

Committee: Health and Housing

Date: 8 January 2004

Agenda Item No: 4

Title: Policy Priorities and Budgets 2004/05

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Summary

- 1 This report seeks to finalise the Committee's General Fund Budgets for 2004/05, based on guidance issued by the Council and subject to Resources Committee's review of the Council's overall financial position at it's meeting on 22 January 2004. The report contains details of the Committee's base budgets, including direct costs and recharges, and proposals to meet the savings target for this Committee set at the Council meeting on 16 December. The figures contained in this report are subject to final checks for consistency and accuracy and do not include the revenue effects of any new capital programme items, the impact on internal charges of any growth or savings, or the effect on this Committee of budget items included within the Corporate Quality of Life Plan. These items will be dealt with at the Resources Committee on 22 January.

Background

- 2 At it's meeting on 23 October 2003, this Committee considered it's draft 2004/05 direct cost budgets, along with a Budget Review Item involving increasing Pest Control income. The Committee submitted proposals to the Resources Committee representing a budget reduction of £3,000 due to that change in the income from Pest Control.
- 3 The Council meeting on 16 December considered draft budget totals of all Committees and made the following resolutions:
 - 1 that Committees be instructed to amend their budget to meet the revised 2004/05 Committee totals as below:

	2004/5 Budget from Appendix 1	Budget Review Items Agreed	Additional Target	Revised Committee Total
Resources	£4,459,870	(£51,550)	(£50,000)	£4,358,320
Environment & Transport	£1,842,410	(£166,000)	£0	£1,676,410
Dev't Control & Licensing	£374,600	£0	£0	£374,600
Health & Housing	£766,100	(£3,000)	(£5,000)	£758,100
Community & Leisure	£1,292,750	£85,800	(£10,000)	£1,368,550

- 2 Best Value reviews be funded from within the services to which they relate;
 - 3 a maximum indicative Council Tax of 7.5% be confirmed for 2004/05;
 - 4 Officers to advise on best practice for the construction & ownership of budgets & fees for semi-judicial committees;
 - 5 that CAB & other relevant Groups be reviewed thoroughly by Community & Leisure Committee during 2004 with the intention of starting new 3 years agreements from 2005/06;
 - 6 that budget consultations be carried out through the organising of appropriate meetings to encompass as wide as possible a consultation as is achievable within the time available.
- 4 Since the Resources Committee met, the following has happened:
- Provisional figures have been received outlining the external financial settlement from central Government
 - Base budgets have been finalised, including internal recharges and Capital Charges
 - Officers have considered how to meet the savings target for this Committee as amended by the Council on 16 December

Local Government Finance Settlement

- 5 The Council has now been informed of the provisional Revenue Support Grant and Business Rate redistribution planned by central Government for 2004/05. The figures have still to be finalised due to a late change in the way Rent Allowances are to be funded by Government. There was also the announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his pre-budget statement of further funding to help offset large Council Tax increases around the country. Overall, the Council has received an estimated increase of £70,000 (1.87%) over 2003/04, compared with the indicative budget approved at the last Council meeting which assumed no cash increase. This increase is not significant enough to affect the Council's budget strategy in a fundamental way, but has been taken account of in the decision by the Council to revise the Committee savings targets.

Base Budget 2004/05

- 6 Appendix 1 contains this Committee's full draft budget for 2004/05. This budget is as presented at the previous meeting, but now contains all internal charges, capital charges for schemes already in the capital programme, and an increase of £450 in budgets for electricity and water.

Budget Review Items and Savings Targets

- 7 The Budget Review item in respect of increased Pest Control income has been accepted and is now built into the base budget.

