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Chief Executive

CABINET AGENDA

Date: Wednesday 17th January 2018

Time: 6.00pm NB Time

Venue: Council Chamber

This meeting will be webcast live on the internet.

Membership:

Councillor Riley	Chairman - Leader of the Council
Councillor Stanley	Finance, Policy and Resources
Councillor Dick	Health & Wellbeing
Councillor Mrs Egan	Housing and Council Homes
Councillor Howard MBE	Street Scene, Waste, Floods and Water Management
Councillor Isaacs	Neighbourhoods & Safer Communities
Councillor MacLean	Customer Engagement and Commercialism
Councillor Skipp	Environment & Leisure
Councillor Smith	Regeneration & Business Liaison

Cabinet Enquiries:	John Riley Ext 2417/Ann Horgan ext. 2413
Reference:	6/2017/2018
Publication Date:	Tuesday 9th January 2018

AGENDA
PART I
(Business to be taken in public)

1. Apologies

2. Members' Interests

3. Minutes

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th November 2017.

4. Forward Plan

To review the Forward Plan.

5. Public Health and Wellbeing

5(a) Disabled Facilities Grant – Update

(Report of the Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing)

6. Environment

7. Transforming Our Community

7(a) South Essex Strategic Plan Update - to follow

(Report of the Leader of the Council)

7(b) The Paddocks

(Report of the Leader of the Council Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Business Liaison)

7(c) Construction of Four Bungalows Church Close Garage site

(Report of the Cabinet Members for Finance, Policy and Resources, Housing and Council Homes)

8. Efficient and Effective Customer Focused Services

8(a) Update: Customer Engagement & Commercialism

(Report of the Cabinet Member for Customer Engagement & Commercialism)

8(b) Autumn Budget & local Government Finance Settlement – High Level Update

(Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance, Policy and Resources)

9. Matters to be referred from /to Policy & Scrutiny Committees

A report from the Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee held on 29.11.2017 has been postponed to the next Cabinet meeting.

10. Matters to be referred from /to the Standing Committees

PART II

(Business to be taken in private)

(Item to be considered with the press and public excluded from the meeting)

- 7(c) Construction of Four Bungalows Church Close Garage site**
(Report of the Cabinet Members for Finance, Policy and Resources, Housing and Council Homes) *(Exempt Information under Paragraph 3 Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 as amended)*

**INFORMAL
CABINET SESSION**

There will not take place as a Special Council meeting has been arranged to follow this meeting.



CABINET

15TH NOVEMBER 2017

PRESENT:

Councillor Riley	Chairman	Leader of the Council
Councillor Stanley		Finance, Policy and Resources
Councillor Dick		Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Mrs Egan		Housing and Council Homes
Councillor Howard		Street Scene, Waste, Floods and Water Management
Councillor MacLean		Customer Engagement and Commercialism
Councillor Skipp		Environment & Leisure

APOLOGIES: Councillors Isaacs and Smith

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors: Acott, Campagna, Hurrell, Mumford, Palmer, Mrs Sach and Taylor.

46. MEMBERS' INTERESTS:

There were none.

47. MINUTES:

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 17.10.2017 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

48. FORWARD PLAN:

To comply with regulations under the Localism Act 2011, the Leader of the Council presented a revised Forward Plan to the meeting which outlined key decisions likely to be taken within the next quarter 2017. The Plan was reviewed each month.

Resolved – To note and approve the Forward Plan as amended.

49. COMMUNITY HALLS UPDATE

The Cabinet considered a report providing an update on the council owned community Halls

Resolved:

To note the report.

50. LAND AT THORNEY BAY PARK: ALIGNMENT OF ROSCOMMON WAY PHASE 3

The Cabinet considered a report informing of recent new developments at Thorney Bay Caravan Park, and their consequences for the final phase of Roscommon Way.

Cabinet was recommended to authorise the Chief Executive to contact Essex County Council as highways authority to seek its urgent support in protecting the alignment of the final phase of Roscommon Way.

Resolved:

Having regard to all those matters raised within this report:

1. To note the recent developments underway at Thorney Bay Caravan Park, and their consequences for the alignment of the final phase of Roscommon Way;
2. To authorise the Chief Executive following consultation with the Leader of the Council, to contact Essex County Council as highways authority to seek its urgent support in establishing a safeguarded route for the alignment of the final phase of Roscommon Way.

51. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT (LCTS) SCHEME FOR 2018/19

The Cabinet considered a report providing an update to Cabinet in respect of the results of consultation on proposed changes for the 2018/19 scheme and recommended changes to the Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2018/19.

Resolved:

1. To note the consultation results, Impacts of Scheme Options, and Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment appended to this report
2. To recommend to Council that there are no changes to the Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2018/19.

52. 100% BUSINESS RATES RETENTION (BRR) SCHEME – ESSEX PILOT BID

The Cabinet considered a report updating Cabinet on progress within Essex in relation to the submission of a bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to become a pilot for the 100% Business Rates Retention scheme for 2018/19 (one year only).

Resolved: To note the report.

53. FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Cabinet considered a report providing the latest medium term financial forecast in respect of the General Fund and updating Cabinet on developments of a financial nature, which might impact on the Council's financial plans in respect of either the General Fund or Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Resolved: To note the report.

54. Corporate Performance Scorecard Quarter 2 2017/18

The Cabinet considered and scrutinised the cumulative performance figures for the Corporate Performance Scorecard for quarter 2 1st July 2017 to 30th September 2017.

Resolved: To note the reported performance.

