

COUNCIL MEETING – 22 JANUARY 2019
REPORT OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

12 December 2018

Present: Councillors Griffiths (Chairman), Partridge-Underwood (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Bell, Carr, Emerson, Francis, Graves, Harrington, Henley, L Lawman, Scarborough, Simmons and M Waters.

Also present: Mrs L Elliott (Managing Director), Miss J Thomas (Director/Monitoring Officer), Miss K Denton and Mr A Piper (Assistant Directors), Mr T Furber (Interim Project and Technical Accountant), Mr N Robinson, (Principal Revenue and Benefits Manager), Mr R Watson (Senior Revenue Officer) and Mrs C A Mundy (Democratic Services Officer).

(Councillor G Lawman and Walia attended as observers.)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Allebone and Morrall.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were advised that there was no requirement to declare an interest on minute 10 - review of local government pension scheme discretions.

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:

Name of Councillor	Item	Reason
Graves	Min. 9 - Nene Valley Crematorium	Registerable – Director of the Board of the crematorium

3. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 31 OCTOBER 2018

The minutes of the resources committee, held on 31 October 2018, were received.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the resources committee, held on 31 October 2018, be confirmed and signed.

4. DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2019-20 AND THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN PROJECTIONS

The annexed circulated report and tabled erratum of the section 151 officer was received in respect of the medium term financial plan (MTDP) projections

for revenue spending and to outline further details of the draft revenue budget for 2019-20 for consultation.

Appended to the report were the following:

- Appendix 1 - Medium term financial projections 2018-19 to 2022-23;
- Appendix 2 - Draft opening budget for consultation 2019-20;
- Appendix 3 - Consultation methodology;
- Appendix 4 - Draft fees and charges schedule;
- Appendix 5 - Flexible use of capital receipts strategy.

The report recommended that reserves be used to balance the revenue budget for 2019-20. Service delivery methods and priorities would continue to be reviewed to implement long term strategies to manage the funding shortfalls.

Officers informed members that the level of reserves had significantly diminished and the risk of not delivering a fully funded budget over the medium term was now acute.

The report further detailed the medium term financial outlook and underlying budget deficit; the central government funding and four year settlement; the New Homes bonus scheme; Council tax funding; Business rates and future changes; fees and charges, including pest control charges; the standstill budget; flexible use of capital receipts and the consultation process.

Members asked if the government had notified the council yet of the finance settlement for the coming year. The managing director clarified that details of this, and the business rates pilot, were both expected this week. A member briefing note would be issued as soon as she was in receipt of the information. She also informed members that the order to delay the elections for Northamptonshire had been laid in Parliament today

The managing director also referred to the proposed action and informed members of an amendment to 4.2 to read 'agree to the use of reserves, rather than 'agree to consult on the use of reserves' and that 4.3 was a resolved item.

Making reference to appendix 4 and the fees and charges, a member asked why the market charges were not included. The officer responded and apologies for the omission this would be circulated separately to member for information.

RESOLVED that approval be given to:

- (i) the indicative level of council tax increase of £5 or 3%, to be included in the budget assumptions as part of the consultation;
- (ii) the use of reserves to support the underlying revenue budget deficit over the short term to allow for more robust service delivery options to be developed and implemented;
- (iii) consult on the proposed fees and charges schedule;

- (iv) consult on the draft 2019-20 revenue budget;
- (v) the method of consultation as detailed in the report;
- (vi) the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy and its proposed application.

R1 RECOMMENDED that approval be given to the in-year changes to pest control charges, as detailed in the report.

5. CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE

The annexed circulated report and tabled erratum of the section 151 officer was received in relation to the capital financing available to the council for the medium term along with a list of potential capital schemes.

Appended to the report was a list of the proposed capital schemes for 2019-2024.

The report detailed the recent meeting of the voluntary sector working party and the approval of a further three applications for capital community grants totalling £36,700 for the following:

- The upgrade of the village hall in Mears Ashby;
- Play equipment at Glebe Farm, Isham;
- Street lighting in Great Doddington.

New schemes were detailed in appendix 1 and had now been scored by officers as detailed in the erratum to the report. Some schemes had been identified as priorities for 'invest to save' and 'health and safety' reasons for inclusion in the current 2018-19 programme.

A request had been received in respect of the £13,000 allocated in the capital programme for the multi-storey car park lifts with work being required to four of the lifts in the car park to ensure safety. A request for the balance of £4,600 of monies to be used to repair the lift in the Tithe Barn Offices was requested.

The report also detailed how capital receipts were sourced.

The three priority schemes which were essential for service delivery included the replacement of bulbs for street lighting, the multi storey car park refurbishment and the replacement of the roof on the extension to Swanspool House.

With regard to the refurbishment of the multi-storey car park, officers were asked if this would be closed and if so for how long and what improvements were intended and whether it would have been more beneficial to rebuild.

The assistant director addressed the meeting and clarified that the car park would remain open and the improvement works would be carried out in phases. The intention was to make improvements to the size of the car parking spaces and to make access, via the ramps, wider and easier to

negotiate. He also confirmed that the cost of refurbishment was considerably less than a full replacement and would be value for money once completed.

It was proposed by Councillor Bell and seconded by Councillor Carr that a report on the refurbishment of the car park giving further details be presented directly to a council meeting in early 2019. On being put to the vote this was declared carried.

A member asked whether the lift repairs at the Tithe Barn offices were required as the upper floors were not in use. Officers confirmed that the lift was required to get to the basement offices.

Members queried the purchase of investment property and asked that officers ensure that any purchases that were made needed to produce a good revenue stream. The managing director confirmed that officers would return to committee with further details at the February meeting. It was also suggested that empty shops be brought back into use for residential if possible.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) approval be given to the potential new schemes to be included in the 2019-2024 capital programme, as per the appendix to the report;
- (ii) the anticipated level of capital reserves be noted;
- (iii) approval be given to a report being presented to a council meeting in early 2019 in relation to the capital programme.

