

EXECUTIVE

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held in the Chamber Suites, The Arc, Clowne, on Monday, 28 October 2013 at 1000 hours.

PRESENT:-

Councillor E Watts in the Chair

Members:-

Councillor R Bowler, D Kelly, B Murray-Carr, K Reid, and A Syrett.

Officers:-

W Lumley (Chief Executive Officer), B Mason (Director of Corporate Resources), P Hackett (Director of Health and Well Being), A Westray-Chapman (Assistant Director – Corporate Resources), S Brunt (Streetscene Manager), M Kane (Governance Manager), A Bedford (Support Officer), N Etches (Business Estates Manager) and L Cheong (Scrutiny Officer).

Councillors H Gilmour and J Smith were also present.

0524. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor A Tomlinson.

0525. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business considered at the meeting.

0526. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared at the meeting.

0527. MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE HELD ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2013

Moved by Councillor E Watts and duly seconded.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Executive held on 30 September 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
(Governance Manager)

0528. RECOMMENDED ITEMS FROM OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

There were no items recommended from other standing committees.

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0529. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS POLICY

Executive considered a report of the Improvement Scrutiny Committee which set out the findings of its review into the Council's Discretionary Housing Payments Policy. The purpose of the review was to:-

- Consider the policy and ensure that Discretionary Housing Payments were awarded appropriately and fairly.
- Ensure that the policy and procedure was open and transparent.
- Consider the procedure(s) for completing an application for Discretionary Housing Payment to ensure that they are effective and efficient.

The review made seven recommendations based on evidence gathered during its review. These were as follows:-

- That the Discretionary Housing Payments Policy be amended to acknowledge single people claiming basic rate Job Seekers Allowance or Employment Support Allowance who have no other income as a priority group and consideration be given to providing additional support to this group to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment on notification from the Department of Work and Pensions of this change in circumstances, e.g. contacting the individual and advising that they may be entitled to a Discretionary Housing Payment award.
- That the Discretionary Housing Payments Policy be amended to provide a guide as to how long Discretionary Housing Payments are awarded for.
- That the application form for Discretionary Housing Payments be amended to include the following;
 - Data Protection Statement
 - A statement to ensure that any person completing the application form is in receipt of housing benefit.
 - A space for the applicant to include their housing benefit reference number (*if known*)
 - That an additional box be included for applicants to expand on expenditure for health/care expenses where they are in receipt of disability benefits.
- That a set of minimum income standards is introduced as a broad guide for staff to ensure consistency and to ensure that the process is transparent. It is suggested that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation – A

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Minimum Income Standard for the UK in 2013 should be used as the guide however, this must remain as an internal document and not one which is published.

- That further consideration is given to a framework of when it is or isn't appropriate to use Discretionary Housing Payments for bonds or rent in advance in respect of applicants in private rented accommodation.
- That Housing Services contribute information to the proposed monitoring system which provides statistical information on those households affected by changes as a result of Welfare Reform.
- That a quarterly update be provided to major partners e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau and Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre on the availability of Discretionary Housing Payment funds in order to assist in the ongoing promotion of the service.

There was a discussion around recommendation six and some of the difficulties that may be encountered around the Housing Service providing statistical information on those households in the District that had been affected by the changes arising from welfare reform.

By approving this recommendation, officers would have an opportunity to investigate the potential for the provision of such information. This may impact on the requirement for the Executive to provide a full response to the recommendations but an update on the position would be given in any case within six weeks.

Moved by Councillor A Syrett and seconded by Councillor K Reid.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) Executive approve the following recommendations made by the Improvement Scrutiny Committee arising from their review into the Discretionary Housing Payments Policy:
 - That the Discretionary Housing Payments Policy be amended to acknowledge single people claiming basic rate Job Seekers Allowance or Employment Support Allowance who have no other income as a priority group and consideration be given to providing additional support to this group to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment on notification from the Department of Work and Pensions of this change in circumstances, e.g. contacting the individual and advising that they may be entitled to a Discretionary Housing Payment award.
 - That the Discretionary Housing Payments Policy be amended to provide a guide as to how long Discretionary Housing Payments are awarded for.

