

COUNCIL MEETING – 15 APRIL 2014

REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

17 March 2014

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

Also present: Miss J Thomas (Interim Head of Planning and Local Development), Mrs V Jessop (Principal Housing Manager), Mrs A Wilcox, (Principal Health Protection Manager), Mr J Casserly (Managing Director, Wellingborough Norse), Miss N Holden (General Manager, Wellingborough Norse) and Mrs P Whitworth (Democratic Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that there were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED to note there were no declarations of interest.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2014 be confirmed and signed.

4. HOUSING SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The annexed circulated report of the Interim Head of Planning and Local Development was received to provide members with an analysis of performance progress for the housing service from April 2013 to January 2014. An outturn figure for April 2012 to March 2013 was also included in the report for comparison purposes.

The report discussed and gave figures for the following areas of the housing service: choice-based lettings (“Keyways”) housing register; housing options (provision of assistance and advice to people in housing need); private rented homeless initiative grant scheme; activities to improve the condition of the borough’s private sector housing stock; housing development and the provision of new affordable homes; Code for Sustainable Homes assessments; energy performance certificate (EPC) assessments; and level of external and internal telephone calls to the service.

The Principal Housing Manager presented the report, and also gave additional details to members about the housing allocation policy and the availability of affordable rural homes. It was explained that band E was for applicants with a local connection with no housing need, and that there was a need to encourage people in, or connected to, rural settlements to apply for affordable housing through Keyways.

Members congratulated the Principal Housing Manager and her team for a very positive and effective service.

Members then asked for clarification about the definition of homelessness, and whether or not that referred to rough sleepers. The Principal Housing Manager explained that a members' briefing note would soon be issued discussing rough sleepers, and the annual count for the borough suggested there were seven. She clarified that the majority of people presenting as homeless to the service were families or single vulnerable people.

Members also asked if there was a reason that paper applications to the Keyways system had almost doubled in the past year and online applications had decreased. The Principal Housing Manager replied that it was often quicker to send a form out rather than taking an applicant through the process on the phone, and reduced team capacity and the introduction of a new computer system had meant it had been a necessity at times over the past year.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

5. FOOD SAFETY AND HEALTH AND SAFETY ENFORCEMENT SERVICE PLANS

The annexed circulated report of the Interim Head of Planning and Local Development was received to seek council approval for the food safety enforcement service plan, and the health and safety enforcement service plan, both of which identified key service delivery issues and set out objectives for the health protection service for the period 2014-15. The food safety enforcement service plan and the health and safety enforcement plan were both appended to the report.

The Principal Health Protection Manager presented the report and explained that the service plans were a requirement of mandatory guidance issued to local authorities by the Food Standards Agency and the Health and Safety Executive.

Members congratulated the Principal Health Protection Manager and her team for a very positive and effective service.

Members then asked about the reasons for the number of written warnings issued on food safety contraventions having doubled in the last year. The Principal Health Protection Manager said that anecdotal evidence pointed to a decrease in standards in some premises due to the economic downturn. She explained it was possible that some premises would spend money on the front of house aspects of their business but could be more reluctant to commit additional funds to more hidden aspects. She also said that the health protection team was having to start from scratch working with new owners, as there was more turnover in different businesses occupying premises.

R1 RECOMMENDED that the food safety enforcement service plan 2014-15 be adopted.

RESOLVED that the health and safety enforcement service plan 2014-15 be adopted.

6. UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS: WELLINGBOROUGH NORSE

The annexed circulated report of the Managing Director of Wellingborough Norse was received to provide members with a quarterly update on performance and progress for the period October-December 2013.

The quarterly performance and progress report was appended to the report. The financial information in part five of the appendix was exempt by virtue of paragraph 3 of part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The chairman informed the committee that as no members of the press or public were present, the report and appendix would be taken in their entirety.

The General Manager of Wellingborough Norse gave members an update on the 'Which Side of the Fence' litter experiment, which had taken place last November in partnership with Keep Britain Tidy. She explained that surveys carried out before and after the experiment – which saw one side of Church Street in the town centre left uncleaned for a weekend – revealed very little change in people's attitudes. She explained that this was probably because 87% of the people surveyed reported they never dropped litter in the first place. She informed members that 41% of people were aware of the experiment, and that survey results confirmed it had made people think more about litter, and made them more aware of the effort and cost of cleaning it up. She explained that even though most people didn't believe the experiment would stop people littering, the high profile of the campaign made it successful and Norse was already working on new campaigns with Keep Britain Tidy to capitalise on that success.

