

**COUNCIL**

**1 December 2015**

**The following are the minutes to receive and adopt.**



## **COUNCIL MEETING – 1 DECEMBER 2015**

### **REPORT OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE**

19 October 2015

Present: Councillors Carr (Chairman), Harrington (Vice-Chairman), Anslow, Ekins, Emerson, Griffiths, G Lawman, Patel, Scanlon, Skittrall and Stevenson.

Also present: Miss J Thomas, Head of Planning and Local Development Mrs V Phillipson, Principal Planning Policy and Regeneration Manager, Mrs S Bateman, Senior Planning Officer, Mrs N MacKenzie, Funding and Regeneration Officer, Mr J Nyakatawa, Senior Planning Policy Officer, Miss S Mason, Planning Officer and Mrs C A Mundy, Democratic Services Officer.

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**RESOLVED** to note that apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beirne, Gough, Maguire and Watts.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations made.

#### **3. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2015.**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Services Committee held on 14 September 2015, be confirmed and signed, subject to it being noted that Councillor Gough was also present as an observer.

#### **4. LOCAL PLAN UPDATE**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received to update members on progress on the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough (PBW) and to approve the approach set out in various background papers.

The chairman informed members that Appendix three to the report – Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper had been withdrawn from this meeting and would be presented in December.

It was suggested by the chairman, and agreed by the committee, that each appendix be taken separately so that members could comment and obtain responses from the officers.

#### **Appendix One- Glossary of Terms**

This document had been found to be very useful and it was suggested that an explanation of CIL – Community Infrastructure Levy – be included therein.

Officers confirmed they would add this, and that this was a working document which could be added to at any time.

## **Appendix Two – Issues and Options**

Below are questions raised along with the response from officers:

- **Issue One – Duty to cooperate**

Q - Would this include green infrastructure and landscaping?

A - This would be included in the duty to cooperate.

- **Issue 21 – Strategic Gaps**

Q – What are the benefits of strategic gaps? Why is it recommended for Wellingborough and Rushden but not Wellingborough and Irthlingborough?

A - Officers clarified that the criteria based policies in the JCS together with the identification of village boundaries and development boundaries are considered to provide sufficient protection of the countryside. All areas would be considered using this approach. If strategic gaps were identified there was a chance that some areas were protected and not others. It was agreed that there was a need for a separation between Wellingborough and Rushden. Consideration had been given to Wellingborough and Irthlingborough with the development at Stanton Cross coming forward, but it was believed that there was very little risk of coalescence between the two.

Q – There appeared to be conflicting comments from Irchester Parish Council and the Irchester, Little Irchester and Knuston Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and it was suggested that these be clarified as it was considered that both comments should be the same.

A – Officers would clarify the submissions.

- **Issue 31 – Employment Sectoral Targets**

Q – Would similar industries be located together where possible - for example noisy businesses or those with unpleasant emissions?

A – This was something that could be considered.

- **Issue 12 – Development in Gardens**
- **Issue 13 – Hatton Park**
- **Issue 14 – White Delves and Kilborn Close**

Q – What has happened with the ‘saved plans’ and will there be a paper on the town policies?

A - Officers confirmed that the Joint Core Strategy and the plan for the borough of Wellingborough would replace these policies and they could circulate the list of saved policies. The Hatton Park Residents Association had contacted the council and whilst they didn't feel the need to produce a Neighbourhood Plan they did feel that policies needed to be produced which were pertinent to their area. . Members confirmed that they would support this, as general policies were not specific enough, and residents in certain areas, such as Hatton Park, needed more protection.

Members asked if the Hatton Park area could be designated as a conservation area.

Officers confirmed that this had been considered but the Conservation Officer had found that the area did not merit conservation status. Officers could consider if a specific policy would be useful for the Hatton Park area.

#### **Appendix Four – Wellingborough Rural Housing Allocation Methodology and site selection**

The appendix explained the requirement for housing in the villages of Earls Barton, Finedon, Irchester, Wollaston and other rural villages with a total requirement of 1250 dwellings.

Q - Members asked if this paper primarily dealt with Finedon?

A - Officers confirmed that as the other three main villages were preparing Neighbourhood Plans the housing requirements would be dealt with in each of these. Finedon had decided not to prepare a plan and this document established the need to identify sufficient sites to deliver approximately 51 dwellings in Finedon. It also referred to other smaller villages where infill and windfall development would take place to meet local needs.

Suitable sites had been identified in Finedon to provide sufficient housing to meet the joint core strategy requirement. These were in Milner Road and at land south of Kenmuir Road. The sites were linked and it was necessary for the Milner Road site to be brought forward to enable access to the Kenmuir Road site.

