

## COUNCIL MEETING – 14 JULY 2020

### REPORT OF THE VIRTUAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

24 June 2020

Present: Councillors Griffiths (Chairman), Partridge-Underwood (Vice-Chairman), Allebone, Bell, Emerson, Francis, Graves, Harrington, Henley, L Lawman, Morrall, Scarborough, Skittrall, Ward and Weatherill.

Also present: Mr S Darcy (Director/Section 151 Officer), Mrs V Jessop, Mr A Piper and Mr E Symons (Assistant Directors), Mr M O'Donnell, Team Leader (Health Protection), Mrs A Wilcox, (Principal Environmental Health Manager), Mrs C Mundy, (Democratic Services Officer), Mrs F Hubbard and Mrs E Robinson (Meeting Producers.)

#### 1. APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

#### 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	Minute no.	Reason
Henley	Min 7 Revenue Outturn 2019-20	Other interest Volunteers with One Wellingborough
Emerson	Min 7 Revenue Outturn 2019-20	Other interest Volunteers with One Wellingborough

#### 3. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 MARCH 2020

The minutes of the resources committee of 11 March 2020 were received.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the resources committee held on 11 March 2020, be confirmed and signed.

#### **4. COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER – 47 ALBERT ROAD, WELLINGBOROUGH**

The annexed circulated report of the assistant director was received on the progress made with regard to the compulsory purchase of 47 Albert Road, Wellingborough; and to seek approval of the General Vesting Declaration and property purchase.

For many years officers had been working with the owner of 47 Albert Road, Wellingborough to encourage refurbishment and re-occupation of the property, without success. Services committee in 2014 had given approval to commence action to move towards a compulsory purchase of the property. Whilst pursuing the action, officers continued to work with the owner without resolution. In February 2020 the case was referred to a public inquiry conducted by the Planning Inspector who confirmed the order; council officers have now progressed to the next stage of advertising the decision and publicising the required notices, and now require member approval to progress with the purchase and subsequent resale of the property.

The Planning Inspector's decision was appended to the report.

Members fully supported the decision to proceed with the compulsory purchase, with ward councillors particularly thanking officers for their hard work in bringing this to fruition after so many complains and concerns raised by constituents. Councillors also fully supported the need to bring empty properties back into occupation. A question was asked about the outstanding council tax; the officer confirmed that this would be reclaimed from the sale proceeds, if there was a legal mechanism to do so. Members also asked if they could be issued with a Member briefing note regarding the number of empty properties in the borough. Officers confirmed they would do so.

Councillor Emerson proposed the action within the report and this was seconded by Councillor Francis. On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried.

**RESOLVED** that the General Vesting Declaration (GVD) be approved in respect of the compulsory purchase order of 47 Albert Road, Wellingborough (and associated land as shown edged in bold in appendix A) under Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981;

#### **R1 RECOMMEND** that:

- (i) the compulsory purchase order be concluded;
- (ii) all final decisions regarding the purchase and resale be delegated to the assistant director (corporate landlord) in conjunction with the section 151 officer.

## **5. HOUSING OPTIONS UPDATE**

The annexed circulated report of the assistant director was received in relation to the delivery of the housing options service with a request that temporary staffing arrangements be continued to mitigate against homeless pressures.

The report detailed that homeless case loads and demand for homes continued to increase in 2019. Homelessness placements into temporary and emergency accommodation reduced to a three year low in April 2019. Over 20 properties had been purchased in the last two years to use as temporary accommodation and this would continue in the future.

Mrs Jessop, Assistant Director, presented the report to committee.

A successful rough sleeper project was formed to meet government expectations of eradicating rough sleeping with over £350,000 secured in government support.

During the year the service had concentrated on managing casework along with the additional emergency demands from the covid pandemic.

Appended to the report were the following:

- Management information relating to homeless applications, housing register applications and temporary accommodation use;
- Temporary accommodation costs and mitigation;
- Affordable housing delivery;
- Current staff structure (established and fixed term MHCLG funded).

Members discussed the report and congratulated officers on the considerable work that had been progressed since the last report.

Particular reference was made by members to the properties that had been purchased, and the delay with the repairs and works contracted to Corby Borough Council, who was carrying out this work on the borough council's behalf. Mrs Jessop clarified that there had been capacity issues at Corby and further delays had been caused by the Covid pandemic. Some of the homes listed in appendix three needed major work such as central heating, new boilers and roofing to comply with Corby's high 'decent home standard'. Members continued to express their concern and commented that progress had been slow on getting these properties back into use and that this was of great social importance. If Corby BC was unable to manage this work in a suitable time consideration should be given to this being carried out by someone else. Mrs Jessop noted the concern and referred members to the recommendation in the report to agree additional capacity to manage the homes and help mitigate this risk.

