

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Date: 18 January 2016

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30pm

Present:

Councillors:	Richard Lewis	(Chairman)
	Glenvil Greenwood-Smith	(Vice-Chairman)
	Steven North	(Leader of the Council)
	Glenn Harwood MBE	(Deputy Leader of the Council)
	Tony Boto	Dudley Hughes JP
	David Brackenbury	Andy Mercer
	Wendy Brackenbury	Sarah Peacock
	Val Carter	Rupert Reichhold
	Roger Glithero	Anna Sauntson

294. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Helen Harrison and Anna Sauntson

295. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (07/12/2015)

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2015 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

296. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following interests were declared in the items listed below:

Member/Officer	Item	Nature of Interest	DPI	Other Interest
Julia Smith (Interim Head of Customer and Community Services), James McLaughlin (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager) and Karen Pell (Interim Environmental Protection Manager)	Minutes of Sub-Committees and Working Parties – Personnel Sub-Committee – 11 January 2016	Members of staff affected by the proposed new pay scales	Yes	
Councillor Andy Mercer	Changes to Housing Legislation	Family member had been a private landlord		Yes
Councillors Wendy Brackenbury, Dudley Hughes JP and Andy Mercer	Response to Northamptonshire County Council's Consultation on	Members of Northamptonshire County Council		Yes

	Proposals to Dispose of Redundant Schools Lands in Oundle and Kings Cliffe			
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297. QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

298. MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES

a) Community Facilities Fund Working Party – 4 November 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Facilities Fund Working Party held on 4 November 2015 were received (see pages 230 to 233).

b) Housing Policy Working Party – 18 November 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing Policy Working Party held on 18 November 2015 were received (see pages 234 to 240) and it was

RESOLVED:

That the suggested amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Housing Policy Working Party be agreed.

c) Finance Sub-Committee – 22 December 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 22 December 2015 were received (see pages 241 to 242).

d) Welfare Reform Sub-Committee – 7 January 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Welfare Reform Sub-Committee held on 7 January 2016 were received (see pages 243 to 246).

R.4 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:

That the Council Tax Support Scheme 2016/17 for East Northamptonshire adopt the existing Council Tax Support Regulations with the following amendments:

- a. the scheme is based on 80% of the annual Council Tax liability.
- b. freeze components within CTS (allowances and premiums) and remove the family premium for children born or new claims made after April 2016.
- c. reduce the period of backdating claims from six months to one month.
- d. align the period in which earnings are taken into account when calculating CTS and Housing Benefit

- e. remove the advantage of extra help to Universal Credit claimants who are repaying debts.

e) Personnel Sub-Committee – 11 January 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 11 January 2016 were received (see pages 247 to 251).

In reporting on the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting on 11 January 2016, the Chairman of the Sub-Committee invited the Chief Executive to provide a detailed explanation of the significant medium-term implications for employers arising from the National Minimum Wage (NMW) legislation. It was noted that the requirement for the NMW to reach 60% of median earnings by 2010/21, which represented an estimated 30% increase from 2016/17, meant that differentials would be eroded. This would potentially render pay scales such as that in place at the Council, which are based on objective assessments of the relative complexity of different roles, redundant. The Chief Executive indicated that there was no national solution to this problem from local government, and the deal proposed by the National Employers, which only covers 2016/17 and 2017/18, had been rejected by UNISON.

He explained that the new pay scales proposed were designed to provide an affordable, sustainable pay structure that implemented the NMW legislation over the medium-term and maintained appropriate differentials between different roles. In doing so, they would also greatly help the council's financial planning over that period. Having considered the Chief Executive's explanation of the proposal, Members expressed broad support for the recommended approach to implementing the legislation.

299. CHANGES TO HOUSING LEGISLATION

The Interim Environmental Protection Manager submitted a report detailing new legislative requirements in respect of retaliatory eviction and the requirement for landlords to install carbon monoxide (CO) and smoke alarms.

It was reported that a number of provisions within the Deregulation Act 2015 had come into effect on 1 October 2015 which were designed to protect tenants against unfair eviction. Under the new provisions, where a tenant makes a genuine complaint about the condition of their property that has not been addressed by their landlord, their complaint has been verified by a local authority inspection, and the local authority has served either an improvement notice or a notice of emergency remedial action, a landlord cannot evict that tenant for six months under Section 21 eviction powers only.