Officers reported that Councillor Bailey, ward councillor for Finedon had requested officers consult further with him. Councillors commented that the Milner Road site had already been approved by Resources Committee. The document would be the subject of consultation including with the parish council and general public and comments could be made in the normal way. It was considered that this was sufficient.

## **Appendix Five – Village Boundaries**

This appendix provided an overview of village boundaries and reviewed the existing criteria and boundaries in the borough, following consultation with parish councils.

The report detailed the boundaries that had been identified for Bozeat, Ecton, Finedon, Great Doddington, Great Harrowden, Grendon, Isham, Little Harrowden, Mears Ashby, Orlingbury, Sywell and Wilby. These would be consulted on.

Members congratulated the officer on the information contained in the appendix and supported this moving forward for consultation.

## **Appendix Six – Employment Land Review**

This appendix dealt with the future demand for employment land to 2031. Reference was made to the current provision of employment land in the borough against the forecasted employment need to ensure there is sufficient supply to meet current and future business requirements.

Members made reference to the following sites:

- Page 189 EM26 – Eastfield Road  
A suggestion was made that this be split in two as this was down as mixed use employment and residential and only had a relatively small area for retail.

Officers would look at this.

- Page 171 EM19 - Sanders Business Park  
A query was raised that this was the route for Stanton Cross and that it should be reflected that the land is safeguarded for an access road.

Officers would check the exact layout.

- Page 222 – Appendix 10 - This did not include reference to Oxford House or Arthur Street.

Officers explained that this was a rolling document and would be updated as and when required.

- Page 213 – EM36 – Vauxhall dealership and Railway Club

It was suggested that this be split into several sites.

Officers confirmed that they would look at this but considered there was no need to allocate any employment land as there was sufficient available.

- Page 207 – EM32 – South of Rixon Road, North of Finedon Road Allotments.

There was some concern over the allotment site as this site was well established and would not want to be lost.

Officers noted the comment.

- Page 122 – a query was raised over why the OG's Business Park had been left out?

Officers would look into this.

- Page 120 - Denington Road Industrial Estate  
This was one of the oldest industrial estates built in the 1960's and now in need of updating. Members considered that its location was good and it was a prime site with the retail development on Victoria Park, and that this could be brought up to date and used as a hi-Tec business park.

Officers explained that the council owned very little property on this site with the majority being owned privately. It would require a lot of intervention by the council to bring any changes forward.

- Page 174 – EM20 – Land at Doddington Road Wollaston.

A query was asked about whether this included the recycling centre?

This was confirmed.

There were no other questions raised and the chairman proposed the following motion:

- (i) The progress being made towards preparing the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough be noted;
- (ii) That the responses to the representations included in appendix two be an appropriate basis for preparing a draft Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough;
- (iii) That approval be given to the background papers included in appendices four to six as the basis for preparing a draft Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Harrington and on being put to the vote declared carried.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the progress made towards preparing the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough be noted;
- (ii) the responses to the representations included in appendix two be agreed as an appropriate basis for preparing a draft Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough;
- (iii) approval be given to the background papers included in appendices four to six being used as the basis for preparing a draft Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough.

**5. REVIEWING THE ECONOMIC STRATEGY FOR WELLINGBOROUGH**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received to seek approval for the economic development strategy to proceed to consultation amongst key stakeholders and economic partners.

The following documents were appended to the report:

- Economic evidence base;
- Business survey results 2014;
- Consultation questions;
- An economic strategy for Wellingborough 2015;
- Economic Strategy Implementation Plan.

Members commented as follows:

- Some concern was raised over outbound commuting from south of the borough.

This was considered inevitable with the cost of housing being lower here than in other places further south. All endeavours would be made to create the right opportunities for people to live and work in the borough where possible.

- Review period - it was suggested that this be every three years and not every five years

This could be considered if resources allowed.

- Clarification was sought as to whether Lotus was still located in the borough.

Officers would check this.

- How do we attract businesses to relocate to the borough?

Officers clarified that a new website was being developed along with a prospectus for the borough. Work was ongoing with the

Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership (NEP) to promote Wellingborough.

Work was also ongoing with the Joint Delivery Unit on housing and employment sites. It had recently been stated that Wellingborough was the most affordable place to buy a property with excellent rail and road links.

- Engagement

Members asked about engagement particularly with new businesses, with particular reference being made to the new Marina at Earls Barton.

Officers confirmed that they had contacted the Marina by email and would follow this up as it is recognised as an attractive asset to promote as part of the 'Destination Nene Valley' project. New businesses would continue to be offered assistance wherever possible.