Members then discussed ways that Norse could be more proactive, with particular reference to replacing bin lids and helping local groups organise litter picks. The Managing Director of Wellingborough Norse added that the company was also compiling a list of parish council websites and magazines so that their services could be more proactively publicised, and also that employees were doing more work out in the community to identify issues and solutions.

Members also enquired about the regularity of the cleaning of the A45. The Managing Director explained the challenges and expense of cleaning the side of a high-speed road and confirmed the next clean up was due to take place on 28 April 2014.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 8.15pm.

COUNCIL MEETING – 15 APRIL 2014

REPORT OF THE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

18 March 2014

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

Also present: Miss J Thomas, Interim Head of Planning and Local Development, Mrs S Bateman, Senior Planning Officer, Mr A Stevenson, Design and Conservation Officer and Mrs C A Mundy, Democratic Services Officer.

(Councillor G Lawman attended the meeting as an observer and Councillor Bailey as a speaker.)

1. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2014 be confirmed and signed.

2. WELLINGBOROUGH PLAN

The annexed circulated report of the Interim Head of Planning and Local Development was received to seek approval to carry out a consultation for the preparation of the new Local Plan (The Wellingborough Plan) for the borough.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 and stressed the importance of having an up-to-date local plan. The plan is made up of development plan documents such as core strategies and other site-specific policies and plans. A key planning principle is that planning should be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings. A plan needs to be kept up to date to provide a practical framework for making decisions on planning applications. Without an up-to-date plan the NPPF takes precedence in policy terms. The plan will supplement the strategic policies in the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS). Together these documents will form the Local Plan for the borough. The JCS was being prepared and it is anticipated that it will be adopted in 2015.

The plan will replace the policies in the Town Centre Area Action Plan, and the saved policies from the current Local Plan. It will also take forward some of the work that was undertaken on the Site Specific Proposals Development Plan Document. A fundamental part of the plan making process is consultation, allowing the public, members and stakeholders to help shape the issues, options and policies of the plan. Once the consultation was completed a series of member workshops will be held.

The consultation will take place over a six week period and will involve consulting 1,290 contacts, including the Environment Agency, Natural

England, parish councils, voluntary groups and individuals and placing the material on the Council's consultation portal.

The Senior Planning Officer informed members that currently the borough was very vulnerable to speculative planning applications because it did not have a five year housing supply in place.

Members expressed concern about the West Northants Core Strategy, which they considered to be further along the process than Wellingborough. The Senior Planning Officer clarified that this was not, in fact, the case as Wellingborough already had in place a local plan and this was what was being reviewed. West Northants had no plan in place at all.

Members discussed the proposed consultation and agreed that this needed to be as widespread as possible with the public being fully engaged. It was suggested that the website be fully utilised, with social media outlets as well as including 'Wellingborough now and then', to ensure there was true democracy. Some concern was expressed that the plan was referred to as the Wellingborough Plan, which indicated that it was only for the town rather than borough-wide. People living in rural areas were vulnerable and needed to be included.

Councillor Elliott proposed an amendment to the title of the document to be the plan for the borough of Wellingborough. This was seconded by Councillor Higgins and on being put to the vote declared carried.

The following then became the substantive motion:

That approval be given to consultation in relation to the plan for the borough of Wellingborough. On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED that approval be given to consultation taking place in relation to the plan for the borough of Wellingborough.

3. PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA EXTENSION FOR FINEDON CONSULTATION

The annexed circulated report of the Interim Head of Planning and Local Development was received to seek approval to proceed with a consultation with interested parties upon the proposed extension of the Finedon conservation area.

Councillor Bailey had made a request to address the committee and the chairman allowed him to speak for five minutes. He congratulated Mr Stevenson on the Finedon character appraisal and confirmed that he had been consulted and supported the proposal.

The report referred to the Finedon conservation area character appraisal which was appended along with the draft area map.

A consultation of six weeks would be undertaken with ward councillors, Finedon Parish Council, English Heritage, Northamptonshire County Council, the Civic Society and local residents. Following consultation the responses would be collated and a further report would be brought to committee for consideration, including costings for the project along with the potential funding sources.

Members expressed their support for the project and considered that it was of importance to ensure that historical buildings were protected. They asked if the cost implications were known at this stage.

