

**CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL – 21<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER 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 9<sup>th</sup> JULY 2009 AND ENDING 7<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2009**

**TREASURY**

Interest rates remain at record low levels, with a greater expected fall in GDP. A cautious approach remains in place. A little over £200k was received from an Icelandic bank, as predicted.

The Council's treasury advisers will make a presentation on treasury issues on 15<sup>th</sup> October which is open to all Members. This is a chance to find out about limits, rating agencies and other mysteries.

**ASSET MANAGEMENT**

Land at Maltings Lane in Witham for a church and a community facility plus cash in lieu of a building will be transferred to the Council under the S106 agreement. Bethel decided not to be involved in running the joint site and a search for new management arrangements will be commenced.

Land east of the High Street in Halstead, where the Council has a significant interest, is attracting good interest from prospective buyers even in the present climate.

The review of community halls is showing that several suffer from under use and signs of ageing.

ECC is delaying a decision on moving into the ground floor at Causeway House, as they are understandably reluctant to move staff and pay rent while retaining an empty building. While we are pressing for an early decision there is a consequent risk of loss of income.

**BUSINESS REVIEWS**

These are monitored by the Performance, Improvement and Efficiency Programme Board ("PI&E") and are on track with few exceptions. A key issue remains around the realisation of benefits from projects.

## **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

The PI&E board has met and noted good performance on projects and programmes, with the few exceptions subject to corrective actions. Cabinet subsequently also monitored performance.

Collection rates for council tax and NNDR are holding up well. Benefits applicants are able to get a quick service. During 2009-10Q1 we resolved 89% of enquiries at first point of contact with an average response time of 12.6 seconds at the Customer Service Centre. There were 92,571 unique visitors to the website. 82% of customer complaints were resolved in 7 working days.

Within the budget of £17m in the general fund, we are now predicting a net deficit of £188k ( budget: £0), with interest income and receipts from charges under pressure.

## **IT**

We achieved the changes needed to access the government network, and Members are now undergoing the necessary briefings on information security including passwords and remote access,

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

A session is planned for 29<sup>th</sup> October at 7.15pm for the Cabinet and deputies, the audit committee and group leaders to review and update the Council's risk tolerance profile and the register of corporate risks.

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

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