

## 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.