

COUNCIL MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2019
REPORT OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

25 September 2019

Present: Councillors Griffiths (Chairman), Partridge-Underwood, (Vice-Chairman), Allebone, Bell, Bone, Carr, Graves, Gough, Harrington, Henley, Morrall, Scarborough and M Waters.

Also present: Mrs L Elliott (Managing Director), Mr S Darcy (Director of Resources/Section 151 Officer), Miss K Denton, Mrs V Jessop and Mr E Symons (Assistant Directors), Mr R Watson (Revenue and Benefits Manager) and Mrs C A Mundy (Democratic Services Officer).

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

(The chairman welcomed everyone, shared the housekeeping rules and informed the meeting that a member of the public intended to film. If anyone objected to this they should indicate this to him.)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Emerson and Francis.

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, no declarations were made.

3. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19 JUNE 2019

The minutes of the resources committee of 19 June 2019 were received.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the resources committee held on 19 June 2019, be confirmed and signed.

4. GREATWELL HOMES – LAND RATIONALISATION

The chairman informed the committee that he intended to defer item 7 on the agenda, Greatwell Homes – land rationalisation, to the October 2019 meeting. This would enable dialogue to take place with all parties to include ward councillors, officers, Greatwell Homes and the tenants and users of the Hemmingwell Community Centre. Anyone who had registered to speak on this item could still do so if they wished at this meeting but they would only be able to speak once on this subject, in accordance with the constitution; alternatively they could register to speak at the October meeting when the matter would be discussed. The speakers indicated that they would prefer to speak at the next

meeting. This deferral was fully supported by the leader of the opposition who considered that this was a good way forward.

5. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

In accordance with 4.2.11 (c) of the constitution the chairman moved that the running order of the agenda be changed and that items 9 and 10 on the agenda be brought forward, unless there was any discussion on the exempt appendices. This was agreed.

6. TO AUTHORISE OFFICERS TO REPRESENT THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WELLINGBOROUGH IN THE MAGISTRATES COURT

The annexed circulated report of the section 151 officer was received to authorise the following officers to represent the council in any proceedings in the Magistrates' Court:

Sophie Greenham, Technical Revenue Officer;
Cathy McKenzie, Court Officer;
Nigel Robinson, Principal Revenue and Benefit Manager;
Richard Watson, Senior Revenue Officer;
Victoria Williams, Technical Revenue Officer (Maternity cover).

RESOLVED that approval be given to the authorisation of Sophie Greenham, Cath McKenzie, Nigel Robinson, Richard Watson and Victoria Williams representing the Borough Council of Wellingborough in any proceedings in the Magistrates' Court.

7. IRRECOVERABLE COUNCIL TAX, HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS, NON-DOMESTIC RATES AND SUNDRY DEBTS

The annexed circulated report, along with exempt appendices, of the section 151 officer was received in relation to the write off, of irrecoverable debts as follows:

• Non-domestic rate cases	£2,881.80
• Council tax cases	£14,150.27
• Housing benefit overpayment cases	£11,157.13

Appended to the report were details of each case with further detail provided in the exempt appendices.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the sum of £28,189.20 of irrecoverable council tax, non-domestic rate and housing benefit overpayment balances be written off;
- (ii) It be noted that the sum of £39,715.39 had been written off under the delegated powers of the section 151 officer.

8. FINANCIAL MONITORING AND POSITION STATEMENT FOR 2019-20

The annexed circulated report of the section 151 officer was received in relation to the monitoring position for revenue expenditure against approved budget; this is the first monitoring report for 2019-20. Further financial forecasts will be reported to future committees to show the position as at 30 September 2019, 31 December 2019 and 31 March 2020. Appended to the report was the revenue monitoring position to 31 July 2019.

The Section 151 Officer, Mr Darcy, presented the report to committee.

The revenue operational budget had been set in February 2019 at £10.658m made up of £17.868m of gross expenditure and £7.210m of gross income. In June 2019 this was revised down to £10.617m and the business rates income was amended to reduce the reliance on general reserves, this was further summarised in the report.

