

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Date: 11 June 2012

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30 pm

Present: Councillors:-

Richard Lewis	(Chairman)
Glenvil Greenwood-Smith	(Vice-Chairman)
Stephen North	(Leader of the Council)
Glenn Harwood MBE	(Deputy Leader of the Council)

David Brackenbury	Sue Homer
Wendy Brackenbury	Dudley Hughes
John Farrar	Andy Mercer
Roger Glithero JP	Jeremy Taylor
Marika Hillson	

24. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2012 were approved and signed by the chairman.

25. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Richard Gell and Rupert Reichhold submitted their apologies.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following members declared interests in the items as shown. Where prejudicial interests were declared, the named members left the room for the consideration and voting on the items.

Person	Agenda Item	Reason for Declaration	Prejudicial
Councillor Sue Homer	9 – Establishing a Northamptonshire Police and Crime Panel	Member of Northamptonshire County Council	No
Councillor Dudley Hughes	9 – Establishing a Northamptonshire Police and Crime Panel	Member of Northamptonshire County Council	No
Councillor Andy Mercer	9 – Establishing a Northamptonshire Police and Crime Panel	Member of Northamptonshire County Council	No
Councillor John Farrar	10 – Review of the Pest Control and Dog Warden Services	Chairman of a Housing Association	Yes

Councillor John Farrar	11 – Release of Personal Covenant – 2 Westfield Avenue, Rushden	Chairman of a Housing Association	Yes
Councillor Glenvil Greenwood- Smith	11 – Release of Personal Covenant – 2 Westfield Avenue, Rushden	Neighbour of the independent valuer who provided advice for the report	No
Councillor Richard Lewis	12 – Compulsory Purchase Order - Request	Friend of the owner of the property	Yes

27. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

There were no questions.

28. AUDIT PLAN – EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL 2011/12

Members considered a report from the District Auditor setting out the work that the Audit Commission proposed to undertake for the audit of financial statements and the value for money conclusion 2011-12.

Neil Bellamy and Yola Green from the Audit Commission were in attendance and presented the report.

The Audit Plan was based on the Audit Commission's risk-based approach to audit planning and reflected the audit work specified by the Audit Commission for 2011-12, current national risks relevant to the authority's local circumstances, as well as local risks specific to East Northamptonshire Council.

RESOLVED:

That the Audit Plan 2011/12 for East Northamptonshire Council be received.

(Reason – For members to note the proposed approach for the audit of financial statements)

29. EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2012 TO 2015

The committee considered a report which sought adoption of the East Northamptonshire Community Safety Partnership Plan 2012 to 2015.

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is required by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to formulate and implement a Community Safety Plan which is informed by an annual strategic assessment and the views of local people. The strategic assessment for 2012 identified four priority areas for the CSP to focus on:

- Anti-social behaviour
- Acquisitive crime
- Violence (including domestic violence)

- Drugs and alcohol

In recent years, the CSP has concentrated on serious acquisitive crime, but the new plan proposed to widen the scope to cover all acquisitive crime in view of the increased activity with metal theft across the district. The CSP will continue to support activity to tackle domestic abuse, which is linked to the violent crime priority, whilst drugs and alcohol is a new priority for 2012, with particular emphasis on alcohol related crime.

The committee debated the implications for the future of the plan in light of the election of a Police and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire in November 2012. It was recognised that existing legislation required the district to agree a plan for the next twelve months, which the committee subsequently endorsed.

RESOLVED:

That the East Northamptonshire Community Safety Partnership Plan be adopted.

(Reason – To ensure that as a responsible authority in the statutory CSP (as defined by the Act) the council formally endorses and supports the plan for 2012 to 2015.)

30. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GRANTS POLICY

The committee considered a report which sought approval for the draft Private Sector Housing Grants Policy to be subject to formal consultation.

East Northamptonshire's current Housing Grants Policy forms part of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy, which was produced following the introduction of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 that gave local authorities more flexibility in determining what housing grants could be offered in their area. In March 2012, members on the Disabled Facilities Grant Case Review Panel agreed to the repayment of monies being subject to the set provisions in the legislation (a minimum of £6,000 and a maximum of £10,000) regardless of the length of time for which the grant was issued. In order for the grant condition to be added to future grants, the Housing Grants Policy would need to be updated before the conditions could apply.

The draft grants policy will no longer be part of the Welland Strategy published in 2003 and therefore requires formal consultation prior to receiving approval. It was proposed that consultation would be with all residents in the district using the council's website and the Nene Valley News, as well as directly forwarding the policy to the following groups:

- Care and Repair;
- Northampton County Council – Occupational Therapists
- Age UK Northamptonshire
- SERVE
- Northamptonshire Centre for Independent Living
- Northamptonshire Rights and Equality Council

The committee noted that, following the completion of the consultation, feedback would be considered and the final version of the policy will be submitted to members for approval.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Private Sector Housing Grants Policy be approved for formal consultation.

