
OVERVIEW OF EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work under my Efficiency and Resources Portfolio.

Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report 2012/13

2. Cabinet has been provided with details of complaints, compliments and comments which have been received by the Council during 2012/13 under the Council's Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure and those representations made under the Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedures.
3. There has been a decrease in the overall number of representations made during 2012/13 compared to previous years, however, there has been an increase in the number of comments received during 2012/13, which is as a result of people's dissatisfaction with changes to Council policy in the light of the current financial challenges.
4. Organisational changes have been made as a result of complaints received where appropriate.

Public Health Complaint Reforms – The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012

5. Cabinet has approved a procedure to ensure that the Council is able to consider complaints received in relation to public health services effectively and in accordance with the NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012.

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2013/14 – Quarter 2

6. Cabinet has considered the Quarter 2 forecast of the 2013/14 revenue budget outturn. The report indicated projections showing an overall improvement of £3.730M of which £1.650 M relates to balances carried forward from 2012/13 outturn. This is an improvement of £0.529M compared with that which had previously been reported to Cabinet in July this year.
7. The in-year improvement compared with the approved Medium Term Financial Plan for 2013/17 is £2.080M and Members will be aware from my last Council

report that £1.918M of this was identified and removed from budgets in Quarter 1.

Annual Canvass 2013/14

8. The Annual Canvass forms the basis of the Register of Electors each year, and this year's Annual Canvass commenced on 1st October 2013, with an Annual Canvass Form being delivered to every property in the Borough over an initial three week period.
9. Reminder forms have now been issued to those properties from which a response has not been received, and Canvassers will be calling at properties throughout December and January to encourage the completion of as many outstanding forms as possible, prior to the publication of the new Register of Electors on 17th February 2014.
10. The maintenance of an accurate Register of Electors forms the cornerstone of our democratic system, and it is particularly important this year ahead of the European Parliamentary Elections in May 2014, and the proposed transition to Individual Elector Registration (IER) later in 2014. The Register of Electors is also increasingly being used to confirm a resident's address, especially if they are applying for credit such as a mortgage, a personal loan, or even a mobile telephone contract.

Council Tax Support Scheme Approval

11. You will see elsewhere on the agenda for tonight's meeting, that Cabinet is recommending a draft Council Tax Support Scheme for 2014/15 based on the 2013/14 scheme, which was implemented for the annual billing period 2013/14. Following the replacement of the national Council Tax Benefit System with local schemes, Councils are required to publish and set a Council Tax Support Scheme each year and consider whether any changes should be made to the existing scheme. As there have been no significant challenges to the current scheme or any formal appeals against decisions made about Council Tax Support Claims, Cabinet is recommending that there should be no changes to the 2014/15 scheme other than uprating certain amounts in line with other benefits.

Freedom of Information, Environmental Information and Subject Access Request Annual Report 2012/13

12. Cabinet has received an overview of the requests processed by the Council under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the subject access provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 between 1st April, 2012 and 31st March, 2013. There are a number of key themes and recommendations within the report which will improve access to information and, if implemented, reduce the number of requests the Council is required to process.

Central Park – Land Disposals and Acquisitions

13. Cabinet have given approval to acquire, by agreement, those properties which remain to be purchased in order to further progress the site assembly process in respect of Central Park South and given delegated power to dispose of plots on Central Park in line with the terms on the Central Park Collaboration Agreement and the agreed masterplan.

Town Hall – Re-commissioning of Southern Passenger Lifts

14. Funding has been released to modernise and re-commission the two southern passenger lifts within the Town Hall building. In view of recent and proposed increases in occupancy levels within the building and changes to principle access routes as a consequence of the DfFE office development, there is an increasing need to modernise and re-commission these lifts to ensure full access to all floors.

Councillor Stephen Harker
Cabinet Member with Efficiency and Resources Portfolio