The Interim Head of Planning and Local Development clarified that the initial costs would be in relation to staff time, but detailed financial implications would be included in a future report.

RESOLVED that consultation be undertaken with interested parties upon the designation of an extended Finedon conservation area as identified in the report.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 7.50pm.

COUNCIL MEETING – 15 APRIL 2014

REPORT OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

19 March 2014

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

Also present: Mrs L Elliott, Head of Finance, Miss J Thomas, Interim Head of Planning and Local Development, Mrs V Phillipson, Principal Policy and Regeneration Manager and Mrs C A Mundy, Democratic Services Officer.

(Councillor Bass attended as an observer.)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that an apology was received from Councillor Carr.

2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2014 be confirmed and signed subject to it being noted that Councillor Ward declared an interest on item 10 Review of Discretionary Non-domestic Rate Relief 2014-15 as a life member of Wellingborough Old Grammarians Association.

3. 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 councillor declared an interest in the following items:

| Councillor | Minute No | Subject | Reason |
|-------------|-----------|---|--|
| Graves | 7 | Town & Country Planning Section 106 Action | Registerable – member of Wilby Playing Field Trust. |
| Scarborough | 6 | Prudential Indicators & Treasury Management Strategy. | Registerable – wife owns shares and is in receipt of a pension from Barclays PLC and is currently working at a building society referred to in the report. |

4. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2014-15

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received to seek approval of the council's Pay Policy Statement for publication on 1 April 2014.

RESOLVED that approval be given to the Pay Policy Statement for publication.

5. FINANCIAL MONITORING AND POSITION STATEMENT FOR 2013-14

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received on the monitoring position for both revenue and capital expenditure.

The Head of Finance explained that the revenue and capital monitoring positions had been combined to give members a clearer view and understanding of the financial position of the council. Each area was reported on separately but where both spending streams were affected the position was highlighted.

The report detailed the position of the 2013-14 revenue budgets and variances and the capital programme 2013-14 to 2017-18 along with the variances and re-profiled budgets.

Members thanked the Head of Finance for the detailed report which they had found very useful and timely. They welcomed the income increases that had been received and the revised revenue position. There was concern over the level of the proposed capital expenditure, which they believed to be optimistic and unrealistic. An early report to committee on genuine capital expenditure proposals was requested. They also made reference to the financial windfall from planning applications and asked if this would be ring-fenced to cover any costs of forthcoming appeals.

The Head of Finance clarified that she was planning to bring a report on a capital review to the June committee. She had also included a red, amber, and green analysis to the report along with comments from the responsible officer to indicate why projects were not delivered in the timescales estimated. She also clarified that she would pursue the idea of ring-fencing the money as suggested.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the position on the revenue monitoring and the reasons for the variances reported be noted;
- (ii) the position on the capital programme and the reasons for the variances and re-profiled budgets be noted;
- (iii) the position on the funding of the capital programme and the forecast programme for 2014-18 be noted.

(Councillor Scarborough left the room during the discussion on the following item.)

6. PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2014-15

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received on the policies and strategies for the Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy for 2014-15.

Members asked questions of clarity regarding investments in building societies and in relation to the level of investment income based on an average return of 0.5% for new investments to which the Head of Finance responded.

R1 RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) the Treasury Management Policy Statement be approved;
- (ii) the Prudential and Treasury indicators be approved;
- (iii) the Annual Investment Strategy be approved;
- (iv) it be noted that the council has previously formally adopted the clauses from the 2011 CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice.

(Councillor Scarborough re-joined the meeting.)

7. TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT SECTION 106 – PROJECT AMENDMENTS

The annexed circulated joint report of the Interim Head of Planning and Local Development and the Head of Finance was received to agree an amendment to a previously identified Section 106 project in Irchester and to seek approval to proceed with three further Section 106 projects.

A request had been made by Irchester Parish Council to change the way in which the Section 106 monies were used. They wished to use the funding towards the creation of a new skate park.

The three further Section 106 project proposals were as follows:

- (i) Wilby Parish Council for play equipment, in the sum of £8,950, which would be managed and maintained by the Wilby Playing Field Trust.
- (ii) Wellingborough Norse for the removal of a hedgerow at Redwell Leisure Centre in the sum of £3,840.
- (iii) Friends of Croyland Gardens for the installation of picnic benches and bird/bat boxes in Croyland Park in the sum of £3,053.