(Reason – To ensure that all groups and organisations affected by the proposed changes have the opportunity to influence the policy prior to its approval)

31. MEMBER NOMINATIONS TO WORKING PARTIES

The committee received nominations for various working parties that come under the auspices of the Policy and Resources Committee, which had not been appointed to at the Council's annual meeting on 16 May 2012.

It was noted that appointments had been made to the District Regeneration, Leisure Contracts and Waste and Recycling Working Parties at the annual meeting of the Council. Appointments were therefore required to be made to the Housing Policy Working Party, Nene Centre Roof Legal Case Working Party and the Nene Centre Roof Procurement of Design and Build Contractor Working Party.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Councillors John Farrar, Glenvil Greenwood-Smith and Rupert Reichhold be appointed to the Housing Policy Working Party.
- (2) That authority to appoint Members to the Nene Centre Roof Legal Case Working Party and the Nene Centre Roof Procurement of Design and Build Contractor Working Party be delegated to the Leader of the Council.

(Reason: To expedite business which has been reserved to the working parties)

32. ESTABLISHING A NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

A report was submitted seeking the endorsement of the proposed arrangements for the Northamptonshire Police and Crime Panel, as required by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

The Act introduced new provisions for national policing, strategic police decision-making, neighbourhood policing and police accountability. Local authorities within a police force area are statutorily required to establish a Police and Crime Panel to be responsible for scrutinising the Police and Crime Commissioners that are to be elected for each force area in November 2012.

Councillor Brian Northall was appointed as the council's representative on the Northamptonshire Police and Crime Panel at the annual meeting and Councillor Gill Mercer was appointed as a substitute member for East Northamptonshire.

In endorsing the proposed arrangements for the Northamptonshire Police and Crime Panel, the committee requested clarification in respect of the arrangements for ethical standards for councillors appointed to the panel and the separate arrangements that would apply to co-opted lay members of the panel.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed arrangements for the Northamptonshire Police and Crime Panel be endorsed, subject to clarification being provided on the ethical standards arrangements for panel members.

(Reason: To accord with the direction of the Secretary of State to have agreed arrangements for police and crime panels by 1 July 2012.)

33. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business because exempt information, as defined under paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972, may be disclosed.

34. REVIEW OF THE PEST CONTROL AND DOG WARDEN SERVICE

The committee considered a report setting out a number of options for the future delivery of a pest control and dog warden service provided by the Council.

Four options were presented to the committee which set out various ways in which the service could be delivered in the future, along with the associated risks and financial implications for each course of action.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Equalities Impact Assessment be approved.

(To have regard to the equalities implications of the options for the service.)

- (2) That there be no change to the existing arrangements in respect of the pest control and dog warden service.

(To meet public expectations in respect of the delivery of front line services.)

- (3) That surrounding local authorities be approached to investigate the feasibility of a shared service in respect of pest control.

(To establish if the service can be delivered more efficiently in partnership with other local authorities.)

35. RELEASE OF PERSONAL COVENANT – 2 WESTFIELD AVENUE, RUSHDEN

The Committee considered a report which sought approval for the release of a personal covenant to facilitate the release of restrictive covenants on a dwelling at 2 Westfield Avenue, Rushden.

Having regard to legal advice and independent valuation advice received, the committee determined that the council would approve the amendment of the personal covenant to

authorise the release of certain restrictive covenants to permit the implementation of previously granted planning permission following the payment of appropriate compensation.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the amendment of the personal covenant in respect of 2 Westfield Avenue, Rushden be approved.

(Reason: To allow Spire to release the restrictive covenants necessary to permit the implementation of planning permission to construct a further two dwellings on the site.)

- (2) That authority be delegated to the Solicitor to the Council to complete the necessary deed of release in accordance with the valuation advice received and to seek the maximum level of compensation for the release of the restrictive covenants. The maximum compensation would therefore not involve entering into an arrangement to share the compensation received with Spire Homes.

(Reason: To expedite the business without recourse to a further report and decision from the Committee and to achieve the maximum amount of compensation for the authority.)

- (3) That Spire be required to reimburse the legal and valuation costs incurred by the Council in this matter.

(Reason: To ensure that no excess costs are borne by the Council.)

Councillor Greenwood-Smith, in the Chair in the absence of the Chairman owing to a declaration of a prejudicial interest.

36. COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER

A report was submitted providing the Committee with information regarding a long term empty property where further enforcement action would be necessary to bring the property back into use.

The committee considered the history of the council's efforts to work with the owners of the property and the current state of the building. Having regard to government guidance in respect of compulsory purchase orders, in addition to the legal implications and the risks associated with the proposed outcome, the committee supported the recommended course of action.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Equalities Impact Assessment be approved.

(Reason: To allow Spire to release the restrictive covenants necessary to permit the implementation of planning permission to construct a further two dwellings on the site.)

- (2) That the formulation stage be commenced.

(Reason: To ensure that no excess costs are borne by the Council.)

R.1 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:

That Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 Compulsory Purchase Order powers be added to the Council's Scheme of Delegation

(Reason: To formally establish the authority required to proceed with such orders in future.)

Chairman