

**MINUTES of the meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee held on 8 November 2011 at 7.00pm.**

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**Present:** Councillors Robert Gledhill (Chair), Diana Hale, Diane Revell, Danny Nicklen and Yash Gupta

**Apologies:** Councillors Terry Hipsey and Wendy Curtis

**In attendance:** Cllr Tony Fish – Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care  
Cllr Lynn Worrall – Portfolio Holder for Community,  
Culture and Leisure  
Cllr Steve Liddiard  
R. Waterhouse – Corporate Director, Change and  
Improvement  
J. Hughes – Business and Strategic Development  
Manager  
N. Byatt – Head of business Services  
M. Jones – Management Accountant  
S. Clark – Head of Finance  
R. Harris – Head of Commissioning  
M. Boulter – Principal Democratic Services Officer

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**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

a) Interests

Councillor Hale declared a personal interest in relation to item 7 by virtue that she is vice-chair of CVS.

Councillor Gupta declared a personal interest in relation to item 7 by virtue that he is the trustee of at least five of the charities and organisations listed.

b) Whipping

No interests were declared.

**2. BUILDING CLEANING CONTRACT**

Officers introduced the report explaining that the award of tender was based on 60% cost and 40% quality. It was clarified that the cost of the service was based on the entire output of the work rather than based on the amount of space being cleaned. In other words the cost was not based on the size of the offices cleaned. It was the Council's aim to increase the number of buildings being cleaned under the same contract thus making some savings.

The Committee enquired whether the reduction in cleaning times would result in deterioration of cleaning quality but it was responded that the cleaning time had been rationalised so that areas that required less cleaning, such as individual managers' offices, would not be cleaned daily, therefore saving cleaning time across the building.

Members expressed a concern about complaints but officers explained that because the cleaning contract largely related to internal offices and not public areas, complaints were expected to be minimal.

Officers stated that the intention was to bring an award of tender to Cabinet which explained the specification sought for the service, as well as the analysis of the project team working on the contract. The Chair disagreed with this process and felt that two reports should return to Cabinet, one outlining the specification and the work of the project team for the Cabinet to comment on and then following that, a further report to award the tender.

Members raised the issue of undertaking the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and asked whether this was part of the specification process. It was stated that it was and that it was unlikely that the decision would be challenged on the grounds of the EIA.

Councillor Nicklen felt that the Council's aim to include more cleaning services within the contract could be quantified and explained in the report and felt this was information Cabinet needed to be aware of.

Councillor Gledhill, Nicklen and Revell agreed to the following recommendation, which Councillors Gupta and Hale voted against.

**RESOLVED that officers report to Cabinet once full specifications are established to ensure full value for money is obtained and more information is available for public scrutiny.**

### **3. ADVOCACY CONTRACTS**

Officers talked the Committee through the report and explained that the tender was separated into lots to allow specialist providers to bid for specialist areas of the service. There was a possibility that one service provider would bid successfully for the entire service or that the service would be delivered through a number of separate organisations.

It was clarified that the two current providers, Thurrock MIND and BATIAS did not want to bid for the contract and had therefore helped the Council draw up the tender document. The Committee was also reassured that the tender would be awarded on terms of quality.

**RESOLVED that the data provided in the report goes back to Cabinet for their information.**

#### 4. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The Committee was informed that the three aims of the review into community engagement was to increase local involvement in communities, support councillors in their role and increase partnership working with external organisations including the third sector.

Some Members noted that more information in respect of what was occurring in their boroughs could be better provided to them and officers responded that they were aware of this and it would form part of the project.

It was clarified that there was an additional £12,500 required to undertake the recommendations with the rest of the project being funded through existing budgets.

There was a brief discussion on Democracy Week and how it was important for the council to maintain a good selection of activities for this event. It was stated that the Peoples' Services Directorate needed to maintain support for the initiative regardless of officer restructures.

Members highlighted that some residents would view the Strategy as yet another layer of bureaucracy and it was important that it was communicated well to the public. Officers agreed.

**RESOLVED that the Committee support the Task and Finish Groups intention to recommend the Community Engagement Strategy and Area Working to Cabinet.**

#### 5. **2011/12 BUDGET MONITORING – MONTH 6**

Officers outlined the key areas of the current budget stating that due to treasury management the Council was expected to increase its reserve for general funds by £2.8 million. There were also pressures on the Housing Revenue Account of £782,000 although the balance would finish the year at £1.7 million.

Officer assured the Committee that these figures would be achievable through treasury management rather than making any particular savings on services. It was also stated that service deficits would not be supported by funds from other services that had saved money this year.

The Committee felt that each overview and scrutiny committee could look at its own service budgets for this year at the budget scrutiny event later in the month.

There was a brief discussion on what constituted a departure decision with officers and members discussing what should or should not be decided within a service manager's remit in conjunction with a portfolio

holder and what should be managed by Full Council. It was also clarified that the rules about who could decide to vire funds into different budgets was set at particular levels and enforced by the constitution.

The Committee debated the impact of sickness pay and possible costs in maintaining the theatre and other leisure services. It was responded that sickness pay had remained sizeable because of the waste team coming back in-house under the council. There was a high sickness rate in the waste collection team due to the nature of the duties and requirements for waste collection teams to be at full capacity to undertake their role meant there were further costs in employing temporary cover staff. In terms of leisure facilities, officers explained that it was prudent to factor in the possibility that services failed to generate the income expected of them. Councillor Nicklen felt this was not a viable way to run services if there was an expectation they could lose but all recognised that there was a well-being aspect to these services that were important for the community.

**RESOLVED: That:**

- i) The Committee note the overall financial position for 2011-12**
- ii) The Committee note the actions being taken in order to deliver a balanced financial position at the end of the financial year.**
- iii) The Committee note that a detailed report will be presented to Cabinet on 9 November 2011.**
- iv) Month 6 variations be added to the budget reports for this year's budget scrutiny.**

**The meeting finished at 9.13pm.**

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](mailto:mboulter@thurrock.gov.uk)**