

The Leader's Report of Cabinet Issues

1. 2013/14 Year End Corporate Plan Progress Report and 2013/14 Annual Report

Cabinet received a progress report on the 2013/14 Corporate Plan, which provided detail of the available year-end data for each of the indicators in the former 2012/17 Corporate Plan. Further context was provided where appropriate, particularly for those indicators where aims had not been achieved.

The Cabinet also received the 2013/14 Annual Report, a public-facing summary of progress against the former 2012/17 Corporate Plan. The purpose of the Report is to demonstrate to Essex residents where the Council's money has been spent, and highlight what has been achieved over the last 12 months (in line with former success measures). This would be the fourth and final Annual Report produced against the Council's former Corporate Plan.

The Cabinet noted both of the reports, which were then due to be presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and, subsequently, published on the Council's website.

2. Broadband Extension Programme

Cabinet has approved the allocation of funds for an extension of the Superfast Essex broadband infrastructure programme. The current programme represents an investment of £24.6m. In conjunction with commercial deployments this will enable 87.4% of premises in Essex to connect to Superfast Broadband by summer 2016. Through anticipated financial contributions the proposed Broadband Extension programme seeks to invest an additional £20.5m to extend the overall superfast coverage to reach 95% of addresses in the County by 2017. The Council has applied for Department for Culture, Media and Sport grant and so needs to make this commitment to the scheme.

3. 2014 – 15 Financial Overview as at the First Quarter Stage

Cabinet noted the forecast financial position of the Council for 2014/15, based upon the position at the first quarter, which was for:

- an over spend for the year of £3.9m on the revenue budget, after agreeing specific proposals for technical adjustments, including the appropriation of funds to and from reserves and virements between portfolios, and assuming full expenditure of the Emergency Contingency of £8m - although the overspend would need to be recovered, this represented a 0.5% variation to the approved budget position;
- a projected underspend of £14.7m against the approved capital payments guideline, after agreeing slippage of £30.5m, budget additions of £9.4m, budget reductions of £3.0m and advanced works of £2.4m.

An in-depth review had been undertaken of all schemes and programmes of works and, where appropriate, these had been re-profiled to reflect internal and external risks that could result in delays or an extended duration of works. This had resulted in a more realistic delivery profile for 2014/15.

4. Proposed Update and Re-launch of the East Anglian Rail Prospectus

Once in a generation – A rail prospectus for East Anglia launched in July 2012 was prepared by local MPs and Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire County Councils with support from the rail industry. The prospectus provides a unified call for investment in agreed priorities that support economic growth across East Anglia. The partners are keen that a revised and updated document is prepared to underpin continued calls for rail investment and to articulate the high-level ask of the new Greater Anglia franchise that will come into effect from October 2016.

Cabinet discussed the prospectus and the wider issues facing Essex and the impact these have on the delivery of the Corporate Outcomes Framework and endorsed the process by which the revised prospectus will be endorsed prior to its formal launch. Cabinet reaffirmed the vital role played by rail transport in supporting the Essex economy and the delivery of the Corporate Outcomes Framework. Cabinet authorised the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation to endorse the revised prospectus on behalf of the Council before its formal launch.

5. Establishment of a new primary academy / free school in Takeley

Cabinet was informed about the growing demand for primary school places in Takeley, arising from population growth in the area. In the light of this, Cabinet agreed to establish a new 210-place (1 form entry) primary academy/free school on the former site of Takeley Primary School, in Roseacres, Takeley, with effect from September 2015. The Director for Commissioning: Education and Lifelong Learning was authorised to seek proposals to establish the new academy or free school, and Cabinet agreed to publicise this by informing the operators of schools in Essex, and by public notice.