

# POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

**Date:** 3 December 2012

**Venue:** East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

**Time:** 7.30 pm

**Present:** Councillors:-

<b>Richard Lewis</b>	<b>(Chairman)</b>
<b>Glenvil Greenwood-Smith</b>	<b>(Vice-Chairman)</b>
<b>Steven North</b>	<b>(Leader of the Council)</b>
<b>Glenn Harwood MBE</b>	<b>(Deputy Leader of the Council)</b>

<b>Peter Baden</b>	<b>Sue Homer</b>
<b>David Brackenbury</b>	<b>Dudley Hughes JP</b>
<b>Wendy Brackenbury</b>	<b>Andy Mercer</b>
<b>John Farrar</b>	<b>Rupert Reichhold</b>
<b>Roger Glithero JP</b>	<b>Jeremy Taylor</b>
<b>Marika Hillson</b>	

## 284. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2012 were approved and signed by the Chairman, subject to the amendment of the attendance list and the correction of a date listed in the minutes of the Leisure Contracts Working Group.

## 285. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received.

## 286. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following interests were declared in the agenda items specified below:-

<b>Councillors</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Nature of Interest</b>	<b>DPI</b>	<b>Other Interest</b>
Councillor John Farrar	Item 6 – Gambling Act 2005 – Statement of Licensing Policy	Member of an organisation opposed to gambling		Yes
Councillor Glenn Harwood MBE	Item 6 – Gambling Act 2005 – Statement of Licensing Policy	Member of the Licensing Committee		Yes
Councillor Andy Mercer	Item 6 – Gambling Act 2005 – Statement of Licensing Policy	Member of the Licensing Committee		Yes

Councillor Peter Baden	Item 8 – Armed Forces Community Covenant	Formerly Armed Forces Personnel	Yes
Councillor Wendy Brackenbury	Item 8 – Armed Forces Community Covenant	Formerly Armed Forces Personnel	Yes
Councillor Glenn Harwood MBE	Item 8 – Armed Forces Community Covenant	Formerly Armed Forces Personnel	Yes
Councillor Andy Mercer	Item 11 – Request for Hardship Assistance	Pre-determined the matter prior to the meeting	Yes

Cllr Andy Mercer left the room during the committee's consideration of agenda item 11.

## **287. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.3**

There were no questions received.

## **288. MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES & WORKING PARTIES**

### **(a) Waste & Recycling Working Party**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2012 were received and approved. (See pages 420 to 423).

### **(b) Welfare Reform Sub-Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2012 were received and approved. (See pages 424 to 426).

Councillor Andy Mercer highlighted the DCLG Transition Grant which the Sub-Committee had been minded not to accept, and the email response from the Benefit Manager to a question regarding Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

### **(c) Finance Sub-Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2012 were received and approved. (See pages 427 to 430).

Councillor Reichhold asked a question regarding the future handling of land comprising the long stay car-park in Oundle. He noted that the committee had agreed in principle that the land in question was surplus to requirements and would be sold. He further stated that the local community in Oundle would regret the loss of this asset and requested that a ward member be associated with the taking of the decision who to sell land to and at what price. He proposed that either he, Councillor Phillip Stearn or Councillor Jake Vowles be present as spectators at the meeting where the decision would be made.

The Chairman responded to proposal stating that, in view of the feeling in Oundle, it would be appropriate for Councillor Reichhold and members of Oundle Town Council to attend a meeting with him and the agent responsible for the disposal of the land in order to outline their concerns.

**(d) Personnel Sub-Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2012 were received and approved. (See pages 431 to 433).

Cllr Roger Glithero noted a fall in staffing numbers to a figure of 176FTE in September 2012. It was further noted that each post continued to be examined as it became vacant and each department was continuously reviewed to improve staffing and service levels.

**289. GAMBLING ACT 2005 - REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY**

The committee considered a report from the Commercial Health Manager which sought to fulfil a requirement under the Gambling Act 2005 to review the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy to ensure it remained relevant and met the needs of the authority and the community.

Members were advised that the reviewed policy statement had been produced by South Northamptonshire District Council on behalf of the seven licensing authorities in the county. The statement had been subject to consultation and approval was required to give effect to its provisions by January 2013. There had been no significant amendment to the guidance which differed very little from the existing policy adopted by the Committee three years ago.