Reference was made to the progress made with the rough sleeping strategy and the work undertaken to give support, not only with accommodation but also with other issues which frequently led to rough sleeping. A government

grant had been requested to mitigate the council against the impact of the Covid pandemic, following the government's 'everyone in' campaign, launched when the pandemic hit. The service had rehoused a significant number of rough sleepers in one week.

Councillors referenced appendix three, affordable housing delivery, and asked for clarity on where in Earls Barton the houses were and also referenced the projected figures for Glenvale Park.

Mrs Jessop confirmed that the houses in Earls Barton were on the David Wilson estate. With regard to Glenvale Park, Mrs Jessop responded to say that housing associations were in discussion with developers about buying units which would increase the offer of affordable houses. The government had made a pledge to create 3,000 new homes in the wake of the pandemic with £633m of funding on offer. The chairman suggested that further information on this would be available for the September committee.

(Councillor Graves joined the meeting, having experienced technical difficulties.)

Members asked the assistant director to pass on the thanks of the committee to the housing service for the work that had been progressed during the last year.

The action within the report was proposed by Councillor Harrington and seconded by Councillor L Lawman. On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried.

**RESOLVED** that approval be given to:

- (i) continue the temporary arrangements for three staff to deliver the housing options services;
- (ii) a temporary additional staff member being appointed to deliver housing management services to July 2021, the decision on financing this post would be delegated to the leader of the council and the director of resources/section 151 officer;
- (iii) the noting of the decision made, under the head of paid service delegations, to extend the housing manager and fixed term posts to July 2021.

## **6. PROPERTY MATTERS**

The annexed circulated report of the assistant director was received to provide an update on ongoing approved property projects as detailed in appendix one to the report.

Mr Piper, Assistant Director (Corporate Landlord), presented the report and referred to the car park in Doddington Road and the former air raid shelter in Arthur Street, Wellingborough.

Planning consent for the residential development of the staff car park in Doddington Road had been approved along with the disposal of the asset to Greatwell Homes. Greatwell Homes no longer wished to develop the land and approval was now sought for the disposal of the site on the open market.

The garages at Arthur Street were also to be included in the transfer of assets to Greatwell Homes, leaving the former air raid shelter on the corner of the site in the ownership of the council. The existing occupier has expressed an interest in acquiring the freehold, which has no services and is used for storage. Approval is sought for the disposal of the site, initially to the occupier, subject to terms to be agreed, or alternatively on the open market.

A member asked about the progress with the Redhill Farm, roads and sewers. Mr Piper confirmed that there was one very minor issue to be resolved and that he was hopeful that this would be completed shortly. Mr Darcy confirmed this would be expedited.

Members noted the steady progress as detailed in appendix one but asked if the end dates shown on the table could detail the revised dates and provide more up to date information. Mr Piper clarified that he would ask the project managers to do this for the next report.

An update was requested on Doddington Road Cemetery and the provision of cemetery plots. Mr Piper clarified that there had been some delay during the pandemic with regard to the availability of contractors to create the additional plots, but this issue should be resolved in the near future.

Mr Piper was also asked for an update on the Greatwell Homes land rationalisation. He clarified that the legal documentation was being finalised along with the associated 16 plans that were being drawn, with completion expected in July.

Members also congratulated officers on the completion of the community asset transfer to the Daylight centre, and asked for an update on the community asset transfer for the Hemmingwell Centre. Mr Piper clarified that more information was required to bring this forward to committee and that officers were working with the community on this potential asset transfer.

Councillor Allebone proposed the action within the report and this was seconded by Councillor Morrall. On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the progress with regard to projects, as outlined in appendix one to the report be noted;
- (ii) approval, in principle, be given to the disposal of the Doddington Road car park, Wellingborough site for residential development;
- (iii) approval, in principle, be given to the disposal of the former air raid shelter at Arthur Street, Wellingborough;

- (iv) delegated authority be given to the assistant director (corporate landlord), to agree the detailed terms of disposal in respect of the above properties.

(During the discussion on this item Councillor Graves lost connectivity and left the meeting.)

## **7. REVENUE OUTTURN 2019-2020**

The annexed circulated report of the section 151 officer was received to give members an overview of the council's revenue expenditure against approved budget for the financial year 2019-2020.