- 8 The Resources Committee on 20 November, in considering the overall position on the General Fund, also issued savings targets aimed at providing options to achieve the indicative Council Tax increase of 7.5% set at their meeting. Targets for individual committees were set taking account of the size and diversity of each Committee's budgets, and also the likelihood of savings being achieved based on Budget Review Items still being researched. The Council meeting on 16 December agreed a revised target of £5,000 for this Committee to reflect the updated overall budget position, including the increase in the funding from central government. However, the extra water and electricity budget requirements identified in paragraph 6 relate to direct cost budgets, thereby requiring the sums involved to be added to the Committee savings target so as to reconcile with the Revised Committee Total given in paragraph 3. The savings target therefore increases by £450 to £5,450.
- 9 Officer and Member meetings have been held and have identified the following options for budget reductions:

£

4330	Saving arising from the closure or transfer of the Felsted public toilet to the Parish Council.
1000	Income arising from advertising on the superloo's
1000	Savings arising from not putting homeless people into Bed and Breakfast accommodation
350	Increased charges for food hygiene courses. Charge rising from £35 to £40
5000	Increase in Pest Control income through deletion of OAP discount
11680	

- 10 The budget reduction options in the table in paragraph 9 clearly provide more potential savings than are required to meet the savings target set for this Committee. However, the potential saving in respect of Felsted toilets has yet to be agreed with the Parish Council, either in terms of their taking over the management of the Toilet, or its possible closure. Two of the other budget reductions shown also require an element of caution regarding their realisation. The budgets for Bed and Breakfast accommodation and Pest Control income are both demand led budgets and are therefore very difficult to predict. Notwithstanding these comments, it will still be recommended that the budget reductions identified be agreed by this Committee to at least meet the £5,450 savings target set by the Council.

Service Plans

- 11 This year, the Service Planning process has been deferred so that officers can assess the affects of the newly adopted Corporate Quality of Life Plan on staffing and other resources. The revised timescale now involves completion of Service Plans by 23rd January 2004. A summary of the key points of these Plans will therefore be brought to Committees in the February/March Committee cycle.

Budget Consultation

- 12 The resolution from Resources Committee regarding budget consultation was re-affirmed by Council on 16 December. Five meetings are planned with Focus Groups in January 2004 and the results will be reported to the Resources Committee on 22 January to inform final deliberations on the budget.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee

- 1 approve the draft budgets for 2004/05 contained in Appendix 1 and forward them to Resources Committee for consideration
- 2 agree and submit to the Resources Committee proposals to achieve the savings target of £5,450 set by the Council and as amended

Background Papers: Budget Working Papers and minutes of Committees and the Council

Committee: HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Date: 8 January 2004

Agenda Item No: 6

Title: VICARAGE MEAD THAXTED

Author: Rod Chamberlain (01799) 510508

Summary

- 1 This report updates the Committee on the current position regarding the proposed refurbishment of the Council's sheltered housing scheme at Vicarage Mead, Thaxted.

Background

- 2 At its meeting in October 2003, the Committee received a report outlining several options regarding the future of the Council sheltered housing complex at Vicarage Mead, Thaxted.
- 3 The Committee agreed that officers consider two proposals which relate to the refurbishment of only the complex itself. These proposals were to invite appropriate Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) to prepare proposals for refurbishment and also for consideration to be given for the work to be carried out by the Council.

The Current Position

- 4 Four RSL's have expressed interest in carrying out refurbishment to Vicarage Mead which will provide self contained units of accommodation for all the residents, which will have separate bedroom facilities, and proposals are due to be received by the Council by 5 January 2004. A verbal update on the current situation will be given at the meeting.
- 5 A further progress report will be made to a future meeting of the Committee, which hopefully will be in February.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee notes the current position regarding the future.

Background Papers: Previous reports to Committee 2003.

Committee: Health and Housing
Date: 8 January 2004
Agenda Item No: 7
Title: Rowntree Way, Saffron Walden - Parking
Author: Rod Chamberlain (01799) 510508

Summary

- 1 This report advises the Committee of the current parking issues at Rowntree Way/Fulfen Way, Saffron Walden and seeks the Committee's views on the way forward.

