government announced aspirations for the UK having access to the fastest broadband in Europe by 2015. A sum of £530m was set aside and allocated to local authorities to plan, procure and deliver broadband infrastructure projects. In late 2011 details of the allocations were released and Essex, including Thurrock and Southend, was allocated £6.46m. This funding had to be matched by council funding.

In November 2011 Cabinet endorsed the Next Generation Access strategy and supported the Essex Local Broadband Plan which set out the rationale for investing in the infrastructure using the funding provided through BDUK. Capital provision was made and governance established in early 2012.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) approved a framework agreement in June 2012, to provide an umbrella arrangement for local authorities to procure the project through a Call-Off Contract. The County Council agreed to use the framework which has two suppliers with only one supplier willing to respond to the tender.

DCMS secured state aid approval on 20 November 2012 which clears the way for the roll-out of broadband infrastructure across the UK. This grant is for the UK’s rural

broadband programme and acts as an umbrella cover for all BDUK Projects that come under this programme.

The DCMS Framework provides the necessary tools to ensure value for money; contract terms and conditions; financial modelling and profiling; risk management and more to support the County Council's due diligence process.

### **3. Approval of Lifelong Learning Strategy Implementation Plan 2013/14**

Cabinet has approved the Lifelong Learning Strategy Implementation Plan for 2013/14 and the approach to the annual review and refresh and 'in year' monitoring.

In order to succeed Essex cannot simply be content with keeping pace with other local authorities. It needs to work hard, with partners, to extend aspirations and create a restlessness to succeed throughout Essex. In recognising this, the Lifelong Learning Strategy was launched on 1 April 2013.

The Lifelong Learning Strategy Implementation Plan is a key driver of the strategy's vision and priorities, outlining the actions required to deliver the strategy and to be both monitored in year and reviewed and refreshed annually.

### **4. 2012/13 Essex County Council Annual Report and Corporate Plan Progress Report 2012/13 Year End**

Cabinet received the 2012/13 Year End Corporate Plan Progress Report providing detail of the available data for each of the indicators within the 2012-2017 Corporate Plan, focusing on 2012/13 performance, with the inclusion of latest 2013/14 data where this is available.

### **5. Renewal of the S75 Mental Health Partnership Agreements**

Cabinet has agreed to renew the Mental Health S75 National Health Services Act 2006 Partnership Agreements between the Council and North Essex Mental Health Partnership University Foundation Trust (NEPFT) and South Essex Mental Health Partnership University Foundation Trust (SEPT). The agreements will provide integrated mental health service provision under a single management arrangement.

The agreements with both NEPFT and SEPT will be for five years, containing break clauses after two years and eighteen months respectively and then annually to allow for flexibility to mitigate against any implications from the transfer of Health contract responsibility from Primary Care Trusts to Clinical Commissioning Groups. Staff currently seconded to NEPFT will be transferred to the Trust under a TUPE compliant process. Staff currently seconded to SEPT will continue to be seconded to the Trust because work underpinning the implementation of the South Essex Mental Health Strategy is likely to change the way that mental health services are commissioned in future and, potentially, the delivery vehicle for social care provision.

## **6. Social Care Case Management**

Cabinet has approved the investment of £647,000 for a project to produce a final business case in relation to the procurement of a Social Care Case Management System. A mini-tender process will be initiated using a pre-procured Government Procurement Service framework and the procurement will be structured to enable purchase of one or more discrete components of a system that both aligns with the needs of the Transformation Programme Mark II and its associated programmes and facilitates a staged transition in Adults and Family Operations.

Currently there are about 35 separate systems supporting Adults Operations and Family Operations, many of which are in need of replacement. Procurement of a modular Social Care Case Management solution will offer the technical functionality to support the social care services of Adults and Family Operations and enable both to meet the requirements of Transformation Mark II by providing adequate systems support. It will cleanse and migrate social care data from the existing systems and allow these systems to be decommissioned, saving on costly support and maintenance. The procurement will result in a number of benefits to Essex residents in terms of greater choice of care and ability to make more informed decisions as well as greater independence. It will also benefit the Council in a number of ways, including by minimising the risk and potential cost of system failure, improving efficiencies, reducing maintenance costs and improving performance monitoring.

