

COUNCIL MEETING – 23 MARCH 2021

REPORT OF THE VIRTUAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

24 February 2021

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

Also present: Mr S Darcy (Executive Director/Head of Paid Service), Mrs V Jessop, Mr A Piper and Mr E Symons (Assistant Directors), Mrs C A Mundy (Senior Democratic Services Officer (Committees and Members)) - minute taker, Mrs F Hubbard (Senior Democratic Services Officer (Civic)) and Mrs E Robinson (Democratic Services Support Officer) - meeting producers.

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies 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 declarations were made:

Councillor	Minute no.	Reason
L Lawman	Min 8 - Community asset transfer request	Personal re: Hemmingwell Community Centre due to husband, Cllr G Lawman's involvement with the asset transfer to the centre.
Morrall	Min 4 - Earls Barton Parish Council request for capital funding	DPI - Is a member of Earls Barton Parish Council
Ward	Min 8 - Community asset transfer request	DPI - is a member of Finedon Town council
Weatherill	Min 8 - Community asset transfer request	DPI - is a member of Finedon Town council

3. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2020 AND THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2020

The minutes of the additional resources committee of 16 November 2020 and the minutes of the resources committee of 18 November 2020, were received.

It was proposed by Councillor L Lawman and seconded by Councillor Morrall that the minutes of both committee meetings be adopted.

On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the additional resources committee held on 16 November 2020, and the minutes of the resources committee of 18 November 2020, both be confirmed and signed.

4. REQUEST FROM EARLS BARTON PARISH COUNCIL FOR CAPITAL FUNDING

(Councillor Morrall, left the meeting during discussion on this item having declared an interest).

The annexed circulated report of the section 151 officer was received to discuss the receipt of a capital funding request from Earls Barton Parish Council for a grant in the sum of £800,000 towards The Grange Sports Field in Earls Barton.

Appended to the report was the business plan for The Grange Sports Field.

The chairman welcomed Parish Councillor Steve Glover to the meeting along with Mr David O'Neil of Nortoft Planning.

Mr Glover addressed the meeting and explained that he was a councillor for Earls Barton Parish Council as well as the chair of the Sports Development Project Management Committee set up by the Parish Council to steer development at the Grange sports field in Earls Barton.

He explained the history of the site and the work undertaken to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, which had resulted in the development of The Wickets, located off the A4500, to the North of the village. Upon occupation of the 200th dwelling, section 106 funding, would be received from the developer, David Wilson Homes.

The development plan is for new sports and community facilities that the village and borough can be proud of, it will be a permanent and much improved home for the Earls Barton football and cricket clubs, and also create spaces and facilities that will benefit the community as a whole and cater for many different interests of the village. The Parish Council is hoping that grant funding from the borough council will assist it to secure significant sporting body match-funding to deliver the facilities outlined in the business plan which

include a new pavilion, all-weather pitches and the refurbishment of the old pavilion to provide multi-use space for the community. It is hoped that such development would address the health and wellbeing of the residents of Earls Barton, along with the wider community.

The chairman thanked Mr Glover and asked the executive director to present the report.

The executive director in presenting the report informed members that the parish council had submitted a request for a grant of £800,000 (24% of the total cost of the scheme) towards the proposed provision of new community facilities. Partnership working between the borough council and the parish council had been ongoing over several years, for the planning of new housing and the provision of new community facilities for the parish. The estimated cost of the proposed scheme was £3.4m, some of which had already been funded by the parish council. The business plan detailed how the parish council planned to finance the remaining costs if the council awarded a grant.

The section 106 agreement from developers, David Wilson Homes, had been agreed for the remodelling and enlargement of the existing sports field, including a change of use from Agricultural to sports playing fields, car parking and associated facilities.

In September 2016, £10,000 of the section 106 contribution had been received by the borough council and paid to the parish council in the same year. The balance of £590,000 is due payable upon the 200th occupation at The Wickets housing development, such trigger point had been reached in December 2020 and an invoice had been issued to David Wilson Homes. Payment of this invoice remained outstanding. When such income is received a further calculation in respect of indexation and interest will be raised, anticipated to be in the region of £150k. EBPC would need to secure the remainder of the funding and have stated that positive discussions had taken place with the Football Foundation.