Background

- 2 Appended to this report is a drawing showing the area in question (Appendix 1). It should be noted that by agreement between Essex County Council and Uttlesford District Council, the latter maintains the cutting of the grass. The area is, however, public highway land and under the ownership of Essex County Council.
- 3 As a result of unauthorised parking on the green at the junction between Rowntree Way and Fulfen Way, the Council arranged for signs to be erected to try to prohibit such parking. It is accepted however that enforcement is difficult.
- 4 There are Council garages at the rear of these properties and these can be let to tenants providing their rent accounts are clear.

The Current Position

- 5 Since the erection of the signs, complaints from various tenants and owner occupiers have been received pointing out that by stopping the parking on the grass verge it has made it more dangerous as there has been an increase in on-street parking outside their homes.
- 6 There have been detailed discussions between Uttlesford District Council and Essex County Council to ascertain if a solution can be found to this problem. Essex County Council have supplied the following comments and information in their capacity as the highway authority.
 - There are yellow lines at the junction and therefore vehicles must not block the sight splay.

- Vehicular crossovers into the front gardens are not possible because of the position of the green to the junction, as moving cars on and off would block sight splays to the junction.
- The existing drop kerbs are not wide enough for cars and the path construction is not strong enough for vehicles.
- The signs are not enforceable and recommend that they should be removed.
- A proposal by a local resident (Appendix 2) submitted on behalf of other residents outlining a scheme for parking is not workable for grounds already outlined.
- The County have stated they will not consider or finance any other schemes for parking in the verge in question because it is too near the junction/bend on safety grounds.

The Way Forward

- 7 In this context the Committee may feel it appropriate to authorise officers to remove the existing signs and enter into discussions with the County Council and explore physical ways of stopping unauthorised parking and then implement as soon as possible.
- 8 In addition, at the rear of 17 – 27 Rowntree Way, it may be possible to construct rear access for the Council properties only, from the garage area. This would help alleviate the problem on the highway. This would cost in the region of £10,000. If acceptable to the Committee, this scheme will be placed in the Planned Programme.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee authorises that the current signs are removed, authorises officers in conjunction with Essex County Council to resolve the unauthorised parking problem, and indicates whether it supports the proposal to create rear parking at the Council houses in question.

Background Papers: None.

Committee: HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Date: 8 January 2004

Agenda Item No: 8

Title: RIGHT TO BUY - GRANT

Author: Rod Chamberlain (01799) 510508

Summary

- 1 This report proposes that a grant of £250 is paid to tenants who can complete their Right to Buy applications by 31 March 2004.

Background

- 2 In April 2004, new arrangements come into operation regarding Right to Buy (RTB) receipts. From that date the receipts, in accordance with Government requirements, will be pooled on a national basis. However, for debt free authorities such as Uttlesford, the Government has announced transitional arrangements for a 3-year period.
- 3 According to the regulations, the Council will be able to retain 75% of the receipt in year one, 50% in year two and in year three, 25%.

The Current Position

- 4 Even with these transitional arrangements, it may be in the interests of the Council to endeavour to get as many of those tenants currently in the process of exercising RTB applications, to completion stage by 31 March 2004 to ensure the Council retains the full receipt of those transactions in the current financial year.
- 5 Accordingly, the Committee may wish to offer RTB applicants a grant of £250 towards their costs if matters can proceed as outlined. Any such grant would be paid for out of the capital receipt received. This payment may encourage a few applicants to hit this deadline.

RECOMMENDED that a grant of £250 be paid to RTB applicants who complete the sale between the date of this Committee and 31 March 2004.

Background Papers: None

Committee: Health and Housing
Date: 8 January 2004
Agenda Item: 9
Title: Performance Management System:
Author: Ian Orton (01799) 510402

Summary

- 1 This report informs all Committees of the Council the progress with the introduction of a Performance Management System within Uttlesford. The report recommends the layout of the reporting mechanism and the process to resolve issues of under performance.
- 2 The report also recommends that performance monitoring be reported to Scrutiny Committees with Scrutiny Committees referring any issues to the appropriate Policy Committee.

