

FINANCE & GOVERNANCE PORTFOLIO STATEMENT 2016-17 - Councillor Paul Barrington-King

1. Portfolio Holder Responsibilities

As the Portfolio Holder responsible for Finance and Governance, the majority of the services for which I have responsibility do not have any front-line presence. The exception is the Revenue and Benefits Services which interacts with all households and businesses in the borough. The primary role of my portfolio is to support others through the provision of resources, assets, goods, advice and assurance. This Portfolio Statement sets out my key objectives for the current year.

My overall objective is to provide high quality support to services whilst, at the same time, reducing the Council's overheads enabling us to put our money into our priorities.

2. Functions and Services

As Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance I am largely responsible for the following services with direct expenditure of £40.5m, direct income of £34.9m resulting in a 2015/16 net revenue budget of £5.6m:

- Finance
- Tunbridge Wells' delivery of Mid Kent Services - Internal Audit, Legal Services ICT and Revenues & Benefits
- Digital Services & Transformation (including Programme Management Office, GIS and the Digital Services Team)
- Business Continuity

I am the Chairman of the Finance & Governance Cabinet Advisory Board and also have responsibility for:

- Risk management
- Value for Money
- Governance
- Back office integration

3. Our achievements in 2015-16

- The Council again delivered a balanced budget with an end of year surplus returned to the General Fund.
- The Council received its Annual Audit letter which once again commended the Council on putting in place good financial governance and effective forward planning. This was all the more remarkable as the accounts were signed off two months earlier than required.
- The Audit & Governance Committee detailed in its annual report the effective and independent assurance and review it applied to the Council's risk management, governance and control. This included monitoring developments on how the Council goes about appointing its external auditor and making a clear recommendation to Council on the most efficient and effective route.
- Leading MKIP in the procurement of new digital systems using the Transformation Challenge Award funding from the DCLG.
- The Council implemented and realised the benefits of a new Debt Recovery Service and continued with the shared Counter Fraud Team.
- Sound legal and project management expertise was provided to the organisation in pursuit of its strategic priorities.
- The 2015 Residents' Survey identified public satisfaction that the Council delivers value for money had increased to 67 per cent from just 30 per cent in 2008.

4. Key Plans and strategies

- Budget and Capital Programme
- Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
- Treasury Management Policy & Strategy
- ICT Strategy and shared service arrangements
- Digital Strategy & Digital Inclusion Plan
- Change programme (Business Delivery Unit) – now the Programme Management Office.

5. Our Priorities for 2016-17

- Produce and seek approval for a new Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 to 2021/22.
- Set a balanced budget that places the Council on course for financial self-sufficiency in time for the removal of the Revenue Support Grant in 2018/19.
- Implementation of new Unified Communications software 'Skype for Business' to replace the ageing telephony system.
- Implementation of the 'Abavus' Digital Customer Services Platform to replace existing online forms and stream-line business processes.
- Ongoing development of the Programme Management Office to support Leadership Board with sound oversight of corporate priority projects.
- To build on the success of the introduction of the Debt Recovery Service
- Implement a new HR/ Payroll system that reduces the need for paper records and enables self service.

6. Contact

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