The chairman thanked the executive director and allowed members to discuss the report.

Members considered this to be a wonderful facility for the residents of Earls Barton and the wider community and that the aspirations detailed in the business plan were excellent and would lead to a superb facility.

Members asked questions for the purpose of clarity of Mr Glover and Mr O'Neil in relation to the other funding sources, particularly those from the Football Foundation and how this was progressing.

Mr O'Neil explained that discussions with the Football Foundation had indicated its support, but there was no formal offer or confirmation at this stage, this would not be forthcoming until the scheme was ready to progress.

Mr Glover also clarified that this was the case, but discussions had been very positive. Without such funding a reduced scheme could proceed but it would only be for grassed pitches rather than the artificial grass pitch, which would be the preference, as it would generate more all year-round usage and therefore more income.

A financial query was raised, as the budget figures did not include VAT. The executive director confirmed that the parish council was VAT registered, and as such would be able to claim back any VAT incurred.

Members asked if there were any firm offers of grant funding coming forward.

Mr Glover said that until the scheme was ready to progress they could not formally apply for funding, the parish council would potentially be able to secure funding from the Public Works Board, which would subsequently be an additional charge on the precept of those living in Earls Barton.

A question was raised about the competition from other similar venues that would compete with The Grange. Mr O'Neil explained that there was a deficit in artificial grass pitches and The Grange would fill a much-needed gap in the market. Currently Earls Barton Football Club depended on the use of the Wellingborough pitch for training purposes, this facility would free up space at Wellingborough for other clubs.

Reference was made to floodlighting and a question was raised over whether this would be generated by solar power. It was confirmed that sustainability was part of the planning permission, and there would be reference to this in the permission that would need to be complied with.

The chairman thanked Mr Glover and Mr O'Neil for their attendance at the meeting and opened the debate.

Members supported the request for a capital grant and believed that this facility would greatly enhance the quality of life for those living directly in Earls Barton and the nearby area. Congratulations were extended to the parish council for the work that they had undertaken, the progress made so far, and the excellent business plan provided. Members wished the parish council every success in sourcing the additional funding.

It was proposed by Councillor Harrington and seconded by Councillor L Lawman that the request by Earls Barton Parish Council for £800,000 of capital funding be approved, subject to confirmation being received that other funding sources had been committed towards the project.

On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried with one abstention.

RESOLVED that approval be given, in principal, to the request by Earls Barton Parish Council for the sum of £800,000 of capital funding to be released, subject to confirmation that other funding sources had been committed.

(Councillor Morrall re-joined the meeting).

5. FINANCIAL MONITORING AND POSITION STATEMENT FOR 2020-21

The annexed circulated report of the section 151 officer was received on the monitoring position for revenue expenditure only.

Appended to the report was the revenue monitoring position to 31 January 2021.

The executive director presented the report and informed the committee of the latest figures which indicated that there would be a need to use £62k of reserves.

He also informed the committee that the local authority support grant received to mitigate Covid-19 pressures had been insufficient to cover the anticipated expenditure. Support had been given to the operators of the Castle Theatre and leisure centre, One Wellingborough and to housing to accommodate homelessness under the revised statute. An additional £37k had been received from central government to support lost fees and charges, making a total of £1.375m.

A member asked a question about the increased staffing costs as indicated in the table at 6.5 of the report. The executive director confirmed that this related to the Covid-19 pandemic and the requirement for additional staffing in relation to the enforcement and environmental health services.

Reference was also made to the budget pressures and the deficit in receipt of court costs of £214k. The executive director clarified that this was due to the courts being unable to sit during the pandemic and the court costs, that would have been claimed back, not being received. It was expected that in due course, when the courts were able to resume operating, that this position would change, and receipts would be forthcoming.

Reference was also made to the contribution towards bin lorries and a question was raised over why this was a revenue expenditure and not capital expenditure. The executive director explained that this was for the leasing of extra vehicles until such time as the Wellingborough Norse contract finished.

