

**CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL – 20<sup>th</sup> JULY 2009**

**CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Michael Lager**

**CABINET PORTFOLIO: Efficiency & Resources**

Portfolio covers:-

- Financial and Treasury Management Strategy
- Asset Management Strategy
- Exchequer (Council Tax and Benefits)
- Business Efficiency Programme
- Business Systems inc. performance
- Procurement Strategy
- Information Technology
- Risk Management/Business Continuity
- HR and Organisational Development
- Health and Safety

**REPORT COVERS ACTIVITY DURING PERIOD COMMENCING 10<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2009 AND ENDING 8<sup>th</sup> JULY 2009**

**PERFORMANCE, INNOVATION & EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME BOARD**

1. The Board met on 29<sup>th</sup> June following a business-setting session on 27<sup>th</sup> May. We have agreed business cases for a review of online consultation tools, and the whole programme of business efficiency reviews. We have approved project initiation documents or PIDs for the business efficiency reviews, attaining the customer excellence standard and a review of legal spending.
2. We also received highlight reports for all projects and have agreed to home in on the most significant, namely the business efficiency reviews, the waste management options appraisal, community engagement and customer surveys, local public service provision and the review of leisure services. All but a few are on track as to budget, timescales, resourcing and risks, and the necessary remedial action is under way.
3. Completed projects comprised the IT security policy (endorsed by the Audit Committee and approved by Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2009), and the CAA self assessment.

**HR & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

1. Cabinet agreed on 6th July 2009 to accept an approach designed to ensure that staff can and do acquire the skills the Council needs today and tomorrow. In essence, skills are compared to a matrix from which a development plan is produced. Delivery is then through a variety of tools including courses, coaching, e-learning etc. The Council's leaders and managers of the future can also come from this.
2. Cabinet also agreed to enlarge greatly our pool of modern apprentices by using existing (funded) vacant posts and adding a modest level of new funding from balances to fund 6 additional apprentices. When added to the several hundred the County Council intends to create across Essex, both Councils are doing their bit to aid particularly young people into the job market at a difficult time.

**IMPROVEMENT EAST (the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Panel for the East of England)**

I have attended a number of IE meetings over the past year, the Panel's first. It has some £5m pa CLG money (out of £185m nationally to support the raised Gershon targets) to promote improvement and efficiency in local government. It operates using a proactive approach over four "clusters" - performance, LAAs and LSPs, skills/capacity, and efficiencies. As a member of the efficiencies cluster, I chaired a well received conference/seminar in Newmarket on 24<sup>th</sup> June attended by around 60 middle

and senior managers across the East (and a few from further afield) on business process improvement, where we heard from Ian Lowrie, chief executive at Adur/Worthing (councils that have merged almost all their operations), Vicky Branchett of Essex CC on how to make the changes into "Lean" processes, Adrian Webb from Uttlesford when facing the financial cliff edge, and other speakers. IE outcomes include a menu of support, networking opportunities, an invest-to-save fund for efficiency projects, and a number of specific projects aimed at local authorities identified as in need of special help. More details about IE are at: <http://www.improvementeast.gov.uk/>

## **BUSINESS RATES**

We collect over £32m and get back about £8m. The Council agreed in January to write to the Secretary of State about the 5% increase this year, and I have just had a reply recapping on the arrangement to reduce this to 2% in 2009-10 but with the 3% due in 2010-11 and 2011-12, plus anything they decide as a normal increase. There was no ground given on any help for smaller taxpayers. A copy of the letter can be provided on request.

***FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT CAN BE OBTAINED BY CONTACTING:***

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