55. MATTERS TO BE REFERRED FROM/TO POLICY SCRUTINY COMMITTEES:

There were no matters.

56. MATTERS TO BE REFERRED FROM /TO THE STATUTORY COMMITTEES:

There were no matters.

Chairman



Castle Point Borough Council

Forward Plan

JANUARY 2018

CASTLE POINT BOROUGH COUNCIL

FORWARD PLAN

JANUARY 2018

This document gives details of the key decisions that are likely to be taken. A key decision is defined as a decision which is likely:-

- (a) Subject of course to compliance with the financial regulations, to result in the local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the savings which are, significant having regard to the local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates subject to a threshold of £100,000; or
- (b) To be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more Wards in the area of the local authority.

The Forward Plan is a working document which is updated continually.

Date	<u>Item</u>	Council Priority	Decision by Council/ Cabinet	Lead Member(s)	Lead Officer(s)
January 2018	<u>Financial Settlement 2018/19 – Update.</u>	Efficient and Effective Customer Focussed Services	Cabinet	Finance ,Policy and Resources	Head of Resources
January 2018	<u>Construction of Four Bungalows Church Close Garage site</u>	Transforming Our Community	Cabinet	Housing and Council Homes Finance,Policy &Resources	Head of Performance & Service Support & Interim Head of Housing
January 2018	The Paddocks – Consideration of Options	Transforming Our Community	Cabinet	Strategic Partnerships Regeneration & Business Liaison	Local Plan & Regeneration Advisor
January 2018	<u>South Essex Strategic Planning Update</u>	Transforming Our Community	Cabinet	Regeneration & Business Liaison	Local Plan & Regeneration Advisor
March 2018	<u>Flooding Update</u>	Environment	Cabinet	Street Scene, Waste, Floods and Water Management	Head of Environment

February 2018	<u>Treasury Management Report –</u>	Efficient and Effective Customer Focussed Services	Cabinet	Finance, Policy & Resources	Head of Resources
February 2018	<u>Budget and Policy Framework</u> To make recommendations to Council on the Council tax and budget setting.	All	Cabinet/ Council	Finance, Policy & Resources	Head of Resources
February 2018	<u>Housing Revenue Account Rent Levels 2017/2018 Housing Capital Programme etc</u>	Transforming Our Community Efficient and Effective Customer Focussed Services	Cabinet	Housing and Council Homes / Finance, Policy & Resources	Head of Resources Head of Performance & Service Support & Interim Head of Housing

CABINET

17th January 2018

Subject: Disabled Facilities Grant - Update

Cabinet Member: Councillor Dick – Health and Well Being

1. Purpose of Report

This report seeks to update Cabinet on the current status of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) function of Environmental Health services.

2. Links to Council's Priorities and Objectives

The report links with the Council's Public Health and Well Being priority and objectives.

3. Recommendations

To note the contents of the report and seek further updates from the Head of Environment on a periodic basis.

4. Background

- 4.1** A suitable, well adapted home can be the defining factor in enabling a disabled person to live well and independently. At a time of financial constraints and policy change, delivering help with home adaptations in the most efficient and effective ways and making use of scarce resources is more important than ever.
- 4.2** The legislative framework governing DFGs is provided by the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. Since 1990, local authorities have been under a statutory duty to provide grant aid to disabled people for a range of adaptations to their homes.
- 4.3** The purposes for which such a grant must be approved, subject to the eligibility of the test of resources are defined in Section 23 of the Act (as amended.) These criteria are largely around facilitating access (including to a garden) to, from and around the home of the disabled person. Other specified purposes relate to making the dwelling / building safe, providing or improving heating systems, facilitating the preparation and cooking of food, facilitating the use of

a source of power, light or heat and facilitating caring responsibilities of a disabled person.

- 4.4 The maximum amount of a mandatory DFG is currently £30,000 in England. The amount payable may also be subject to a deduction derived from a test of the financial resources of the disabled person and their partner. Where the application is for a disabled child or qualifying young person, there is no means test.
- 4.5 Local authorities also have discretionary powers to provide financial assistance for housing adaptations in any form (i.e. grant, loan or equity release) for adaptations. Castle Point currently offers 'top-up' financial assistance where the full mandatory grant award is not able to cover the full cost of the recommended adaptation. However, the Council would expect for the customer to have exhausted all other means of funding prior to applying to the Council for a discretionary top-up grant.

5. Current Castle Point Arrangements

- 5.1 Environmental Health deliver DFG grant funding to customers in partnership with Essex County Council Occupational Therapists and Basildon Council Building Control Section who also offer the services of a Home Improvement Agency.
- 5.2 Customers requiring a disabled adaptation are initially referred to the ECC Occupational Therapy Team for an assessment of their needs. A report is produced and forwarded to Environmental Health Services at Castle Point (EH.) EH contact the customer to ask whether or not they wish to use the services of Basildon Council to assist them in their application, survey and subsequent management of building works. 99% of customers choose this option, with their fee being added to the final grant.
- 5.3 Cases are then referred to Basildon Council who will fully project manage the process for the customer including preparing an application for funding, drawing up plans, obtaining quotations from builders and supervising works right through to completion.
- 5.4 Castle Point are consulted at various stages in the process and are ultimately responsible for approval of an application, deciding on the level of funding / contribution via means testing, approval of plans and funding and ensuring works have been completed before finance is finally released.

Capital Grant funding - The Better Care Fund

- 5.5 The Better Care Fund (BCF) is a programme spanning both the NHS and local government which seeks to join up health and care services, so people can manage their own health and wellbeing and live independently in their communities for as long as possible.