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- That the application form for Discretionary Housing Payments be amended to include the following;
 - Data Protection Statement
 - A statement to ensure that any person completing the application form is in receipt of housing benefit.
 - A space for the applicant to include their housing benefit reference number (*if known*)
 - That an additional box be included for applicants to expand on expenditure for health/care expenses where they are in receipt of disability benefits.
 - That a set of minimum income standards is introduced as a broad guide for staff to ensure consistency and to ensure that the process is transparent. It is suggested that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation – A Minimum Income Standard for the UK in 2013 should be used as the guide however, this must remain as an internal document and not one which is published.
 - That further consideration is given to a framework of when it is or isn't appropriate to use Discretionary Housing Payments for bonds or rent in advance in respect of applicants in private rented accommodation.
 - That Housing Services contribute information to the proposed monitoring system which provides statistical information on those households affected by changes as a result of Welfare Reform.
 - That a quarterly update be provided to major partners e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau and Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre on the availability of Discretionary Housing Payment funds in order to assist in the ongoing promotion of the service.
- (2) Executive provide a response on the review recommendations within six weeks in accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules in order that an action plan can be drawn up to monitor implementation.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To enable Executive to consider the recommendations arising from the review and to enhance Council services to customers.

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OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED: The issues and methodology from the review was set out in the scrutiny review report.
(Governance Manager/Head of Housing)

0530. WELFARE REFORM/UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE

Executive considered the report of the Assistant Director – Customer Services which provided an update on the Government’s programme of welfare reform.

The report advised of the following:-

- The Local Support Services Framework (LSSF) had been published in March 2013 as a consultation document for Universal Credit implementation and would be finalised by Government in autumn 2013. The document set out the context for which the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and local authorities would deliver Universal Credit.
- Regular meetings had been held with the DWP to understand the scope and expectations for partnership working. The view was that much was still to be decided by Central Government but a number of decisions would remain with local authorities.
- In July 2013, authorities undertaking pilot activity regarding the LSSF were asked to request an extension to their initial project. This was the first formal indication that the LSSF would be delayed.
- Advice Agency Liaison meetings continued to provide a constructive forum for policy consultation and information exchange with various partner agencies.
- Training had been delivered to frontline staff on personal budget coaching and conflict resolution and negotiation. Training on mental ill health awareness would commence in the autumn. Members had been briefed through the Member Development session on the Budget Buddy Programme.
- Benefit staff had undertaken work to promote discretionary housing payments to ensure that those people who were eligible received support. A scrutiny review of discretionary housing payments had been reported to Executive as part of the previous item.

As part of understanding the wider impact of welfare reform it was recognised that corporate monitoring needed to be undertaken to understand resource and policy implications. Attached as an appendix to the report was a monitoring form proposed to capture information on a quarterly basis which would allow members to monitor any developing trends.

Following questions by members, Executive was advised that the Council was working to ensure that any language barriers with Eastern European residents in the District were overcome.

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Moved by Councillor A Syrett and seconded by Councillor D Kelly.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) Executive notes the advice from Central Government regarding the roll out of Welfare Reform and Universal Credit.
- (2) The form to be used corporately to monitor the impact of Welfare Reform, as attached as an appendix to the report, be approved.
- (3) The form referred to in resolution (2) above be incorporated within the Council's Quarterly Performance Management Framework.
- (4) Executive notes the wider activity undertaken on Welfare Reform and Universal Credit within the Contact Centres and Revenues and Benefits.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To update Members of the latest Government announcements regarding Universal Credit and to note Council's response to the changes already introduced. Also, to approve the Corporate Monitoring Form to assess the impact of Welfare Reform.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

None.

(Assistant Director – Customer Services)

0531. COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

Executive considered a report of the Support Officer which set out information on the numbers of compliments, comments and complaints for the second quarter of 2013/14 covering July to September 2013.

In total, 26 written compliments had been received expressing appreciation for service across the Council. This was down from 54 in the previous quarter.

Executive was advised that there had been almost double the number of complaints regarding the Council's waste collection service in the second quarter than from the first quarter. These were predominantly concerning missed domestic or green bin collection.

There had been 45 stage one complaints in the second quarter, of which 30 were responded to within time. A total of 47 stage two complaints had been received in the second quarter as well as seven stage three complaints. All stage two and stage three complaints had been responded to within time. A handful of complaints had been received via the Local Government Ombudsman but none of these required any action on behalf of the Council.

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Moved by Councillor E Watts and duly seconded.

RESOLVED that the report into compliments, comments and complaints in the second quarter of 2013/14 be received.

