

Portfolio Holder Statements 2020-21

Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance, Councillor Tom Dawlings

Portfolio Holder Responsibilities

Service Areas:

- Finance
- Operational partnerships (including Mid Kent Services)
- Revenues and benefits
- Fraud and debt recovery
- Internal audit
- Legal services
- ICT/Digital transformation
- Project & programme management
- Performance management
- Data protection
- Democratic services
- Human resources (including learning and development)
- Property and estates
- Facilities

Priority Projects:

- Balancing the budget
- Property and asset disposals and acquisitions

Partnerships:

- Mid Kent Services Board

Plans and Strategies:

- Annual Budget
- Statutory Accounts
- MTFS
- ICT Strategy
- Risk Register and Management Plan
- Treasury Management Strategy
- People Strategy
- Asset Management Plan

Additional Responsibilities

Other posts held:

- Chairman of the Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board

Plans for the year ahead

When presenting a balance budget to the Full Council in February, I focused my comments on how constrained the Council's finances are. Our two main income sources are from Fees and Charges (budget £21.4 million) and from Council Tax (budget £8.5 million) and there is little or no flexibility in how these can be increased. Economic growth in the Borough encouraging new businesses provides the only means of increasing the Council's income as we are permitted to retain a larger share of new business rates. All these matters have been adversely affected by Covid-19 and lockdowns.

For existing small businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, many of our staff were involved in the distribution of Government grants amounting to £28 million to some 2,000 small businesses (those with Rateable Values of £51k and under) in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors.

Our focus now is to continue to support the funding and provision of essential local services throughout the national emergency. Our staff will again be assisting local businesses through the distribution of business grants and supporting residents with financial difficulties and in need of food and shelter. TWBC entered the pandemic in a relatively healthy financial position but the entire country now finds itself in a precarious financial situation. Through effective financial and cash-flow management we will use all available resources until the Government is able to set a recurring funding package for local government as part of the delayed Comprehensive Spending Review.

We will continue to lobby for greater financial support and local decision-making. In addition to meeting our statutory responsibilities which have continued we are also looking ahead to enable the borough to achieve a sustainable economic recovery.

On property, we cannot ignore the high cost of running and maintaining many of the Council's properties, especially the Town and Assembly Hall. In recent weeks we have seen the Cinema site put up for sale again and there is obviously continuing uncertainty about demand for business and office premises in the town.

The Council has a new Corporate Property Manager, Katie Exon, who joined in October (replacing Dianne Brady who left at the end of June).

Councillor Tom Dawlings

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