The report detailed which development schemes the monies would be taken from.

Members raised particular concern over the urgent repairs that were required to be made to the car park at the Olympic Way shops. A report to committee in October 2013 had indicated that S106 monies from the Calendar Pub development had been identified to carry out the required improvements as a matter of urgency and they asked why this had not been progressed.

(Councillor Hollyman declared an interest, as he represented the developer who was looking at the site, and left the room during further discussion on this item.)

Officers responded to this query and explained the reasons for the delay. An additional officer had been appointed and was progressing this. The chairman suggested that the funding be taken out of the capital budget to enable this project to be completed as soon as possible. Members also asked that the ward councillors for Brickhill ward be kept informed of developments by officers.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The amendment to the Irchester Parish Council project for a change of use to a new skate park instead of new play and fitness equipment at Austin Close play area, to be managed and maintained by Irchester Parish Council, in the sum of £30,857, be agreed;
- (ii) Approval be given to the use of £8,950 from the S106 agreement WP/2011/0345/FM to finance new recreation equipment in Wilby, to be managed and maintained by Wilby Playing Fields Trust;
- (iii) Approval be given to the use of £3,386 from the S106 agreement WP/2011/0345/FM and £454 from CP/2009/0013/F to finance the hedgerow removal at Redwell Leisure Centre (RLC);
- (iv) Approval be given to the use of £3,053 from the S106 agreement WP/2012/0208/FM (2 Avon House, Tithe Barn Road, £9,000 for environmental improvements) to finance the installation of picnic tables and bat/bird boxes in Croyland Park.

(Councillor Hollyman rejoined the meeting.)

8. REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The annexed circulated report of the Chief Executive was received on proposals to review the council's decision making arrangements.

The report detailed the areas of duplication of work across existing committees and the fact that a number of agendas contained items of information or to note. In addition there was no longer a requirement for a council operating a committee system to have a scrutiny committee

The council's senior management team had reduced and there were now fewer senior officers available to administer the existing committee arrangements.

The report made reference to the existing committee structure and gave recommendations for the future alignment of committees and the decision making processes.

The draft civic timetable 2014 was appended to the report for review.

Members discussed the proposals for the changes to the committees, agreeing that the number of items for decision making coming before committee had significantly reduced. There was some concern that items for note would now be sent via a members' briefing note rather than them coming before committee for full discussion. It was also suggested that the Constitution Working Party should consider the level of delegated power that was given to officers. With regard to the timetable, amendments were suggested to the dates of the Planning Committees to now be held on 3 December 2014 and 14 January 2015 and for the borough and parish election on 7 May 2015 to be included on the timetable. Members also asked if the annual council meeting for 2015 could be included on the timetable and, if possible, that the school holiday period be avoided when setting the date.

The chairman clarified that any note items that needed full debate would continue to come before committee. He agreed that the proposed changes to the timetable be incorporated and that a date for annual council 2015 be included when the report was put before council.

R2 RECOMMENDED that:

- (a) With effect from the 2014 civic year, which commences with annual council on 29 May 2014:
- (i) the three existing policy committees be deleted and replaced with two policy committees known as Resources Committee and Services Committee;
 - (ii) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be deleted and the scrutiny function be removed as it was no longer required;
 - (iii) a Partnerships & Performance Committee be established;
 - (iv) the frequency of the two policy committees be six times per civic year;
 - (v) the frequency of the Partnerships & Performance Committee and Audit Committee be three times each per civic year;
 - (vi) reports to any committee meeting of the council should generally require substantive decisions;
 - (vii) items for members to note or for information should generally be communicated via a members' briefing note;
 - (viii) the notables report to council be discontinued.
- (b) The draft civic timetable for 2014 be approved, to incorporate the changes referred to above.

RESOLVED that if the recommendations above are agreed the Constitution Working Party be convened to consider detailed administrative arrangements and to advise council on these matters.

9. IRRECOVERABLE SUNDRY DEBTS AND HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received on the amounts written off under delegated powers for sundry debts and housing benefit overpayments.

RESOLVED to note that the amount of £9,482.71 had been written off under delegated powers of the Section 151 officer.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 7.55pm.

COUNCIL MEETING – 15 APRIL 2014

REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

25 March 2014

Present: Councillors Bailey (Chairman), Bell, Dholakia, Harrington and Henley.