Background

- 3 Corporate Management Team on the 11th July 2003 agreed the introduction of a Performance Management System and authorized the Performance Manager to meet with Service Heads to develop a robust range of Performance Indicators to measure both the corporate and service health of the authority. Once this process was completed a report outlining the range of performance measures was to go to all Committees of the Council seeking the views of Members on the robustness and reporting mechanism of the Performance Management system
- 4 A range of draft Performance Measures were developed with Heads of Service and a multi committee report did the rounds in September and October 2003. As a result of this exercise 68 Performance Measures were identified as forming the basis of the pilot performance management framework. Members asked for an additional performance indicator to measure homeliness and this have been added. In addition officers were asked to explore additional methods to measure access to services and customer care. The First Point of Contact Review Team is carrying out this exercise. Some concern was raised about a Traffic Lights Reporting Mechanism, as this would discriminate against people who are colour blind. To meet this concern colour coded Smiley Faces were added to the reporting mechanism.

- 6 To keep the reporting process simple it is recommended that the following mechanism is introduced:

**Green for On Target to achieve agreed Performance Target –
Smiley Face**

**Amber for up to 10% slippage from agreed Performance Target –
Straight Face**

**Red for more than 10% from agreed Performance Target –
Glum Face**

- 7 Attached at Appendix A is a draft report for the Half Year with details of 03/04 performances delivered. The format of the reporting is:

Indicator Code – if it is a National Indicator or a Local Indicator

Basic Details of the Performance Measure

A 2002/03 Performance Outturn if the data exists

Target for 2003/04

Quarterly data for April to June and July to Sept 03

Daventry Benchmarking Group 2002/03 – 16 authorities broadly the same as Uttlesford DC. How Uttlesford was placed either Top/Medium/Lower in categories in 2002/03

Smiley Face/Straight or Glum Faces based on colour code –

Comments if required

The quarterly data will be reported to SMT and colleagues with Reds will outline a recovery package or a request to re-work the target. This information will be included in the quarterly reporting report to Scrutiny Committees. Scrutiny Committees will have the opportunity to refer comments on performance to the appropriate policy committee.

- 8 At the Half Year there were six Red Indicators out of 69. They are:

- Financial Penalties imposed by the Inland Revenue
- Percentage of debt outstanding at 90 days
- Average length of stay in Bed & Breakfast
- New tenants visits completed within 3 months
- Score against a checklist of environmental standards
- Percentage of valid planning applications determined within 5 weeks

These six indicators are all being re-examined to ensure that the data returns are accurate and that the performance targets are realistic. For example three of the indicators have a target of 100%, is this ambitious?

- 9 The Performance Management system will be piloted for the rest of 2003/04 with reports delivered to Scrutiny Committees in Jan/Feb and March 2004. The system will be fine tuned as required and the formal mechanism will commence from April 2004.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1 The comments of all Committees are sought on the Range of Performance Measures, Performance Targets and use of a Traffic Light System
- 2 Note that the Performance Review Data will be reported to Scrutiny Committee(s).
- 3 Note that any Red Indicator will have a Rescue Recovery Package from the relevant manager incorporated into the report.

Committee: HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE
Date: 8 January 2004
Agenda Item No: 10
Title: CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF HOUSING CONFERENCE 2004
Author: Rod Chamberlain (01799) 510508

Summary

- 1 This report advises the Committee of the Chartered Institute of Housing conference in 2004 and asks what level of representation the Council wishes to have at this conference.

Background

- 2 Each year, the Committee appoints representatives to attend the annual Chartered Institute of Housing Conference at Harrogate. In 2004, the conference will be held in mid June.
- 3 For the last conference, the Chair of the Committee and one of the Chairs of the then Tenant Panels accompanied the Head of Housing Services. In order to make the necessary bookings, it will now be necessary for the Committee to agree its level of representation at the conference.
- 4 If the Committee agrees that a Tenant Panel representative should be appointed, then it is suggested this be referred to the Tenant Forum to resolve.
- 5 With regard to the Member appointment, it is felt that this should be resolved at the meeting.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee determines its representation at the Housing conference 2004.

Background Papers: None.