Councillor Partridge-Underwood proposed the motion within the report, this was seconded by Councillor Allebone and on being put to the vote was declared carried.

RESOLVED that the position on the revenue monitoring and the reasons for the variances reported and detailed in appendix 1 be noted.

6. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING

The annexed circulated report of the section 151 officer was received to provide an update in relation to the capital programme monitoring to 31 January 2021.

Appended to the report were the following:

- Appendix 1: Capital outturn report to 31 January 2021;
- Appendix 2: Capital programme funding position;
- Appendix 3: Urgent action – Safer Streets CCTV.

The executive director informed the committee that the revised budget for 2020-21 was £12.638m which was further detailed at 6.1 to the report.

As some of the schemes would not be completed within the current financial year, £1.705m would be carried forward into the 2021-22 financial year.

The report also detailed the urgent action taken following the Office of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's decision to approve funding to increase the number of CCTV cameras, and to upgrade current cameras, in Wellingborough Town Centre at a cost of £148k. The council had been asked to contribute £35k to the cost and due to the timescales involved an urgent action had been approved under delegated powers and this was appended to the report.

The voluntary sector funding working group had met in January 2021 to discuss community project schemes. The allocated funding had been fully utilised, and the working group recommended that further funding be allocated equating to £87,800 to the community grant programme. This funding would benefit Little Harrowden Parish Council, Wellingborough and District Hindu Association, Sywell Parish Council and Hemmingwell Community Centre.

A request for capital funding had also been received for the High Street/Jacksons Lane car park, to upgrade the car park and bring it up to a better standard to include re-surfacing and enhancements to the CCTV camera in the sum of £97,100.

The public realm outside the Tithe Barn area, along with the much discussed proposed water feature, had been further discussed by the Wellingborough Town Regeneration Working Group who had suggested that the sum of £25,000 from the £170k allocated to a water feature, be provided as a grant to Wellingborough Town Council, should it wish to carry out improvements to the public realm, including the installation of a water feature.

Members praised the capital programme and the significant progress made.

The re-profiling was noted, as several items would not complete in-year.

Members asked about the multi-storey car park and the ‘snagging’ issues. There was some concern that the ‘finish’ of the car park was not as good as had been expected, though members did comment that they were pleased at how much brighter and safer the car park now was. Some concern was expressed about the impact on those living near to the site, with the intrusive noise and the spotlights that had been placed on the roof of the car park.

The assistant director clarified that the ‘snagging works’ were nearing completion and Wellingborough Norse was carrying out ongoing maintenance and cleansing. The intrusive lighting would be removed as soon as the work had been completed.

The chairman informed members that a low-key ribbon cutting was planned for the first week of March.

An update on the progress with the disabled facilities grants was also requested. The executive director clarified that there was slippage across all the North Northamptonshire councils in relation to this, which had been exacerbated by the pandemic. This had been flagged as an urgent issue for the North Northamptonshire Council to prioritise.

Councillors praised the decision of the working group to allocate funding to the town council to complete the improvements to the public realm and to install a water feature.

Members thanked officers for the considerable work that had been undertaken on the capital programme and the financial advice that had been forthcoming from senior officers.

Councillor Harrington proposed the motion within the report, this was seconded by Councillor Partridge-Underwood, and on being put to the vote declared carried.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the projected outturn and anticipated variances as at 31 January 2021, be noted;
- (ii) the external funding be noted;
- (iii) the updates and amendments to the 2020-21 capital programme be noted;
- (iv) the urgent action request approved under delegated powers be noted.

R1 RECOMMEND that:

- (i) approval be given to the supplementary budget request of £87,800, being committed to the community capital grant programme;
- (ii) approval be given to capital funding of £122,100, for the refurbishment of the High Street/Jacksons Lane car park; and for a grant to Wellingborough Town Council for improvements to the public realm in

the vicinity of the Tithe Barn, to include the installation of a water feature.

7. PROPERTY MATTERS

The annexed circulated report of the assistant director was received to provide members with an update on the ongoing approved projects.