- Members asked about leisure, country parks and heritage.

Officers confirmed that this was referred to under the tourism activities proposed in the appended implementation plan.

- Education - Members were concerned over educational standards.

Officers explained that there was a desire to improve educational standards and that there were a number of initiatives ongoing in partnership with NEP to bring together employers and schools, review the further education offer and identify the skills employers wanted for the future.

- Environment – page 138

It was suggested that the SWOT analysis for 'Environment' be amended to reflect opportunities to increase cycling and also the potential dangers of building in floodplains.

There being no other points to raise the chairman put the proposition to the meeting. This was declared carried.

**RESOLVED** approval be given to the consultation on the appended Economic Evidence Base, Strategy, Implementation Plan and Questions.

## 6. URGENT MATTER

The chairman decided that the following matter was urgent within the meaning of Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972 for the reason set out:

<b>Minute No</b>	<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Reason for urgency</b>
7	Parking Strategy Advisory Group	There was an urgent need for an advisory group to be established to feed into the Plan.

**7. PARKING STRATEGY ADVISORY GROUP**

The report had been circulated to establish a Parking Strategy Advisory Group of five members of the Services Committee to advise on the production of a parking strategy to feed into the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough.

It was proposed that Councillors Anslow, Ekins, G Lawman, Scanlon and Skittrall be appointed to the Parking Strategy Advisory Group.

- R1 RECOMMENDED** that Councillors Anslow, Ekins, G Lawman, Scanlon and Skittrall be appointed to the Parking Strategy Advisory Group for a period of 12 to 18 months.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 8.20pm.

**COUNCIL MEETING – 1 DECEMBER 2015**  
**REPORT OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

21 October 2015

Present: Councillors Bell (Chairman), Griffiths (Vice-Chairman), Allebone, Bailey, Carr, Emerson, Francis, Hallam, Harrington, Henley, Morrall, Partridge-Underwood, Scarborough, Ward and M Waters.

Also present: Mr J T Campbell, Chief Executive, Mrs L Elliott, Head of Finance, Mrs B Lawrence, Head of Resources, Miss J Thomas, Head of Planning and Local Development, Miss S Lyons, Monitoring Officer/Solicitor District Law and Mrs C A Mundy, Democratic Services Officer.

(Councillors G Lawman and V Waters attended as observers.)

**1. 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 following declarations were made.

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Min. no.</b>	<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Allebone	5	Castle Theatre	Personal – is council representative on the Board.
Scarborough	3	Treasury Management	Personal – wife works for Yorkshire Building Society.

**2. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2015**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Resources Committee held on 16 September 2015, be confirmed and signed.

**3. MID YEAR REPORT ON TREASURY MANAGEMENT**

(Councillor Scarborough left the meeting.)

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received in relation to the treasury management activity in line with the treasury management strategy statement which was approved by Resources Committee on 18 March 2015.

The summary of investment transactions at 30 September 2015 and the summary of economic background and interest forecast were both appended to the report.

The Head of Finance apologised to members as the incorrect appendix had been provided she would circulate an updated summary of economic background and interest forecast after the meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the mid-year report on treasury management be noted.

(Councillor Scarborough returned to the meeting.)

#### **4. MANAGEMENT OF INVESTMENT PROPERTY ARREARS**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received to seek approval of a refreshed draft policy for dealing with arrears in commercial properties, for which the council is landlord, and to write off historical arrears which cannot be recovered.

The draft policy for dealing with arrears was appended to the report along with a further appendix detailing the existing debts recommended for write off.

Some background information was included in the report which prompted members to ask about the accounting process, particularly around the return from the council's investment portfolio and the extent to which it supported the running costs and maintenance of its operational property.

The Head of Finance confirmed that the investment and operational costs were accounted for separately but that for the purpose of this report they had been totalled; she would provide a members briefing note to explain the full break down.

The council's commercial property investment portfolio was managed via contract by Messrs Underwoods LLP and they carried out the rent collection and debt management. Collection and debt levels were reviewed monthly as part of the council's management of the contract.

Members asked for clarity on the current process carried out by Messrs Underwoods for chasing and collecting debts. The Head of Resources confirmed that the review had been carried out because the financial climate had changed since the current policy was put in place, and she would provide a members briefing note to highlight the differences between the existing procedures and the proposed new procedure.

**RESOLVED** that approval be given to:

- (i) the policy and procedure for handling arrears in commercial property to take immediate effect;
- (ii) write off the debts detailed in appendix two of the report.

## **5. CASTLE THEATRE**

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received following a request from The Castle (Wellingborough) Ltd to consider a proposal to redevelop the premises. The aim would be to make it a more viable business and would be a means of ensuring that it remained in the borough.