The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations 2015 came into force on 1 October 2015 and require a smoke alarm to be installed by the landlord on every floor of rented accommodation. It was also noted that where an appliance that uses solid fuel (such as a woodburning stove or an open fire) is present a CO alarm must be provided in that room where the appliance is installed. Where such alarms are not fitted, the council has the power to serve notice under the regulations which would require the landlord to install the necessary alarms within 28 days of the issue of the notice. Local authorities had been given power to install alarms once the notice period had expired if alarm had not been fitted and could issue a penalty charge to the landlord of up to £5,000.

RESOLVED:

That the Monetary Fee to be imposed for smoke and carbon monoxide alarm offences to be set as £5,000, unless otherwise determined by the Head of Environmental Services, in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee.

(Reason – to comply with government guidance.)

R.5 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND:

That Section 33 of the Deregulation Act 2015 and The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015 be adopted and authority be delegated to the Executive Director, Head of Environmental Services, Environmental Protection Manager and Housing Technical Officers to undertake the new functions.

(Reason – to ensure legislative compliance and that the appropriate governance framework is in place within the Constitution.)

300. LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIPS

The Chief Executive submitted a report providing an update on the position regarding Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in the region and recommended that the council signed up to the South-East Midlands LEP (SEMLEP).

The report recalled the previous discussions that had taken place in 2010 when LEPs were established by the coalition government and the decision to join Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership (NEP) in 2011. Following the unsuccessful bid for the establishment of an Enterprise Zone for the Rockingham area in 2015, NEP had sought feedback from the Department for Communities and Local Government on the reasons for the failure of the bid. One weakness identified was the inability to identify an accountable body for the Enterprise Zone. Whilst this was not the critical aspect of the bid's failure, it was noted that any future bids would be likely to be unsuccessful without an accountable body. It was reported that Northampton Enterprise Zone was created through a successful bid through SEMLEP, with Luton Borough Council acting as the accountable body.

It was proposed that the council join SEMLEP at a modest subscription cost of £7,000 per annum, which could be through existing budgets. Members broadly supported the proposal to join SEMLEP and noted that the low subscription fee was good value for money even in the event of any future bids not being successful. The reference to gaining SEMLEP support and lobbying for the council's key priorities of the Enterprise Zone, Chowns Mill and the dualling of the A45 from Stanwick to Thrapston was considered to be particularly important.

RESOLVED:

- i. That, in principle, agreement be given to the Council becoming a member of SEMLEP, at an annual cost of up to £7,000.
- ii. The authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to enter into negotiations and commit the Council to membership if terms acceptable to them can be agreed.

(Reason – Membership is a cost-effective way of helping to achieve the economic development outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan.)

301. RESPONSE TO NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS TO DISPOSE OF REDUNDANT SCHOOL LANDS IN OUNDLE AND KINGS CLIFFE

The Executive Director submitted a report detailing the consultation by Northamptonshire County Council on the application for the Secretary of State's consent to dispose of surplus playing field land at Oundle and Kings Cliffe.

It was reported that the County Council would seek residential planning permission for the sites in the event of consent to disposal being secured but it was noted that this would be dealt with separately from this consultation.. It had also indicated that any sale proceeds would be applied to the capital cost of the schools reorganisation in the north of the district.

Members reviewed the draft consultation response which had been prepared by the Executive Director and made a number of points which that were considered worthy of inclusion within the final response to the County Council. Specific reference was made to the need to consider the health and wellbeing implications of the loss of green space currently used for sporting or wellbeing activity by the public, along with a request for the return of some funding given by the Council to Oundle Church of England School through the Community Facilities Fund.

RESOLVED:

That authority be delegated to the Executive Director, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, to amend the draft response and incorporate the additional points raised by the Committee.

(Reason – To respond to the County Council's invitation to comment on its proposals and to highlight the need to take a holistic approach to the future use of these sites.)