Regarding the Casino Resolution, Members noted that the Council had previously adopted Option 1; that the Licensing Authority had not passed a 'no casino' resolution under Section 166 of the Gambling Act 2005, but was aware that it had the power to do so. Members considered that this effectively left an option for the future establishment of a casino within the district boundaries and considered that this position should be maintained in the future.

**R.6 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:**

1. That the Statement of Licensing Policy be adopted.
2. That no resolution be made in respect of the licensing of casinos, in accordance with Section 166 of the Gambling Act 2005.

**290. FUNDING FOR HIGHAM FERRERS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Members received a report from the Executive Director which sought approval for the release of further funding of £23,640 to assist in the completion of Higham Ferrers Community Plan and to aid the production of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Town. The report also provided members with an update on the progress of the Community Plan.

The Executive Director advised members that at the meeting of the committee in February 2012, funding of £18,510 had been agreed to cover the costs of certain aspects of the work, including a specialist transport and parking study, meeting consultation costs and a contribution to back-filling of the Clerk's role to enable her to project manage the work.

Members heard that Higham Ferrers had now received the initial results from the consultation, which ENC had been able to make use of. The Town Council had now submitted a request for additional funding to complete the Community Plan and Neighbourhood Plan stage. Higham Ferrers would be eligible for additional £30,000 of funding from DCLG to assist with the costs of production of Neighbourhood Plans. This money would be made available in two tranches. An initial payment of £5,000 would be

made following designation of a neighbourhood area, with the second payment of £25,000 being made on successful completion of the neighbourhood planning examination. This would cover costs for that examination and any other further steps that may be needed for the Neighbourhood Plan to come into legal force, including a referendum.

Members raised concerns over the estimated breakdown of costs required to complete the Higham Ferrers Town Plan and Neighbourhood Plan as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report. It was felt that the costings were too vague and the committee would have appreciated a more detailed breakdown of the financial implications.

Further concerns were raised in respect of the potential for duplication of work. Members wished to ensure that any funds paid to Higham Ferrers would not be spent on areas of work that would be covered by either the Four Towns Plan or the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy. The committee was advised that Higham Ferrers had guaranteed figures for a certain amount of the work, but had precisely estimated the remaining costs which would only be paid retrospectively by invoice. ENC would be working closely with the Clerk to Higham Ferrers Town Council and the Planning Policy department to ensure there would be no unnecessary costs. It was also noted that the figure of £23,640 would be the maximum amount Higham Ferrers would be requesting.

#### **R.7 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:**

1. That the revised request from Higham Ferrers Council for funding to enable the Town Council to complete its Town Plan and develop a Neighbourhood Plan be approved.
2. That the release of a further sum of up to £23,640 to be split over the financial years 2012/13 and 2013/14 from the community projects allocation of New Homes Bonus be approved, subject to the provision of an acceptable breakdown of costs and monitoring.

*(Reason – Development of these plans will provide timely information to inform the review of the local planning framework.)*

#### **291. ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT**

The committee were presented with a report from the Executive Director which sought to provide members with an understanding of the Armed Forces Community Covenant and to recommend the Council sign up to the covenant with the aim of encouraging local communities to support the Armed Forces community in their area.

Members heard that ENC was sympathetic to the issues faced by armed services personnel and their families and already disregarded fully War Widows / Widowers Pension, War Disablement Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments in any housing benefit calculations. Consideration had also been given to the position of forces personnel and their families in the recent review of the Housing Allocation Policy. Members heard that ENC had also recognised the needs of members of the Royal Naval Reserve, Territorial Army, and the Royal Airforce Reserve, where there has been active service of at least one year, within the last 5 years, not just the Territorial Army, as specified in legislation.

Although there were no financial implications at this point, disregard of benefits had formerly been fully funded by Central Government and there would inevitably be a cost to ENC in the

long term, but it was something the committee had previously expressed an interest in bearing should that be the case.

Members discussed the potential for amendment to Paragraph 2.5 of the report which covered the length of active service within the last five years, as it was considered that this may lead to a migration issue.

The Housing Strategy Manager stated that this matter had been discussed when ENC looked at the housing allocation policy. The allocation policy would be submitted to the next meeting of the committee in January, and further changes could be made at that stage.

