

COUNCIL MEETING – 11 OCTOBER 2016
REPORT OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

21 September 2016

Present: Councillors Griffiths, Chairman, Partridge-Underwood, Vice-Chairman, Carr, Emerson, Francis, Graves, Gough, Hallam, Henley, G Lawman, Morrall, Scarborough, Simmons and Ward.

Also present: Mr J T Campbell, Chief Executive, Mrs L Elliott, Head of Finance, Mrs B Gamble, Head of Resources, Miss J Thomas, Head of Planning and Local Development, Mrs C Taylor, Solicitor District Law, Mrs S Knowles, Principal Finance Manager, Mr R Watson, Business Rates Manager, Mrs G Chapman, Principal Community Safety Officer and Mrs C A Mundy, Democratic Services Officer.

(Councillors L Lawman and Maguire attended as observers.)

1. APOLOGIES

RESOLVED that there were no apologies.

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 were made.

Councillor	Min. no.	Report Title	Reason
Graves	7	The efficiency plan and key projects update	DPI – Director of the Board of Wellingborough Bereavement Services
Lawman G	7	Voluntary and Community Sector funding	DPI - Board member of Shire Community Service and trustee of the Victoria Centre (as NCC representative).

3. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 JUNE 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Resources Committee held on 29 June 2016 be confirmed and signed.

4. IRRECOVERABLE COUNCIL TAX, NON-DOMESTIC RATES, LICENSING FEES AND SUNDRY DEBTS

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

The report detailed the debts that had occurred and the appropriate action taken to pursue the debts using legal proceedings through the Magistrates' or County Court.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Non-domestic rates of £36,764.87 be written off as irrecoverable;
- (ii) It be noted that the sum of £14,388.29 had been written off under the delegated powers of the Section 151 officer.

5. FINANCIAL MONITORING AND POSITION STATEMENT FOR 2016-17

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received in relation to the monitoring position for the council's revenue expenditure.

The revenue budget had been set in February 2016 at £9.936m, using £619,000 of general fund reserves and £44,000 of ear marked reserves to support the revenue spending. The monitoring of the revenue budget reports the variance to the use of reserves to show any under or over spending on that budget.

The revenue monitoring position forecasted an increased use of reserves of £76,000 made up from a number of items with the key areas contributing to the movement being listed in the report.

The report also detailed the main item contributing to the need to increase reserves which related to the cost of demolition works at the High Street and Church Street sites. Other contributing factors included project initiation costs for invest to save schemes, such as feasibility studies and strategy development along with additional staffing costs to cover salary awards and temporary absence cover to maintain essential service delivery.

Further costs, in relation to The Castle, were expected and will be reported at a future meeting.

The Head of Finance informed members of a recommendation made by the Development Committee on 19 September 2016, for this committee to recommend to council that a supplementary estimate of £19,000 to be funded from reserves in order to complete the new market layout as outlined in the report to the Development Committee. She also sought approval to the garden waste collection service being extended to the end of November. This would increase the number of collections from eight to nine. It had been a good

growing year and there had been extra tonnage collected so there was no additional pressure on the budget at present.

Members agreed that both the market layout scheme, which traders were happy with, and the extension to the collection of garden waste should proceed.

The report also made reference to the Wollaston Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC). In March 2016 a decision had been made to fund the centre for a further six month period and to approach parish councils to ask if they would consider contributing towards the revenue funding.

Wollaston Parish Council had agreed to contribute £5,000 but other parish councils had been unable to make a contribution with some indicating that their budgets had already been set for the year. Some had said they may be able to consider the matter again in their budget setting for 2017-18.

There were two options for members to consider:

- (i) to cease funding and stop providing the facility as soon as possible;
- (ii) or to agree further revenue funding to allow those parishes, that were able, to consider their position further whilst setting their precept for the coming financial year.

Members discussed the options in detail. They were conscious that closure of the site may have a detrimental impact on fly tipping which was already costing a considerable amount to collect. Other members considered that regardless of the centre being open some people would still fly tip. Members asked if there was any data collected at the centre on the numbers using the facility, what they were disposing and where they travelled from. Other members thought that it didn't matter where people travelled from so the collection of data would be irrelevant and would not impact on the decision of the committee. It was also thought that parish councils should again be approached to see if they could consider allocating some form of funding within their budget process. It was suggested that discussions over whether it would be possible, or relevant, to collect data would be held with Wellingborough Norse who ran the site.

It was proposed by Councillor Carr and seconded by Councillor Gough that the Wollaston Household Waste Recycling Centre remains open for a further six months, that revenue funding for this be allocated and that the Chief Executive be asked to write to parish councils to see if they would reconsider contributing to the cost in the future.

On being put to the vote this was declared carried with eight votes in favour and four against.