The section 151 officer summarised the report. He detailed the underspend of £859k compared to that reported in January of £690K, and as further detailed within the report. The final outturn position indicated that there had been no need to use general funds for 2019-2020. The use of earmarked reserves was estimated to be £308K with £92K for grants for homelessness and property recharges flowing through reserves to services.

Section 8 of the report also detailed the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the urgent actions that had been taken. There were some concerns over the impact of the pandemic and these would be reported more fully at the September meeting.

Appended to the report was the revenue monitoring position to 31 March 2020.

The report further detailed the creation of the urgent approval group, made up of the leader of the council, leader of the opposition and the chairman of the arts and leisure sub-committee, this enabled the council to provide funding and support to respond to local needs and prevent failure of service. The following decisions had been approved by that group:

- One Wellingborough bid – a partnership between the Victoria Centre and Glamis Hall.
- The Castle Theatre;
- Doddington Road Cemetery capital works.

Funding of £840k had been awarded by the government to support the additional pressures faced from the pandemic. It was currently estimated that £1,140m had been spent. It was also anticipated that there would be reduced income streams during the financial year because of the pandemic. This would result in an adverse impact on finances and may lead to reserves being used. Further information would be available for the committee in September.

Members were grateful for the information provided and stressed the need to ensure that the government provided sufficient funds so reserves did not need to be used. There was concern that planning fees, business rates and the collection fund would be affected and that this would result in a significant reduction in income for the year. Members understood that the true picture

would not be known fully until the September committee when officers would provide a more detailed report. In the meantime officers would continue to pursue the government for additional funding.

Councillor Skittrall proposed the action within the report and this was seconded by Cllr Harrington. On being to the vote the motion was declared carried.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) approval be given to the utilisation of existing earmarked reserves as detailed in the report at 6.7a;
- (ii) approval be given to the contribution to existing earmarked reserves as detailed in the report at 6.7b;
- (iii) the outturn position, subject to audit, as outlined in the report and the reasons for the projected outturn variations as at 31 March 2020 be noted.
- (iv) the Covid-19 update as detailed in the report, along with the urgent actions taken to support the council's response to dealing with the circumstances and the recovery stage, be noted.

## **8. CAPITAL OUTTURN 2019-2020**

The annexed circulated report of the section 151 officer was received to give an overview of capital expenditure.

The section 151 officer, summarised the report and referenced the progress of the multi storey car park and the Isham bypass funding. He also reported that an application had been received from Earls Barton Parish Council for funding but further information was required before it could be brought before committee.

Attached to the report were the following appendices:

- Appendix 1 - Capital outturn report to 31 March 2020;
- Appendix 2 - Capital programme funding position;
- Appendix 3 - Analysis of significant capital budget variances.

Councillor L Lawman asked if the concerns over the 3G pitch and the water logged areas had been resolved. Mr Piper confirmed that the sub-contractor had been asked to return to resolve this. He was not aware of the current position but confirmed he would make further enquiries and provide a member briefing note giving an update.

Councillor Henley asked if the capital spend of £22m this year plus £25,000 next year would be achieved as this was the last year of the borough council. He considered that for the September meeting members needed to know what would be completed and there potentially needed to be some reprofiling.

The section 151 officer confirmed there would be extensive spend in this year but said that a thorough re-profiling would be provided for the September meeting.

Members also asked whether the borough council had a duty to notify the progress on capital schemes to the shadow authority. The s151 officer clarified that task and finish groups had been established and there was discussion about assets and expenditure. A task and finish group for accommodation had also been established and there would be a requirement to rationalise properties.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the outturn position on the capital programme and the reasons for the variances as detailed in appendix one, be noted;
- (ii) the position on the funding of the capital programme be noted and that re-profiling of budgets, as shown at appendix two, be agreed;
- (iii) the update on the 2020-2021 capital programme, as detailed in the report, be noted;

**9. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN – ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020**

The annexed circulated report of the section 151 officer was received to inform the committee of the outturn position in respect of the application of the treasury management strategy for 2019-2020.

The section 151 officer reported that there had been an over achievement of £96k on that forecasted. Whilst interest rates had dropped, long term investments had been good.

**R2 RECOMMENDED** that the treasury management outturn position, as detailed in the report be approved.

**10. ANY OTHER ITEM THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES IS URGENT**

The chairman had no further business to discuss and thanked everyone for their attendance; and officers for the organisation and conduct during the meeting; before declaring the meeting closed.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 8.20pm.