

COUNCIL MEETING – 19 APRIL 2016

REPORT OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

23 March 2016

Present: Councillors Bell (chairman), Griffiths (vice-chairman), Carr, Emerson, Francis, Hallam, Harrington, Henley, Partridge-Underwood, Scarborough and Ward.

Also present: Mr J T Campbell, Chief Executive, Mrs L Elliott, Head of Finance, Mrs B Gamble, Head of Resources, Mr B Gallyot, Wellingborough Norse, Miss S Lyons, Monitoring Officer/Solicitor District Law, Mr R Watson, Business Rates Manager and Mrs C A Mundy, Democratic Services Officer.

(Councillor Graves and G Lawman attended as observers.)

1. APOLOGIES

RESOLVED to note an apology for absence was received from Councillor Allebone.

2. 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 declaration was made.

Councillor	Min. no.	Report Title	Reason
Emerson	11	Fees and charges update 2016-17	Personal – Treasurer of Wellingborough Twinning Association which regularly uses Swanspool Pavilion and on occasion the Tithe Barn.

3. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 FEBRUARY 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Resources Committee held on 3 February 2016, be confirmed and signed.

4. IRRECOVERABLE COUNCIL TAX, HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS, NON-DOMESTIC RATES AND SUNDRY DEBTORS

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

Following a number of questions and concerns from members the Business Rates Manager explained the council's process for collecting debts.

The debts listed below had been thoroughly pursued via officer visits, the use of specialist tracing/collection agencies, and action taken through the magistrates' court or county court and were deemed as irrecoverable. Should further information come forward the debt could be reclaimed regardless of it having been written off.

Council tax (no. 42)	£14,296.66
Housing benefit overpayments (no. 19)	£2,224.47
Non-domestic rates (no.4)	£5,168.46
Sundry debt (no. 7)	£2,333.00

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The write off of £17,420.78 irrecoverable non-domestic rates be noted;
- (ii) It be noted that the amount of £24,022.59 had been written off under the delegated power of the Section 151 officer.

5. NORSE BUSINESS PLAN 2016-17

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received in relation to the annual business plan for Wellingborough Norse Ltd for 2016-17.

The annual business plan had been agreed by the Wellingborough Norse Board and was appended to the report.

Mr Gallyot of Wellingborough Norse attended the meeting to explain the business plan and answer questions from members.

The company's objective was to achieve business growth in any area of service provision in which it was involved. The current economic environment was difficult to compete in and Wellingborough Norse had decided to concentrate on establishing a solid structure on which to base future competitive growth. It had been successful in securing trade waste contracts and ad-hoc building cleaning works. It had also been proactive in marketing its services, including leading on an initiative on Finedon Road Industrial Estate that showcased the service provided by the partnership.

It had also embarked on an aggressive campaign for growth in both commercial and local authority contracts; it had been shortlisted for four major contracts and was awaiting the outcome of these. It was also seeking to increase the commercial side of the business from grounds maintenance to facilities management.

Members asked Mr Gallyot a number of questions in relation to the following:

- Whether Wellingborough Norse would continue to use glyphosate weed killer. Mr Gallyot confirmed that this was not a banned substance in the UK, it was a superior product, widely used, there was no alternative that worked as well and there was no intention to discontinue its use.

- Members also commented on the use of weed killer rather than hand strimming which, in their opinion, would be preferential. Mr Gallyot confirmed that weed killing was only used twice a year and, where possible, strimming was carried out, dependent on the area in question.
- Concern over the issue of fly-tipping generally and particularly on the verges and unsightly rubbish on the A45. Mr Gallyot explained that due to the difficulties with the need to close the A45 during a clean up, it was only cleared twice a year at the cost of £60,000, although initiatives were being investigated to improve the cost and frequency. Fly-tipping was an ongoing and continuing problem.
- Congratulations were extended by members to Wellingborough Norse for the estate action programme which had resulted in a positive impact on people's lives in various parts of the borough. There were ongoing issues in Victoria Ward which Wellingborough Norse was aware of, and there was an educational programme taking place.

Members thanked Mr Gallyot for his attendance and asked that the thanks of the committee be extended to all at Wellingborough Norse for their continuing hard work.

RESOLVED that approval be given to the Wellingborough Norse Annual Business Plan 2016-17.

6. WASTE ISSUES

The Head of Resources addressed the meeting and referred to the recommendation made at the services committee on 21 March 2016 in relation to the Wollaston Household Recycling Centre remaining open for a further six months, and a capital bid to purchase additional waste receptacles.

A number of parishes wished the centre to remain open and Wollaston Parish Council had agreed to make a contribution towards the cost of running the centre. Other parish councils would be approached to see if they wished to also make a similar contribution.

The report to services committee had also agreed that the member working group be convened to discuss various strategic matters in relation to waste collection.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The Wollaston Household Recycling Centre be operated for a further six months at an approximate cost of £45,000 to be funded from reserves;
- (ii) a capital bid of £15,000 be agreed to enable the purchase of additional waste receptacles in the short term.

7. DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT

RESOLVED to note that this report had been withdrawn from the services committee agenda and also from this agenda.

8. FINANCIAL MONITORING AND POSITION STATEMENT 2015-16

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received in relation to the monitoring position for revenue expenditure, estimated as at 31 January 2016.

The report detailed the net revenue budget along with the monitoring thereof.

Analysis of the spending position indicated that the use of reserves had increased by an additional £10,000 to that reported in December and now stood at an additional £60,000 over the current budget to achieve a balanced position. Further details were shown in the report.

RESOLVED that the position on the revenue monitoring be noted along with the reasons for the variances reported.

9. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received in relation to the capital programme monitoring to 31 January 2016.

The report detailed the revised capital budget for 2015-16 as being £8.524m.

Reference was made in the report to the photovoltaic panels scheme and High Street/ Church Street demolition works.

The report also detailed the capital programme movements for 2015-16, with particular reference to the purchase of additional land at the crematorium, Swanspool Allotments, and a detailed request for scheme budget re-profiling, as well as new projects and updates.

The Head of Finance referred to item 7.4 in relation to market improvements and informed the committee that the capital bid had been withdrawn. A revenue budget supplementary estimate of £2520 was requested to replace the capital bid for the removal of 14 Market Stalls in Pebble lane. This was agreed.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the projection outturn and anticipated variances as at 31 January 2016 be noted;
- (ii) the external funding be noted;
- (iii) the analysis of the 2015-16 capital programme budget at 31 January 2016 be noted;

- (iv) the scheme re-profiling as outlined in the report be approved;
- (v) the inclusion of the new projects and updates, identified in the report, into the 2016-17 capital programme be approved;
- (vi) approval be given to a partial use of the crematorium contingency budget of £38,000 to fund the purchase of additional land adjacent to the crematorium;
- (vii) approval be given to the change of use request as detailed within the report.

10. CAPITAL STRATEGY FOR THE MEDIUM TERM

The annexed report of the Head of Finance was received in relation to the capital strategy for the medium term, together with a list of all agreed capital schemes.

The proposed capital strategy and the capital programme for 2016-17 onwards were appended to the report.

Members raised a number of issues in relation to the strategy to which the Head of Finance and Chief Executive responded.

R1 RECOMMENDED that the capital strategy be agreed.

11. FEES AND CHARGES UPDATE 2016-17

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received to provide members with updates to the fees and charges schedule and to also seek clarification regarding the terms and conditions for the hire of halls.

The fees and charges update was appended to the report.

Members discussed the terms and conditions with reference to cancellation, after payment, resulting in forfeit of the full fee unless the hall could be re-booked, in which case a charge of 25% would be made.

Changes to the terms and conditions would enable the Heads of Service to agree variations dependent on circumstances. Members considered that the words 'exceptional circumstances' be added to the recommendation.

R2 RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) the fees and charges schedule be approved;
- (ii) approval be given to the Heads of Service having delegated authority to agree variations to the hire of halls terms and conditions in exceptional circumstances.

12. RESERVES POLICY

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received in relation to the current position with regard to revenue reserves and capital reserves, along with a review of the reserves policy.

Appended to the report were the current levels of revenue reserves at 31 March 2015 and predicted year end reserves to 31 March 2016.

The reserves policy was also appended.

R3 RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) the current reserves position be noted;
- (ii) the reserves policy be agreed.

13. RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received in relation to the council's key risks and managed mitigations.

Appended to the report was the corporate risk register.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

14. PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2016-17

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received in relation to current indicators and treasury management strategy.

The treasury management strategy statement, including minimum revenue provision policy statement and annual investment strategy, was appended to the report.

R4 RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) approval be given to the treasury management policy statement;
- (ii) approval be given to the prudential and treasury Indicators;
- (iii) the annual investment strategy be approved.

15. EFFICIENCY AND PERFORMANCE PLANNING AND KEY PRIORITY OUTCOMES FOR THE MEDIUM TERM

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received in relation to the appended efficiency strategy. The report also outlined the associated key priority outcomes and corporate performance indicators recommended for

adoption in developing the efficiency action plan and to inform any further corporate planning requirements.

The report explained how an agreement to an efficiency strategy and action plan would enable the council to take advantage of the opportunity for a four year funding agreement along with the flexible use of capital receipts.

An efficiency and action plan was needed to address the financial challenges and deliver cost effective and efficient services. Initially it was necessary to refresh the council's key priority outcomes. Suggestions were detailed in the report following members' comments and views, indicated at a previous workshop, on the direction of travel that they wished to see in the next four years.

Members discussed the report in detail and considered that more work was required on the key priority outcomes and the corporate business plan that had expired in 2014. Comments were also passed on the action plan.

The Head of Resources and Chief Executive responded to the comments made, informing members that this report had been a starting point that further work and discussions could take place in relation to the key priority outcomes and the corporate performance indicators.

Members considered the comments and agreed to approve the efficiency strategy but to defer a decision on the key priority outcomes and corporate performance indicators until there had been further discussions.

RESOLVED that the efficiency strategy be approved.

16. CREMATORIUM UPDATE

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received in relation to the progress of the project build of the crematorium and on operational matters relating to the governance of Wellingborough Bereavement Services Ltd.

A wholly owned local authority trading company had been created to deliver the bereavement services provided at the crematorium. The company was called Wellingborough Bereavement Services Ltd with the current directors being Mrs Bridget Gamble, Head of Resources and Miss Julie Thomas, Head of Planning and Local Development.

A crematorium manager has been appointed and would take up the position in late May 2016. It was anticipated that the crematorium would open in July 2016, with open days and an official opening in advance of that.

It was also proposed that two members be nominated as directors. One nomination would be from the administration and one representing the opposition, and be made at annual council in May 2016. The Head of Finance

could also be appointed to the board, once issues relating to potential conflict of interest had been resolved.

Governance arrangements would be finalised following the appointment of the board, but would be similar to those in place at Wellingborough Norse.

It was also proposed that the trading name for the new crematorium be Nene Valley Crematorium.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the crematorium update be noted;
- (ii) approval be given to the proposed governance arrangements to be put in place for Wellingborough Bereavement Services Ltd.;
- (iii) the trading name for the crematorium be Nene Valley Crematorium.

Chairman

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.