Also present: Mrs L Elliott, Head of Finance, Mr M Watkins, Chief Internal Auditor, CW Audit Services, Mrs Y Geen, External Auditor, KMPG, Mr N Robinson, Principal Revenue and Benefits Manager and Mrs C A Mundy, Democratic Services Officer.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bass and Simmons.

2. 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.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

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

4. 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, Mr M Watkins, highlighted that to the end of February 2014, 202 days of planned work had been undertaken. This was in line with expectations. He confirmed that by 31 March 2014 the plan would be delivered and all work completed.

The report summarised the reviews completed for financial management and budgetary control, main accounting and treasury management, benefits, and council tax. All had a significant level of assurance. A review of The Castle Theatre Contract Monitoring, indicated a moderate level of assurance.

Members raised queries over The Castle. The Head of Finance explained that she and the Head of Resources were now dealing with The Castle. Monthly meetings were being held to review the financial position and formal reporting and monitoring were in place. The Chief Internal Auditor clarified that he had carried out an audit last year of The Castle and had made some recommendations to improve their financial control process.

In response to questions regarding the progress of the crematorium, the Head of Finance explained that work was being undertaken on the design to proceed to the planning application stage. A meeting of the working party was to take place in April.

Reference was also made to the moderate assurance level for the licensing partnership. The Head of Finance explained that the Central Administration Unit for licensing comprised: Wellingborough, East Northamptonshire, Kettering, Corby and Daventry councils. A moderate assurance opinion had been given in respect of the licensing partnership and a number of recommendations – largely in respect of computer system developments – had now been put in place to address issues found between the collection of licensing income on behalf of the council.

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 2013-14 financial year.

5. EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL AUDIT PLANS

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received on the External Audit Plan for 2013-14 accounts and the Internal Audit Plan for work to be completed in 2014-15.

The chairman welcomed External Auditor, Mrs Geen, to the meeting.

The External Auditor highlighted the four key stages of work required to produce the financial statements in readiness for September 2014. She also referred to the two standard risks which have to be considered for all organisations of management override of controls and fraudulent revenue recognition. With regard to the planned audit fee for 2013-14 this was £65,781, which was the same as the audit fee for 2012/13.

The Chief Internal Auditor referred to the Internal Audit Plan 2014-17 and informed members of the areas of work proposed to be audited in 2014-15. The Strategic Internal Audit Plan for 2014 to 2017 gave an estimate of the number of days in each year that would be spent on each service area.

Members commented that some of the suggested areas would need to be reviewed as there may no longer be a requirement for them to be audited. The Head of Finance confirmed that there would be flexibility on what would be audited.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the External Audit plan 2013-14 be received and noted;
- (ii) the Internal Audit plan 2014-15 be received and noted.

6. CERTIFICATION OF CLAIMS AND RETURNS – ANNUAL REPORT

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received on the annual report on the Certification of Grants and Claims 2012-13 issued by KPMG.

The document was appended to the report.

The External Auditor made reference to the very small adjustment of 0.01% which had been made to the housing and council tax benefit claim and confirmed that no qualification letter would be issued. Reference was also made to the fee for this year which equated to £14,401 which was a reduction of £8,000 on the fee levied for 2011-12.

The Head of Finance confirmed that it was very rare that an unqualified opinion was issued and that this had been down to the hard work of the benefits team.

Members congratulated the officers on this achievement.

RESOLVED that the annual report on the Certification of Claims and Returns for 2012-13 be received and noted.

7. 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:

| Min. no. | Item | Paragraph of Schedule 12A |
|----------|---|---------------------------|
| 8 | Fraud Briefing – protection of public purse | E3 |

8. FRAUD BRIEFING – PROTECTION OF THE PUBLIC PURSE

The annexed circulated exempt report of the Head of Finance was received on the Audit Commission's publication 'Protecting the Public Purse' and the individually tailored fraud briefings for each council. The briefing for Wellingborough was attached to the report.

The External Auditor made particular reference to the important role that councillors had in the fight against fraud; and to the national picture on fraud; detailed how Wellingborough compared to other districts in Northamptonshire; and made reference to tenancy fraud which had a knock-on effect on homelessness figures. Appended to the report was a checklist for councillors and others responsible for governance which the Head of Finance said she

would work through with her officers and report back on at the September meeting.

RESOLVED that the fraud briefing for Wellingborough be received and that it be noted that officers would report back to the Audit Committee in September 2014.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 7:15pm.