



Finance Sub-Committee

Minutes of a meeting held on Monday 30 November 2015 at 7.30pm, East Northamptonshire House, Thrapston

Present: Councillors: Steven North (Chairman)
Val Carter
Roger Glithero
Glenvil Greenwood-Smith
Richard Lewis

Councillor Dorothy Maxwell attended as an observer (for items 1 – 9)

Officers: David Oliver (Chief Executive)
Sharn Matthews (Executive Director)
Glenn Hammons (Chief Finance Officer)
Katy Everitt (Head of Resources and Organisational Development)
Michelle Drewery (Finance Manager)
David Bennett (Business Transformation Manager)

1.0 MINUTES

1.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 7 September 2015 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

2.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Brackenbury and Glenn Harwood MBE.

3.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 The following interest was declared in the Agenda item specified below:

Councillor	Agenda item	Nature of Interest	DPI	Other Interest
Val Carter	Asset Management – Sale of Land and Buildings Progress Update	Member of Thrapston Town Council		Yes

4.0 QUESTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

4.1 There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

5.0 BUDGET MONITORING TO 31 OCTOBER 2015

5.1 The Finance Manager presented a report providing an update on the forecast Revenue and Capital positions against the approved budgets for the period ended 31 October 2015. It was noted that the estimated services outturn for the year was an underspend of £242,000.

5.2 The Sub-Committee considered a request to transfer £38,500 from the Development Pool into the Capital Programme. This related to essential property maintenance and the replacement of lights, light fittings and switch controls in the Council Chamber and reception area to the Council Chamber. The work had been tendered and the sum requested covered the tender price plus 10% for contingency.

RESOLVED: That

- i) the latest revenue, capital and reserves positions for 2015/16 be noted.
- ii) the transfer of the proposed maintenance costs of £38,500 from the Development Pool to the Approved Capital Programme be approved and the changes to the Capital Programme be noted.

(Reason: To follow the formal process for approval of the amendment to the Capital Programme Budget for 2015/16.)

6.0 TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT TO 31 OCTOBER 2015

6.1 The Chief Finance Officer presented a report setting out the current position for Treasury Management for the period to 31 October 2015.

RESOLVED:

That the Treasury Management performance for the period to 31 October 2015 be noted.

(Reason: In accordance with CIPFA guidance and best practice in Treasury Management)

7.0 BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION UPDATE

7.1 The Business Transformation Manager presented a report setting out the proposed Business Transformation Plan. The Plan set out the vision and mission of the programme and how it would help to deliver the outcomes contained in the Corporate Plan. It also detailed the governance arrangements and decision making processes that were in place to ensure the programme remained aligned to the future direction of the Council.

7.2 A summary of current business transformation projects was provided including hybrid mail; printer replacement; a trial of paperless working in the Planning Management team; recycling contamination reduction and commercial development.

- 7.3 As part of the paperless working trial, it had been necessary to purchase equipment to enable the trial to take place. It had been possible to do this from the Planning Services budget, but it might not be possible for service areas to fund similar purchases to enable other trial projects to proceed in future. It was therefore proposed that the Business Transformation Team fund new equipment purchases and other expenses associated with future trials and initiatives that formed part of the Business Transformation Programme.

RESOLVED: That

- i) the content and format of the high level Business Transformation Plan be agreed.

(Reason: To confirm the Business Transformation Programme is moving in the right direction and allow that direction to be communicated to staff.)

- ii) the sum of £10,000, from the Council's Improvement Reserve, be made available to the Business Transformation Team for the purpose of purchasing equipment and covering other expenses associated with future trials and initiatives

(Reason: To allow the Business Transformation Team to purchase equipment and materials to allow the progression of future trials and initiatives within the Council.)

8.0 LAND AT DITCHFORD LAKES

- 8.1 The Head of Resources and Organisational Development reported that Land owned by the Council at Ditchford Lakes had been leased to The Wildlife Trust since 1998 under a 21-year Management Agreement.

- 8.2 The Wildlife Trust had recently applied for significant Heritage Lottery funding to join up conservation sites at Ditchford Lakes, Rushden Lakes and Irthlingborough Lakes and Meadows. The funding bid had successfully passed phase one, but in order to be successful at phase two (the final phase) The Wildlife Trust needed to demonstrate that it had control over all of the sites for a minimum period of 35 years and, accordingly, had requested a new lease of Ditchford Lakes from the Council for a minimum period of 35 years with no break clauses.