Chairman



Community Facilities Fund Working Party
Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 4 November 2015
at 2pm in the Members' Room

Present:

Councillors:	Councillor Steven North (Chair)	Cllr SN
	Councillor Helen Harrison	Cllr HH
	Councillor Roger Glithero	Cllr RG
	Councillor Richard Lewis	Cllr RL
Officers:	Julia Smith, Interim Head of Customer & Community Services	JS
	Mike Greenway, Community Partnerships Manager	MG
	Michelle Drewery, Finance Manager	MDwy
	Lucy Hawes, Community Partnerships Officer	LH
Minutes:	Sharon Prior, PA to Chief Executive sprior@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk	

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1. **Apologies** **ACTION**
- 1.1. Apologies had been received from:-
- Councillor Glenn Harwood
2. **Appointment of Chairman of the Working Party**
- 2.1. Cllr RG nominated Councillor Steven North (Cllr SN) to the chair of the Working Party, seconded by Cllr RL. Cllr SN was formally appointed to the Chair. Cllr SN
- 2.2. Cllr SN then made an introduction to the group noting the changes in membership of the Working Party – new member Councillor Helen Harrison. Cllr SN outlined the 3 streams:-
- Stream 1** Member Empowerment Fund
Stream 2 Community projects (Community Facilities Fund – CFF)
Stream 3 Major infrastructure projects
- Cllr SN then outlined the importance of this Working Party and the good feedback received from communities who have previously bid and received funding for their projects under Stream 2.
3. **Declarations of Interest**
- 3.1. **Councillor Richard Lewis**
- Item:** Item 6 – Expression of Interest (Eols) for Round 3 of the Community Facilities Fund 2015/16
Nature of Interest Member of Rushden Town Council
DPI/Other Interest Other
- Councillor Roger Glithero**
- Item** Item 6 – Expression of Interest (Eols) for Round 3 of the Community Facilities Fund 2015/16
Nature of Interest Ward Member for Kings Forest – applications received For funding from villages in his ward
DPI/Other Interest Other
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4. **Financial position**

- 4.1. MDwy presented a summary sheet outlining the funds available under each stream, which the meeting noted. Cllr SN noted that the current allocation for Stream 2 was £200,000, but that underspends were available to use if required.
- 4.2. Cllr RL enquired on funding not yet drawn down by groups who had been allocated a grant from a previous year, specifically mentioning Rushden Historical Transport Society who were unable to draw down the ENC funding until other match funding was obtained. MG confirmed that provision would be given in the grant agreement for an extension to carry forward the funding to the next financial year.

5. **Progress update on projects from previous rounds of the Community Facilities Fund (CFF)**

- 5.1. MG provided an update on projects that received funding in previous rounds - 2013/14 (Round 1) and 2014/15 (Round 2), which the meeting noted. MG confirmed that LH kept in regular contact with all the groups to check on progress with their projects and advised that active monitoring will continue. It was noted that some community groups would draw down funding in small amounts, whilst others would draw down the whole amount in one request.

6. **Expressions of Interest for Round 3**

- 6.1. MG presented the covering report which provided background information on the previous rounds of this Fund, as well outlining the criteria to be followed, and the details of the bids received, which the meeting noted.
- 6.2. MG outlined the timetable to be followed for Round 3, which the Working Party approved:-

Task	Timescale
CFFWP determines those Eol to be invited to second stage application process	4 November 2015
2 nd stage application deadline (6 weeks)	21 December 2015
Evaluation and analysis	December 2015 / January 2016
CFFWP meeting to consider 2 nd stage applications	Mid-January 2016
CFFWP recommendations to Policy & Resources Committee	15 February 2016
Awards confirmed	w/c 15 February 2016

- 6.3. The Working Party then considered the 35 applications received individually, and noted their comments on each one and agreed on the following recommendations:-

Did Not Qualify – outside of District

- 5 – Ise & Nene Valley Turners
- 31 – Friends of Greenfield Primary School

Withdrawn

- 34 – Higham Ferrers Archaeology and Research Society

No

- 1 – Islip Bowls Club
- 2 – Waterloo Academy Performing Arts
- 4 – Higham and Rushden U3A
- 10 – Higham Ferrers Town Council
- 16 – Kings Cliffe Parish Council
- 20 – Raunds Town Council youth facility building
- 21 – Kings Cliffe Active
- 22 – Fermyn Woods Country Park
- 26 – Raunds Town Council
- 27 – Stanwick Village Hall Trust
- 28 – St Laurence Church, Stanwick
- 30 – Thrapston Primary School

