

**COUNCIL MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2013**  
**REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY COMMITTEE**

16 September 2013

Present: Councillors Morrall (Chairman), B Patel (Vice-Chairman), Carr, Emerson, Higgins, M Patel, Raymond, Simmons, and V Waters.

Also present: Mr T Wright, Director of Services, Mr C Pittman, Head of Community, Mrs V Jessop, Principal Housing Manager, Mr J Casserly, Managing Director Wellingborough Norse, and Mr A Barron, Democratic Services Officer.

(Councillors Bell, Harrington and G. Lawman attended as observers.)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**RESOLVED** to note that apologies for absence were received from Councillors Blackwell and Watts.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**RESOLVED** to note that in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the council's code of conduct and the council's constitution, the under-mentioned councillors declared an interest in the following items:

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Minute No</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Reason</b>
B Patel	4	Housing Service Performance Report	Registerable - Council appointed board member of Wellingborough Homes
Higgins	4	Housing Service Performance Report	Registerable - Council appointed board member of Wellingborough Homes
B Patel	6	Wellingborough Homes Governance Arrangements	Registerable - Council appointed board member of Wellingborough Homes
Higgins	6	Wellingborough Homes Governance Arrangements	Registerable - Council appointed board member of Wellingborough Homes

**3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2013 be confirmed and signed.

**4. HOUSING SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received to inform members of the service volumes and performance of the Housing Service from April 2012 to July 2013.

The Principal Housing Manager outlined to members activities undertaken in the housing service including housing developments within the borough and the standards that landlords must adhere to. Members heard that since January 2013, the service had discharged homeless duties into the private rented sector to seven families. Members were informed that improvements to the service had led to increased flexibility for both families and officers.

Members were informed that currently 117 affordable housing units were being developed and due to CODE assessments, extra income was being raised for the service. The Principal Housing Manager highlighted to members the need to understand the private rented market in order to continue to deliver the service and provide opportunities for citizens.

Members expressed concern at the strategy of advertising the support the housing service offers. However, they were reassured that the website would be further developed to inform the public and that information would be provided through council tax mail-outs alongside articles in The Link, and parish magazines.

Members were advised that inspections of houses in multiple occupation (HMO) are a priority for the service and additional licensing arrangements for HMO's and private rented stock would be investigated further.

Councillor Emerson expressed his congratulations to the service for the standard of the Energy Performance Certificate assessments, which were commended following audit, and welcomed the news that the scheme was to be extended.

Councillor Emerson enquired about the level of elderly residents applying for sheltered housing and the success rate of this type of application. Members heard that each application held information that could be provided in statistical format and welcomed this through a Members' Briefing Note.

**RESOLVED** to note the report and approve the investigation of licensing schemes.

**5. ADVISORY PANEL TO REVIEW CEMETERY RULES AND REGULATIONS**

The annexed circulated report of the Managing Director of Wellingborough Norse was received to request of members the formation of a working party to review the current cemetery rules and regulations.

The Managing Director of Wellingborough Norse outlined to members that this is one of the most sensitive services provided, but was a necessary exercise in the interests of balancing the needs of visitors to the cemeteries and the efficient administration of the service.

The Chairman declared that Councillors Morrall, Higgins, Simmons and V Waters would form part of the advisory panel. Councillor Emerson stated his intention to provide a councillor from the opposition who would complete the formation of the advisory panel.

Members agreed the resolution in the knowledge that an additional member would be elected to the panel.

**RESOLVED** to agree the formation of an advisory panel to review the current Cemetery Rules and Regulations in accordance with the terms of reference in the report.

**6. WELLINGBOROUGH HOMES GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

The Chairman reminded the Wellingborough Homes Board Members of the requirement to abstain from voting on this item.

The annexed circulated report of the Chief Executive summarised the various proposals set out by Wellingborough Homes to alter its governance arrangements based on recognised national best practice. The report invited the committee to recommend how it would wish the council to vote on the issue of the rule change at the special general meeting of Wellingborough Homes to be called to deal with this matter.

The report confirmed that none of the changes proposed by Wellingborough Homes alter the council's rights to secure the appointment of four persons to the Board of Wellingborough Homes.

The Head of Community outlined to members that the proposal regarding remuneration was perhaps the most significant proposal to be discussed. The Head of Community informed members that Wellingborough Homes should be requested to amend its rules so that it is beyond any doubt that the board posts filled by councillors remain unremunerated.

Members enquired about the issue of expenses but were satisfied with the response that expenses, on occasions such as travel costs, would

still be paid by Wellingborough Homes, and would not fall within the remit of board member remuneration.

Members sought clarification about how Wellingborough Homes had contacted tenants regarding the changes to the composition of the board. Members were advised that Wellingborough Homes has very active tenant participation through, for example, regular questionnaires.

Councillors B Patel and Higgins abstained from voting on this item.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) Wellingborough Homes Limited be asked to amend its proposed rules to the effect that any Council Board Member post should be regarded as an unremunerated post, if the person appointed to that post is a member of the council, and that this amendment should be incorporated in the rules put forward for consideration and adoption at the special general meeting of Wellingborough Homes Limited called for that purpose.
- (ii) any further amendments to the proposed new rules they would wish Wellingborough Homes Limited to consider.

