

COUNCIL MEETING – 2 JULY 2013

REPORT OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

12 June 2013

Present: Councillors Bell (Chairman), Hollyman (Vice-Chairman) Bailey, Dholakia, Morrall, B Patel, Scarborough, Ward and Waters (9).

Also present: Mr J T Campbell, Chief Executive, Mr R Micklewright, Director of Resources, 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, Mr N Robinson, Principal Revenue and Benefits Manager, Mrs S Knowles, Principal Accountancy Manager, Mr P Burnett, Principal Property and Facilities Manager and Mrs C A Mundy, Democratic Services Officer.

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

The Chairman welcomed Councillors Patel and Ward to the committee.

1. APOLOGIES

RESOLVED to note that apologies were received from Councillors Allebone, Graves, Henley and Partridge-Underwood (4).

2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2013 be confirmed and signed.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no verbal declarations made.

4. FINAL REVENUE OUTTURN 2012-13

The annexed circulated report of the Director of Resources was received to inform members of the year end position against the controllable revenue budget.

Appended to the report was the monitoring statement showing a projected net under spend compared to the approved revised net budget of £68,000 (0.77% of net budget). Also appended to the report were the revenue reserves at 31 March 2013 which were subject to external audit.

The report detailed the main reasons for the under spend in each service.

Members asked a number of questions for the purpose of clarity in relation to the closure of accounts, the overspend in property, the situation with Faraday Court and the employment of agency staff. A question was also raised regarding the Castle Ward consultation relating to on-street parking.

The Principal Accountancy Manager responded to the queries relating to the closure of accounts; overspend on property and employment of agency staff. A written response would be made by the Principal Property and Facilities Manager regarding the queries on Faraday Court. With regard to the Castle Ward consultation the Head of Planning and Local Development informed the meeting that the consultation had been the subject of a bid to the capital fund but that this had been unsuccessful.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the outturn position, subject to audit, be noted;
- (ii) the reasons for the projected outturn variations at 31 March 2013 be noted;
- (iii) approval be given to the contributions to reserves and utilisation of reserves as detailed in appendix B to the report.

5. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2012-13

The annexed circulated report of the Director of Resources was received on the capital outturn position for the year ending 31 March 2013.

The revised capital programme, approved by Resources Committee on 20 March 2013 was £5,701,3k with an allowance of £60.8k of budget for a number of projects to be re-profiled into the programme for 2013-14. In addition the purchase of land, in respect of the proposed crematorium, had been completed prior to the 31 March 2013 although budget had been earmarked for 2013-14. This had resulted in an increase in the budget profile for 2012-13 to £7,007.2k.

The report detailed the outturn for capital as being £3,739.6k, which included the purchase of land for the crematorium, leaving an under spend of £3,267.6k compared to the budget. The majority of the under spend will be re-profiled into 2013-14.

Appended to the report was the capital monitoring report to 31 March 2013 along with the Capital programme for 2013-14 incorporating budget re-profiling from 2012-13.

Councillor Scarborough asked how the outturn figures compared to previous years. He was informed that a further report would be submitted to the July committee.

RESOLVED to:

- (i) note the Capital expenditure totalling £3,739.6k for the year ending 31 March 2012;
- (ii) note the budget re-profiling to future years as identified in the report;
- (iii) agree to return to reserves the £13.6k identified in the report;
- (iv) note the re-profiling of budget of £1,307k from 2013-14 for the crematorium project.

6. MEDIUM TERM PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The annexed circulated report of the Director of Resources was received on the planning challenges and pressure the Council was facing over the medium term and proposed a framework to ensure robust service and financial planning and delivery whilst facing these challenges.

The report detailed the current financial planning process and proposed a framework to refresh the Council plan priorities and provide a robust planning process to ensure the Council's resources were focussed on its key priorities.

There was a need to have an effective method in place to plan, develop and deliver services which would focus on the corporate priorities and the needs of local people and communities in a sustainable way. Appended to the report was the suggested strategic planning framework. This indicated the need to have the Council's vision and core purpose clearly outlined and underpinned by the plans and customer outcomes for the service areas.