Cabinet has also agreed to extend the licence for the current Family Operations Case Management Tool until May 2015 whilst procurement of the new system is completed and implemented.

## **7. Capita Contract Extension**

Cabinet has approved the extension of the existing recruitment service contract with Capita until 24 September 2015 (its maximum duration).

The contract for the managed service for recruitment services between the Council and Capita was implemented in September 2008. The maximum duration of the contract is seven years, made up of an initial three-year period with opportunity for up to four, one-year periods. The contract has already been extended for two of those periods, expiring at the end of December 2013.

Having considered a number of options, extension of the contract for a further two years is considered to offer the maximum benefit to the Council. It provides an opportunity to continue stable service provision for recruitment and safeguarding checks through challenging times and will also ensure that the eventual approach to market will take place after completion of the Corporate Systems tender process, the outcome of which will provide clarity in relation to the business needs of the new organisational model.

## **8. 2013-14 Financial Review as at the First Quarter Stage**

Cabinet has received an updated assessment of the financial position of the Council in 2013/14, based upon the position at the first quarter stage. A number of actions to deal with variances arising were approved, resulting overall in a forecast under spend at year end.

## **9. Establishment of a Company to Facilitate the Transformation Programme**

The Cabinet has approved the establishment of an operating company which is able to receive work directly from the Council. This is an initial step towards creating a group company structure owned by the Council.

The Council and the European Union recognise that sometimes there is a benefit for a public authority to establish trading companies to discharge part of its functions. Usually the award of the contracts has to be tendered, but in certain circumstances, where the company is controlled by the Council, a direct award of contracts may be possible.

Establishment of an operating company represents phase 1 of a process to create a group company structure, the aim of which is to enable the Council to make direct award to the parent company or an appropriate subsidiary once a business case has been established evidencing that a transfer of services to the company will produce best value. Phase 2 of the process will be the creation of a broader company structure, providing that a clear business case exists to support this.

Any decision to transfer work or let contracts to any company within the group structure will be the subject of further decisions by the Leader of the Council or the Cabinet, supported by individual business cases.

## **10. Proposal for the Use of Sustainability Funding S256 2013/14**

The Cabinet has approved the use of £5.647m remaining sustainability funding to fund sustainability schemes and integration activity, as recommended by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Section 256 Sustainability funding transfers occur each year from the NHS to local authorities to contribute to the costs of Adult Social Care, subject to conditions set within Directions from the Department of Health. Funding must be used to support adult social care services in each local authority, which also have a health benefit.

The amount of funding allocated to the Council for 2013/14 was some £5.647m higher than expected. Proposals for use of these additional funds for sustainability schemes and integration have been developed based on Integrated Plans already developed between the Council, NHS England and the Clinical Commissioning Groups. They also take account of both the existing evidence base and the work carried out in October 2012 as part of the Whole Essex Community Budgets submission.

The schemes proposed include work towards the avoidance and prevention of falls, reablement and support work at Colchester Garrison and various mental health projects. They are intended to improve social care services and outcomes for service users. Benefits will be achieved by preventing admissions to hospital and to residential care, resulting in financial savings to both health and social care, and delivering improved outcomes for service users arising from prevention and early intervention activity.

The schemes were supported by the Health and Wellbeing Board at its July meeting.

## **11. The Children, Young People and Families Partnership Plan 2013 – 16**

The Cabinet has agreed to recommend to Council for approval the Children, Young People and Families Partnership Plan 2013 – 16. This is the subject of a separate report on the agenda for this meeting.

## **12. Foster Care Rolling Select List**

The Cabinet has agreed to the appointment of a Rolling Select List for the provision of independent foster carers as a replacement for the previous contractual arrangement which ended in April 2013. The list will run from 1 October 2013 until 30 September 2017, with the option of two one-year extensions, meaning the maximum contract period will extend until 30 September 2019.

A Rolling Select List is a framework-type agreement (although not a formal framework agreement) with multiple independent foster care agencies to provide foster carers when the Authority is unable to provide them from within its own internal pool. Suppliers on the list are tiered at three levels, based on quality and price criteria.

David Finch  
Leader of the Council