**R1 RECOMMENDED** that the council should vote as shareholder at the special general meeting of Wellingborough Homes Limited to be called to consider and decide upon the adoption of the proposed new rules:

- a) if Wellingborough Homes Limited does not designate Council Board Member posts to which members of the council are appointed as unremunerated posts; or
- b) if Wellingborough Homes Limited does designate Council Board Member posts to which members of the council are appointed as unremunerated posts;

**R2 RECOMMENDED** that the council appoint Councillor Higgins to attend and vote on its behalf at the meeting;

**R3 RECOMMENDED** that the council instruct officers to develop, for approval by the Resources Committee, a formal arrangement for appointing and instructing the person charged with attending, speaking and voting on behalf of the council as a shareholder at annual general meetings and special general meetings of Wellingborough Homes Limited and any other company in which the council is a shareholder.

## **7. UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS: WELLINGBOROUGH NORSE**

The annexed report of the Managing Director of Wellingborough Norse was received to provide an update to members on the performance of Wellingborough Norse.

The Managing Director of Wellingborough Norse outlined to members the Strategic Action Plan, which had been introduced as a replacement to the Project Register, and devised to ensure that the right employee was undertaking the right task at the right time.

The Managing Director was pleased to announce that Wellingborough Norse employees had developed a set of team goals and values to be adhered to as ambassadors of the company. The Managing Director continued and stated that following audit on the overall governing of the partnership and grounds maintenance, commendable reports had been received that stated that both areas were 'well managed and delivered all expected outcomes'.

Members also heard that as the Borough Council of Wellingborough and Wellingborough Norse were inextricably linked, and that the latter ensure that they satisfy the PRIDE objectives, some members of the public were still unaware of the partnership.

Members enquired about the introduction of area representatives as agreed at a previous community committee and were satisfied that information would soon be provided as the initiative was still being developed.

**RESOLVED** to note the content of the quarterly report.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 7.55pm.



## COUNCIL MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2013

### REPORT OF THE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

17 September 2013

Present: Councillors Allebone (Chairman), Waters (Vice-Chairman), Elliott, Gough, Graves, Hawkes, Henley, Higgins, L Lawman, Warwick and Watts.

Also present: Mr S Wood, Head of Planning and Local Development, Mrs N Mackenzie, Economic Regeneration Officer, Mr P Ridley, Design and Conservation Officer and Mrs C A Mundy, Democratic Services Officer.

(Councillors Carr, Harrington and G Lawman attended the meeting as observers.)

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

**RESOLVED** to note that an apology for absence was received from Councillor Bass.

#### 2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2013 be confirmed and signed.

#### 3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY UPDATE SEPTEMBER 2013

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received, along with a verbal update, on the economic development activity to September 2013.

The report detailed the achievements for this period, the scheduled tasks for the following quarter, and details of the visitor economy, conditions for growth, education and skills developments.

Members asked questions of clarity regarding the Investment Brochure, the on-line marketing of Wellingborough, the ambition for a technical college in the borough, the possible re-introduction of Partners in Business (or an alternative) acknowledging the town centre's unique features mentioned at the town team meeting. Members also congratulated officers on the partnership working with the BID to bring the beach event to the town, which had been very well received and extremely successful.

The Head of Planning and Local Development updated the committee regarding Tresham's application to the central education body, which had not been accepted. Tresham had been asked to re-submit a redrafted application in September and they were hopeful that this would be accepted.

**RESOLVED** that the Economic Development Activity quarterly report to September 2013 and verbal update be noted.

#### **4. NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT PLANNING UNIT- MEMORANDUM OF INTENT**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received in relation to the arrangements for the management and operation of the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (NNJPU) and to request approval to sign an updated Memorandum of Intent to enable the partner authorities to continue to benefit from effective joint working in North Northamptonshire.

The report referred to the fact that the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit is a partnership of North Northamptonshire local planning authorities, including Wellingborough, which reports to the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee (NNJPC) in respect of the Core Spatial Strategy, the Statement of Community Involvement and any other local development documents.

The original Memorandum of Intent was drawn up in 2004 to enable each local planning authority to support the partnership equally. This document had also been updated in 2009 to reflect changes in circumstances. The Memorandum of Intent had been reviewed and the main changes were set out in the report. A copy of the Memorandum of Intent was appended to the report.

Members raised questions regarding the set up of the NNJPU, the financial input from the council, the annual cost to the council, the cost of consultation, the equalisation agreement and the general lack of financial information within the report. Some members considered that it was difficult to make a decision about signing of the Memorandum of Intent without additional financial implications being made available.

The Head of Planning and Local Development responded to the points raised and explained that signing the Memorandum would not have any additional financial implications from those already approved by Resources Committee during the normal budget process. In answer to a number of questions from members of the committee, he confirmed that any matters that affected the borough would be brought to the development committee for consideration and approval, therefore maintaining the council's full control over its planning policy function.

The council was represented at the North Northants Joint Planning Committee by three councillors who protect the interests of the borough at scheduled meetings of the committee. The partnership allows the council to benefit from the expertise of individuals from other member councils and the Joint Planning Unit and members were assured that the unit represented good value for money.

Councillor Allebone asked if members felt they were able to make a decision or whether they wished the report to be deferred. Members considered this option and decided the proposition should be put to the vote. In putting the matter to the vote members of the committee also felt that councillors would

be interested in understanding the costs of the NNJPU compared with an in-house provision; it was agreed that should be done through a members' briefing note issued before the next council meeting.