The 2019-20 budget was funded by using £1.167 of general fund reserves (of which £0.438m was from general reserves and £0.729m from earmarked reserves) and other sources of external funding which were detailed in the report.

The report also contained details of service income and funding sources to show the overall financing of the total expenditure of £17.827m. Over 37% of financing was from internally generated fees and charges and property income and more than 24% from council tax. Less than 9% was from government grants, and a further 22.6% was from retained business rates.

The current forecast was showing a decrease in the need to use reserves of £311K, made up from a number of net pressures and efficiencies. The key contributing areas were listed in appendix 1 to the report.

RESOLVED that the position on the revenue monitoring and the reasons for the variances reported be noted.

9. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING

The annexed circulated report of the section 151 officer was received in relation to the capital programme monitoring to 31 July 2019.

Appended to the report were the following:

- Appendix 1 - capital outturn report to 31 July 2019;
- Appendix 2 - capital programme funding position.

The total capital budget for 2019-20 of £10.393m had been reported to committee in June. Subsequent updates and amendments to the budget were detailed in the report, with the revised capital budget for 2019-20 being £10.611m.

The report detailed the schemes that were expected to be completed within the financial year as follows:

- Wellingborough heritage and shop front grant initiative
- Private sector housing grant – homelessness;
- Project costs of CPO;
- Aggresso upgrade;
- PFP Leisure;
- Crematorium pathways;
- Crematorium garden infrastructure;
- Disabled Facilitates grant

The progress on each of these schemes was detailed further within the report.

There were two supplementary budget requests and particular reference was made to the request for the multi storey car park. The refurbishment of the Swansgate MSCP had been approved, with the original capital budget over two years being £2,727.236; a list of what was included was shown in the report.

Since the original budget had been agreed additional items had been costed for the consideration of the committee as follows:

- Installation of water sprinklers;
- Installation of access and ingress barriers;
- Installation of five charging points for electric vehicles;
- Security fencing to the first floor level;
- Cost of updated condition survey.

The cost of these items had been estimated at £541,900, resulting in a total cost of the scheme being £3,249.721, including 15% contingency, which the committee was asked to consider.

Before debating the request the chairman asked Mr Shoesmith, who had asked to speak, to address the committee.

The speaker considered that the supplementary budget request should be refused as he felt the budget and list of works to be carried out were sufficient. He explained why he felt there was no requirement for some of the additional items listed and considered there were other places that the money could be spent to improve the lives of residents and would be much more beneficial.

The chairman thanked him for his words. There were no questions of clarity and the chairman opened this item, for debate.

Members considered that the additional items listed were essential to avoid crime, vandalism and arson attacks of which there had been a number. As a council the safety of car park users had to be paramount and needed to be taken into account. There had already been a number of arson attacks and

a fire in the multi storey could soon spread to other vehicles and compromise the integrity of the building, even extending to the Swansgate Centre which could be catastrophic. A sprinkler system was considered to be essential.

It was felt that with these added improvements the car park could remain open in the evening to serve the Castle Theatre and night time economy of the town.

A query over whether five charging points was sufficient was raised. It was considered that currently this was deemed to be adequate and more could be added in the future if required.

A comment was made about the items listed in the report which fell under the original budget and officers were asked to clarify that all the items were actually included in the original contract as it was thought that some had not originally been listed. The director confirmed that was the case.

The reduction of the number of lifts from six to four was also raised. This had previously been agreed and it was considered that four working lifts were more than adequate for users.

Members congratulated officers for bringing forward the original proposal and the additional items and considered that a refurbished, fit for purpose, car park for the town was a good legacy to leave the whole borough.

It was proposed by Councillor Bell and seconded by Councillor Partridge-Underwood that the supplementary budget request for the additional expenditure on the multi-storey car park be approved.

