



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Z378

Cabinet 3 December 2008

Report of the Policy Development Committee: 19 November 2008

At this meeting the Committee also considered the following issues:-

- (a) Review of Homes Assistance Policy;
- (b) Customer Service Strategy; and
- (c) Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy and Sub-Regional Housing Strategy,

Separate reports for these items appear on this Cabinet agenda.

(1) Cabinet Forward Plan/Work Programme

- 1.1 The Committee examined the Cabinet's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period November 2008 to February 2009, but did not ask for any further information or involvement on this occasion.
- 1.2 Turning to its own Work Programme, the Committee noted the current position and the topics expected at its next meeting on 14 January 2009.

(2) Delivering a Sustainable Budget 2009/2010

- 2.1 As in previous years, Cabinet will receive a full report and recommendations from this Committee regarding the 2009/2010 budget on 11 February 2009. The Committee has commenced its work towards these recommendations, and this report is intended to advise Cabinet of progress made so far.
- 2.2 On 15 October 2008, the Committee discussed the key priorities for the coming year across the Cabinet's Commitments, together with statutory, strategic and service pressures expected to be the focus of each service during 2009/2010. The Committee also considered the revised Capital Programme at that meeting. On 19 November 2008, the Committee considered the broad context of the 2009/2010 revenue budget, including the five year model, results of the 2008 Suffolk Speaks survey, proposed Dynamic Review – Innovation, Value and Enterprise (DR-IVE) savings to date, and proposed growth bids to date.
- 2.3 The 2008 Suffolk Speaks research provided some useful data to inform the budget setting process, and a full summary of the research was attached as Appendix 2 to Report Z361 and was considered by the Committee.
- 2.4 Concerning progress made to date with DR-IVE, given that the 2009/2010 level of council tax had yet to be set, together with the effects of the economic downturn, such as a reduction in the interest rates likely to be achieved by the Council, it could not yet be confirmed to the Committee exactly what level of DR-IVE savings would be required. As at the date of the Committee's meeting, the required savings stood at approximately £1.1 million, although this prediction was likely to change as the date of budget setting

approaches. Officers were working to achieve maximum savings across all budgets, and this work will continue up to budget setting, with a further position report being considered by the Committee on 14 January 2009 prior to making its recommendations to Cabinet. Nevertheless, savings to the value of £219,400 had so far been proposed, with a further £100,000 almost finalised.

- 2.5 Turning to revenue growth, the Committee considered four avoidable and three unavoidable 'growth bids'. It also considered a capital growth bid for funding to meet the requirements of the revised Homes Assistance Policy which is the subject of a further report on this agenda. As explained above, rather than provide recommendations to Cabinet in a piecemeal fashion, the Committee will consider any further DR-IVE savings and growth bids on 14 January 2009, and provide a full and complete set of recommendations to Cabinet following that meeting.

(3) Choice Based Lettings: Scoping Report

- 3.1 The Committee has requested a review of the recently introduced Choice Based Lettings Scheme, Home-Link and the review will be brought for consideration to the meeting of the Committee on 14 January 2009. The Committee therefore, took the opportunity to discuss the required scope of the review with the officers.
- 3.2 The review will look at how the new scheme has been working since implementation and the impact it has had on applicants, and will cover areas including satisfaction with the new system and budgetary implications, together with an analysis of numbers of home seekers, transfer applicants and allocations.

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