The Chairman proposed that this matter be recommended to the next meeting of the council and this was seconded by Councillor Henley. On being put to the vote, this was agreed.

The substantive motion was put to the committee and approved.

- R1** **RECOMMENDED** that the Chief Executive be authorised to sign the 2013 revision of the North Northamptonshire Memorandum of Intent.

**5. ADOPTION OF LOCAL LIST OF HERITAGE ASSETS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received on the results of the public consultation exercise on the Local List of Heritage Assets Supplementary Planning Document. Approval was sought to adopt the document including the appointment of the advisory panel referred to therein.

The report detailed the feedback that had been received following the consultation. Such comments had been reviewed and, where appropriate, changes had been made. The final version of the Local List of Heritage Assets Supplementary Planning Document was appended to the report.

The Design and Conservation Officer explained the report to the committee and asked that it be noted that reference to Winkworth Mill should actually be Whitworth Mill and that this would be changed in the document. Also appended to the report were the terms of reference for the advisory panel.

Members fully supported the Local List and suggested additional consultees to add to the list. It was also suggested that the terms of reference (re: the membership of the panel) be deleted, so that *any* member of the council could be appointed, as opposed to just development committee members. This was agreed. It was also agreed that the advisory panel be comprised of four members and it was proposed that Councillors Carr, Elliott and Hawkes be appointed to the advisory panel with Councillor Bailey acting as the chairman.

- R2** **RECOMMENDED** that the Local List of Heritage Assets Supplementary Planning Document, incorporating the amendment that any member of the council could be appointed thereto, be adopted and that Councillors Bailey, Carr, Elliott and Hawkes be appointed to serve on the working party to be known as the Local List Advisory Panel;

**6. TOWN CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT – RAG PROGRESS REPORT**

The annexed circulated report and verbal update of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received on the latest progress on the project programme for the town centre redevelopment.

The Head of Planning and Local Development reported that work had commenced on the removal of some of the street furniture around the town centre. Following the resignation of the External Funding Officer, the Chief Executive and Director of Resources were in discussion regarding alternative options for this position.

A member asked what the current situation was in relation to developments at Stanton Cross. The Head of Planning and Local Development confirmed that he would arrange for a members' briefing note to be issued.

The Head of Planning and Local Development also made reference to the Wellingborough Market Charter. District Law had informed him that this needed to be registered with the land registry before 12 October 2013. He was therefore seeking the authority of the committee to proceed with this registration in consultation with the chairman of the development committee.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the report and verbal update be noted;
- (ii) officers proceed with registration of the Wellingborough Market Charter with the land registry, in consultation with the chairman of the development committee.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 8.40pm.

## COUNCIL MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2013

### REPORT OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

18 September 2013

Present: Councillors Bell (Chairman), Hollyman (Vice-Chairman) Allebone, Bailey, Dholakia, Graves, Henley, Morrall, B Patel, Scarborough, Ward and Waters.

Also present: Mr J T Campbell, Chief Executive, Mr T Wright, Director of Services, Mr C Pittman, Monitoring Officer, Mrs L Elliott, Head of Finance, Mrs B Lawrence, Head of Resources, Mr S Wood, Head of Planning and Local Development, Mrs V Jessop, Principal Housing Manager, Mr N Robinson, Principal Revenue and Benefits Manager, Mrs S Knowles, Principal Accountancy Manager and Mrs C A Mundy, Democratic Services Officer.

(Councillors Emerson, Harrington, G Lawman, L Lawman, and Simmons also attended as observers.)

#### 1. APOLOGIES

**RESOLVED** to note that an apology for absence was received from Councillor Partridge-Underwood.

#### 2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2013 be confirmed and signed.

#### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no verbal declarations made.

#### 4. CONSULTATION ON LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT 2014/15 PROPOSALS

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received on the Council Tax Scheme (CTS) for 2014/15 to seek approval to commence a consultation process on the 2014/15 scheme.

The proposed options for consultation were detailed in the report as follows.

**Option 1:** The default Council Tax reduction scheme will be adopted with the local amendment that only 75% of the Council Tax liability would be used in the entitlement calculation for working age customers.

**Option 2:** The default Council Tax Reduction Scheme will be adopted with the local amendment that only 80% of the Council Tax liability would be used in the entitlement calculation for working age customers.

**Option 3:** The default Council Tax Reduction Scheme will be adopted with the local amendment that only 91.5% of the Council Tax liability would be used in the entitlement calculation for working age customers.

In 2013-14 the transitional grant allocation was detailed in the report. For 2014/15 there was no transitional funding available.

Members raised some queries for the purpose of clarity to which the Principal Revenue and Benefits Manager responded.

**RESOLVED** to note the changed scheme proposals prior to the formal public consultation commencing on 1 October 2013.

## **5. REVENUE MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2013 TO 31 JULY 2013**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received on the forecast of the year end revenue budget position for 2013-14 based on the latest financial information available at the 31 July 2013 (Period 4).

The monitoring statement indicated an additional use of reserves at the end of 2013-14 of £64,000 (0.62% of net budget). This represented an improvement of £92,000 on the forecast additional use of reserves of £156,000 which was previously reported to Resources Committee on 17 July 2013. Further details were given in the report.

Members raised questions about waste, transport and revenue and benefits to which the Principal Accountancy Manager responded and said she would clarify further details in writing.