(The chairman reported to the committee that this was Mr Furber's last meeting at the council, he was thanked for his service to the council and wished well for the future.)

6. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2019/20

The annexed circulated report of the section 151 officer was received to advise members on the council's local council tax support scheme (CTS) for 2019/20 and subsequent years.

The CTS annual total expenditure is estimated to be in the region of £4,000,000 for 2019/20, which is in line with previous estimates. Currently the scheme does not present a significant additional burden on the revenue budget with there being no requirement to make changes to the existing scheme, though this would need to be reviewed in future years.

R2 RECOMMENDED that no change be made to the Borough Council of Wellingborough's Local Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme for 2019/20.

7. CALCULATION OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE 2019/20

The annexed circulated report of the section 151 officer was received in relation to the calculation of the council tax base.

The council tax base is calculated by taking into account:

- (a) The present occupancy situation;
- (b) New dwellings becoming chargeable;
- (c) The ratio of the bands to band D;
- (d) An estimated collection rate of 99%;
- (e) Local council tax discounts;
- (f) The local council tax support scheme.

The council tax base for the borough of Wellingborough is calculated at 25,113 at band D equivalents as required by regulation (2018/19 – 24,492). Appended to the report was a breakdown of the tax base for each parish and for Wellingborough town.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) it be noted that the amount calculated by the Borough Council of Wellingborough as the council tax base for the year 2019/20 be £25,113;
- (ii) approval be given to the council tax bases for the parish councils and Wellingborough town.

8. PROPERTY MATTERS

The annexed circulated report of the director was received to provide an update in relation to ongoing approved projects and seeks approval to change the project priorities.

A request had been made by Mr Howard to speak at the meeting. The chairman allowed him to address the meeting for three minutes; he spoke particularly in relation to 6.1(q) of the report – High Street/Jacksons Lane retained land. Officers informed the meeting that the land in question was to be retained by the council and had been taken out of the development scheme.

The report detailed the recent meeting of the town centre sub-committee which had resolved that the town centre high level review be approved. The sub-committee had also agreed that further progress be made on the projects listed below:

- High Street parking;
- Mosaic repair and protection;
- Multi storey car park;
- Connections into the town centre;
- Town Centre car parking study, benefits and opportunities;
- Council owned assets;
- Retail improvements – shop fronts;
- Open space study.

The report also referred to the items that were to be removed from the list and those that were being added, along with the changes to priority. Appended to

the report was a list of the property projects dated November 2018, indicating the priority and the current position thereof.

Members asked what the current position was in relation to the Castle Theatre contract. The managing director clarified that negotiations were nearing conclusion and it was hopeful that the contract would be completed shortly.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the progress with regard to the projects as outlined in the report be noted;
- (ii) the updated property and project team priorities as set out in the appendix to the report be approved;
- (iii) the use of capital receipts under the flexible use of capital receipts strategy, where appropriate, to fund officer time and external advice to facilitate these projects, be approved.

9. NENE VALLEY CREMATORIUM – ANNUAL REPORT

The annexed circulated report of the managing director was received in relation to the annual report of the Board of Wellingborough Bereavement Services (WBS) Ltd, which was attached to the report.

(Councillor Graves left the room having declared an interest and did not return.)

Members considered that the crematorium was a great asset to the borough, both members of the public and funeral directors had been praising the management and public-facing staff at the crematorium and members expressed their thanks for the wonderful job they were doing. The only issues continued to be in relation to the canopy roofing and the planting.

The managing director clarified that further soft planting had been undertaken and the bulbs would flourish in the spring time. The trees and other landscaping were being replanted in December by Waites. The granite for the Memorial wall had been inferior and had been returned; this had caused a delay which would be resolved early in the New Year. With regard to the canopy this was in design and would be completed as soon as possible.

RESOLVED that the report of Wellingborough Bereavement Services Ltd be noted;

R3 RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) approval be given to the development of options for landscaping of the site, to enable a detailed capital bid to be made once proposals were in place, taking into account any guidance issued should an order be made for reorganisation of local government in Northamptonshire;
- (ii) the fees for 2019-20 be set as follows:
 - (a) Core fee for cremation remains at £899.00;

- (b) Medical referee fee be increased to £21.00;
- (c) The Nene Valley Crematorium manager be given delegation to review fees for 2020-21 and make recommendations based on research via a more robust benchmarking exercise.

10. REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME DISCRETIONS

The annexed circulated report of the assistant director was received to review the council's approach to discretions available to it as a designated employer within the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

Appended to the report was the discretions policy for the Borough Council of Wellingborough as at 20 November 2018.

Members asked for clarification that the changes to the discretions did not significantly affect employees. It was clarified that these were only minor changes.

RESOLVED that approval be given to the pension discretions set out in the appendix to the report.

11. IRRECOVERABLE COUNCIL TAX, HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS, NON-DOMESTIC RATES AND SUNDRY DEBTS

The annexed circulated report and exempt appendix of the section 151 report was received to seek approval for the write off, of irrecoverable debts.

The report detailed the amounts as follows:

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|-------------------------------|------------|
| • Non-domestic rate | £16,692.62 |
| • Council tax cases | £8,966.26 |
| • Housing benefit overpayment | £7,227.08 |

RESOLVED that:

- (i) approval be given to the write-off of £32,885.96 of irrecoverable council tax, non-domestic rate and housing benefit overpayment balances;
- (ii) It be noted that the amount of £28,509.27 had been written off under the delegated powers of the section 151 officer.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 8.50pm.