## **R.8 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:**

That East Northamptonshire Council sign the Armed Forces Community Covenant.

*(Reason: to show support for the service personnel and their families living in the district who may experience specific issues as a result of their service to this country)*

## **292. COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BID POLICY**

The committee considered a report from the Policy and Performance Manager which sought to provide Members with an understanding of the new Community Right to Bid. The report also requested that members set out the council's policy on the right to bid, and asked the committee to recommend delegated decision-making to the Monitoring Officer and Chief Executive in respect of the right.

Members heard that the Community Right to Bid (CRtB) was introduced as part of the Localism Act 2011 and came into force on 21 September 2012, providing local groups with the opportunity to bid to buy, and take over the running of, assets that are of value to the community. Community groups would be provided with six weeks to show interest in an identified asset, before a six month moratorium came into place preventing the disposal of the asset so that funds could be raised for purchase. At the end of the moratorium period, the owner could sell to whoever they chose.

Members noted that this was a politically charged issue for communities and registered their concern at the lack of elected member involvement in the process, especially at appeal stage. Concerns were also raised regarding a potential compensation scheme for landowners detrimentally affected as a result of having an asset listed for potentially six months.

The Executive Director responded that legislation had been left deliberately vague, and that no council had yet developed a compensation scheme. ENC would be in touch with Monitoring Officers at other councils, and would seek to draft a compensation scheme as tightly as possible. ENC would aim to have a compensation scheme in place within six months, with the potential for it to be completed within three months. Central Government had indicated that they expected Local Authorities to bear the first £20,000 of any compensation and ENC were examining the possibility of obtaining insurance to cover that.

Members proposed approval for the policy but requested that the second resolution be taken in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee and the ward member for the location of the asset (or members if the area overlapped wards).

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee approved the Community Right to Bid Policy.

**R.9 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:**

That decision-making be delegated to the Monitoring Officer and Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee and the ward member for the location of the asset (or members if the area overlaps wards) in respect of decisions on registration of assets of community value under the Community Right to Bid legislation.

**293. STREET TRADING CONSENTS**

The committee were presented with a report by the Commercial Health Manager which requested consideration as to whether East Northamptonshire Council should introduce street trading consents across the district.

Members heard that under Section 3 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, local authorities could charge for street trading consents for anyone selling on the street. This would apply to 14 vehicles operating in the district at the current time, and fees currently charged by other authorities were supplied to members for comparison. Preparatory work had estimated an ENC charge of £850 for an annual street trading consent. However, it was noted that if traders operated on private land then the charge would not apply. Members further noted the need to take into account the viability of businesses in the current financial climate, with an Equalities Impact Assessment having been completed with the results included as an appendix to the report.

Members felt that there would be no value to pursuing the scheme and believed it could depress economic activity in the district without benefit.

**RESOLVED:**

That East Northamptonshire Council not pursue the street consent process.

**294. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:**

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

**295. REQUEST FOR HARDSHIP ASSISTANCE**

Members considered a request for hardship assistance from the Homelessness Grant 2012/13. It was noted that this request was the first of its type received by the council.

The report set out the background information and stated that the funding request related to remainder of the 2012/13 Council Tax liability. An alternative method of assistance had been considered and the potential consequences of pursuing that route were outlined in the officer report.

Members discussed the application at length, but felt that by granting the application a precedent may be set for future applications of a similar nature.

**RESOLVED:**

That the committee refuse the request for hardship assistance as detailed in the officer report from the Homelessness Grant 2012/13.

**296. MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES & WORKING PARTIES**

**(a) Leisure Contracts Working Group**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2012 and 9 November 2012 were received and approved.

**Chairman**

## MINUTES

<b>Held on:</b>	24 October 2012
<b>Time:</b>	2.00pm
<b>Place:</b>	Room CHG2, East Northamptonshire Council, Thrapston
<b>Present:</b>	<p>Councillors: Glenn Harwood (Chairman) (GH), Tony Boto (TB), , Sylvia Hobbs (SH), Roger Glithero (RG), Wendy Brackenbury and Pam Whiting (PM)</p> <p>Officers: Mike Deacon (MD) Head of Environmental Services, Charlotte Tompkins (CT) Waste Manager, Mike Bailey (MB) Waste Officer and Zena Ireland (ZI) Administration Officer</p>

### Action

#### 1.0 **Apologies for absence**

- 1.1 Councillor Glenn Harwood opened the meeting. GH stated the Cllr David Bateman has resigned as a Councillor; he would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his contributions to the W&RWP.
- 1.2 ZI confirmed apologies were received from Cllrs North and Lewis.

