

EXECUTIVE

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Monday, 19 July 2021 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Steve Fritchley in the Chair

Councillors Mary Dooley, Clive Moesby, Sandra Peake and Liz Smyth.

Officers:- Karen Hanson (Director of Environment and Enforcement), Grant Galloway (Director of Development), Theresa Fletcher (Head of Finance and Resources & Section 151 Officer), Sarah Sternberg (Head of Corporate Governance & Monitoring Officer), Chris Fridlington (Assistant Director of Development and Planning), Ian Barber (Head of Property Services & Housing Repairs), Nicola Calver (Governance Manager), Helena Skeavington (Contract Administrator - QS) and Amy Bryan (Senior Governance Officer).

EX13-21/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Downes, Duncan McGregor and Deborah Watson.

EX14-21/22 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to be considered at the meeting.

EX15-21/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were requested to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or other interests, not already on their register of interests, in any item on the agenda and withdraw from the meeting at the appropriate time.

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

EX16-21/22 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Sandra Peake and seconded by Councillor Clive Moesby
RESOLVED that the minutes of a meeting of Executive held on 21 June 2021 be approved as a true and correct record.

MATTERS REFERRED FROM SCRUTINY

None

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BUDGET & POLICY FRAMEWORK ITEMS

None

NON KEY DECISIONS

EX17-21/22 FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2020-21

Executive considered the report of the Portfolio Holder – Finance which informed Members of the outturn position of the Council for the 2020/21 financial year.

It was noted that the draft Statement of Accounts had been published on 14 June 2021. The draft Statement of Accounts was subject to the independent audit from the Council's external auditors, Mazars.

The report set out the position in respect of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Investment Programme outturns, which were detailed in the appendices to the report.

In respect of the General Fund balances, the level was considered to be at an acceptable level for a district council. The General Fund balance had to be considered against the background of ongoing changes to the level of Government funding together with the range of risks facing the Council. With only a limited level of General Fund reserves it was considered crucial that the Council continued to maintain robust budgetary control whilst securing its ongoing savings targets in order to safeguard both its reserves and financial sustainability.

The main feature of the 2020/21 financial year was that the Council had transferred £0.906m to Earmarked Reserves in preparation for future expenditure.

With regard to the underlying favourable variance on the General Fund in 2020/21, this was to be reviewed as usual during the budget process for 2021/22 – 2025/26, from October 2021 onwards.

The outturn position of the Housing Revenue account and the position of the Capital Programme were outlined in the report. Carry forward amounts in relation to the Capital Programme were proposed due to individual schemes that were still in progress, where there were outstanding commitments or where the schemes had been delayed. The proposed carry forward was £5.447m.

The Council's treasury management activity for 2020/21 was also summarised in the report.

Moved by Councillor Clive Moesby and seconded by Councillor Liz Smyth
RESOLVED that –

1) the outturn position in respect of the 2020/21 financial year be noted.

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2) the transfers to various earmarked reserves of £0.906m as outlined in detail in paragraph 2.3 of the report be approved.

3) the proposed carry forward of capital budgets detailed in Appendix A totalling £5.447m be approved.

(Head of Finance and Resources)

REASON FOR DECISION:

To consider the financial outturn position of the Council for 2020/21 and its implications for future years' budgets.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

As the financial outturn report was fundamentally a factual report giving details of the outcome of previously approved budgets there were no alternative options that were considered.

The allocation of resources to earmarked reserve accounts had been undertaken in line with the Council's policy and service delivery framework and in the light of the risks and issues facing the Council over the period of the current MTFP. If there risks were not to materialise or were settled at a lower cost than anticipated then the earmarked reserves would be reassessed and returned to balances where appropriate.

EX18-21/22 CORPORATE DEBT 2020-21

Executive considered the report of the Portfolio Holder – Finance which presented a summary of the corporate debt position as at 31 March 2021.

The corporate debt position was broken down into Business Rates (NNDR), Council Tax, Housing Rents, Overpaid Housing Benefits and Sundry Debtors.

Arrears had increased in 2020/21 for NNDR, Council Tax and Housing Rents. The Coronavirus Pandemic was a part of the reason for this, although less so for NNDR as the amount of Government reliefs provided meant some businesses had little or no liability to pay for 2020/21.

Overall in 2020/21 £0.784m (net) more in income had been raised on the Council systems. The Council's arrears had increased by £1.4m but if just NNDR, Council Tax and Housing Rents were included the increase was £1.7m. The bad debt provision had been increased by £1.5m.

RESOLVED that the report concerning the Council's Corporate Debt as at 31 March 2021 be noted.

(Head of Finance and Resources)

REASON FOR DECISION:

To ensure that Executive were informed of the latest position concerning the Council's debt.

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OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

The report was for information only.

EX19-21/22 OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENTS

Executive considered a report that set out the proposed appointments for representatives of the Council to Outside Bodies related to Executive functions.

It was proposed that Councillor Liz Smyth be appointed as a Deputy for Councillor Watson on the DEFRA Rural and Farming Network.

Moved by Councillor Clive Moesby and seconded by Councillor Sandra Peake

RESOLVED that –

1) the representatives to outside bodies, as listed in Appendix 1 and those reported at the meeting, be appointed.