- 5.6 The BCF encourages integration by requiring Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and local authorities to enter into pooled budget arrangements and agree an integrated spending plan.
- 5.7 Capital grant funding previously provided to the Council directly from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is now pooled into a joint Essex budget, which is then distributed to each second tier authority responsible for the provision of Disabled Facility Grants.
- 5.8 Since this arrangement came into being, DFG capital grant funding to Castle Point Borough Council has increased significantly in the past two financial years. Prior to these years annual grants were typically in the region of **£250k** to **£350k** but for 2016/17 and 2017/18 were **£580k** and **£630k** respectively. However, demand on the service over this time has increased at a similar level and demand currently still exceeds supply. It is not yet known what levels of grant can be expected to be received in future years.
- 5.9 Funding for DFGs at Castle Point is primarily from the aforementioned capital grant. Additional funding is made by the Council through contributions from the General Fund. These are normally £100k per annum but can sometimes vary. Occasional additional contributions are also received directly from Central Government.

Current situation / Financial Status Update – January 2018.

- 5.10 During 2017/18 Environmental Health Services are currently processing 118 cases to an estimated value of **£866k**. These include a wide range of adaptations from home extensions, bathroom adaptations, stair lifts, ramped access, through floor lifts, widening doorways and specialist toilets.
- 5.11 A further 30 cases, of approximate value of **£200k** are currently on the priority waiting list.
- 5.12 During the course of the year, the Service began to process a further 103 Occupational Therapist recommendations of estimated value of **£500k**. However for various reasons, these applications were abandoned prior to completion.
- 5.13 The current amount of work undertaken, the number of cases being dealt with and the estimated value of the works undertaken by the Council are at record levels. This demonstrates the ever increasing demand for this type of service, mainly due to the aging population profile of the Borough.
- 5.14 It is estimated that the actual value of works completed or commenced to 31 March 2018 will be **£550k**, and accordingly the revised budget for 2017/18 due to be approved by Council in February 2018 as part of the Policy Framework and Budget Setting for 2018/19 has been set at this value. Unused amounts of grant funding will be carried forward towards expenditure in 2018/19 or beyond. It is not anticipated at this time that any unused grant funding at the end of March 2018 will need to be returned.

- 5.15 Environmental Health will continue to work in partnership with all stakeholders to ensure the continued and effective provision of grants to customers in need and aim to continually refine the way that we operate to ensure the best value for money for the Council and most effective customer focussed service.
- 5.16 The Council intend to continue to process referrals and applications on behalf of customers in a timely manner and will take every opportunity both on its own behalf and as part of wider groupings of Councils to lobby for more funding for this very important function of Council services.

6. Corporate Implications

(a) Financial Implications

These are addressed in the report from paragraphs 5.5.to 5.16.

(b) Legal Implications

There are no legal implications to this report

(c) Human Resources and Equality Implications

There are no human resources or equality implications associated with this report.

7. Timescale for implementation and Risk Factors

It is recommended that Cabinet seek further updates from the Head of Environment on an annual basis.

Report Author – Simon Llewellyn, Environmental Health Operational Manager

CABINET

17th January 2018

Subject: The Paddocks Long Road Canvey Island

Cabinet Member: Councillor Riley - Leader of the Council – Strategic Partnerships

Councillor Smith - Regeneration & Business Liaison

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report is to inform the Cabinet of proposals for The Paddocks site, Long Road Canvey Island.

2. Links to Council's priorities and objectives

2.1 The initiatives described in this report are directly linked to the Council's "Transforming our Community" priority – incorporating objectives for a sustainable future.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That Cabinet note the current condition of the existing Paddocks building;

3.2 That Cabinet note the opportunities afforded by a careful analysis of the wider site area;

3.3 That Cabinet note the preparation of a detailed business case for a new community hall on the Paddocks site;

3.4 That Cabinet receive further reports on the proposal as the business case evolves.

4. Background

History

- 4.1 At its meeting on 18th October 2017, the Cabinet received a report on regeneration initiatives underway in the Borough.
- 4.2 That report explained that a further phase of feasibility work was required for proposals for new community space and facilities at The Paddocks site. Cabinet approved a sum of £8,000 from reserves in order to commission architects to complete this work.
- 4.3 This work has now concluded, and Cabinet is now invited to consider the conclusions.

Current position

- 4.4 As Cabinet will be aware, the Paddocks site is situated on the south side of Long Road just to the south west of Canvey town centre.
- 4.5 The site accommodates a number of buildings and users:
 - The Paddocks Community Centre – a two storey building in the centre of the site operated by the Borough Council
 - The Canvey Primary Care Centre – a three storey building to the east of the site operated by the NHS
 - A Paddling Pool facility - an open air facility with associated outbuildings situated to the south west of the site operated by a lessee of the Borough Council
 - Canvey Island Senior Citizens Association (CISCA) House – a single storey building and associated car park offering community uses located to the north east corner of the site, leased to and operated by a charitable organisation
 - Car parking managed by the Borough Council
 - War Memorial and Gardens to the front of the Community Centre
- 4.6 Recently it has become evident that the Paddocks Community Centre building is in need of modernisation, and the opportunity has been taken to review whether this amenity is still required and if so what form it should take.
- 4.7 In conducting this review it is also evident that there is an area of land to the south of the Canvey Primary Care Centre which is currently underused amenity land and which could serve a more useful purpose.
- 4.8 It has also become evident that significant pressure exists for car parking space on the site because of the popularity of Canvey Primary Care Centre, the uses at The Paddocks Community Centre and the Paddling Pool and because this car park also serves the town centre and provides for long stay car parking, for which there is currently no charge.

