

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	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 ringfenced 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 ringfencing 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 rejoined 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.