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep Members informed of volumes and trends regarding compliments, comments and complaints.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED: None.
(Support Officer)

0532. BANK HOLIDAY WASTE COLLECTION ARRANGEMENTS

Executive considered a report of the Joint Streetscene Services Manager which detailed arrangements for the organisation of the Council's waste collection arrangements over Bank Holiday periods throughout 2013/14, and in particular Christmas and New Year.

Executive had agreed at their meeting on 19 November 2012 to introduce seasonal suspension of green bin collection from the end of November 2013, recommencing on 10 March 2014. Residents would be advised by way of calendars over the forthcoming 12 month period.

The suspension of green bin collection throughout the winter period provided an opportunity to suspend black bin collections throughout the Christmas week and resume New Year week. Full details of collection days were set out in the report.

It was acknowledged that some residents may view suspension of green bin collection as a reduction in service. However, waste and recycling collection services had seen significant enhancements since the single weekly black bin collection arrangements. This included the introduction of green and burgundy bins for organic and other recycling requirements.

Staff who would undertake green bin collections during winter would provide increased resilience during periods of inclement weather and enhance other streetscene service areas.

Executive was advised that collection of "side waste" could be facilitated. Residents were asked to place waste/recycling in a plastic sack next to their bins.

Moved by Councillor D Kelly and duly seconded.

RESOLVED that Executive notes:-

- (1) That the Bank Holiday waste collection arrangements, and in particular those relating to Christmas and New Year as set out in the report, be noted.

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- (2) That calendars be produced and distributed to all District households ahead of green bin suspension in November 2013.
- (3) That prior publicity and media release be undertaken to inform Bolsover residents of suspension arrangements ahead of distributing collection calendars.

REASON FOR DECISION: To advise of the variations of collection days during Christmas and New Year Bank Holidays.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED: None
(Streetscene Manager)

0533. RENEWAL OF INSURANCE POLICIES 2013

Executive considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which set out the action he had taken under delegated powers to renew the Council's insurance policies.

The Council's insurance policies had been due for renewal on 1 October 2013 within a framework established by a three year long term agreement. The Council had granted delegated powers to the Director of Corporate Resources to renew the Council's insurance cover so that the most economically advantageous outcome could be achieved.

The report set out the detail of each type of insurance, including reasons for premiums increasing and decreasing. The table below sets out the variance from 2012/13 to 2013/14:-

	2012/2013 £	2013/2014 £	Variance £
Vehicles			
➤ Fleet	79,360	71,614	(7,746)
➤ Lease Cars	10,540	1,761	(8,779)
➤ Grey Fleet Contingency Liability	750	825	75
➤ MAPS Recovery Loss Agent	697	601	(96)
Total Vehicles premiums	91,347	74,801	(16,546)
Casualty			
➤ Public liability / Libel & Slander	24,272	33,455	9,183
➤ Employers liability	15,879	20,000	4,121
➤ Officials indemnity / Land Charges	4,646	4,635	(11)
➤ Professional Indemnity	4,626	2,320	(2,306)
Total Casualty premiums	49,423	60,410	10,987
Property			

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	2012/2013 £	2013/2014 £	Variance £
➤ Housing Stock	107,926	110,370	2,444
➤ Leased Flats	3,130	3,245	115
➤ General Properties	31,954	33,133	1,179
➤ Play Areas	1,321	1,488	167
➤ Contents	3,493	3,598	105
➤ Car Parks	1,019	1,049	30
➤ Work In Progress	3,652	2,957	(695)
➤ Business Interruption	3,166	3,332	166
➤ All Risks	801	806	5
➤ Money	329	329	0
➤ Council Tools (in vehicles)	757	780	23
➤ Pleasley Vale B P Mills	9,405	9,687	282
➤ Pleasley Vale B P Lodges	412	427	15
Total Property premiums	167,365	171,201	3,836
Minor Classes			
➤ Fidelity Guarantee	2,508	2,534	26
➤ Computer	1,832	1,539	(293)
➤ Engineering (hired plant & inspection)	8,437	9,894	1,457
Total Minor premiums	12,777	13,967	1,190
Sub Total (exc IPT)	320,912	320,379	(533)
Less low claims rebate (Property)	(10,624)	(8,885)	1,739
I.P.T. @ 6%	18,126	18,644	518
Premium Total (inc IPT)	328,414	330,138	1,724
Inc NEDDC insurance recharges	6,916	6,690	(226)
Overall Grand total	335,330	336,828	1,498

The overall annual sum allocated to cover insurance and risk was £500,328 which was a slight increase on the 2012/13 figure of £498,830.