#### 2.0 **Minutes of meeting held on 23 July 2012**

- 2.1 CT mentioned the arrangements for waste collections over the Christmas and New Year period. The main change is for resident who would normally have their collection on Monday 24 December, this was being brought forward to Saturday 22 December. Promotion of the dates will be done in advance through Nene Valley News, bin tags, a Members Brief and information on the Council's website.
- 2.2 Depending on your normal collection day your refuse / recycling bin will be collected either a working day earlier or a day later. Please ensure the correct bin is out on the changed collection day for 7am.

**Normal collection day**  
Monday 24 December  
Tuesday 25 December  
Wednesday 26 December  
Thursday 27 December  
Friday 28 December  
Monday 31 December  
Tuesday 1 January  
Wednesday 2 January

**Amended collection day**  
Saturday 22 December  
Monday 24 December  
Thursday 27 December  
Friday 28 December  
Saturday 29 December  
Monday 31 December  
Wednesday 2 January  
Thursday 3 January

Thursday 3 January  
Friday 4 January

Friday 4 January  
Saturday 5 January

Brown lidded Garden Waste Services bins will not be collected between 24 December 2012 and 4 January 2013.

- 2.3 The minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2012 were approved as a true record by the working party.

**3.0 Update of bid for Support for Weekly Collections Fund**

- 3.1 CT confirmed that the County Partnership bid was successful and they were awarded £1.5 million. However due to the fact that East Northamptonshire Council has already made the changes and introduced the weekly collection prior to the funding being made available we were only awarded £7,000 as a Council. MD requested a steer from the working party as to how the funds could be spent, which has to be connected to the project mentioned in the application i.e. food waste.

- 3.2 CT put forward the idea of working directly with a supplier of food liners to ensure the correct liners are easily available to residents through out the district. MD mentioned the vending machines that can be altered to dispense food liners and these machines could be placed at various locations for residents use.

- 3.3 The meeting discussed the various options for using the government awarded funds. In principle it was decided that this money should be used to promote the food waste collections, as there is currently only approximately 60% participation in the district. It was decided that CT bring a report showing the various options and the costs involved to a future working party meeting.

CT

**4.0 Waste contract performance update**

- 4.1 MB provided the meeting with a handout showing the performance of the contract for the last 2 quarters and highlighted certain areas. The Waste team investigated all fly tipping incidents in the last quarter (July to September 2012), this resulted in 6 Fixed Penalty Notices and 1 Warning Notice being issued.

- 4.2 GH commented that the performance figures are excellent and should be publicised to our residents showing how well the new contract is going. It should also emphasis the improvement of less waste going to landfill and how much this has saved the Council. CT and MB confirmed that a similar article appeared in Nene Valley News 6 months into the new contract.

**5.0 Northamptonshire Waste Partnership (NWP) update**

- 5.1 MD fed back on the main two areas of work that the NWP are focusing on. A proposal was made to reduce the local authority's contribution to the partnership by 10% for the next 3 years; this proposal is going before the Shadow Board for approval.

- 5.2 The NWP is still finalising the Residual Waste Project, the disposal arrangements need to be in place by April 2013. MD confirmed that this would more than likely change the arrangements that East Northamptonshire Council currently have in place and a new Service Level Agreement would need to go P&R Committee.

**6.0 Garden Waste Service (GWS) update**

6.1 CT mentioned that since the launch in March 2012 there are now approximately 1700 customers of the GWS. A short promotional was done for resident to have a 6 month autumn contract, which was successful.

6.2 MD raised the issue of the fee for the GWS for 2013/14. The meeting discussed various options. It was decided that CT would look into the various suggestions and bring these to the next W&RWP.

CT

**7.0 Update on kerbside collection of textiles**

7.1 MB prepared a handout for the group explaining the pilot scheme for the kerbside collection of textiles. The first collection took place this week, approximately 130 kilos were collected with an estimated 20% participation.

