

EXECUTIVE

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held in the Chamber Suites, The Arc, Clowne, on Monday, 3 February 2014 at 1000 hours.

PRESENT:-

Councillor E Watts in the Chair

Members:-

Councillor R Bowler, D Kelly, B Murray-Carr, A Syrett and A Tomlinson

Officers:-

W Lumley (Chief Executive Officer), B Mason (Executive Director - Operations), P Hackett (Executive Director - Transformation), J Foley (Assistant Director – Customer Service and Improvement), S Clow (Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager), M Broughton (Commercial Property and Development Manager), R Owen (Senior Valuer), A Wylie (Principal Solicitor), S Chambers (Communications Officer) and M Kane (Governance Manager).

0787. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor K Reid.

0788. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

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

0789. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared at this meeting.

0790. MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2014

Moved by Councillor D Kelly and seconded by Councillor B Murray-Carr.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Executive held on 14 January 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(Governance Manager)

0791. RECOMMENDED ITEMS FROM OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

There were no items recommended from standing committees to this meeting.

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0792. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2014/15 TO 2016/17

Executive considered a report of the Executive Director – Operations which presented the 2014/15 General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Programme budgets and financial plans for consideration and recommendation to Council.

In respect of the General Fund, the Council was anticipating that an in year surplus would be achieved which would mean no call on general fund balances in respect of 2013/14. The forecast surplus will be dependent upon the use of the £1.064m of Efficiency Grant in order to fund the costs of rationalisation, restructuring and Invest to Save measures. In order to deliver a surplus the Council had secured the majority of the planned £0.884m of financial savings during 2013/14 and identified other savings and increased income during the revised budget process which generated the forecast surplus position.

The total savings required for 2014/15 were in the order of £0.447m. A range of savings proposals totalling £0.430m had been proposed which would mean that the unidentified savings target for 2014/15 was £0.017m. While the Council had continued to drive its savings agenda it would still be necessary to achieve the financial savings targets of £0.430m during the 2014/15 financial year together with the £0.017m which remained to be identified.

On the basis that the full £0.447m was achieved in respect of 2014/15 there would be a further £0.973m to be achieved in respect of 2015/16 and an estimated figure of £0.800m for 2016/17. Given the Government's spending plans it was expected that further reductions would be required in future financial years.

The overall position for the HRA in 2013/14 was that there was a forecast surplus of £0.086m in the current year which, if realised, would increase the HRA balances to £1.861m. The key issue for 2014/15 was that the average rent increase required to comply with Government rent convergence requirements was 6.24% which resulted in the average rent for a Council house increasing to £83.61 per week on a 48 week basis.

One development within the 2014/15 HRA budget was the requirement to increase the debt repayment sum in line with the long term business plan to repay the settlement debt over a 30 year period. The principal repayment figure would increase by £1.5m to £3.5m for 2014/15.

In respect of the Capital Programme, the financial provision to fund the ongoing programme of housing refurbishment work was planned to continue at a level between £3m and £4m per annum. That level of spend would be reviewed in the light of the HRA stock condition survey which it was anticipated would be available in early 2014. Once that information has been considered it was anticipated that a further report would be brought back to Council seeking approval for a revised Capital Programme in respect of the HRA.

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During 2013/14, capital expenditure of £2m would be incurred in respect of HRA new build properties at New Houghton with a further sum of £0.680m expenditure being paid in 2014/15. With regard to the General Fund a stock condition survey was nearing completion and the Council was working to secure Lottery Funding for the Mill complex at Pleasley Vale.

Legally, the Council's Section 151 Officer was required to comment on the robustness of the estimates made and on the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves. The Council's Section 151 Officer was satisfied that the methodology adopted to calculate the estimates was robust, and provided Members with reliable information on which to base their decisions.

Likewise, the Section 151 Officer was satisfied that the proposed level of reserves, which although at a relatively low level, were adequate to cover the issues and potential risks which faced the Council.

Following consideration of the report, members asked questions and sought information in relation to National Non Domestic Rates, the increase in repayment relating to the Housing Revenue Account and the budget implications of improving the Council's housing stock.

Moved by Councillor E Watts and seconded by Councillor A Tomlinson.

RESOLVED to recommend to Council that:

- (1) The view of the Chief Financial Officer, that the estimates included in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2013/14 to 2016/17 were robust and that the level of financial reserves whilst at minimum levels were adequate, be accepted.
- (2) That officers be required to report back to Executive and to the Audit Committee on at least a quarterly basis regarding the overall position in respect of the Council's budgets, these reports to include updates on progress in achieving the range of identified efficiencies necessary to achieve a balanced budget by the end of the 2014/15 financial year.
- (3) In respect of the General Fund:
 - (a) Members be minded to impose no Council Tax increase for the financial year 2014/15 and instead accept the proposed Government grant compensation arrangements. This recommendation will be submitted for formal approval at the Council meeting on 3 March 2014.
 - (b) The Medium Term Financial Plan in respect of the General Fund as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved and the Estimated Outturn Budget 2013/14 with a spending requirement of £12,389,845 together with the original budget for 2014/15 with a spending requirement of £11,868,004 as detailed in Appendix 1 Table 1 be agreed.