**RESOLVED** that the projected outturn and explanations for the forecast variations at 31 March 2014 be noted.

## **6. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received on the capital programme monitoring information at 31 July 2013.

The total capital budget for 2013-14 of £6,646,000, as reported at Resources Committee on the 17 July, was further increased by £23,000 for the Section 106 items reported as urgent actions. The revised capital budget for 2013-14 is £6,669,000.

The report gave a full assessment of the capital monitoring and the current position for approved schemes along with comments from individual officers on how the schemes were progressing.

Members were asked if the next report to committee would give full details of all expenditure and the stage that projects were at. The Principal Accountancy Manager confirmed that would be provided for the December meeting of the committee.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the projected outturn and anticipated variances at 31 July 2013 be noted;
- (ii) the variations, as detailed in the report, be agreed;
- (iii) the external funding, as detailed in the report, be noted.

## **7. HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY PROCUREMENT**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received on the procurement of a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) service to allow the statutory delivery of the council's disabled facilities.

The report informed members of the decision by Northamptonshire County Council to consider its funding arrangements for the provision of Home Improvement Agency and other housing related services in the county and the need for the borough council to re-procure HIA services to allow the statutory delivery of the council's disabled facilities grants. The procurement would be carried out jointly with East Northamptonshire District Council facilitated through the council's procurement partnership with Welland Procurement Unit.

Members expressed concern over the long waiting lists with 'Care and Repair' and also asked whether Spire Homes would still be used.

The Principal Housing Manager confirmed that the specification would deliver disabled facilities and that whilst handyman services would not be specified they may be included as added value. At the current time the procurement process was proceeding in accordance with the tender timetable and that she was unable to advise whether or not Spire Homes would tender for the service.

**RESOLVED** that delegated authority be given to:

- (i) the Head of Planning and Local Development and Head of Finance to progress a joint procurement with East Northamptonshire District Council for a Home Improvement Agency service supported by Welland Procurement Unit in partnership with Northamptonshire County Council;
- (ii) the Head of Finance to agree a fee of between 10-12% charged to the cost of each disabled facilities grant towards the cost of the Home Improvement Agency service.

## **8. NORTH WELLINGBOROUGH – COUNCIL-OWNED LAND**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received on the council's land interests associated with the North Wellingborough sustainable urban extension. This land was included in an area which had planning permission for up to 3,000 dwellings and associated facilities and infrastructure, together with a reserve corridor for the Isham-Wellingborough road improvement (IWIMP).

Requests to address the meeting had been received from Mrs R Smart on behalf of Earls Barton Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan Project Group,

Irchester Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan Group and Wollaston Parish Council, Mr J Wilson, President of Wellingborough Chamber of Commerce and Councillor G Lawman, Ward Councillor for Hemmingwell.

The Chairman allowed each of the speakers to address the meeting.

In summary Mrs Smart and Mr Wilson, were in support of the proposal as they considered that the commencement of negotiations would give an indication to government that the council would be achieving somewhere near its housing five year supply, so would assist with decision making in respect of the proposed developments that were coming forward in rural areas. The development would also encourage new businesses and employment and safeguard the future of the borough. Financially it would give the council capital income that could be invested and turned into revenue, along with additional revenue income when houses had been built.

Councillor G Lawman had received representations from the community association and residents of Redhill Grange who were concerned about the lack of infrastructure if this area was to be developed. They considered that Stanton Cross should be developed first, with Wellingborough North moving forward once this had been completed.

The Chairman thanked the speakers for their comments.

The council had been advised that Northants LLP should be regarded as a special purchaser in relation to their proposed acquisition of the two parcels of land fronting Niort Way (40.08 acres and 26.08 acres). This was because Northants LLP had an interest in adjacent land, and the value of such would be enhanced by a merger.

The sale of any land would need to be conditional to protect specific interests, such as the IWIMP. The land for IWIMP was included in phase two, giving the reason for phases one and two to be disposed of at the outset.

Members debated the proposal.

Some considered that as the land already had outline planning permission, following an appeal, that there should be no further delay, as the sale would go some way to achieving the government's targets for a five year housing supply, as well as helping financially with receipt of the new homes bonus, council tax and capital funding which could be reinvested.

It was also considered that there was a need, whilst dealing with a special purchaser, to ensure that best value was obtained and that the best possible advice obtained with regular updates being provided to committee.

Other councillors were concerned about the lack of infrastructure and the fact that IWIMP had not progressed as expected. There was also concern that, even with housing at Stanton Cross and Wellingborough North coming forward, there would still be a shortfall in achieving the five year housing supply target.

Members asked how many houses would be required for the five year supply. The Head of Planning and Local Development explained the housing trajectory and five year supply implications.

The chairman suggested that a progress report be made to the Resources Committee on 30 October 2013. This was agreed.

**RESOLVED to:**

- (i) authorise officers to enter negotiations with Northants LLP, as a special purchaser, for best consideration for the council's land needed for phases one and two of the Wellingborough North development;
- (ii) agree that there will be a report back to a future Resources Committee with recommended terms of sale;
- (iii) agree that conditions be attached to the sale of the land to ensure that specific interests are protected;
- (iv) note that a progress report will be made to the Resources Committee on 30 October 2013.

