

**COUNCIL MEETING – 20 JANUARY 2015**  
**REPORT OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

17 December 2014

Present: Councillors Bell (Chairman), Hollyman (Vice-Chairman), Allebone, Carr, Graves, Harrington, Hawkes, Henley, Morrall, Partridge-Underwood, Scarborough, Ward and M Waters.

Also present: Mrs L Elliott, Head of Finance, Mrs B Lawrence, Head of Resources, Miss J Thomas, Interim Head of Planning and Local Development, Mrs S Knowles, Principal Accountancy Manager, Mr N Robinson, Principal Revenue and Benefits Manager, Mr R Watson, Business Rates Manager and Mrs C A Mundy, Democratic Services Officer.

(Councillor G Lawman attended as an observer.)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**RESOLVED** to note that apologies for absence were received from Councillors Emerson and Griffiths.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations made.

**3. CALCULATION OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE 2015-16**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received to approve the council tax base for 2015-16.

The council tax base calculation was shown in Appendix A to the report and the Principal Revenue and Benefits Manager also explained the technical detail of how the figures were reached.

**R1 RECOMMENDED** that:

- (i) the amount calculated by the Borough Council of Wellingborough as the council tax base for the year 2015/16 be 23,190 (Band D equivalents);
- (ii) the council tax bases for the parish councils and Wellingborough town be approved.

**4. FINANCIAL MONITORING AND POSITION STATEMENT FOR 2014-15**

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

To the report was appended the revenue monitoring position to 31 October 2014; the capital monitoring position to 31 October 2014; and the capital programme funding position.

The Principal Accountancy Manager also informed the committee that since the report had been circulated Wellingborough Norse had reported a further saving of £50,000.

Councillor Henley enquired about the leisure services saving.

The Head of Finance clarified the position explaining that she was negotiating a contract with Places for People (formerly D C Leisure) and drawing up a specification for that contract. There was an overspend showing in the current budgets as specialist consultants had been employed to assist.

Reference was also made to the capital spend. There was a forecast spend of £2.7m and to date £1.6m had been spent. Officers explained that work was ongoing with project managers to ensure that reliable project progress and forecasts was presented to committee.

Councillor Henley asked that his thanks be recorded to the finance team for reporting this information early in the financial year.

Councillor Scarborough asked for clarification as to whether monies had been set aside for planning appeal costs. The Principal Accountancy Manager agreed to look into this and report back after the meeting.

A question was asked as to why there was an overspend on the Waendel Walk. The chairman of the Waendel Walk steering group responded to this and explained that it was due to one of the officers being on maternity leave.

The chairman reminded members that it would be helpful if they forwarded any detailed questions to officers prior to the meeting to enable full information to be available at the committee meeting.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The position on the revenue monitoring and the reasons for the variances 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 be noted;
- (iv) The supplementary budget allocation for operational property contingency be agreed;
- (v) Approval be given to the budget for empty properties CPO (K007) being converted to a rolling budget to enable officers to continue the programme of bringing empty homes back into use.

## **5. DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2015-16 AND THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN PROJECTIONS**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received to provide details of the medium term financial plan projections for revenue spending and to outline more details of the 2015-16 draft revenue budget for consultation.

Members noted that the charges for Glamis Hall were still included within the fees and charges table but that the market charges were not included.

It was explained that when the report had been written Glamis Hall was still awaiting the decision of the council. The market fees and charges would be the subject of discussion by the market advisory group and reported back for a decision.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the indicative level of council tax increase be agreed for inclusion in the budget assumptions as part of the consultation, after considering the S151 officer's advice in the report;
- (ii) the use of reserves to support the revenue budget over the short to medium term be agreed to allow more robust service delivery options to be developed and implemented;
- (iii) the proposed draft fees and charges schedule be agreed along with its inclusion in the information for consultation;
- (iv) the draft 2015-16 revenue budget, be agreed, including the initial proposed savings suggestions, for consultation;
- (v) the methods of consultation proposed be agreed.

## **6. DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2015-16 TO 2019-20**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received in relation to the capital financing available to the council for the medium term, together with a list of potential capital schemes.

Appended to the report was a list of capital schemes recommended for prioritisation; a list of capital schemes awaiting further information and a summary of capital resources.

Members raised a number of points for the purpose of clarity. The Accountancy Manager informed members that the report contained a link to the intranet where the project submission details could be found.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the list of capital schemes, which will progress to the next stage of prioritisation, be agreed, for implementation when resources are available;
- (ii) it be agreed that officers re-profile schemes in line with available resources, based on the funding schedules and scheme prioritisation.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received in relation to the revised risk management strategy and updated corporate risk register for consideration.