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- (c) Officers continue to progress the implementation of measures designed to secure the forecast surplus in respect of 2013/14 and a balanced budget in respect of 2014/15 with progress to be reported back to both Executive and Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.
 - (d) The proposed Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix 1 Table 3 to the report be adopted with effect from 1 April 2014.
 - (e) An allocation of Efficiency Grant of up to £20,000 in 2014/15 be approved in order to fund a Joint Empty Homes Property Officer with North East Derbyshire District Council.
 - (f) Any surplus generated in the financial year 2013/14 be used to increase General Fund balances.
 - (g) Officers continue with the programme of work to secure the agreed savings required of £0.447m in order to balance the 2014/15 budget at the earliest opportunity.
- (4) In respect of the HRA:
- (a) Council agree to introduce rent increases in line with the Government's convergence policy with effect from 1 April 2014. The recommended increase would bring about an average increase in rents of 6.24%. However, the actual percentages would vary depending on the type of property.
 - (b) The increases in respect of other charges as outlined in Appendix 2 Table 2 to the report be implemented with effect from 1 April 2014.
 - (c) The Housing Revenue Account as set out in Appendix 2 Table 1 to the report be approved as the Estimated Outturn Budget in respect of 2013/14 and as the Original Budget in respect of 2014/15.
 - (d) The HRA target level of balances remains at a level of £2m.
- (5) In respect of the Capital Programme:
- (a) The Capital Programme for 2013/14 to 2016/17 as set out in Appendix 3 Table 1 to the report be approved.
 - (b) That Council notes the requirement to repay some £7.865m of prudential borrowing at the end of the 2013/14 financial year which was incurred in order to fund expenditure

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incurred during 2012/13 and 2013/14, and that this expenditure be funded by capital receipts which it was currently anticipated would be received before the end of the current financial year. The utilisation of these receipts to repay borrowing had previously been agreed by Council.

- (c) Further reports concerning the Capital Programme be brought back to Council once expenditure programmes based upon priorities as identified by the stock condition survey of both General Fund and HRA have been developed.

REASON FOR DECISION: To deliver a balanced budget for the authority in 2014/15.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED: None.
(Executive Director - Operations)

0793. ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP POLICY

Executive considered a report of the Assistant Director – Customer Service and Improvement which sought approval for an Advertising and Sponsorship Policy across the Council and its Strategic Alliance partner, North East Derbyshire District Council.

The Advertising and Sponsorship Policy was part of the Revenue Strategy, which identified opportunities to bring in additional income to the two Councils. The purpose of the Policy was to provide guidance to officers and Members on advertising and sponsorship activities which were acceptable, whilst also providing clarity to potential clients and terms under which such business would be undertaken. The Policy also lists prohibited products and services which would create either competition for our own services or a conflict of interest.

The Policy had been widely consulted on and comments made by the Improvement Scrutiny Committee in relation to potential conflicts of interest where offers of sponsorship may be made from bodies looking to apply for planning permission. A debate on this matter had taken place at the Strategic Alliance Joint Committee who, having considered all the issues, decided to recommend the Policy in its original format with the addition of 'high cost lending or pay day loans' and 'no win no fee claims' being added to the list of prohibited products, services and advertising.

Moved by Councillor E Watts and seconded by Councillor A F Tomlinson.

RESOLVED that the Joint Advertising and Sponsorship Policy as appended to the report be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION: In line with the requirements of the Revenue Strategy agreed by Executive on 10 June 2013

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OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED: None.
(Assistant Director – Customer Service and Improvement)

0794. DEVELOPMENT FUND

Executive considered a report of the Commercial Property and Developments Manager and the Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager which sought the creation of a development fund to assist the Council in gaining a detailed understanding of the value and potential value of its land assets, as well as the opportunities and options associated with such assets.

Members were advised that although the Council knew what land was in its ownership officers were currently unable to quantify the most valuable use of those assets. This proposal was for the creation of a new development fund to bring forward residential, commercial and mixed use sites through Council owned land. The development fund would be used to gain a detailed understanding of the value of land assets and would provide officers with an understanding of the opportunities and options for sale. This would allow the Council to identify which pieces of land could be disposed of to generate a capital receipt for the Council, as well as those which could help the Council to meet its corporate growth ambitions and wider corporate priorities such as the delivery of affordable housing.