Yes – progress to stage 2

- 3 – TS Collingwood, Irthlingborough
- 6 – Stanwick Community Garden
- 7 – Ringstead Village Hall
- 8 – Transition Kings Cliffe
- 9 – Ranger Cadet Corps
- 12 – Higham Ferrers Town Council/Heritage Centre
- 13 – Islip Village Hall
- 14 – St Peter’s Church, Oundle
- 15 – Rushden & Higham RUFC
- 17 – Stanwick Parish Council play area
- 18 – Collyweston Village Hall
- 19 – WI Brigstock
- 23 – Manor Learning Trust
- 24 – Oundle Town Rowing Club
- 25 – Oundle Tennis Club
- 29 – Rushden Town Council / Spencer Park Pavilion
- 32 – Kings Cliffe Parish Council / Village Hall parking area
- 33 – Irthlingborough Cricket Club
- 35 – Wildlife Trust / Rushden Lakes

7. Confirmation of shortlisted Eols to go forward to 2nd stage application round

- 7.1. The Working Party noted the applications agreed to progress to the second stage application round:-

- 3 – TS Collingwood, Irthlingborough
 - 6 – Stanwick Community Garden
 - 7 – Ringstead Village Hall
 - 8 – Transition Kings Cliffe
 - 9 – Ranger Cadet Corps
 - 12 – Higham Ferrers Town Council/Heritage Centre
 - 13 – Islip Village Hall
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- 14 – St Peter’s Church, Oundle
- 15 – Rushden & Higham RUFC
- 17 – Stanwick Parish Council play area
- 18 – Collyweston Village Hall
- 19 – WI Brigstock
- 23 – Manor Learning Trust
- 24 – Oundle Town Rowing Club
- 25 – Oundle Tennis Club
- 29 – Rushden Town Council / Spencer Park Pavilion
- 32 – Kings Cliffe Parish Council / Village Hall parking area
- 33 – Irthlingborough Cricket Club
- 34 – Wildlife Trust / Rushden Lakes

8. **Any Other Business**

8.1. Cllr RG suggested that the criteria for bids be reviewed for future rounds, and the Working Party members noted their support for this suggestion. The Working Party noted the follow comments to be noted as part of this review:-

- Officers to be delegated the authority to refuse applications presented with no match funding.
- Look at development by ward and consider that some smaller villages don’t apply for funding as they don’t believe they’ll be successful.
- Larger Town Councils tend to receive higher points as they are able to provide a contribution in match funding.
- Applications received for smaller amounts to be re-directed to other funders and/or their relevant Parish or Town Council.
- A minimum amount could be set for applications.
- Future applications need to show value for money.
- Criteria to be reviewed thoroughly and suggest an increase to 4 bands.

MG suggested, once applications had been progressed and funding approved by Policy & Resources Committee, that a follow-up meeting of the Working Party be arranged to review criteria and recommend changes to a future Policy & Resources Committee, all in preparation for future rounds of the Community Facilities Fund.

9. **Date of Next Meeting**

9.1. The Working Party agreed to meet again on Wednesday 13 January 2016 at 2pm in the Members Room.

All

JS/MG/LH/SP 25.11.15

Minutes approved by Chair (Cllr Steven North) – 8.1.16



**Housing Policy Working Party
Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 18th November
2015 at 2pm in Kasen Room**

Present

Councillors	Rupert Reichhold	RR
	Tony Boto	TB
	Steven North	SN
	Richard Lewis	RL
	Helen Harrison	HH

Also in attendance

Executive Director and Interim Head of Planning Services	Sharn Matthews	SM
Planning Policy and Conservation Manager	Richard Palmer	RP
Housing Enabling Officer	Aine Cooper	AC
Housing Services Officer	Louise Bagley	LB
Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager	Carol Conway	
Benefit Manager	Lucy Hogston	LH
Environmental Protection Manager	Karen Pell	KP

ACTION

1. **Apologies**

1.1 Apologies had been received from Councillor Sarah Peacock

2. **Terms of Reference**

2.1 The Terms of Reference had been agreed by Policy and Resources Committee. The minutes of this meeting would be forwarded to the Policy and Resources Committee for consideration. The working party resolved to recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee approval of the 2 suggested additions to the Terms of Reference.