Feasibility work principles

- 4.9 In preparing for the feasibility work to be completed describing future options for the site, certain key site principles were established.
1. It is essential that, if the Paddocks Community Centre building was beyond economic repair, a new community facility should be provided on site.
 2. It is essential that during the construction of a new community facility the existing Paddocks Community Centre building should remain open and available for use.
 3. The existing access into the site from Long Road should not alter.
 4. The existing War Memorial and Gardens should not be affected.
 5. The opportunity should be taken to re-organise the car park layout at the site to improve circulation routes and maximise the numbers of parking spaces available, in conjunction with the NHS and the Canvey Primary Care Centre.
 6. The existing Paddling Pool facility would need to be replaced with a splash Park/Water Play area elsewhere on Canvey Island.
 7. Opportunities should be taken to provide funding for the new community facility from “enabling development” on the site of the existing Paddling Pool facility.
- 4.10 Finally, the operation and management of the on-site facilities should be affordable and sustainable in the longer term.

Feasibility work outcome

- 4.11 The conclusion of feasibility work reveals that the Paddocks Community Centre building has reached the end of its design life and is beyond economic repair. Operationally, the facility has limited flexibility, does not meet modern hire requirements, is energy inefficient and costly to run and it suffers from periodic recurrent anti-social behaviour issues. The feasibility work shows however that it is possible to construct a new community facility immediately to the south-east of the existing building. This could potentially provide a reception area, café and seating area, kitchen and servery, WCs and a flexible meeting space sufficient to accommodate three separate hall each 15m by 10m, or one larger hall measuring 15m by 30m.
- 4.12 Because the new community facility would be located to the south east of the existing Paddocks Community Centre building it would also have the benefit of improving security around the southern boundary of the site and the rear of the new building.

- 4.13 The new layout would also allow the future redevelopment of the Paddling Pool facility for enabling development with potential access from Clifton Road to the west.
- 4.14 Finally it would be possible to re-configure the car parking layout across the whole site, to provide an indicative capacity of approximately 380 spaces.
- 4.15 This compares to an existing car parking capacity at the site of approximately 200 spaces.

Next steps

- 4.16 In order to test the financial viability of the feasibility study it is now necessary to prepare a detailed business case setting out the likely costs of developing the site in the way envisaged, the likely contribution from the potential future “enabling development” and the potential future arrangements with the NHS regarding car parking for the Canvey Primary Care Centre.

5 Corporate Implications

a. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Cabinet is asked to note the preparation of a business case following feasibility study work for improved community amenities at the Paddocks site.
- 5.2 The business case will be mindful of the principles set out at 4.9 above and include consideration of:
 - a) The current operational costs of the existing facility.
 - b) Future existing and potential operational requirements of a new facility.
 - c) Costs and revenues of providing a new facility (capital and revenue) and funding options available to the Council.

b. Legal Implications

- 5.3 Any future development of the site will need to be progressed in accordance with Council procedures, and the law regarding council developments.

c. Human Resources & Equality Implications

- 5.4 There are no implications of this kind arising from the recommendations in this report.

d. Timescale for implementation & risk factors

- 5.5 The work on a detailed business case for new community amenities at The Paddocks will need to be thorough and comprehensive, taking into

account projected development costs and existing and future revenue costs. This piece of work is scheduled for completion by end of June 2018.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The Paddocks site on Canvey Island is an important community asset, and it is therefore entirely appropriate that the condition of the asset and its potential are regularly reviewed.
- 6.2 The Paddocks Community Centre building is recognised as a unique and valued space and therefore as it reaches the end of its design life, there is an important opportunity to review and plan for a new future community facility.
- 6.3 The construction of a new Community Centre will be dependent on “enabling development” on other parts of the site.

Background Papers

None

Report Author: Steve Rogers – Local Plan & Regeneration Adviser

CABINET

17th January 2018

Subject: Construction of four new two Bedroomed Dormer Bungalows at Church Close Garage Site, Canvey Island, Essex

Cabinet Members: Councillor Mrs B Egan Housing and Council Homes, Councillor Stanley Finance, Policy and Resources

1. Purpose of Report

To seek authority from Cabinet to pursue the development of 4 two bedroomed dormer bungalows at Church Close garage site, subject to all relevant legal, financial and probity issues being considered to the satisfaction of the Chief Executive.

2. Links to Council's priorities and objectives

The work is linked to the aim of Transforming our Community.

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet agrees in principle to the development of four new two bedroomed dormer bungalows at Church Close garage site, subject to all relevant legal, financial and probity issues being considered to the satisfaction of the Chief Executive.

4. Background

- 4.1 There is an acute demand for affordable housing within the Borough with a total of 530 households on the housing needs waiting list. Of these, a total of 199 are in the top two priority bands, and the number of households in these bands awaiting a one or two bedroomed home is 155, with 70 awaiting a two bedroomed home.
- 4.2 Within this context, a business case has been developed to build four new two bedroomed homes at the Church Close garage site in Canvey Island.