Appended to the report were the following:

- Appendix 1 - Project Register;
- Appendix 2 - Project Summary;
- Appendix 3 - Doddington Road information.

The report detailed the approved, funded projects that would transfer to the North Northamptonshire Council programme. This included the following:

- Tithe Barn office block;
- Doddington Road cemetery footpaths;
- Tithe Barn – Phase 1;
- Festival lights;
- 12-15 Oxford Street;
- Retail improvements – shop fronts;
- Street lighting replacement;
- Bassett's Park skate park;
- Doddington Road development site;
- BCW owned properties – flats over shops;
- Digital High Street;
- Croyland Gardens;
- Park improvements;
- The Castle;
- The Embankment – Phase 1

These projects were further detailed in the appendix to the report.

The development committee had also requested officers to put forward a list of proposed projects for the consideration of North Northamptonshire Council. These projects included the following:

- Play areas – Phase 3;
- Park improvements – Phase 3;
- Road adoptions, structures, cycle paths;
- Market Square;
- Cycling Strategy;
- Church Street;
- Norse SLA Review;
- Public Halls;
- London Road cemetery chapels;
- Q2 Booth Drive, Wellingborough;

- Mausoleums;
- Town Centre connections;
- The Embankment – Phase 2.

Officers were working on start-up forms and other project information to ensure that such proposed projects can be put to the new authority for consideration.

The development site at Doddington Road had been placed on the market with Underwoods, and several offers had been received. The committee was asked to approve the sale of the site for best consideration. The council had obtained planning permission for 12 flats, with such planning permission expiring on 3 October 2021. Significant works on site needed to have started before that date to ensure the planning permission did not expire.

Members discussed the report. It was suggested that the festival lights be transferred to Wellingborough Town Council, rather than passing to the North Northamptonshire Council (NNC). The assistant director clarified that such transfer could be considered by NNC.

Reference was also made to the Doddington Road site, whilst members appreciated that approval had previously been given to market this, they considered that as NNC would have its own housing stock that it may wish to consider utilising this town centre site. The assistant director clarified that Greatwell Homes had initially considered this site for development, but it had proved to be unsuitable for social housing.

An update on the flooding issues at Doddington Road Cemetery was requested. The assistant director was able to confirm that the drainage works had been completed, with further work needing to be undertaken by the Environment Agency to divert the drainage to the brook.

A question was raised over whether Freemans School had been consulted on the location of the Skate Park at Bassett's Close. The assistant director clarified that this would be dealt with under the consultation process for the planning application.

Members further considered the issue with the sale of the land at Doddington Road and despite the advice of the assistant director, felt that such decision on the sale should be made by North Northamptonshire Council, as it may wish to consider this site for its housing stock.

An amendment to the proposed action in relation to Doddington Road was made by Councillor Partridge-Underwood and seconded by Councillor Harrington, to read as follows:

Resolve to dispose of the Doddington Road development site, in consultation with North Northamptonshire Shadow Authority, at best consideration in order to gain a capital receipt.

On being put to the vote this was declared carried.

This became the substantive motion, along with the proposed action in the report and was proposed by Councillor Partridge-Underwood and seconded by Councillor Harrington, and on being put to the vote declared carried.

The chairman extended the sincere thanks of the committee to Mr Piper and his team, for the outstanding work that had been undertaken in a very short period to bring so many of the projects to fruition.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the progress in relation to the projects, as outlined in appendix 1, be noted;
- (ii) the approved list of projects, as detailed in the report, be put forward to North Northamptonshire Council;
- (iii) approval be given to the Doddington Road development site being disposed of, in consultation with North Northamptonshire Shadow Authority, for best consideration in order to gain a capital receipt.

(Councillors Ward and Weatherill left the meeting for the following item, having both made a declaration.)

8. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

The annexed circulated report of the assistant director was received in relation to the receipt of a request to transfer Finedon recreation ground and toilets, and the obelisk in Finedon, to Finedon Town Council, in accordance with the asset transfer policy.

Appended to the report were the following:

- Appendix 1: Business case;
- Appendix 2: Budget information;
- Appendix 3: Valuation.