CC

2.2 Group Members

2.3 Members of the group introduced themselves

2.4 Appointment of Chair

2.5 TB was nominated and appointed for the position of chair. RR was nominated and appointed as vice chairman

3. **Introductions – who does what?**

Officers explained their roles and gave some detail on the work they carry out with respect to the housing related responsibilities of this council

4. **Scope of the Working Party**

4.1 The Housing Options Contract is an urgent item to be considered as the current contract expires on 31 March 2016. Policy and Resources Committee has already agreed to extend the contract for another 3 years, but minor amendments and updates will be required. Housing Services have a meeting with Midland Heart this month to go over any changes. Once everything is agreed between the parties the contract will go to P&R committee early next year for approval.

CC/LB

4.2 The housing allocations policy was approved in 2013 but needs to be reviewed and updated. It was agreed that specific timeframes need to be set for the various tasks to be completed by.

4.3 Housing Mix Requirements Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The district wide housing mix requirements assessment shows what we have and what we need in the district in terms of property size, tenure and affordable housing. An SPD is being developed which will provide developers with more guidance on what is acceptable in planning terms for new housing. However publication of details related to the Government's Starter Homes initiatives would be required before significant further work could be completed (see below).

4.4 Clawback Policy

The Working Party need to consider developing a policy to determine how requests for clawback provisions to be waived will be dealt with to avoid each individual request being taken to P&R for approval.

4.5 Welfare Reforms

The Working Party needs to be aware of the reforms and any implications they may have for the council.

4.6 Housing and Tenancy Strategies

These were adopted in 2012. The Housing Strategy outlines the council's priorities for housing in the district, whilst the Tenancy Strategy provides guidance for Registered Providers working in the district when framing their own policies.

4.7 Work Programme

Many issues are inter-related. Until the Housing and Planning Bill becomes legislation it is not known what changes this will bring. Councillor Boto to liaise with Carol to agree timescales for elements of the work required.

TB/CC

5. The Housing and Planning Bill

The Housing and Planning Bill was published on 13 October 2015, had its second reading on 2 November 2015 and will now proceed to committee stage.

5.1 Starter Homes

Starter homes will be delivered as affordable housing as part of Section 106 Agreements. Starter Homes will be new homes available for first time buyers under the age of 40, at 20% below the market value, with a £250,000 cap outside of London. Starter homes will be exempt from CIL and other tariff based contributions. The Bill will mean developers will achieve 80% market value of properties as opposed to the 50-60% they are currently achieving for rented and shared ownership homes. Concerns were raised that a balance of properties should be built to attract a mixture of people. It was also noted that the Welfare Reform Bill will introduce a 1% per annum rent reduction for social landlords for the next 4 years. This will result in developers wanting to renegotiate numbers and tenure on existing S106 obligations.

5.2 Self-build and custom housebuilding

The Council will be expected to hold a register for custom-build and self-build homes. The Council will have a duty to grant outline planning permission for enough sites to meet the demand for this

5.3 Extension of the Right to Buy (RTB)

RTB is being extended, and will be available to those who have been a social housing tenant for at least 3 years. It is hoped there will be concessions for rural areas and sheltered housing but as yet there has been no detail provided on exemptions. Discounts will depend upon how long a person has occupied the property.

5.4 Sale of vacant high value local authority housing

Local authorities will be expected to sell high value council homes as they become vacant. As a non-stock-holding council ENC should not be affected by this. However, SM raised a potential risk that monies could possibly be obtained by the government through receipts from historic RTB agreements.

5.5 Pay to Stay

Social housing tenants with a household income of £30,000 or more per annum will be expected to pay a market or near market rent. It was noted that Housing Services keep records of private rents to keep track of current market rental prices.

5.6 Ending of lifetime tenancies

It is likely that lifetime tenancies will end, with 5 to 15 year tenancies being offered instead. It is believed that this is for new tenancies only but this has not yet been clarified. It is hoped that there will be exemptions for

retirement, supported and specialist housing.