Members referred to the budget setting process and asked if there had been any indication from the government of what the Chancellor's autumn statement would contain. The Head of Finance clarified that there had been no

information forthcoming and that the autumn statement was expected on 23 November and would be reported to Resources Committee in December.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The position on revenue monitoring and the reasons for the variances reported and shown in appendix one to the report be noted;
- (ii) Approval be given to an additional round of garden waste collections in November 2016.

R1 RECOMMEND that:

- (i) a supplementary estimate of £19,000 be funded from reserves in order to complete the new market layout as outlined in the report to the Development Committee of 19 September 2016;
- (ii) the Wollaston Household Recycling Centre remain open for a further six months, that revenue funding be allocated and the Chief Executive be asked to write to parish councils to see if they would reconsider contributing to the cost in the future.

6. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received on the capital programme monitoring to 31 July 2016.

The total capital budget for 2016-17 had been reported in June as being £7.436m. Subsequent movements in the budget in respect of re-profiling were detailed in the report and the revised capital budget for 2016-17 was £5.948m.

The Head of Finance referred to the recommendation from the Development Committee of 19 September 2016 to allocate the sum of £17,000 of capital to enable the new market layout to be completed.

Members were fully supportive of the allocation of capital for the market layout project.

The report detailed the budget re-profiling that had been required.

The report also referred to a capital request for the installation of a 3G pitch and floodlights which was estimated to cost in the region of £600,000. A bid to the Football Association (FA), if successful would provide a 50% grant towards the installation of the new pitch. An initial feasibility study had been commissioned, however, due to the deadline of submitting a bid for the funding from the FA, the project needed to be progressed and capital of £300,000 was being sought to enable such bid to be submitted.

Some members were concerned that a business case hadn't been presented to committee and asked if more information could be provided to a future meeting. There were also queries regarding the decision on the pitch being

located at Redwell Leisure Centre, rather than an alternative site such as Wollaston School.

The Head of Finance confirmed that a decision was required in regard to capital funding at this meeting to enable a recommendation to be made to council in October so that an application for match funding could be made. The FA had indicated that the Redwell site was compliant for a 3G pitch to be installed; members had previously expressed a wish that it be sited in Wellingborough rather than in a village.

The future of the leisure centre would be the subject of further discussion but the football element at the leisure centre was run by Wellingborough Norse and not Places for People. The Principal Community Support Manager clarified that an expression of interest needed to be made in November with a decision from the FA due in February or March 2017.

A number of members considered this scheme to be an excellent project bringing a much needed 3G pitch facility to the borough which could be used by all including disabled teams, walking football, ladies teams and blind football where a flat surface was paramount. The current facilities in the borough did not come up to the required standard.

Other concerns were raised about the Redwell location because of potential floodlighting issues in a highly populated residential area.

Councillor Lawman proposed that the words 'in principle' be added to the motion and that the words 'at Redwell Leisure Centre' be deleted so it would read as follows:

Recommend to approve that, in principle, funding of £300,000 be provided for the installation of a new 3G football pitch and floodlights.

This was seconded by Councillor Scarborough.

This amendment was put to the vote and declared lost with five votes in favour and seven against.

Councillor Graves proposed a further amendment to the motion to add the words 'in principle' to read as follows:

Recommend to approve that, in principle, funding of £300,000 be provided for the installation of a new 3G football pitch and floodlights at Redwell Leisure Centre as detailed within the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Lawman and on being put to the vote declared carried.

Members also asked for an update on progress in relation to photovoltaic panels. The Head of Finance confirmed that PV panels had been placed on Trafalgar House and that investigations were taking place to see if the panels

would be suitable for the Waendel Leisure Centre, as the feed-in tariff had now changed. Members asked if a briefing note could be provided as an update.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the projected outturn and anticipated variances as at 31 July 2016, as shown in appendix one, be noted;
- (ii) The external funding as stated in appendix two be noted;
- (iii) Approval be given to the scheme re-profiling outlined in the report at 6.2.1 to 6.2.5 and in the agreed capital programme;
- (iv) The variations at appendix three be noted;

R2 RECOMMEND that:

- (i) approval be given, in principle, to funding of £300,000 being provided for the installation of a new 3G football pitch and floodlights at Redwell Leisure Centre, as detailed in section seven of the report.
- (ii) £17,000 of capital funding be allocated to complete the new market layout as reported to the Development Committee of 19 September 2016.

7. VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR FUNDING

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received on the allocation of voluntary and community funding to date, to propose further funding streams and use of the remaining funding, as recommended by the Grants Working Party.