The Castle was built by the council at a cost of just under £3.5 million and opened on 30 March 1995. The council subsidises the running costs of the theatre and there is currently a contract in place with The Castle (Wellingborough) Ltd to provide a range of specified services. This commenced on 1 April 2011 and is due to terminate on 31 March 2021.

The financial support provided to The Castle has reduced over the years and would continue to do so by agreement between the council and The Castle (Wellingborough) Ltd, under the terms of the contract.

There had been a number of challenges over the years but a programme of improvements was ongoing.

The report suggested that, having received the proposal from The Castle (Wellingborough) Ltd to develop the facility, a detailed options appraisal be carried out to provide members with the information they needed to make a decision on the future of The Castle.

Three requests to address the meeting had been received from the public and the chairman allowed each person to speak for three minutes. Their comments are précised below.

Marion Turner-Hawes, a local resident who was also chairman of the Castle Fields Community Group, made representations on behalf of the local community and asked for assurance that all options be considered for the running and use of the theatre. She considered The Castle to be an essential asset for the town bringing many people into the area and enabling the diverse community to participate in various activities, enhancing their skills and interests. She expressed concern that its place in the community had withered with local groups no longer being able to afford to stage meetings or events at the venue. She called for The Castle to be registered as a community asset so no decision about its future ownership could be made without recourse first to the community who would have the opportunity to present its own option.

Darren Walter, spoke as Director of The Castle (Wellingborough) Ltd and informed the committee of the improvements that had been made during the last three years with an increase in ticket sales, full capacity on participation, and the new restaurant concession 'Franks' which had seen a marked increase in restaurant takings. He spoke of the aspirations and plans that he envisaged for the future of The Castle. This included a refurbished 500 seat main theatre, 200 seat studio theatre and a 100 seat cinema, along with a

destination restaurant, extra rehearsal spaces, private function rooms and a business centre with meeting rooms.

Rae Levene, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of The Castle, also addressed the meeting. He referred to the opportunities that the redevelopment of The Castle could bring to the borough which would ensure that the arts offering remained for the borough. If a community asset transfer, either freehold or leasehold, was agreed in due course this would enable The Castle (Wellingborough) Ltd to apply for external funding for what was an ambitious and aspirational project ensuring the future of The Castle.

The chairman reminded members that at this stage they were only being asked to decide whether to instruct officers to carry out a detailed options appraisal to enable full consideration to be given to this matter.

Members acknowledged that The Castle (Wellingborough) Ltd had made improvements during the last three years and also acknowledged that the grant funding from the council was reducing each year. Members considered that it would be wise to instruct officers to carry out further investigations.

Councillor Henley made reference to 6.5 of the report and the options (a) through to (f) and proposed that options (a) to (d) be investigated. Councillor Scarborough seconded this proposal.

Councillor Carr proposed an amendment and suggested that only an amended version of option (c) be considered, to read as follows:

“to investigate the interest from The Castle (Wellingborough) Ltd in completing a community asset transfer based on a sound business case and sound development aspirations committing this council to relinquish its interest in the property.”

This was seconded by Councillor Morrall.

A lengthy debate ensued with members considering the best way forward.

Mrs Lawrence outlined the key features of a community asset transfer; if this was the route the council wished to follow it would be necessary for members to confirm that they wished to dispose of the premises by this means. She also reiterated that it was essential for members to satisfy themselves that they had carried out due diligence in respect of any decision they made, as well as considering all the risks. For this reason a consideration of all options available had been proposed.

The chairman suggested that options (a) to (d), incorporating Councillor Carr's amendment to option (c) be investigated to enable a detailed report to come before the December meeting. Members agreed that they needed to understand any proposals coming forward and to ensure their viability.

Some members considered that they needed more information and further details of the plans that The Castle (Wellingborough) Ltd had for the site before they could make a decision and suggested that an informal presentation be given to councillors to inform members' when making a decision about the facility's future. Members concurred that a presentation would be welcome.

The Chief Executive addressed the meeting. He reminded members that at this stage the only decision required was whether or not members wished officers to investigate the options available. From such investigation members would be able to make an informed decision as they would have all the current information that was available, including legal, financial and procurement advice.

Further discussion took place and Councillor Carr agreed to retract his amendment that only option (c), as amended, be considered.

The chairman then put to the meeting that options (a) through to (d) be further investigated. This was seconded by Councillor Griffiths and on being put to the vote declared carried.

**RESOLVED** that officers be instructed to carry out an options appraisal on options (a) through to (d), as detailed within the report, for further consideration by members in due course.

Chairman

The meeting closed at 8.25pm.