Moved by Councillor E Watts and duly seconded.

RESOLVED that the action of the Director of Corporate Resources, acting under delegated powers, in continuing to secure the Council's insurance policies within the framework established by the long term agreement be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To ensure the Council is adequately covered against any losses or damage to its assets.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

The Council had assessed value for money, quality and service issues and selected the option financially beneficial to the Council.

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The relevant considerations were set out in the report.

(Director of Corporate Resources)

0534. ARREARS – IRRECOVERABLE ITEMS OVER £1,000

Executive considered a report of the Billing and Recovery Manager which sought the write-off of a number of irrecoverable items, including costs, amounting to £72,951.02.

This included £63,448.97 arising from bankruptcy and liquidation cases and £9,502.05 where the debtor was no longer traceable. A schedule setting out the exact details of each debtor was provided in the report.

Where debtors left properties without forwarding addresses extensive efforts had been made to trace them. In addition to departmental checks, statutory undertakers and other agencies were contacted and enquiries had been made with neighbours and family or employers, where known. Where it was known that a person had moved to another area, contact was made with the relevant authority.

Moved by Councillor E Watts and duly seconded

RESOLVED that the write-off of irrecoverable items, including costs, amounting to £72,951.02 be approved with the proviso that should any of the debts become collectable the amounts be re-debited.

REASON FOR DECISION: In order that outstanding debts can be written off.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED: None.
(Recovery and Billing Manager)

0535. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the stated Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and it is not in the public interest for that to be revealed.

0536. EXEMPT – PARAGRAPH 3 ARREARS – IRRECOVERABLE ITEMS OVER £1,000

Executive considered a report of the Billing and Recovery Manager which sought the write-off of a number of irrecoverable items, including costs, amounting to £7,433.38.

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This included £1,382.09 arising from a death, £1,586.29 where a business had ceased to trade, £3,103.77 that was statute barred and £1,361.23 which was not cost effective to recover. A schedule setting out the exact details of each debtor was provided in the report.

Moved by Councillor R Bowler and duly seconded

RESOLVED that the write-off of irrecoverable items, including costs, amounting to £7,433.38 be approved with the proviso that should any of the debts become collectable the amounts be re-debited.

REASON FOR DECISION: In order that outstanding debts can be written off.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED: None.
(Recovery and Billing Manager)

0537. EXEMPT – PARAGRAPH 3 OXCROFT LANE DEPOT LETTING

Executive considered a report of the Director of Development which sought a short term letting of Oxcroft Depot to Groundwork Creswell, Ashfield and Mansfield for six years.

Back in December 2010, Executive had decided that Oxcroft Depot should be retained by the Council and let on a short term basis of three years. Since then the property had been on the open market but no offers had been received. During this time the property had been severely vandalised and subject to substantial metal theft resulting in repair costs.

Following a long negotiation period the Council had agreed heads of terms for letting the whole site to Groundwork Creswell, Mansfield and Ashfield for a period of six years. The site would be used as a depot and training facility which would allow Groundwork to consolidate their assets and enable them to work with more young people in vocational opportunities.

The letting would result in Groundwork leaving South Normanton Depot. However, they had agreed to remain in occupation of the depot and take on all liabilities on a peppercorn rent until the Council could find a new tenant. The site was being marketed through the Council's commercial agent.

A number of the buildings on the Oxcroft Depot site were beyond their viable life and a long term strategy for the site was redevelopment. To enable this, the lease agreement would not be a secure tenancy and would be excluded from the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954.

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Moved by Councillor E Watts and duly seconded.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) Executive agree to enter into a short term letting of Oxcroft Depot for six years with Groundwork Creswell, Ashfield and Mansfield in accordance with the heads of terms attached to the report.
- (2) Executive agree to enter into a peppercorn lease arrangement with Groundwork Creswell, Ashfield and Mansfield for Meadow Lane Depot until a new tenant was found. This contract was determinable by the Council by serving two weeks' notice.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To develop vibrant town centres and flourishing rural communities by securing the future of a regeneration agency and employer within the Bolsover District and to ensure commercial buildings were kept in the appropriate employment use.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

None.

The meeting concluded at 1115 hours.

Executive Mins (BDC) 1028 (2013)AJD