7.2 GH highlighted the importance of getting the textiles out of the recycling bins as this can damage the machines and cause delays during the sorting process. TB raised his concerns about the sustainability of providing the service. The findings of the pilot scheme will be reported back to the group at a later date.

**8.0 Proposal for commercial recycling collections**

8.1 CT put together a short report showing the initial thoughts and proposal for East Northamptonshire Council to introduce a commercial recycling collection service. The meeting discussed the report and the various issues. RG asked whether we have the resources and vehicles to introduce the service. MD said that in the current climate there is a risk involved in such a project. GH and TB were both in favour of the proposed new service. WB asked if it would take a lot CT's time to explore the idea; CT stated that it would not involve a great deal of her time to make initial investigations.

8.2 The W&RWP agreed the recommendation for CT to complete a full scoping study and prepare a business case testing the viability of a new collection service; this is to include a full risk analysis and financial projections.

**9.0 Update / discussion on contamination protocol and the next steps**

9.1 The working party was provided with an update and flowchart on the protocol to be followed with regards to residents contaminating their recycling wheeled bin. GH stated that what CT needed was the groups agreement to change the protocol into a policy which could be put before the P&R Committee for approval.

9.2 The meeting discussed various issues relating to the contamination protocol. TB asked CT what the ultimate penalty was for a resident who persistently contaminated their recycling; CT said at present the resident could be fined or have their bin removed. WB requested an update on the exercise carried out in September examining contamination of recycling bins and what the officers discovered. CT advised that approximately 20% of the bins were contaminated with textiles, food, garden waste and nappies; advisory notes to residents were placed on the bins.

9.3 CT said that when we receive quality recycling the Council can potentially make £10 per tonne, but if the recycling is contaminated it can cost the Council up to £100 to dispose of the waste. That is why it is essential we encourage

and educate our residents to use the recycling system correctly.

- 9.4 After careful consideration of the recycling contamination protocol for East Northamptonshire Council it was:

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:**

That the protocol be incorporated into the existing Wheeled Bin Policy with the approval of P&R Committee.

**10.0 Dates for Depot visit**

- 10.1 GH mentioned that previous planned visits to the Kier Depot at Chelveston were delayed due to IT issues. MB suggested 4 possible dates to the working party. It was agreed that the visit would take place on the morning of Friday 9 November; MB will confirm the time and details nearer the time.

**MB**

The date of the next meeting will be Thursday 17 January 2013 at 2pm.



## Welfare Reform Sub-Committee

Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 8 November 2012 at 3.00pm, Office of the Monitoring Officer, East Northamptonshire House, Thrapston

### Present:

Councillors:           Andy Mercer (Chairman)  
                              Glenvil Greenwood-Smith (Vice-Chairman)  
                              Richard Lewis

Officers:                Lisa Hyde (LJH)  
                              Kelly Watson (KW)  
                              Lucy Hogston (LH)  
                              David Pope (DP)

### 1.0 MINUTES

- 1.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 28 August 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 2.0 APOLOGIES

- 2.1 Councillors John Farrar, Steven North and Jeremy Taylor gave their apologies.

### 3.0 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

- 3.1 There were no disclosures of interest.

### 4.0 SOCIAL FUND/CRISIS LOANS

- 4.1 Members considered a report which outlined changes to the Social Fund taking place from April 2013 as part of the Welfare Reform Act 2012.
- 4.2 The sub-committee heard that Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans would be abolished from April 2013, to be replaced by a local provision that would be administered by upper tier local authorities.
- 4.3 It was noted that the Government required local authorities to design schemes reflecting local needs and priorities. The existing national scheme had proved to be inefficient and had been open to fraud.
- 4.4 Members noted that a stakeholder session had taken place in September hosted by Northamptonshire County Council (NCC). It was further noted that ENC would be willing to help create contact and advice networks to support potential claimants.
- 4.5 Members were advised that NCC had intentions to introduce a cashless, voucher-based system to alleviate fraud and misspending. Assistance would be made with regard to utilities

reconnection, provision of white goods and travel costs in exceptional circumstances. The system would be grant-based with no loans available.