**9. REDWELL AND WAENDEL LEISURE CENTRES: CONTRACT EXTENSION TO 31 MARCH 2014**

The annexed circulated report of the Director of Services was received to seek authority to extend the current contract between the council and D C Leisure Limited for the management and operation of the Waendel and Redwell Leisure Centres.

A working party had been established by Resources Committee on 30 May 2012 to explore options for the management arrangements for the leisure centres subsequent to the expiry of the contract with D C Leisure Limited.

On 26 February 2013 the contract between the parties had been extended by six months to terminate on 30 September 2013.

Since February negotiations between the council and D C Leisure Limited have been proceeding in accordance with the instructions of the member working party. The basis of an agreement for a new contract was that it delivered savings on the council's management fees and this has been reached.

Further savings from leisure services needed to be investigated and the working party considered that pursuing this merited further examination and therefore more time was sought to explore alternative options.

D C Leisure Limited had been informed of the position and is agreeable to an extension of the existing contract to 31 March 2014.

**RESOLVED** that a six month extension, to 31 March 2014, be agreed for the leisure centre management contract on current terms to afford time to complete negotiations between the council and D C Leisure Limited.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 7.55pm.

**COUNCIL MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2013**  
**REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

22 July 2013

Present: Councillor Pursglove (Chairman), Councillors Carr (Vice Chairman), Elliott, Emerson, Gough, Hawkes, G Lawman, Maguire, M Patel, Simmons, Timms and V Waters.

Also present: Mrs B Lawrence (Head of Resources) and Mrs P Whitworth (Democratic Services Officer).

**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Minute number</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Elliott.	3.	Presentation – Northamptonshire Rights & Equality Council (NREC).	Other interest – Member of NREC.
Emerson.	3.	Presentation – Northamptonshire Rights & Equality Council (NREC).	Other interest – Member of NREC.

**2. RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2013 be confirmed and signed.

**3. PRESENTATION – NORTHAMPTONSHIRE RIGHTS & EQUALITY COUNCIL**

The Chairman welcomed Anjona Roy, Chief Executive of Northamptonshire Rights & Equality Council (NREC), and invited her to begin her presentation.

Ms Roy told the committee that the organisation's Annual General Meeting had recently taken place, and distributed copies of the latest annual report to members. She then informed the committee about the vision of NREC, which she explained aims to challenge and eradicate discrimination and prejudice or hostility in all its forms, so that all Northamptonshire's diverse communities and citizens can enjoy peace, achieve their full potential, and live free from injustice. Ms Roy explained that this vision was achieved by:

- Supporting and representing individual victims of discrimination.
- Providing immigration advice.
- Supporting victims of hate incidents and monitoring hate incidents.
- Raising awareness of the rights of individuals not to experience discrimination and to have their human rights upheld.

Ms Roy shared a couple of discrimination case studies with the committee. She explained that NREC helped to resolve problems so that business could continue, as was demonstrated by one of the case studies where the subject was still employed by the company after settling racial discrimination and racial harassment claims against them.

She then talked the committee through a number of statistics, illustrating the types of casework categories NREC dealt with in Wellingborough, and the racial, age and gender demographics of their clients. She concluded by informing members about marketing work undertaken by the organisation which included leaflets, regular mail outs and emails, partnership working and referrals from other organisations, local events, a recently-upgraded website, and a social media presence.

The Chairman thanked Ms Roy for her presentation and invited members to ask questions.

Members asked for more information about NREC's partnership working in relation to hate crime reporting and monitoring. Ms Roy explained that around three or four years ago there had been a county partnership organisation that worked with local authorities, schools, and the police in order to bring perpetrators of hate crime to justice. It had been decided that the partnership was an unaffordable model and it had been axed, meaning NREC had changed the way it worked. NREC now tried to raise awareness of hate crime, and took on cases itself to try and get action. She went on to explain that the NREC reported to a county-wide body made up of local authority chief executives at a meeting known as 'Super Tuesday', where hate crime strategies were discussed, and that hate crime was also reported to a hate crime incident review group every month.

Members also asked for more information about NREC's fundraising activities. Ms Roy explained that the organisation was continually bidding for external funding, and also raised money from members and through a number of fundraising activities and events. She explained that the organisation was doing all it could to bring in revenue, but that it was difficult as they were a specialist organisation.

Members offered Ms Roy some advice about the production of the annual accounts, and also asked for a copy of the most recent set of accounts. Ms Roy confirmed she would forward these to members after the meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the presentation be noted.

#### **4. PRESENTATION – VICTORIA CENTRE**

The Chairman welcomed Victoria Centre representatives Ann Reynolds, Chairman; Edeltraud Freund, Centre Manager; and Carrie Masters, Fundraising and Development Worker, and invited them to begin their presentation.

Ms Freund began by giving a brief summary of the history of the organisation. She explained that the Victoria Centre's mission statement meant that the organisation was dedicated to providing cultural and educational services and development opportunities for those most in need, such as the elderly, children and their parents, young people, people with learning difficulties and disabilities, lone parents, newcomers to the area, single people and others in danger of social exclusion.

To show how the organisation met its objective, Ms Freund shared the centre's timetable of activities with the committee. The timetable included regular activities

provided by the Victoria Centre itself such as childcare and an over 50s friendship club; plus activities provided by other organisations that shared the Victoria Centre objective such as an interfaith group meeting and councillor surgeries; as well as one-off events held at the centre such as training sessions and courses. In addition to this full timetable of activities at the centre, Ms Freund explained that the organisation also ran projects such as the Mates of Castle Fields, whereby adults with learning disabilities helped look after a local park, as well as providing support for emerging community groups.

