

MINUTES of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 January 2011 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors Angie Gaywood (Chair), Cathy Kent, Wendy Curtis (Substituting for Sue Gray), Sue MacPherson, Amanda Prevost

Patricia Wilson, Steve Cray, Alistair MacPherson

Apologies: Councillors Sue Gray, Diana Hale and Charles Curtis

In attendance: M. Hone – Corporate Director – Corporate Finance and Governance

J. Olsson – Corporate Director – Children, Education and Families

C. Stewart – Head of Business (Policy, Performance and Resources)

M. Boulter- Democratic Services Officer

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a) Interests

Mr Cray declared a personal interest by virtue that he is a governor at St. Clere's School and a member of the St. Clere's and East Tilbury Collaboration Group.

Mr. MacPherson declared a personal interest by virtue that he has a child at Aveley Primary School and is a parent governor at Aveley Primary School.

Mrs Wilson declared a personal interest by virtue that she sits on the governing body of St. Thomas of Canterbury School.

Councillor Kent declared a personal interest by virtue that she has children who attend St. Thomas of Canterbury School, Grays Convent School and Grays Media Art College. She is also a governor at Grays Convent School.

Councillor Gaywood declared a personal interest by virtue that she has children at Arthur Bugler Junior and Infant School, St. Clere's School and Palmer's College; that she is a governor at Arthur Bugler School; she is the chair of the East Tilbury schools and St. Clere's school Collaboration Group and a Parent governor at St. Clere's School.

Councillor Curtis declared a personal interest by virtue that she has grandchildren at Bulphan School.

Councillor MacPherson declared a personal interest by virtue that she has children at Chafford Hundred Campus and Tudor Court; she hires facilities to William Edward's School.

b) Whipping

No interests were declared.

33. MINUTES

The minutes of 15 December 2010 were approved as a correct record subject to the addition of a personal interest for Councillor Kent in that she represented the Council on the Fire Authority.

34. GENERAL FUND DRAFT 2011/12 – BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Officers introduced the report and highlighted a number of items contained within it, namely:

- The Council had overspent by £4 million last year and it was therefore essential that the savings were made this year of nearly £10 million.
- Any overspend over £5000,000 would be taken to Full Council for explanation and debate.
- There would be no increase in council tax next year, although there was a central government grant of £1.4 million to help the Council achieve this.
- Further savings would need to be made in future years.

A discussion was had on the capital programme and it was explained that some of the items on the list for Children's Services were added to ensure the Council had a range of options in place to mitigate the risk of any central government clawback of capital funds.

There was some debate on Ormiston Park Academy and Officers stated that the Government had recently confirmed that they would commit a £14 million grant to develop the school. Officers explained that as the money would not be enough for a complete new build of the school, the work would progress to plan for a significant redevelopment of the existing facilities. It was clarified that all academies in the country had gone through a site assessment in order to determine the level of any government grant and because of the significant issues the school faces the grant for the school was in the upper range of the capital funding allocations for academies. Following further questions, officers outlined that the Council's provisional identification of a funding

requirement for capital spend on Ormiston Park was to demonstrate that the Council had identified the need for the school to be re-developed as and when central government funding was made available.

Officers clarified that the capital spend programme was prioritised on the basis of projects which would increase the capacity for future school places in line with levels of demand and to facilitate new forms of school leadership such as amalgamations.

The Committee explored the development of additional site options to further resolve the need for additional pupil places in Chafford Hundred and the options for future redevelopment of Beacon Hill Special School. Members queried whether these sorts of project falsely built up the hopes of the community. Officers explained that they needed to show their priorities, regardless of whether they would be realised or not in the short term, and it was the Council's role to try and find alternative ways of funding projects if the capital funding to the Council was insufficient to deliver on these kinds of priorities.

The Committee noted the importance of the emerging new Council Asset Management Plan in helping the Council prioritise its capital spends.

Prudential borrowing was briefly discussed and the Committee learnt that the Council had to prove it could afford to borrow sums of money in its budget calculations. However, it was usually the case that the Council could borrow the money from within its own resources. It was added that any rise in inflation would cause the Council some challenges but it was one the Council was prepared to meet.

RESOLVED: That:

- i) The Committee consider the assumptions, including those on prudential borrowing, and that the minutes recording the discussion be included in the budget report to Cabinet in February 2011.**
- ii) The Committee agree on the principal of reporting back to Full Council should the 2011/12 budget not be contained within an overspend of £0.5 million.**
- iii) The Committee's comments recorded within these minutes be made available to the Cabinet when they consider the draft budget.**
- iv) That a single joint meeting to consider such reports is put in place in future years.**

The meeting finished at 7.38pm.

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIRMAN

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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or alternatively e-mail mboulter@thurrock.gov.uk**

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