**RESOLVED:**

That the sub-committee

- 1) Endorse Northamptonshire County Council as the accountable body for the scheme.
- 2) Endorse the use of a voucher-based, cashless system
- 3) Agree to work with and support the local voluntary and community sector as facilitators and developers of potential schemes.

**5.0 DCLG COUNCIL TAX SCHEME PROPOSALS - TRANSITION GRANT**

- 5.1 The sub-committee were presented with a report by the Head of Customer and Community Services which sought to inform members of the recent announcement from the DCLG on a transition grant for Local Council Tax Support schemes.
- 5.2 Members were advised that on 16 October 2012 the DCLG announced a new £100 million transition grant the would be made available to billing and major precepting authorities who choose to design their Council Tax Support schemes with specific criteria. These criteria included local schemes that state
  - Those that would be on 100% support under current Council tax benefit arrangements pay between zero and no more than 8.5% of their council tax liability;
  - The taper rate does not increase above 25%; and there is no sharp reduction in support for those entering work - for claimants currently entitled to less than 100% support, the taper will be applied to an amount at least equal to their maximum eligible award.
- 5.3 Applications for grant funding would be available from 31 January 2013, with payments to be made in March 2013. It was suggested that this would be a one-off payment, with the exact figure available to ENC unclear at this stage.
- 5.4 At this stage, members stated an inclination not to take the transition grant, as it was only for one year, would not meet the funding gap created by the 10% loss of grant and could create a cliff edge in the scheme in future years.

**RESOLVED:**

That the sub-committee note the change made by DCLG for future reference when determining a final East Northamptonshire Local Council Tax Scheme at the next meeting of Welfare Reform on 11 December 2012.

**6.0 PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE PAYMENTS**

- 6.1 The members received a report which sought to outline the changes to disability benefits that would occur from April 2013 as part of the Welfare Reform Act 2012.

- 6.2 It was noted that the current Disability Living Allowance (DLA) had been in place for over 20 years, remaining largely unchanged during that period. The total number of DLA claimants has risen from 2.5 million in 2003 to 3.3 million at present, with an estimated expenditure for 2012 standing at £13 billion.
- 6.3 Personal Independence Payments (PIP) was a new benefit that would be rolled out nationally from June 2013, with existing DLA claimants being migrated to the new benefit from October 2013.
- 6.4 Councillor Andy Mercer wished to know the impact of the change in regulations on disabled facilities adaptations. The Head of Service advised a response to the question would be supplied as an email appended to the minutes.

**RESOLVED:**

That the contents of the report be noted

**7.0 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME**

- 7.1 Members received a verbal update from the Head of Customer and Community Services on the current status of the Council Tax Support Scheme.
- 7.2 Members noted that the consultation was live and would be running until 23 November 2012. It was further noted that up until 6 November 2012, 99 electronic responses had been received from consultees.
- 7.3 The sub-committee were advised that a stakeholder event had taken place, with positive feedback received from attendees regarding the working relationship with ENC.
- 7.4 An update of ENC's "Struggling to Pay Bills" leaflet would be undertaken to ensure that the list of organisations available to provide help and support was accurate.
- 7.5 SPIRE Homes had now become a member of the East Midlands Credit Union and could assist in providing basic bank accounts with Direct Debit facilities.
- 7.6 A letter had been received from the Royal British Legion which request continuance of the 100% disregard for those in receipt of War Disablement Pension, War Widows Pension or Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments as outlined in the Armed Forces Covenant .

**8.0 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.3**

- 8.1 No questions had been received from members.



## Finance Sub-Committee

**Minutes of a meeting held on Wednesday 26 November 2012 at 7.30pm,  
Council Chamber, East Northamptonshire House, Thrapston**

### **Present:**

- Councillors: Steven North (Chairman)  
Glenn Harwood MBE (Vice-Chairman)  
Peter Baden  
Roger Glithero JP  
Glenvil Greenwood-Smith  
Richard Lewis
- Officers: David Oliver (Chief Executive)  
Sharn Matthews (Executive Director)  
Glenn Hammons (Chief Finance Officer)  
Kelly Watson (Finance Manager)  
Katy Everitt (Head of Resources and Organisational Development)

### **1.0 APOLOGIES**

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Brackenbury.

### **2.0 MINUTES**

- 2.1 The minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee meeting held on 12 September 2012 were approved and signed by the Vice-Chairman, who had presided at the meeting.