2) the term of office for each appointment will be from the date of this meeting until the end of the Municipal Year unless otherwise specified in Appendix 1.

(Monitoring Officer)

REASON FOR DECISION:

To ensure the Council was represented on the Outside Bodies.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

The alternative not to appoint a representative to these organisations was rejected as this would have failed to provide the Council with representation on these organisations.

KEY DECISIONS

EX20-21/22 AWARD OF PHASE 2 EXTERNAL WALL INSULATION WORKS VIA EEM FRAMEWORK

Executive considered a report by the Portfolio Holder – Housing which sought approval for the award of a contract for installation of External Wall Insulation (EWI) to 93 Council properties.

It had been identified that the Council had a number of dwellings which would qualify for Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Phase 2. This scheme aimed to raise the energy efficiency of low-income and low Energy Performance Certified (EPC) rated homes. The Council had been successful in securing funding for 93 properties.

The proposed contractor, Sustainable Building Services, was already on site delivering Phase 1 of the scheme.

Moved by Councillor Sandra Peake and seconded by Councillor Liz Smyth

RESOLVED that –

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1) the contract be directly awarded to Sustainable Building Services to guarantee resources to deliver the scheme and secure the funding support.

2) progress on the contract be reported through the Housing Stock Management Group.

(Head of Property Services & Housing Repairs)

REASON FOR DECISION:

To ensure continuity of work flow and to ensure that works were completed within a tight schedule. There was a 31 December 2021 completion deadline for the funding.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

The alternative option of a full competitive tender or mini completion within the Framework was rejected because of the tight timescales to complete the works and the necessity to secure a certified and competent contractor and resources. The alternative option of extending the current contract was not deemed appropriate due to the large value and it would have required doubling the contract period.

EX21-21/22 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Moved by Councillor Clive Moesby and seconded by Councillor Sandra Peake

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 items of business on the grounds that they involve 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. [The category of exempt information is stated after each Minute].

PART 2 - EXEMPT ITEMS

NON KEY DECISIONS

EX22-21/22 PLANNING POLICY TEAM

Executive considered a report of the Portfolio Holder – Corporate Governance which provided a summary of the current issues affecting management and operation of the joint Planning Policy Team. The report sought approval regarding possible changes to the existing arrangements.

Moved by Councillor Steve Fritchley and seconded by Councillor Clive Moesby

RESOLVED that –

1) officers take the necessary steps to dis-establish the joint Planning Policy Team by migrating officers back to their host Councils including opening discussions with North East Derbyshire District Council.

2) a review of the resulting structure, including consultation and a report to seek approval for any further changes be considered by the Employment and Personnel Committee.

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(Director of Development)

REASON FOR DECISION:

To provide flexibility to address the potential impact of upcoming planning policy reforms and to be able to best reflect the priorities of each Council in respect of their Local Plans.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

A 'do nothing' option was rejected because this would not address the increasingly urgent case for change. A 'do more' option was rejected because more work was needed first.

[Paragraph 1]

KEY DECISIONS

EX23-21/22 BOLSOVER COMMUNITY WOODLANDS PROJECT

Executive considered a report by Portfolio Holder – Corporate Governance which sought approval to enter into a Funding Agreement, Lease Agreement and Service Level Agreement regarding the Bolsover Community Woodlands Project.

The Bolsover Community Woodland project had been established as part of the Council's efforts to address the challenge of climate change and to achieve carbon reduction as expressed through its Carbon Reduction Plan.

The Council had engaged with the Woodland Trust to explore the potential for partnership working to bring about significant tree planting across the District. The Council's successful expression of interest was one of only 11 pilot local authorities with the Woodland Trust's national emergency tree fund and represented the only one in the East Midlands.

The Bolsover Community Woodland project would initially focus on a flagship site on former colliery land to the south of Creswell and a number of other sites around the District.

Moved by Councillor Sandra Peake and seconded by Councillor Liz Smyth

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted and subject to Council approving a budget of £10,000 per annum from 2024 to 2036 to be used for the scheme, the following be agreed:

- a) to enter into the Funding Agreement with the Woodland Trust to secure their offered £269,160 for the Council's Bolsover Community Woodlands project, as set out in Appendix 1.
- b) to enter into the Lease Agreement with Wellbeck Estates to secure control of their land south of Creswell to deliver the flagship component of the Council's Bolsover Community Woodlands project and comply with the Heads of Terms, as set out in Appendix 2.

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c) to enter into the Service Level Agreement with Bolsover Woodlands Enterprise to secure the tree planting and woodland management services necessary to deliver the Council's Bolsover Community Woodlands project and comply with the Woodland Trust Funding Agreement, as set out in Appendix 3.

(Assistant Director of Development and Planning)

REASON FOR DECISION:

The offer of funding from the Woodland Trust for the Bolsover Community Woodlands project offers the Council a significant opportunity to address the challenge of climate change and to achieve carbon reduction as expressed in the Carbon Reduction Plan. The project will also create a significant environmental resource across the District.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

No alternative options were considered.

[Paragraph 3]

The meeting concluded at 10:31 hours.