RESOLVED: That,

- i) the offer of a new lease of Ditchford Lakes to The Wildlife Trust be agreed in principle for 35 years with no break clauses on a fully maintaining lease.
- ii) the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance Sub-Committee, be authorised to determine the boundaries of the land to be offered for lease, taking into consideration any potential commercial opportunities that may be available on parts of the Ditchford Lakes site.
- iii) a further report be submitted to the Finance Sub-Committee once the lease has been completed.

(Reason: To enable The Wildlife Trust to access funding from the Heritage Lottery and also reduce the Council's maintenance responsibilities)

9.0 LAND AND BUILDINGS ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 9.1 The Head of Resources and Organisational Development reported that the Council's existing Land and Buildings Asset Management Plan had been approved by the Sub-Committee on 18 November 2013. A number of actions had taken place since that time, including full building condition surveys and mechanical and electrical surveys which had been carried out at all of the Council's leisure buildings since 2013.
- 9.2 The Sub-Committee reviewed options for the maintenance strategy to adopt and considered that a flexible approach to the replacement of items was more advantageous than replacing items at the end of their lifespan regardless of condition.

RESOLVED: That

- i) the content of the report be noted
- ii) a flexible approach to the replacement of items be adopted, with replacement being determined based on regular reviews of each item taking into account its recommended lifespan and current condition
- iii) the Head of Resources and Organisational Development, in consultation with the Council's S151 Officer and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Finance Sub-Committee, be authorised to determine the need for replacement of items within the Plan..

(Reason: To ensure the Council's land and building assets are kept in a good condition and Councillors are involved in determining the strategy adopted by the Council for maintenance of its land and buildings)

10.0 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

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 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972, may be disclosed.

11.0 CEDAR DRIVE OFFICE SPACE LEASING PROJECT – PHASE 1

- 11.1 The Business Transformation Manager presented a report which outlined phase 1 of the proposed Cedar Drive office space leasing project, including refurbishment work which might be required and the provision of suitable alternative accommodation for the Members' Room.
- 11.2 Members expressed concern at the shortage of car parking space at the Council offices during the day which could be exacerbated should part of the offices be leased to tenants. There might be scope to increase the number of parking spaces available by altering the layout of the current car park area and officers would examine the feasibility of doing this.

RESOLVED: That

- i) the general principle of leasing out parts of the ENC offices at Cedar Drive be agreed in order to generate additional income for the Council.
- ii) authority to release funds for the refurbishment of the office space to be leased in phase 1 (including authority to release funds to refurbish alternative areas of the building to accommodate meeting, training and staff lunch break space).be delegated to the Council's Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance Sub- Committee
- iii) Councillors Glenvil Greenwood-Smith and Richard Lewis be appointed to liaise with the Business Transformation Team with regard to alternative accommodation for the current Members' Room, including any refurbishment that would need to take place in the new accommodation.

(Reason: To ensure that the Council can generate income, ensure that officers can react quickly to potential tenants and provide the assurance that Members require)

12.0 ASSET MANAGEMENT – SALE OF LAND AND BUILDINGS PROGRESS UPDATE

- 12.1 The Head of Resources and Organisational Development presented a report providing the Sub-Committee with an update on progress made in relation to the sale of Council owned land and buildings.
- 12.2 The Sub-Committee considered a request received from Thrapston Town Council for consent to install CCTV cameras in the ENC car park at Sackville Street.

RESOLVED: That

- i) the contents of the report be noted
- ii) subject to Thrapston Town Council meeting the cost of any legal fees, installation fees and maintenance fees, the Town Council be authorised to use this Council's car park at Sackville Street, Thrapston to host the Town Council's CCTV cameras

(Reason: To note the progress on the sale of assets and help the Council to provide financial stability and enable Thrapston Town Council to have CCTV in the area of Sackville Street, Thrapston)

13.0 UPDATE ON LAND CHARGES SEARCH REFUNDS

- 13.1 The Executive Director presented a report providing the Sub-Committee with a further update on the progress made in settling the legal actions relating to requests for refunds for Land Charges search fees which had arisen following the abolition of personal search fees in 2010.

RESOLVED: That

- i) the current position in relation to the legal actions be noted
- ii) the Land Charges Refunds Reserve be closed once the final claimant's and Council legal costs have been paid and that any remaining balance be transferred to general reserves.

(Reason: To provide members with an update on the legal claims regarding land charges and to ensure the Councils finances are managed efficiently)

Chairman