Ms Masters then talked about the organisation's funding, informing the committee that in addition to borough council funding of £23,000 a year, the centre had raised £175,202 through external funding since its last attendance at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of October 2011. She gave details of some of the funding received, which included £5,000 for a three-year project for new arrivals from the J Paul Getty Jnr charitable trust, and £45,747 for a three-year playschemes project from BBC Children in Need.

Ms Freund explained the organisation's management and staffing structure to the committee, and talked briefly about some of the challenges the centre had faced, after which she concluded the presentation by thanking the council for its continued support.

The Chairman thanked the Victoria Centre for their presentation and the work they carried out in the borough, and invited members to ask questions.

Members asked whether the Victoria Centre reviewed the services it provided regularly to ensure there was no duplication with other charitable organisations and that funds were being used in the best way possible. Ms Freund replied that the centre worked closely with other organisations and project boards and that some duplication had been shown. Where duplication was identified they worked on reducing it, for example closing the breakfast club for school-aged children when it was shown that most schools provided their own clubs.

Members also offered advice about the production of the annual accounts and suggested it would be beneficial to have a separate and more comprehensive annual report produced as well.

The Victoria Centre was congratulated on its fundraising efforts, and for the work it had done with Castle Fields. Members asked for more information about future ambitions for the park and the recently-restored bandstand. Ms Freund replied that there was another event in the park in August, and that there was still lots that could be done, including more activities at the bandstand, installation of adult fitness equipment, clearance of the brook, and new toilets.

Before the Victoria Centre representatives left the meeting, Mrs Reynolds extended an invitation to the committee to visit the organisation to see the work they carried out in the borough.

**RESOLVED** that the presentation be noted.

## 5. URGENT MATTER

The Chairman decided that the following matter was urgent within the meaning of Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 for the reason set out:

Minute number	Title	Reason
6.	Overview and Scrutiny projects for 2013-14.	The committee work plan for 2013-14 needed to be finalised.

## 6. URGENT MATTER – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROJECTS FOR 2013-14

The Chairman advised the committee that under this agenda item members could put forward suggestions for possible projects that could be undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee throughout the year. He explained that for reasons of transparency, verbal suggestions should be brief and they would then be looked at in more detail, accompanied by a report for discussion, at a later meeting. The reason for the urgency was that the work plan needed to be finalised, and it would take time for reports to be drafted and discussed before the scope of the projects was decided.

Councillor Elliott suggested a scrutiny project could be undertaken around health and wellbeing and the use of council budgets in the provision of direct services, services commissioned by the council, and grants to partners. He suggested this should cover statutory responsibilities around benefits, income collection, housing, and environmental health, as well as non-statutory advice services, economic development, and sport, leisure and cultural wellbeing services, in order to ensure that in difficult times, services were effectively meeting the council's objectives in terms of their impact on those who are most vulnerable in the borough.

The Head of Resources clarified that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was only able to review current policy, meaning any new set of proposals would need to go in the first instance to the Resources Committee, as there would inevitably be resource implications. Councillor Elliott asked that it be recorded that he had his doubts about this approach as he believed his suggestion would be a review of services rather than the creation of new policy.

Following discussions, it was agreed that the suggested project needed more clarification and direction as a comprehensive review of all council services was very significant. The committee agreed that the Head of Resources would discuss the proposed project with Councillor Elliott in more detail and a report would be brought back to the September meeting of the committee, as part of the review of the whole work plan, and that the report would also recommend an appropriate way to progress the project.

Chairman

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

## COUNCIL MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2013

### REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 September 2013

Present: Councillor Pursglove (Chairman), Councillors Carr (Vice Chairman), Elliott, Emerson, Gough, Hawkes, G Lawman, M Patel, Simmons, and V Waters.

Also present: Mr T Wright (Director of Services), Mrs L Elliott (Head of Finance), Mr G Jones (Head of ICT), Mrs B Lawrence (Head of Resources), Mr S Wood (Head of Planning and Local Development), Mr J Casserly (Managing Director, Wellingborough Norse), and Mrs P Whitworth (Democratic Services Officer).

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

**RESOLVED** to note that an apology for absence was received from Councillor Maguire.

2. **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2013 be confirmed and signed.

#### 3. PERFORMANCE – PROGRESS AGAINST TARGETS

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received to inform the committee of progress against performance targets from 1 April to 30 June 2013.

The report showed that the council has 33 performance indicators that are monitored by a red, amber, green (RAG) traffic light system, and that progress was also monitored by a direction of travel to provide a comparison against the previous year. It was also explained that four of the performance indicators were annual targets for which performance data could not yet be provided, and therefore the RAG status could not be ascertained.

It was shown that as at 30 June 2013, of the 29 indicators that could be reported on, 19 indicators (65%) were greater than, or equal to, target (green), 6 (21%) were within 5% of target (amber), and 4 (14%) were less than 95% of target (red). The report explained that this represented a considerable improvement in performance since 31 March 2013, when of the 38 indicators reported on, 20 (53%) were green, 5 (13%) were amber, and 13 (34%) were red.