The key areas of work that the development fund would be used to finance were outlined in the report. The £70,000 would be taken from the Transformation Fund and topped up with receipts generated, enabling a rolling programme to be brought forward over a number of years.

The Council's Asset Management Group would assume responsibility as a project board for deciding which sites were prioritised and supported by the development fund and for making recommendations to Executive, where appropriate. Reports produced by consultants would enter the public domain at the determination of the project board. A team of officers from the Growth and Resources Directorate would be responsible for establishing a short-list of sites and developing reports with the relevant consultancy support for consideration by the Asset Management Group. Procurement of consultants would be through a process agreed by the Executive Director – Operations.

Moved by Councillor A F Tomlinson and seconded by Councillor D Kelly.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) £70,000 of Transformation Fund be allocated as a development pot as outlined within the report.
- (2) Executive agrees to any receipt delivered through this process being used to "top up" the development pot back up to £70,000 to allow for future schemes to be brought forward.

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- (3) The Executive Director – Operations, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, review and implement appropriate membership of the Asset Management Group.
- (4) The Building and Contracts Manager, with the agreement of the Executive Director – Operations and following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, be given delegated authority to appoint consultants for works as identified through the Project Management Group.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) To develop vibrant town centres and flourishing rural communities.
- (2) To deliver £100,000 of New Homes Bonus per annum in the District as part of the Local Investment Plan.
- (3) To maximise the supply of affordable housing in the district and deliver an average of 20 units per annum by March 2015.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

None
(Commercial Property and Developments Manager/
Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager)

0795. IDOX UNIFORM ESTATES MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Executive considered a report of the Senior Valuer which sought approval to purchase the Idox Estate Management System to improve the efficiency and management of the Council's land and property assets.

Executive was advised that the Council currently had no up-to-date central records or management system for its land and property assets. Details of the Council's current manual arrangements were outlined within the report.

Officers had recently had a demonstration of the Idox Uniform Estate Management system, which formed part of the Uniform suite of software. This system was the market leader in estate management and land terrier systems and was widely used across local government. The system was able to assist in a number of functions, including acquisition and disposal of property, record property ownership and valuations, track leases and assignments, co-ordination and management of works and maintenance, recording and management of other assets.

Idox had quoted the Council the sum of £16,100 to provide the system, which included providing and installing the software with licences for up to five concurrent users. Training would also be provided for those using the system.

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Moved by Councillor A F Tomlinson and seconded by Councillor A Syrett.

RESOLVED that the Council purchase the Idox Estate Management Module on the terms contained in the report.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that the Council was able to manage its property assets in order that it can achieve best value from them.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED: None
(Senior Valuer)

0796. CHILD PROTECTION UPDATE

Executive considered a report of the Housing Enforcement Manager which provided an update on activity around child protection within the Council.

Members were reminded that Executive had approved a revised Child Protection Policy in August 2013. In addition, a number of safeguarding link officers had been identified. A new dedicated safeguarding page was available on the Council's intranet system and a staff briefing card had been developed for all staff outlining signs of abuse, how to refer in an emergency and contact details for the safeguarding link officers. This card would be used for both the Council and North East Derbyshire and be issued via payslips.

No internal child protection training had been provided by the Council in the last 12 months. In light of the County Council's decision to no longer provide specialist training internal delivery options were being explored including a 'train the trainer' and e-delivery module option.

There had been seven referrals to the County Council regarding child protection issues since January 2013. Three of the referrals had been received from Housing, one from the Domestic Violence Officer, two from the Anti-Social Behaviour Case Worker and one from a Repairs Operative.

There was a brief discussion in relation to a recent case in the District. A debate also took place about where child protection issues best sat within the Council. Executive was advised that child protection was a matter for which the County Council had principal responsibility and that it remained a cross cutting issue across the Council to inform the County Council if staff had concerns about the welfare of any child. It remained the duty of all officers and Members to report concerns of abuse and that the Executive Director - Transformation would remain as lead officer.

Moved by Councillor A Syrett and duly seconded.

RESOLVED that the report setting out the Child Protection Update be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To provide Executive with an update on child protection issues.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED: None

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(Executive Director – Transformation)

0797. LAND AT SOUTHFIELD LANE, WHITWELL

Executive considered a report setting out development options for a portion of land at Southfield Lane, Whitwell.

Moved by Councillor E Watts and duly seconded.

RESOLVED that the report into land at Southfield Lane, Whitwell be referred to Cabinet for further deliberation.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable a full and proper consideration of the options.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED: None
(Chief Executive)

The meeting concluded at 1115 hours.