### **3.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

### **4.0 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER 2 2012/13**

- 4.1 The Finance Manager presented a report to the Sub-Committee detailing the Council's expenditure to the end of quarter 2 (30 September 2012) against the approved revenue and capital budgets for 2012/13. The report highlighted any significant under or overspend greater than £10,000 and identified the impact on the end of year position.
- 4.2 Members noted that since the budget was set in February 2012, the total budget figure had been revised to £10,194,830. The estimated outturn for the year was an

underspend of £163,000 (against an estimated underspend of £147,000 at the end of quarter 1) and it was noted that £124,000 of this had resulted from staffing changes. The forecast drawdown from reserves was £382,000 (against a forecast of £398,000 at the end of quarter 1).

The Council had decided on 29 October 2012 to terminate the Council's car lease scheme and as the report covered the period up to 30 September 2012, the financial implications of ending the car lease scheme would be reflected in future reports.

The Sub-Committee noted that an arbitration meeting was scheduled to be held in September/October 2013 in relation to the recovery of costs for the replacement of the Nene Centre roof. A mediation meeting would precede this, possibly in February 2013, which may resolve the matter before the arbitration hearing.

After reviewing the report it was

**RESOLVED:**

That the current budget position be noted

**5.0 TREASURY MANAGEMENT HALF YEARLY ACTIVITY REPORT AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2012**

5.1

The Finance Manager presented a report to the Sub-Committee which provided an update on the activity of the Treasury Management function for the first half of 2012/13. The report also provided the likely performance for the remainder of the financial year.

5.2 The Sub-Committee noted that the 2012/13 Treasury Management Strategy had been approved on 29 February 2012 and was underpinned by the adoption of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice. The Code recommended that members be informed of treasury management activities at least twice a year; hence the production of the report

5.3 It was not anticipated that there would be any significant change to interest rates over the coming 2-3 years and returns on investments would remain low. The Council's Fixed Term Deposits had been rolled forward for a period of 3 months at a slightly reduced rate of return. However, the average rate of return of 0.70% on the Council's portfolio for the first half of 2012/13 was above the average London Inter-bank Bid rate of 0.52% with the investment limits being kept in accordance with the Council's policy. The Sub-Committee noted that borrowing in the first instance would continue to be made from its surplus cash resources, a process known as "internal borrowing".

**RESOLVED:**

That the Treasury Management performance be noted.  
*(Reason – in accordance with CIPFA guidance and best practice in Treasury Management)*

## **6.0 DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

- 6.1 The Chief Finance Officer presented a report to update members on the position of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) following agreement of the MTFS 2012/16 by Council in February 2012 and to set out the position for the 2013 planning round.
- 6.2 The Sub-Committee was provided with an outline of the Council's position as at September 2012, with specific regard to Revenue Budgets, the Capital Programme 2012-22 and cash reserves. The draft budget included savings proposals which had recently been implemented or were being developed to contribute to bridging the funding gap which existed over the period of the MTFS. These proposals were expected to be sufficient to achieve the savings required in 2013/14, although some significant items within the proposals were only estimated savings at this stage.
- 6.3 The Chief Finance Officer informed the Sub-Committee that the minimum level of reserves held by the Council may be reviewed later in the year when more factors, such as the level of Central Government funding, were known.
- 6.4 The Empty Property Strategy, which had received Central Government funding, had resulted in increased income to the Council. The Chief Finance Officer reiterated that income would need to be maximised and the scheme would be kept under annual review with a view to continuing it as long as it was financially viable to do so. The increased income would be cumulative as empty properties came into use and the budget would reflect this.
- 6.5 .A budget workshop for Councillors would be held on 13 December 2012 and it was noted that the meeting of the Sub-Committee scheduled to be held on 9 January 2013 may need to be re-arranged to a later date depending upon when confirmation of the Central Government funding settlement was received.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted, specifically the:

- Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
- Draft Revenue Budget 2013/14
- Draft Capital Programme for 2013/14-2021/22 (subject to the ongoing review of schemes within that programme)

*(Reason: To ensure that the Sub-Committee is aware of the forecast financial position so that in due course the Council complies with its constitution in setting its Budget).*