The report also explained that, in accordance with council policy, any indicators that were in the red category on a consistent basis became the subject of a performance improvement plan (PIP). For the period of 1 April to 30 June 2013 there had been six PIPs in place. Due to improvements in performance, the corporate management team (CMT) had agreed to remove five of the PIPs at the end of the quarter and put two additional ones in place. This meant that at the time of the committee meeting there were three PIPs in place, relating to: the number of missed bins collected before the end of the next working day; the processing of new benefit claims from the date of receipt; and the processing of changes of circumstances to housing and council tax benefit claims. It was explained that these PIPs would be

monitored by CMT and an update report submitted as part of the next progress report to the committee.

Members discussed the report and asked for clarification and more information on several of the performance indicators, including: the number of households housed as a direct result of action by the local authority; the percentage of calls answered in 10 seconds; and the end of month total debt over rent roll. The Head of Planning and Local Development and the Head of Resources gave additional information in response to members' requests for clarification on the above performance indicators.

Members also requested additional information about the indicator relating to the percentage of council tax collected, and asked in particular what percentage of those in arrears were working-age claimants in receipt of the maximum amount (91.5%) of council tax support. The Head of Finance confirmed that she would provide the figures as a written answer to members of the committee after the meeting.

A discussion then took place around the performance improvement plan relating to the number of missed bins collected before the end of the next working day. Members asked for clarification of the definition of next working day, as the refuse collection week ran from Tuesday to Friday. The managing director of Wellingborough Norse clarified that if a bin was missed on a Friday, the next working day would be considered to be the following Tuesday. He explained that the refuse collectors would, however, try and return the same day, and that the customer would be informed of what to expect at the time of reporting the missed bin.

The Chairman commented that the report was much more focussed than previously and thanked officers for their efforts.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

#### **4. ANNUAL REPORT**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received to summarise the items considered by the committee over the past municipal year. Appended to the report was a list of the presentations from partners and community groups, and a summary of the work of the committee.

Members commented that the appendix that summarised the work of the committee would benefit from additional information giving an update on progress made on each piece of work since the date of the relevant committee meeting, where appropriate. It was agreed that in subsequent annual reports a progress column would be added to the appendix.

Members also discussed the council's shared legal service, District Law, which had been reviewed at both the meetings of 24 September 2012 and 11 February 2013, and asked whether the issue of member involvement at board level had progressed any further. The Head of Resources clarified that there was no provision in the District Law management agreement for members to sit on the board because it was concerned with internal, operational arrangements rather than strategy and policy.

After listening to members' comments, the Chairman asked that officers provide further information.

**RESOLVED** that the annual report of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be approved for presentation to council.

## 5. REVIEW OF PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2013-14

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received to review the work programme for 2013-14, as agreed on 17 June 2013, to take account of new requests from members.

The Head of Resources explained that the report confirmed what had already been agreed, with the addition of a request from Cllr Elliott for a further item: a review of the council's approach to debt recovery, covering collection policies for benefits and council tax, together with information about grants to organisations that provide debt advice.

Members agreed that the new item would be added to the work programme.

**RESOLVED** that the revised work programme for 2013-14 be agreed.

## 6. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

**RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item in accordance with Section 100A(4) to the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that they would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information of the descriptions shown in schedule 12A to the Act:

Minute no.	Item	Paragraph of Schedule 12A
7.	Wellingborough Homes progress report	3

## 7 WELLINGBOROUGH HOMES PROGRESS REPORT

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received to provide members with an update on the service provided by Wellingborough Homes. The report included information presented to the council's Community Committee in June 2013, comprising a detailed update on the Wellingborough Homes Improvement Programme, and the final report on the progress of Wellingborough Homes at the end of the five year monitoring period. Additional, exempt, information had been provided by Wellingborough Homes for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman welcomed Dave Willis, managing director of Wellingborough Homes, to the meeting.

Mr Willis highlighted a number of Wellingborough Homes' successes and challenges during the last five years, which included:

Successes:

- the new build programme, with all new affordable housing in the borough last year being built by Wellingborough Homes;

- tenant satisfaction, which had increased from 82% to 87% over the last three years; and
- the organisation was now in the Sunday Times' top 100 not-for-profit companies to work for.

Challenges:

- the quality of the repairs service offered to tenants, as delays had occurred in finding a new contractor for the service;
- issues around supply and demand of housing, as the majority (51%) of the organisation's housing stock is three-bedroom family housing. More needed to be done to ensure new builds met the demand for one and two-bedroom homes; and
- the approaching introduction of Universal Credit, which would be paid directly to tenants and could affect the organisation's rental stream.

The Chairman thanked Mr Willis for his summary and invited members to ask questions.

Members requested an update on the Diana and Sylvanus House projects. Mr Willis explained that the projects had been delayed due to board scrutiny but that the contract had now been let and it was hoped work would begin within the next couple of months.

Members also asked about the organisation's tenant advisory panel (TAP), and questioned whether meetings were accessible to those people living outside of the town centre. Mr Willis clarified that free transport was provided, as engaging with people in rural areas was one of the organisation's priorities. He added that the TAP was not the only way for tenants to engage with Wellingborough Homes.

In response to further questions, Mr Willis also confirmed that if proposed changes regarding remuneration of the board were accepted, the two tenant board members would also be paid.