Appended to the report was the strategic approach to risk management and the corporate risk register.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the revised risk management strategy together with the corporate risk register and the risk tolerance levels contained therein be approved;
- (ii) the regular updating of the strategy and register be delegated to the Chief Executive.

## **8. CREMATORIUM PROGRESS REPORT**

The annexed circulated report of the Chief Executive was received to update members on the progress of the project to build a crematorium and the draft project plan for its delivery.

Appended to the report were the sketches of the proposed design and a summary project plan.

Councillor Allebone asked for an indication of when a second cremator would be considered.

The Head of Finance clarified that there was no date for a second cremator and that a business case would need to be put forward to assess the future needs within the borough. The design that would be presented to the planning committee had taken into account the fact that, in the future, there may be a need for a second chamber.

Councillor Scarborough voiced his concern that the full business case for the crematorium had not been presented to committee. He appreciated that funding had been approved and allocated via the capital programme and some of that spend had been approved via urgent action, all of which had been reported to committee. He noted that a planning application had been submitted, but he considered that a formal business plan needed to be presented for approval. He did not believe that what had been presented to committee contained sufficient information.

The Chief Executive noted Councillor Scarborough's concern; he believed that officers had received clear instructions from members about how to proceed with this project, however, should members require additional information this could be provided to the crematorium advisory group or to the Resources Committee.

Members considered the comments made and the concern raised, but stated during the debate that the council was committed to the building of a crematorium.

Councillor Scarborough asked that the motion at 4.2 of the report be amended to say 'note' rather than 'approve' the draft project plan and this was agreed. He also asked that further detail in respect of the business case and project plan be presented to the Resources Committee in February.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the progress on the crematorium project be noted;
- (ii) the comments on the draft project plan, which outlines the next actions to be taken to deliver the build phase of the project, be noted;
- (iii) further detail in respect of the business case and project plan be presented to the next committee in February;
- (iv) expert advice be commissioned on the operation of the crematorium with a view to reporting back on the creation of an arm's length trading company.

**9. REVIEW OF DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF – 2015-2016**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received to review the award of discretionary rate relief to business ratepayers for the 2015-2016 financial year and to introduce a new policy.

Appended to the report was a summary of policies considered, the policy, a summary of policies of neighbouring authorities and a list of organisations affected by proposed policies.

**RESOLVED** that the discretionary rate relief policy, as presented, be implemented from 1 April 2015.

**10. IRRECOVERABLE NON-DOMESTIC RATES, SUNDRY DEBTS AND HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received in relation to the write off of irrecoverable debts.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the write-off of £48,575.16 of irrecoverable non-domestic rates and housing benefit overpayments be approved;
- (ii) the amount of £35,980.11 which had been written off under the delegated powers of the Section 151 officer be noted.

## **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:

<b>Min. no.</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Paragraph of Schedule 12A</b>
12	Irrecoverable non-domestic rates, sundry debts and housing benefit overpayments	E1
13	Senior management arrangements	E1 & E2

## **12. IRRECOVERABLE NON-DOMESTIC RATES, SUNDRY DEBTS AND HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS**

The annexed circulated exempt appendices were received.

**RESOLVED** that the information therein be noted.

(The heads of service and principal officers left the meeting during discussion on the next item.)

## **13. SENIOR MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

The annexed circulated exempt report of the Chief Executive and head of paid services was received on the review of the operation of the senior management structure and to set out some further adjustments to the current arrangements.

The report detailed the changes that had been made to the senior management team and the major pieces of work that had moved forward during the last 12 months.

The heads of service now had to deputise and represent the Chief Executive, which was not in the original head of service role. It was suggested that adjustments be made to salary to reflect this increased responsibility and that the Head of Finance be designated to deputise for the Chief Executive in his absence. Details of the changes were contained within the report and it was recommended that the three heads of service be designated as the council's chief officers. The report also detailed the reduction in hours of the Head of Resources from 37 hours per week to 32 hours per week and another financial adjustment which would result in the additional costs being met from existing budgets.

Reference was also made to the monitoring officer role and the agreement made at the council meeting on 9 December that the current arrangements remain until the end of March 2016.

Members noted the report and agreed that this was appropriate way forward.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the review of the senior management structure and the proposals of the head of the paid service be noted;
- (ii) Members' comments on the urgent action in relation to the monitoring officer arrangements be noted.

**R2 RECOMMENDED** that:

- (i) the proposed amendments to the senior management arrangements be endorsed to take effect from 1 January 2015;
- (ii) the council's constitution be amended to reflect the designation of heads of service as chief officers;
- (iii) the salary banding of 55% of the chief executive's salary be approved (£57,067 - £59,446) for chief officers and that the council's pay policy be amended to reflect this.

The chairman wished everyone a happy Christmas and new year.

Chairman

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