## **7.0 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

### **7.1 RESOLVED:**

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

## **8.0 SALE OF LAND AND BUILDINGS**

- 8.1 The Head of Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report to the Sub-Committee which provided an update on the progress of the sale of Council owned land and buildings. The Sub-Committee noted that agents had been appointed to sell each of the buildings and land and an update was provided for each site detailing the current status of the sale process.
- 8.2 It was noted that the sale of some sites may be affected by the new Community Right to Bid. The policy and procedure for this, which the Council was required to adopt under the Localism Act 2011, would be considered by the Policy and Resources Committee at its next meeting. The Chairman reiterated that the Policy and Resources Committee had determined that the sites should be sold.
- 8.3 It was reported that the NHS had expressed an interest in renting the Rushden Centre for a period of 14 months while Rushden Hospital was being refurbished and this was being explored.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

**Chairman**



placed on the workforce. The Sub-Committee considered suggestions for providing a reward to staff to reflect this.

**RESOLVED:**

**AA**

That the Human Resources Manager prepare an issues paper on the options for providing a reward to staff in recognition of the additional burdens recently placed upon them for consideration by the Corporate Management Team and submission to the next meeting of this Sub-Committee.

**6.0 VACANT POSTS UPDATE**

6.1 The Sub-Committee received a report on:-

- (a) Vacant posts
- (b) New posts created on the establishment
- (c) Posts temporarily vacant
- (d) Budget savings, and
- (e) Empty posts/hours still on establishment but with no budget.

**7.0 CHANGES TO TAX TREATMENT OF MEMBERS' ICT ALLOWANCES**

7.1 The Executive Director submitted a report to update the Sub-Committee on the proposed future tax treatment of Members' ICT Allowances and equipment.

7.2 In 2011/12, 17 Councillors had chosen the option of the ICT equipment allowance of up to £250 per year, whilst 22 Councillors had a Council supplied laptop, 18 of whom also had a Council supplied printer. One Councillor had not taken up either option. The historical position regarding the taxation of ICT allowances and the provision of equipment was outlined. From the 2013/14 tax year both allowances and equipment would not be taxed at source, but would be declared on individual Councillor's tax returns and would be subject to the criteria defined by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

**RESOLVED:**

That the current position in relation to the tax treatment of the provision of ICT allowances and equipment be noted and the proposal to declare these in future via P9D/P11D returns as set out in the report be agreed.

**SM**

*(Reason: to harmonise the tax treatment and reduce the administrative burden on the Council and lower income Councillors)*

**8.0 EXCLUSION OF 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 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, may be disclosed.

**9.0 STAFF PROPOSAL 17 – CHANGES TO COMMERCIAL HEALTH TEAM STRUCTURE**

- 9.1 The Sub-Committee received a report of the Executive Director seeking confirmation of a change to the Commercial Health Team structure to implement the final part of the restructuring which had taken place as part of the savings incorporated into the 2011/12 budget. Details of the change proposed, together with the reasons why the change could not be implemented previously, were considered and it was

**RESOLVED:**

**AA**

That the change of the Trainee Environmental Health Officer post (scale 6) to an Environmental Health Officer post (scale 7) be confirmed with effect from February 2012

*(Reason: to enable continuation of previously agreed savings arising from a related restructure)*

**10.0 STAFF PROPOSAL 18 – PLANNING SERVICES IMPROVEMENTS**

- 10.1 The Executive Director presented a report on behalf of the Head of Planning Services setting out high level proposals for the review and improvement of the Development Control, Planning Administration and Planning Policy and Conservation Teams. An initial review had identified a wide range of areas for improvement within the service and proposed changes would be taken forward through a series of improvement projects, which were categorised for the Sub-Committee.
- 10.2 The Sub-Committee welcomed the review taking place and the objectives it aimed to achieve.

**RESOLVED:**

**SM/RB**

That the high level aims of the review set out in the report be endorsed and the potential for changes to officer roles and structures as a result of the process be noted.

**11.0 STAFF PROPOSAL 20 – PENSION ISSUE**

- 11.1 The Sub-Committee considered a request to transfer pension benefits into the East Northamptonshire Council/Northamptonshire County Council Pension Scheme, details of which were reported to the Sub-Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

**AA**

That the transfer request outlined in the report be approved.

**Chairman**