The report detailed the discussion and proposals of the Grants Working Party to allocate to the Victoria Centre, Goodwill Solutions Community Interest Company and an increase to the small grants budget. Discussions were on-going with Shire Community Services in relation to Shopmobility. More work was being done in regard to advocacy funding. Grant funding for Heritage groups would enable groups to apply for small grants of up to £500 for heritage projects.

The working party recommended the following:

- (a) That £4,500 be transferred to the small community grants pot and prioritised for heritage based applications for the 2016-17 and 2017-18 financial years. The scheme would be publicised amongst the relevant organisations to ensure maximum take-up. Any remaining funds would become part of the wider small community grants pot and would be available for applications from groups under the wider fund criteria. This would mean that the council would be able to accept bids for local initiatives supporting national awareness weeks such as hate crime week or domestic abuse week.
- (b) The remaining £4,000 be left unallocated at the present time as a contingency fund for consideration should the council receive any urgent calls on its resources to support the sector.

Members commended the decisions of the working party.

Questions were asked about the bridging loan arrangements for refuges for women experiencing domestic violence.

The Head of Finance clarified that the bridging loan had been given to Northampton Borough Council, as the project leader, whilst national funding was awaited from the government.

The Chief Executive addressed the meeting explaining that a number of council's had experienced difficulties in funding refuges and as such the government had agreed to provide funding at a national level. Funding had originally been expected in March 2016. The funding had not been received yet and councils did not want to close these vitally important refuges and consequently it had been agreed to fund this via a bridging loan as a way of plugging the financial gap.

Members also briefly referred to the changing needs of the community and highlighted that there may be a need to consider a supplementary estimate or for the working group to seek additional funding in the future.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The voluntary and community sector allocations to date be noted along with the current budgetary position;
- (ii) The recommendations and proposals of the Grants Working Party be approved;

10. THE EFFICIENCY PLAN AND KEY PROJECTS UPDATE

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Finance was received on the progress to date of efficiency actions in line with the agreed efficiency strategy and to agree further property related projects to focus on in the coming months.

(Councillor Graves left the meeting having declared an interest in relation to the Crematorium.)

The report detailed the progress to date in relation to the following:

- IT strategic review;
- Revenues and benefits customer self-service changes and structural review;
- Conversion of Croyland Hall and Abbey to residential units;
- Town centre redevelopment;
- Crematorium update;
- The Castle update;

Other projects included the following:

- The Waendel Centre;
- Redwell Leisure Centre.

The report also sought approval for the Head of Finance to submit the council's Efficiency Strategy to DCLG by 14 October 2016 and apply for a four year minimum funding settlement.

DCLG had also offered councils the opportunity to apply capital receipts flexibly to projects that delivered efficiency savings for spending that may typically be revenue in nature. To date the council has £450,000 of capital receipts from the sale of its assets this financial year with larger capital receipts from land sales expected later in the year. The Head of Finance recommended that the current capital receipts be used to fund two main elements of the efficiency plan as follows:

- Project initiation costs for invest to save projects, such as feasibility studies and the costs of the IT Strategy changes;
- Two additional employees to support property projects which had been agreed at the last committee

Members congratulated officers on the progress made with The Castle theatre and also commended 'Franks' restaurant for remaining open during this difficult period. The new Crematorium had opened on Monday 19 September, and now had 20 bookings, the open days had been well received and the Manager was proposing to have an annual open day. A question was asked about highway signage to the crematorium and the Head of Planning and Local Development clarified that there had been a delay with highways installing this but it was expected to be in place by Friday 23 September.

The issues at Redwell and Waendel Leisure Centres were highlighted in relation to the tiling repairs and future replacement at the pool and the poor state of the tennis courts at Redwell.

The progress of the review of IT Services was also raised with members asking if the service would continue to be shared with East Northants District Council.

The Head of Finance confirmed that at present the consultants report was awaited. Officers were aware that the current service required improvement. The intention was that Wellingborough could be part of a shared service or that it would be able to stand alone. Members would be consulted throughout.

Members also asked how the telephony system was progressing. The Head of Finance clarified that she was part way through the procurement process.

Members also asked the Head of Finance if they could have the opportunity to suggest capital projects in their wards.

The Head of Finance confirmed that she was currently asking parish councils to submit bids and that she would also write to members to ask if they wished to feed in any schemes for their wards.

RESOLVED that the progress to date on efficiencies achieved and major projects to date be noted;

R3 RECOMMEND that:

- (i) The use of capital receipts outlined in sections 6.9 of the report be agreed and that the Head of Finance be authorised to submit a request for the flexible use of capital receipts to the DCLG;
- (ii) The Head of Finance submit to the DCLG a request for the four year funding settlement as outlined in the report;
- (iii) The setting of ancillary sales prices for its business be delegated to the Board of Wellingborough Bereavement Services Ltd.

Chairman

The meeting closed at 9.20pm.