5. Report

- 5.1 A more detailed business case has been prepared and is attached as a confidential Appendix. There are a number of possible benefits:
- Provision of new affordable housing that will utilise right to buy receipts

- Providing new affordable housing accommodation for which there is acute demand.
 - Regenerate a garage area which is in poor condition.
 - Improve the fabric of the surrounding area
 - Obtaining rental income at affordable housing rent levels
 - Reduce the risk of liability in relation to fly tipping and other anti-social behaviours
 - Opportunity for a local builder to compete for the construction work.
- 5.2 Pre-planning advice has been sought and is favourable to the development proposal and is further detailed in the business case attached. The business case also sets out a series of high level actions, although these will be developed further into more detailed actions, objectives and milestones as the project progresses.
- 5.3 There are a number of risks and issues. A summary of these and actions to consider are set out below:
- a) Resident resistance to the development – this will be mitigated by developing a communication plan to promote the development as an improvement to the current garage area.
 - b) Concerns regarding the general development of housing. This will be mitigated by the fact that the site is already in a brownfield area which is in a poor state and the development will result in an improved environment providing much needed affordable rented accommodation for residents of Canvey Island.
 - c) Possible issues regarding prescriptive rights of way. However, this is unlikely to be the case as the site is not well used and letters have already been sent to properties with gates. No response has been received.
 - d) Construction time and costs risks. These will be managed by the in-house team who now have some experience in constructing new homes and are able to assess key risks and take appropriate preventative action.
 - e) Issues regarding the demolition of the site. Care will need to be taken when dismantling the garages and demolition of the concrete base. This will involve close supervision of the contractor and good communication with residents.
- 5.4 The project team are reviewing a number of sites and it is hoped will identify more one and two bedroomed development opportunities for Cabinet to consider in the near future.

6. Corporate Implications

a. Financial implications

There are significant financial implications which are summarised in the business case attached.

b. Legal implications

There are significant legal implications. These are summarised in the business case attached.

c. Human resources and equality

The development will be managed through an in-house project team and the appointment and procurement of a contractor.

d. Timescale for implementation and risk factors

An update to Cabinet will be made once planning permission is received.

7. Background Papers:

None

Report Author: Craig Watts ext. 2419 crwatts@castlepoint.gov.uk

CABINET

17th January 2018

Subject: Update: Customer Engagement & Commercialism

Cabinet Member: Councillor MacLean - Customer Engagement & Commercialism

1. Purpose of Report

This report is intended to provide an overview to Cabinet of the work which is currently in progress and/or planned within the scope of Customer Engagement and Commercialism.

2. Links to Council's Priorities and Objectives

This report is linked to the Council's priority of Efficient and Effective Customer Focused Services.

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet note the report and support the various initiatives described within.

4. Introduction

4.1 Customer Engagement & Commercialism are themes which cut across all Council services and all levels of the organisation.

4.2 Customer Engagement refers to how residents interact with the Council and gain access to the Council's services. Customer engagement takes many forms including, but not limited to, traditional telephone contact, visits in person to the Council's Offices and online service access using the Council's website. Activities in this area are broadly focussed on three key themes;

- developing greater customer insight,**
- increasing awareness and accessibility of services,**
- working with partners to enrich the customer experience.**

4.3 Commercialism is a relatively new term in the context of local government, and it is fair to say that the Council is just starting out on this particular journey. The programme which is forming under this theme as expected includes a focus on raising additional revenue, but will also include establishing greater financial awareness in terms of our costs, smarter ways of working in order to reduce those costs with the objective of achieving financial self-sufficiency in the medium to longer term.

5. Work in progress

5.1 The work plan is ambitious and by its very nature will be continuous. There will always be new ideas, new ways of working and new technological advances. The needs and expectations of our residents will continue to evolve and the Council must be mindful of all these drivers and keep pace, whilst continuing to deliver high quality and essential services to residents in a consistent and reliable manner.

5.2 The following bullet points are intended to give an indication of progress and the work currently underway;

5.3 Developing greater customer insight

Understanding our customers and partners can help us to design service delivery in a way that maximizes common interests and benefits for all.

- A survey of customers who have recently used the new online Benefit Claim form was completed during October and November. This provided valuable and generally, very positive, feedback on the customer experience with some 40 people completing the survey. Further surveys are planned as other digital services come online.
- Feedback from the survey has been anonymised and shared with relevant software providers to help inform future product development. Additionally quick win changes to the design and functionality of the Claim form have been discussed with suppliers and are currently being implemented.
- Two respondents from the survey have also accepted invites and shown keen interest in taking part in future individual customer focussed testing and feedback sessions. This sort of engagement will prove invaluable in helping us design services that are customer centric. It is hoped that the pool of customers willing to take part will increase as further surveys are undertaken.

5.4 Increasing awareness and accessibility of services

Digital on-line is often also referred to as “digital access” or “digital service”. These terms all mean access to services / information via the Council’s website, which is intended to offer a faster, more responsive and convenient service to residents. Raising awareness and accessibility to Digital on-line is a developing area for the Council.

- A Christmas digital E-Card design competition to engage both staff and partners in the Council’s digital transformation was held in November. A prize was contributed by the Staff Forum and the winning E-card design was circulated for staff and Members to share with partners to increase the Council’s digital profile.
- Work continues to develop the suite of e-forms on the Councils website which will enable customers to report changes and complete a number of transactions related to their Council Tax accounts. Forms are currently available for customers to report moves out, moves in, and moves within the

borough. Work is now progressing to add these functions to the customer on-line portal in addition to them simply being hosted on the website, and to develop further forms that will allow customers to make method of payment changes and request refunds.