Finedon Town Council had submitted a community asset transfer application in November 2020 for the freehold transfer of Finedon recreation ground and toilets, and the obelisk. If agreed this would allow Finedon Town Council to take over the management and maintenance of the said recreation ground, toilets and obelisk. It is the town council's intention to extend the agreement with Wellingborough Norse (WN) for maintenance and it can finance this within the parish precept. The toilets (apart from the disabled) are closed and the town council wishes to reopen these and will seek funding from North Northamptonshire Council to do so in due course.

The obelisk was built in 1789 by the Lord of the Manor of Finedon to record the blessings of the year, including the return to sanity of King George III.

The recreation ground is the subject of two leases from the borough council to the Finedon Volta Football Club and the bowls club respectively and this

generates an annual income. The obelisk and the land on which it stands require ongoing maintenance.

If the transfer is successful the current rental payments would no longer be received by this council, and the maintenance costs would also be removed.

The annual maintenance cost is estimated at £23,482 per annum and Finedon Town Council will need to enter a contract for services directly with Wellingborough Norse.

The community asset transfer policy recommends a transfer under a long lease at a peppercorn rent; however, the committee could agree to transfer the freehold if it wished to do so.

Any transfer will need to ensure that the town council uses the land for the purpose intended in the longer term, and the transfer document will include provision for that.

Members considered that this request should be approved, and that it would be beneficial for the aforementioned items to be transferred to Finedon Town Council. It was proposed by Councillor Scarborough and seconded by Councillor Morrall that the following amendment be put:

Resolve to approve the community asset transfer of the freehold interest of Finedon recreation ground and toilets, and the obelisk to Finedon Town Council.

Members discussed the amendment and considered that the transfer of the freehold interest would be the best solution to ensure that the recreation ground and the obelisk were retained and maintained for the future use of the parishioners of Finedon.

The chairman put the amendment to the vote, and this was declared carried.

This became the substantive motion and on being put to the vote was declared carried.

RESOLVED that approval be given to the community asset transfer of the freehold interest of Finedon recreation ground and toilets, and the obelisk, to Finedon Town Council.

(Councillors Ward and Weatherill re-joined the meeting).

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

The annexed circulated report and appendices, along with exempt appendices, were received in relation to the write off, of irrecoverable debts.

The council's section 151 officer had authority to write off debts up to £2,000. Debts above this level can be written off by the resources committee under the delegated powers from council.

The report requested the write off, of the following debts, due to them being irrecoverable:

Council tax cases	£47,125.32
Housing benefit overpayment	£37,024.57
Non-domestic rate cases	£4,732.52

Further details of such debts were detailed in the exempt appendices to the report.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) approval be given to the sum of £88,882.41 of irrecoverable council tax and housing benefit overpayment balances being written off;
- (ii) It be noted that the sum of £324,265.71 had been written off under the delegated powers of the section 151 officer.

10. ANY OTHER ITEM THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES IS URGENT

The chairman had no further business to discuss but referenced the fact that this was the last resources committee of the Borough Council of Wellingborough.

He praised and thanked both officers and members for the considerable work that had been undertaken by the committee and referenced some of the projects including the refurbishment of the multi-storey car park, the improvements to the public realm, park improvements, temporary accommodation provided for the homeless, the sale of the Drill Hall and 20 Sheep Street, the 3G pitch at Redwell, Heritage initiatives and the improvements to the Hind Hotel, the transfer of The Castle, and the ongoing community grants which had provided a lifeline for many during the pandemic. All of this provided the borough with a legacy for the future. This had only been possible due to the solid financial governance that had been provided. The committee needed to be proud of its achievements and he extended his thanks to all involved.

Several members responded to the chairman agreeing that with the help of officers' some great decisions had been made for the people of the whole borough. Most councillors would have chosen to remain independent but that decision had been made elsewhere and whilst it was very sad that the Borough Council of Wellingborough was coming to an end, the good work would continue with Wellingborough Town Council and North Northamptonshire Council from 1 April 2021.

The chairman finished the meeting by thanking all the Borough Council of Wellingborough employees, past and present and wishing them well in the new authority.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 9.45pm.