Members raised concerns about community communication, with specific reference to non-tenants, in relation to planning applications by Wellingborough Homes, and subsequent work once planning permission had been granted. Mr Willis explained that there had been issues in the past around communication, but the organisation had learned from the experience. He also acknowledged that there was more to be done. He said there was a balance to be reached in the level of communication with residents, as over-communicating could divert from the planning process and it was important that any concerns were raised in the proper way. In relation to work being carried out once permission had been granted, Mr Willis clarified that the organisation would not want to mislead people, but that not everything that appeared on plans was subject to planning permission, and there would always be people opposed to, as well as supportive of, every application.

Members then asked for more information about the introduction of service charges and requested reassurance that communal areas would be kept to a decent standard if the charges were introduced; and also congratulated

Wellingborough Homes on the award of £400,000 from the Big Lottery Fund which would be used to help hard-to-reach groups and those in fuel poverty. Mr Willis clarified to members that the lottery funding would not be restricted to providing help for Wellingborough Homes tenants only, and would assist non-tenants that were in need too.

Members asked what concerns Wellingborough Homes had for the future, and what the council could do to help alleviate those concerns. Mr Willis suggested that discussions could continue around intensive housing management charges, which meant that certain work carried out could be claimed as housing benefit, paid for by the council and reclaimed from the Department for Work and Pensions. He also suggested that work could be done around the Keyways housing allocation system, and making changes to the priority bandings within the system, to help with the supply and demand issues for housing.

Councillor Elliott asked that it be recorded in the minutes that discussions around both the intensive housing management charge and housing benefit suggestion, as well as the banding system and active monitoring of housing demand, be supported by the council.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

Chairman

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.



## **COUNCIL MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2013**

### **REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE**

24 September 2013

Present: Councillors G Simmons (Chairman), Bell, Harrington and Henley (4).

Also present: Mr R Micklewright (Director of Resources), Mr C Pittman (Head of Community and Committee Manager), Mrs L Elliott (Head of Finance), Mr M Watkins (Chief Internal Auditor, CW Audit Services), Mrs Y Geen (External Auditor, KPMG), Mr V Patel (External Auditor, KPMG), Mrs S Knowles (Principal Accountancy Manager) and Miss E Davidson (Democratic Services Officer).

#### **1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

It was proposed by Councillor Harrington and seconded by Councillor Bell that in the absence of the chairman and vice-chairman Councillor Simmons be appointed as chairman for this meeting. On being put to the vote this was declared carried.

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Simmons be appointed as chairman for this meeting.

#### **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**RESOLVED** to note that apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bailey (Chairman), Bass (Vice-Chairman) and Dholakia (3).

#### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**RESOLVED** to note there were no declarations of interest received in respect of the agenda items specified in accordance with the code of conduct:

#### **4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2013 be confirmed and signed.

#### **5. CHIEF INTERNAL AUDITOR'S UPDATE REPORT 2013-14**

The annexed circulated report of the Chief Internal Auditor was received on the performance of the internal audit service against its agreed scope of work.

The Chief Internal Auditor highlighted that the report was the first of the financial year. 45 of the 232 planned days of work had been undertaken by the end of August. This was usual for the time of year as a greater amount of the planned work could not be completed until financial quarters three and four.

The Head of Finance provided an update on the outstanding recommendation from March 2013, relating to improved controls over the expenditure on agency staff and contractors. She summarised the council's continued work on limiting agencies to a list of preferred suppliers with agreed contracted rates and the introduction of controls which would enable the length of temporary employee contracts to be managed more easily.

The Chief Internal Auditor had undertaken checks and balances at the end of the financial year and was satisfied that officers' self-assessments of progress against actions were accurate.

Members asked for more information about the use of agency workers. The Head of Finance replied that the council was not attractive to specialists in certain areas because of market pay conditions and limited contract duration.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted as part of its role in ensuring that sufficient progress was being made against the agreed internal audit plan for the 2013/14 year.

## 6. **AUDITED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2012-13**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance presented the audited Statement of Accounts to the committee, which included amendments agreed with the council's external auditors, KPMG. The statutory deadline for the audited Statement of Accounts to be approved by the committee was 30 September 2013.

The External Auditor confirmed the council's Annual Governance Statement was in accordance with the opinion of KPMG as to the council's governance arrangements.

The external auditors found no material errors. KPMG's level of materiality for audit purposes was £1,500,000; whilst the council's level operated on one of £100,000 for its own purposes.

Members asked for more detail regarding an outstanding issue regarding an entry of £540,000 in the accounts. The Head of Finance explained this first occurred in the accounts in 2008/09, which coincided with the adoption of international financial regulations, which had been implemented and presumed to be successful at the time. The money was believed to be held as a debt outstanding to central government for business rates but the matter was under investigation. It was expected to be resolved in next year's Statement of Accounts.

Members asked what the planning reserve was intended to cover and were advised that it was an amalgamation of several smaller planning funds, for use in relation to any eventuality resulting from planning applications, such as the cost of enquiries.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the adjustments made in the redrafted financial statements presented be noted;
- (ii) approval be given for the Section 151 Officer to sign the Letter of Representation on the Audit Committee's behalf;
- (iii) the Section 151 Officer be authorised to approve any amendments after the committee date and prior to the official signing of the accounts;
- (iv) progress be monitored in implementing KPMG's issues and recommendations at a future meeting.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 7:45pm.