RESOLVED that the planning framework, as proposed and appended to the report, be noted.

7. INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

The annexed circulated report of the Chief Executive was received to update members on the changes due to be made in respect of electoral registration.

The report detailed the current system whereby an annual household canvass form was sent to each address and completed by one individual on behalf of everyone living at the property.

From 2014 this system would be replaced by one of individual electoral registration (IER) where citizens would need to make individual applications to register, providing personal identifiers such as date of birth and National Insurance number.

The transition to IER is being carefully prescribed, monitored and managed by the Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission with legislation being in place and detailed actions and timetables being provided.

The report also detailed the electoral activities that had recently been undertaken and those that would need to be carried out in the near future. An early assessment of the work that would need to be undertaken was given in the report which indicated there would be resource implications in delivering this, along with the work that would be required for 2014 and onwards.

Members discussed this at length and raised their concern that this process would be very resource intensive and considered that, whilst the current system was not satisfactory, the new system would not work particularly in relation to obtaining details for the younger population who were often transient. Members could understand the logic of introducing the new system but had general concerns regarding how this would work in practice. There was also concern that registration would primarily be carried out on-line as it was considered that older people would not have the facilities to do this. The practicalities of getting individuals to complete their forms would be extremely difficult.

The Head of Resources assured members that every effort would be made to create an accurate register. This would be achieved by a range of methods, to ensure that local residents were not disfranchised. The Cabinet Office had committed to funding the transition to individual registration; records were being maintained so that the council could cover its costs.

The Chairman thanked Members for their input to the debate and said that their views would be sent back to the Cabinet Office.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) monies allocated to the Council for Individual Electoral Registration under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 be directed to the Council's electoral registration budgets;
- (ii) sufficient resource be allocated, within budget, to the introduction of IER;
- (iii) further reports on the progress of the project and any exceptional resource requirements be made to a future meeting.

8. WELLAND PROCUREMENT UNIT

The annexed circulated report of the Director of Resources was received to seek approval to join the Welland Procurement Partnership.

The Council had formerly been a member of the Northamptonshire Procurement Partnership before its demise in 2011. The budget for NAPS, had been retained and used for the acquisition of ad hoc procurement advice on service contracts or other major procurements and stood at £30,000 per annum.

The Welland Procurement Unit, a subsidiary of the Welland Partnership, provided procurement services to five authorities. Should the Council join the unit there would be a considerable degree of technical expertise for a reasonably modest cost. The cost of membership would be £27,500 which could be met from budget. Details of the proposal were appended to the report.

RESOLVED that approval be given to officers seeking membership of the Welland Procurement Unit.

9. COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDERS UPDATE

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received to update members on the Compulsory Purchase Orders authorised at a previous committee.

The report detailed the present position on the implementation of the Orders for Stanton Cross, the Tudor Gate, Finedon, 66-74 Lea Way and further investigations on 16/17 Broad Green. An update was also given on Compulsory Purchase Orders for empty dwellings. The Head of Planning and Local Development also gave a verbal update.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

10. DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF – 2013-2014

The annexed circulated report of the Director of Resources was received to review applications for discretionary rate relief from business ratepayers for the 2013-14 financial years.

Resources Committee of 11 January 2012 had adopted a discretionary rate relief policy to make the process clearer for applicants. All new applications would be presented to the Resources Committee for approval before any award would be made as per the policy.

RESOLVED that discretionary rate relief totalling £69,645.92 be awarded to the organisations detailed in the report.

11. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items 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
12	Redevelopment of the High Street/Jacksons Lane site – verbal update.	3

12. REDEVELOPMENT OF THE HIGH STREET/JACKSONS LANE SITE – VERBAL UPDATE

The Chief Executive gave a verbal update. He informed the committee that there had been contact with all of the interested parties and that the council was awaiting responses from some of them. Further information is still required before a full report can be compiled.

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The Chief Executive was hopeful that sufficient information would be available to enable a report to be submitted to either the July or September meeting of the committee.

RESOLVED that the verbal update of the Chief Executive be noted.

Chairman.....

The meeting concluded at 8.05pm