5.5 Working with partners to enrich the customer experience

The transformation of the First Contact space in the Council Offices in January 2017 now provides a great opportunity to help the public build digital skills and promote our services more effectively. First Contact can maximise these opportunities by working closely with a range of internal and external partners to gain wider reach and depth of service.

- Work has begun on exploring ways in which we can expand on the existing Service Level Agreement with Family Mosaic. This agreement currently provides a one day per week Drop In service that delivers budgeting support, digital support, and advice and signposting on a range of topics including housing, benefits, and debt management. It currently operates alongside the First Contact service.
- A review of the First Contact Service Level Agreement with other departments across the Council has been completed. The new SLA is intended to revitalise internal communication, increase development of digital solutions, and deliver a co-ordinated and more robust approach to managing customer expectations. Work has now also begin to link this with a refreshed Customer First Strategy and Customer Promise.

5.6 Commercialisation:

Much of the initial work under this theme is of a financial nature and as such the intention is to undertake it alongside preparation of the budget for the new financial year.

- Development of Principles of being a Commercial Council. The expression “Commercialisation” has many interpretations and encompasses a range of behaviours which may or may not be applicable to this organisation. The purpose of establishing a set of Commercial Principles is to express how the term will be applied specifically by this Council.
- Understanding the Cost of Discretionary Functions. Work is continuing to establish the net cost to the Council of its discretionary services / activities on an individual service basis. This work will clearly set out the level at which specific discretionary services are subsidised.
- Review of Chargeable Services. Similar to the work involved in relation to discretionary services above. Going forward it is desirable for charges for services to be set at a level which at least covers their direct costs.

6. Work to commence

- 6.1 The following bullet points set out examples of areas which will be subject to review / consideration over the next 12 to 18 months. This work programme is flexible and items are not presented in any priority order

- Community Engagement Events
 - Stronger engagement with local community groups.
 - Improve financial viability of Council operated community events.
 - Enabling community groups to play a greater role / take the lead on community events and initiatives.
- Engagement with Local Business
 - Exploring opportunities to promote Council facilities and services.
 - Development of a co-ordinated promotions/advertising strategy.
- Engagement with Residents & Users of Council's services
 - Undertake a review of how the Council currently engages with residents' e.g. social media, viewpoint, website etc.
 - Continued promotion of digital online to staff, residents, and partners.
- Commercialism
 - An officer working group will begin work from January 2018 and the report in March will provide an update on this work stream.

7. Corporate Implications

a) Legal implications

There are no additional implications arising as a result of this report. Specific legal implications will be considered in the context of individual subjects / services.

b) Financial Implications

The Council's medium term financial forecast currently indicates a budget gap for 2018/19 of approximately **£500k**, rising to approximately **£1m** in 2019/20.

With the depletion of Government funding and limitations on levels of council tax, the Council needs to work towards self-sufficiency in the medium to longer term. This can be achieved by behaving in a more commercial way and is a strategy being adopted across all areas of local government.

The budget process for 2018/19 is currently underway and will include the presentation of an up to date financial forecast to Cabinet and Council in February 2018.

c) Human Resources and equality implications

No additional implications as a result of this report. Equality implications will be considered in the context of individual subjects / services.

d) Timescale for implementation and risk factors

These are initial projects identified for consideration during the current financial year and / or work currently in progress.

Report Author: Chris Mills, Head of Resources
Edwina Mosuro, Transformation Manager

CABINET

17th January 2018

**Subject: Autumn Budget & Local Government Finance Settlement
– High Level Update**
Cabinet Member: Councillor Stanley – Finance, Policy and Resources

1. Purpose of Report

This report is a precursor to the budget and council tax setting report which will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February, and provides Cabinet with highlights from both the Autumn Budget (November 2017) and the Local Government Finance Settlement 2018/19 (December 2017) with an indication of the financial implications specific to Castle Point.

The report also highlights other significant financial implications which have arisen outside the aforementioned milestones but which will also be addressed within the budget process for 2018/19.

2. Links to Council's Priorities and Objectives

This report is linked to the Council's priority of Efficient and Effective Customer Focused Services.

Sound and strategic financial management is essential in order to ensure that resources are available to support the Council's priorities and maintain or improve services.

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet note the report.

4. Highlights from Autumn Budget

- 4.1 The Autumn Budget contained a number of measures with a direct impact on local government and this authority. These are outlined below.

Business Rates

- 4.2 The Government has announced a number of changes to business rates. The main changes announced are:

- From April 2018, CPI will be used to uprate the multiplier for business rates, rather than RPI, bringing forward the change already announced from April 2020;

- The business rates revaluation cycle will switch from five to three years following the next revaluation. This should mean that, following the planned 2022 revaluation, the next revaluation will be in 2025;
 - There will be an extension of one-year to the £1,000 discount to business rates bills for pubs with a rateable value of less than £100,000 to 2018/19.
- 4.3 The proposal to move to uprating the business rates multiplier by CPI from April 2018 should see a reduction in the rate of increase from 3.9% (September RPI) to 3.0% (CPI rate). However, this is still significantly higher than the 2017/18 increase of 0.8% and higher than the previous two years' of 2.0% (which were as a result of a 2% cap).
- 4.4 The cost to the Government of this change is reflected in the policy costings at £240m in 2018/19 and £530m in 2019/20. In the Budget papers, it states that "Local government will be fully compensated for the loss of income as a result of these measures".
- 4.5 This change should therefore be revenue neutral for local authorities for 2018/19 and 2019/20. However, it is likely that it will result in a lower Baseline Need/NNDR Baseline amount in 2020/21, which, if not compensated for, would reduce local authority resources by £0.5bn per annum.

