



MINUTES OF A CABINET MEETING
Council Chamber - Town Hall
Wednesday, 4 February 2015
(7.30 - 8.05 pm)

Present:

Councillor Roger Ramsey (Leader of the Council), Chairman

	Cabinet Member responsibility:
Councillor Damian White	Housing
Councillor Robert Benham	Environment
Councillor Wendy Brice-Thompson	Adult Social Services and Health
Councillor Meg Davis	Children and Learning
Councillor Osman Dervish	Regulatory Services and Community Safety
Councillor Melvin Wallace	Culture and Community Engagement
Councillor Clarence Barrett	Financial Management
Councillor Ron Ower	Housing Company Development and OneSource Management

Also present Councillors Keith Darvill, David Durant and Ray Morgon.

34 REVISIONS TO THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Councillor Roger Ramsey, Leader of the Council, introduced the report.

Cabinet was reminded that it had received the Financial Strategy Report on 21st January 2015 which had provided an update on the local government financial settlement and the results of the public consultation exercise in relation to its budget proposals which had been considered by cabinet on 3rd September 2014.

As requested by Cabinet and in response to the public consultation this report considered proposals to make changes to a number of the budget proposals. The report also gave consideration to the impact of these changes to the budget strategy.

The public consultation on the 2015 proposals had been launched on 29th September 2014 and ran for three months, closing on 29th December. Simultaneously, the Council had undertaken specific statutory consultations

on proposals related to the Library service and to Parking. A further statutory consultation was expected to be carried out in respect of the Youth Service later in the year.

In response to the consultation Cabinet on the 21st January 2015, had requested that a number of the budget proposals be reconsidered.

Libraries

- 5 Libraries each to be open 50 hours per week. (an increase from the four in the original proposal) Upminster was proposed as this was currently the third busiest library in the borough;
- The 5 other libraries to be open 24 hours per week;
- Additional staff time to be made available at the busiest libraries;
- One post for local studies to be retained;
- A reader development post to deliver the summer reading challenge to be retained;
- Computer charges to be replaced by increased fines; and
- The Housebound service to be run by volunteers.

The impact of these proposals was to reduce the level of savings achievable in 2016/17 by £244k.

The libraries strategy had been updated to reflect these proposals and was also attached to the report for approval.

Youth Services

- To support the development of a newly created Youth Trust; (an Employee Led Mutual);
- Management of MyPlace to be included within the Trust's remit;
- Savings would be achieved through alternative management arrangements; and
- To explore the development of a partnership with the YMCA.

Following the mapping of the service offering, the Council would provide a budget to commission the Youth Trust to do targeted work. This would come back for full consultation and approval during the coming financial year. At this stage the original proposed savings target for 2015/16 of £250k was being removed to enable this to happen.

Changes to Parking in Parks

- Some parks sites were not considered viable for the implementation of the charging policy. The Leader in conjunction with the Cabinet Member Environment, would consider whether any parks and open spaces should be exempt from the car parking charges, taking account of the size of the car park, the

investment required to bring it up the required standard and the level of income that could be achieved.

- Changes in rates to be amended to reflect the needs of sports groups. The Leader in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Environment might also consider whether alternative charges might apply to certain organisations which currently had significant use of a car park in a park or open space.
- Otherwise, charges to be amended to:
 - 20p for three hours and 50p for 5 hours proposed (Mon-Fri 8am-6:30pm);
 - Maximum stay to be 5 hours;
 - Free Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays.

The financial impact of these changes was not considered material to the original proposal although it would need to be kept under review in the first year as the policy was progressed.

This would also enable the service to review the overall impact of changes in parking charges for future budgets and to be able to consider options around Christmas and Bank Holiday parking.

Queens Theatre

- To phase the cumulative savings of £200k evenly over three years rather than the initially proposed two years, giving the Theatre more time to make the necessary changes to its operating model.

Reasons for the decision:

This enabled the Council to adapt its financial strategy in response to the public consultation and to develop its budget as set out in the constitution.

Other options considered:

None. The Constitution required this as a step towards setting its budget.

Cabinet:

1. **Considered** and **approved** the revised budget savings options set out in Appendix A to the report.
2. **Approved** the Libraries Strategy attached at Appendix C to the report.
3. **Approved** that the Leader in conjunction with the Cabinet Member Environment, would consider whether any parks and open spaces should be exempt from the car parking charges on the grounds laid out in the report and whether any alternative charges might apply to certain

organisations which currently had significant use of a car park in a park or open space.

Chairman