The report also referenced a virement of £75k from the BCW property renovation capital budget to the 43/44 High Street capital budget. The original capital sum for 43/44 High Street was £150k of which £75k was grant funding. Following changes to the scheme a revised scheme was developed, with an estimated price of £225k. This investment will bring the property back into use, reduce the council's costs by approximately £2k per year and generate an annual rental income of over £20k, with an additional £9k annual income for eight years from the grant. Some external work of approximately £11k is being funded by the Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme.

A retrospective request for capital funding had been received for a retaining wall at Senwick Drive which had needed urgent repairs totalling £32,692.00. This had been paid from revenue but could be capitalised if the committee agreed.

The report also updated the committee on the temporary accommodation mitigation fund. Ten properties had been acquired with a further offer having been accepted. The original budget allocation of £1.725m had been fully committed.

The capital community grants scheme had contributed to the following schemes:

- Play equipment in Grendon;
- Outdoor gym equipment in Wilby;
- The replacement of railings at Tainty Field, Finedon;
- Upgrade of lighting and heating system Wellingborough Rugby Football Club;
- Skate park at Earls Barton;
- Outdoor gym equipment, Wollaston;
- Traffic calming sign, Grendon.

Councillor Henley asked the director how much of the capital budget the considered would be spent in the financial year. The director confirmed that there may be some slippage on timescales for the bigger items, though it was priority to complete these as soon as possible. The 3G artificial turf pitch had recently been completed and it was hoped that other schemes would be dealt with quickly.

The chairman also confirmed that there was an opportunity, now that the pitch was completed, to make some improvements to Redwell Leisure Centre and that work would start on the multi storey car park during the autumn.

The proposals were put to the vote and declared carried.

RESOLVED to note:

- (I) the projected outturn and anticipated variances as at 31 July 2019 and as detailed in appendix 1;
- (II) the external funding as detailed in appendix 2;
- (III) the updates and amendments to the 2019-20 capital programme as detailed in the report;
- (IV) the release of funds approved in principle as detailed in the report;

R1 RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) approval be given to the supplementary budget requests as detailed in section 7 of the current 2019-20 capital programme;
- (ii) the request for capital funding of £32,692 be approved.

10. PROPERTY MATTERS

The annexed circulated report of the director was received to provide an update on ongoing approved projects, as per the list of current projects appended to the report.

Members asked for clarity on the following to which the assistant director responded:

PP032 – Property and Project relocation - –The director clarified that this was the rehousing of employees from Swanspool House and Annexe to the Tithe Barn Road offices.

PP020 – Digital High Street – there was a query on the acronym ‘WDYT campaign’ contained in the summary – it was clarified that this related to the ‘What do you think’ campaign.

It was noted that 20 Sheep Street had been boarded up this week and members asked why this had been done. The director confirmed that a decision had been taken to secure the building as there was evidence that the building had been broken into. It was intended to sell in the future.

High Street - a member asked if there was any update on whether this would be coming back to committee. The leader confirmed that a report would be presented to Council and it was hoped that this could be arranged within six to eight weeks to give an update on the scheme. Discussions were taking place with Keepmoat to bring this forward.

Members praised the officers for the positive work that had taken place with the Drill Hall, the townscape heritage shop fronts, the Queen’s Hall Day Centre, Hind Hotel, Tithe Barn Public Realm and the flats at 43/44 High Street.

Reference was also made to the work at the Crematorium with the opening of the memorial gardens and the completion of the canopy. The crematorium had had proved to be a great benefit for the people of the borough and the work of the board and senior officers at the council was commended.

RESOLVED that the progress made on the projects outlined within the appendix be noted.

11. NOTICE OF URGENT ACTION – FREE MARKET STALL FEES FOR DURATION OF THE BEACH EVENT

The annexed circulated report of the director of resources was received to inform the committee of the urgent action taken by the chairman of the resources committee on 17 June 2019 to approve the provision of free market stall fees on the Market Square for the trading period between 27 July and 17 August 2019 as part of ‘the beach’ event.

RESOLVED that the urgent action taken be noted.

Chairman.....

The meeting concluded at 8.10pm.