Council tax

- 4.6 The Chancellor announced that, from April 2018, local authorities will be given the power to increase the council tax empty homes premium from 50% to 100%. This is something which the Council will need to consider further in due course.

Other measures announced

- 4.7 **Housing.** The Government announced that it wishes to increase the numbers of new homes being built to 300,000 per annum by the middle of the 2020s. A wide breadth of measures were announced to support this objective and these include:
- **Housing Investment:** the Government will provide £1.1bn for a new Land Assembly Fund; a further £2.7bn to the competitively allocated Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) in England and a further £630m through the NPIF to accelerate the building of homes on small, stalled sites, by funding on-site infrastructure and land remediation. The Government has also agreed a housing deal with Oxfordshire, which has agreed to bring forward for adoption a joint statutory spatial plan and commit to a target of 100,000 homes in the county by 2031, in return for a package of Government support over the next five years.
 - **Housing Revenue Account:** the Government had announced that it will lift Housing Revenue Account borrowing caps for councils in areas of high affordability pressure, so they can build more council homes. Local authorities will be invited to bid for increases in their caps from 2019/20, up to a total of £1bn by the end of 2021/22. The Government will monitor how authorities respond to this opportunity, and consider whether any further action is needed.

- **Intervention:** the Government confirmed it has begun the formal process of considering intervention in 15 areas where the local authority has failed to put an up-to-date plan in place and that it will shortly activate powers that will enable it to direct local planning authorities to produce joint statutory plans and undertake an assessment of where they should be used.
- 4.8 Members will be aware that Castle Point is one of the 15 authorities facing intervention. There may be financial implications arising from this action, the extent of which will only become clear in time. For the time being a “best estimate” of these implications will be determined as part of the process leading up to setting the budget for 2018/19.

- **Community Infrastructure Levy:** DCLG will launch a consultation with detailed proposals on reforms to the CIL.

4.8 The Government has also announced:

- An extra **£42m** of Disabled Facilities Grant in 2017/18 of which Castle Point has been allocated **£56k**.
- An extra **£45m** for the Pothole Fund in 2017/18;
- A package of measures to support the continued roll out of Universal Credit;
- A national living wage of **£7.83** from April 2018.

5. Financial Settlement Outcome

5.1 The main changes announced as part of the 2018/19 provisional settlement are set out below

- Local Government Funding Reform - The Government has published the consultation paper “Fair funding review: a review of relative needs and resources”, a technical consultation on relative need. The Secretary of State stated that the result of the review will be introduced in 2020/21.
- The Secretary of State also confirmed that there will be a business rates baseline reset in 2020/21 and, from 2020/21, business rates retention will be at 75% (with existing grants, including RSG and Public Health Grant incorporated into business rates retention).
- Council Tax – There has been an increase to the referendum limit for Council Tax from 2% to 3%.
- Business Rates Pilots – The Essex Bid for Pilot Status was unfortunately unsuccessful.
- New Homes Bonus - the 2018/19 allocations have been announced (previously these figures were only indicative – based on previous years’ allocations). There have been no changes to the deadweight threshold (at 0.4%) or the eligibility of properties to qualify for the funding. Castle Point has not been awarded any funding for 2018/19.
- Top Up/Tariff Adjustments – A consultation will take place in spring 2018 regarding the current £153m in negative RSG that remains in the 2019/20

funding allocations. For Castle Point, negative RSG is currently set at £515k in 2019/20.

6. Corporate Implications

a) Financial & Legal implications

As indicated in the main body of the report.

b) Human Resources and equality implications

There are no Human Resource or equality implications arising directly from this report.

7. Timescale for implementation and risk factors

The financial settlement is traditionally announced annually in December and provides authorities with an indication of their allocations for the forthcoming financial year. Under the four year funding arrangement, allocations up to and including 2019/20 are already known and not subject to annual confirmation.

14th February - Budget and Council Tax for 2018/19 considered by Cabinet and recommendations made to Council.

Background Papers:

- The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2018-19.

Report Author: Chris Mills, Head of Resources

CABINET

17th January 2018

Subject: South Essex Strategic Planning

**Cabinet Member: Leader of the Council – Councillor Riley
Deputy Leader of the Council – Councillor Stanley**

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to recommend to the Special Council endorsement of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to take forward the collaborative work being undertaken by South Essex Councils - Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock and Essex County Council - to create a vision and sense of place for South Essex through the Association of South Essex Local Authorities

2. Links to Council's Priorities and Objectives

The initiatives described in this report are directly linked to the Council's "Transforming our Community" priority – incorporating objectives for a sustainable future.

3. Recommendations

Having regard to all those matters raised within this report and the recent letter from the Secretary of State giving notice of his intention to intervene in the Castle Point Local Plan process that it is particularly important to draw to his attention, the following :

- 1. To recommend to Special Council approval and endorsement of the Memorandum of Understanding of the Association of South Essex Local Authorities.**
 - 2. To recommend to Special Council to note and support the work taking place to develop a Spatial Strategy for South Essex.**
-

4. Background

South Essex

History of joint work

- 4.1 The local planning authorities in South Essex have for some time been defined as Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock and Essex County Council. More recently Brentwood has been incorporated in the group, given its close relationship with Basildon, Thurrock and key infrastructure affecting the area, such as the A127.
- 4.2 There is a long established tradition of working in partnership on strategic planning matters, dating from the era of the former Thames Gateway South Essex Board. Examples of this work include a Planning & Transport Strategy for the Thames Gateway South Essex area, a series of Strategic Housing Market Assessments, Strategic Flood Risk Assessments, and more recently an Economic Development Needs Assessment.
- 4.3 Furthermore Planning Portfolio Holders/Cabinet Members acknowledged in 2016 that a strategic planning framework of some kind was necessary for the area in order to assist with the preparation of individual local plans and demonstrate that the “duty to co-operate” was being effectively discharged. A Memorandum of Understanding for Strategic Planning in South Essex was subsequently agreed in early 2017.

Leaders & Chief Executives

- 4.4 Stemming from housing and local planning issues initially, there has been a growing recognition of the opportunity and need for greater cross-boundary working on strategic infrastructure planning and growth across South Essex. In June 2017 Leaders and Chief Executives of Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock and Essex County Council (the Authorities) agreed to initiate and shape a programme of work through the summer and autumn to explore a joint ‘place vision’ and the scope for greater strategic collaboration along the South Essex growth corridor.
- 4.5 The work during the summer and autumn has resulted in an emerging vision and identification of strategic growth opportunities that need testing and strengthening with the people and stakeholders of South Essex and beyond. It has also built a strong commitment amongst the Authorities to collaborative working. It was agreed that an Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) should be established to continue this collaborative work.
- 4.6 The Authorities wish to record the intention to establish ASELA and basis of collaboration through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This MoU sets out:
 - a) The core purpose and aims of ASELA
 - b) The principles of collaboration

Association of South Essex Local Authorities

- 4.7 The core purpose of ASELA is to provide place leadership for South Essex. Recognising that through a collaborative approach Councils will be best placed to develop and deliver a vision for South Essex up to 2050, promoting healthy growth for our communities.
- 4.8 ASELA will focus on the strategic opportunities, regardless of individual local authority boundaries for the South Essex economic corridor to influence and secure the strategic infrastructure that will help our individual areas to flourish and realise their full economic and social potential.
- 4.9 The aims of ASELA will be to:
- Provide place leadership;
 - Open up spaces for housing, business and leisure development by developing a spatial strategy;
 - Transform transport connectivity;
 - Support our 7 sectors of industrial opportunity;
 - Shape local labour & skill markets;
 - Create a fully digitally-enabled place;
 - Secure a sustainable energy supply;
 - Influence and secure funding for necessary strategic infrastructure;
 - Enhance health and social care through co-ordinated planning; and
 - Work with and provide a voice for South Essex to the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission and Commissioners.

Potential funding

- 4.10 This work has coincided with the recent announcement by Government of a Planning Delivery Fund, again heralded in the Housing White Paper earlier in the year. The Government's intention is that the Fund would support:
- *more and better joint working, across local authority boundaries, ensuring that there are the skills and capacity where they are needed to plan strategically for housing growth, and to manage delivery of new homes and infrastructure;*
 - *a step change in the design quality of new development, as well as design advice and support to local authorities delivering growth; and,*
 - *innovation in the planning system, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of processes and enable the delivery of more high quality homes.*
- 4.11 Expressions of interests for funding were invited and were made by 11th January 2018. The Government is expected to announce the successful bids by the end of January. For joint working and design, successful bids are expected to be up to £250,000 per bid for expenditure incurred by the end of March 2018. For innovation, no award amount information is yet available since this will be dependent on the number and nature of bids.

5. Planning Implications

- 5.1 The collaborative work described above will allow all local planning authorities in the area to demonstrate effective on-going cooperation on strategic planning matters, thereby satisfying the “duty to co-operate”.
- 5.2 Where those authorities have been identified by the Secretary of State of being at risk from intervention, the work described demonstrates on-going commitment to joint working on strategic planning matters as advocated by Government.
- 5.3 Furthermore for those authorities with no up-to-date local plan or five year housing land supply, the on-going commitment to joint working on strategic planning matters is likely to prove an important material consideration in resisting unwelcome or ill-timed development proposals, pending the completion of the joint strategic plan.

6. Corporate Implications

(a) Financial Implications

- 6.1 The additional Government funding of up to £250,000 through the Planning Delivery Fund would augment the resources at each individual local planning authority level for joint work.

(b) Legal Implications

- 6.2 Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 allows a local authority to perform any of its functions jointly. Section 50 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 allows for the joint preparation of local plans.

(c) Human Resources and Equality Implications

- 6.3 Support for the Association and for the collaborative work has been possible from within existing resources and any additional funding ,if agreed can be used to support existing resources for future collaboration.

(d) IT and Asset Management Implications

- 6.4 There are none to be addressed by this report.

7. Timescale for implementation and Risk Factors

- 7.1 South Essex Leaders and Chief Executives are committed to continuing with the “vision” work beyond January 2018.
- 7.2 The risks of not pursuing further collaborative work across South Essex are not being able to demonstrate effective strategic planning and requiring a significantly greater number of Statements of Common Ground with the risk that agreed strategic infrastructure priorities may not be aligned.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 There has been significant recent work undertaken across South Essex in recent months to understand the importance of and develop ideas around

place making and the role which strategic planning can perform in delivery of infrastructure and growth.

- 8.2 The natural progression of this work is to ensure that suitable governance arrangements are in place, to allow joint work to progress whilst respecting the “sovereignty “ of individual local planning authorities, to ensure that the right level of resources is available, and to make progress with the preparation and delivery of a joint strategic plan.

9. Background Papers

Association of South Essex Authorities Memorandum of Understanding.

Report Author:

David Marchant – Chief Executive