5.7 Rogue landlords and letting agents

Legislation will enable councils to issue banning orders, with fines in place if the order is breached. The government will set up a database of rogue landlords that the Council will be responsible for entering information into. Rent repayment orders are to be extended over a broader range of offences.

5.8 Planning

The planning aspects of the Housing and Planning Bill were considered, with focus on the Brownfield Register. The Working Party queried whether former airfield sites will be classified as Brownfield sites as this was unclear at this stage although thought unlikely. The council will have to create a Brownfield Register.

5.9 Housing Implications for East Northamptonshire Council

As a Council we are not directly affected by some of the proposed measures as we are not stock holders of homes, but some of our registered partners will be affected and there will be knock-on effects on the council such as reduced stock and less new affordable rented and shared ownership developments coming through. It is therefore extremely important to have the right Allocations Policy in place to minimise the pressures on front line staff.

The homelessness and waiting list figures will be brought to the next working party meeting.

LB

6. Welfare Reforms

6.2 Removal of spare room subsidy (Bedroom Tax) – sees benefits being reduced if a house is not being fully occupied. 585 households in East Northants were affected by this last year, with the figure currently at 439 affected households. This figure has not changed much in recent months, possibly due to the lack of suitable properties available for people to 'downsize' into.

6.3 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) have helped some, but it is uncertain how long these payments will be available

6.4 Universal Credit (UC) has been introduced in the district for single job seekers only. They receive one monthly payment to cover their rent and living expenses.

6.5 Tax credits - Current earning thresholds are to be halved by next year

LHA freeze - From April 2016 there will be a local housing allowance freeze for the next 4 years.

6.6 Under 21s - From April 2017 automatic entitlement to Housing Benefit for 18-21 year olds out of work will be removed. There will be exemptions for vulnerable people, but details are yet to be clarified on who will be classed as vulnerable.

6.7 Council tax support - In April 2013 the Council designed their own scheme. The Council are proposing 20% is the minimum amount paid towards council tax from next year.

7. Accessible Properties Aspiration

7.1 This is a 3 phase plan, for the short, medium and long term, with the phases running concurrently. The aim is to deliver an improved service with a fairer allocations system, make better use of the DFG budget and plan for future needs for adapted and accessible properties.. The DFG policy needs to be reviewed in conjunction with housing allocations and planning policies.

8 Working Party Work Plan

8.1 CC ran through the work plan. Some points are dependant on the Housing and Planning Bill. TB and CC to agree work plan and timetable for consideration by the Working Party. TB/CC

9 Future Meetings

9.1 Agenda

An agenda is to be produced for each meeting together with a work plan with timeframes. TB to liaise with the housing team on meeting contents for the future

TB
CC
LB
AC

9.2 Proposed meetings

It was proposed to hold the meetings on the second Wednesday of each month, between 2pm-4pm in the Kasen Room if available.
Proposed dates of future meetings:

9th December 2015
13 January 2016
10 February 2016
9 March 2016
13 April 2016

9.3 Next meeting

It is proposed to hold the next meeting on 9 December 2015 at 2pm in the Kasen Room.

9.4 Conclusion of meeting

The meeting concluded at 16.06pm

Housing Policy Working Party

Terms of Reference

1. Membership

Members: Councillor Steven North
Councillor Richard Lewis
Councillor Rupert Reichhold
Councillor Sarah Peacock
Councillor Tony Boto
Councillor Helen Harrison

Lead Officers:

Sharn Matthews	Executive Director
Richard Palmer	Planning Policy Manager
Jenny Walker	Health Protection Manager
Karen Pell	Environmental Protection Manager
Carol Conway	Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager
Louise Bagley	Housing Services Officer
Aine Cooper	Housing Enabling Officer

There may also be a need to involve other officers as and when required, such as representatives from Benefits, Finance, or Planning Services as well as from Registered Housing Providers and other partners.

2. Terms of Reference

- i. To consider any proposed changes to the terms and conditions of the Contract for the Housing Options Service prior to presentation to Policy and Resources Committee
- ii. To review the Housing Allocation Policy for presentation to Policy & Resources Committee
- iii. To steer the development of flexible and fair housing policies for the provision, adaptation and allocation of accessible properties for presentation to Policy and Resources Committee
- iv. To steer the development of a Supplementary Planning Document in respect of the Housing Mix Requirements for the district for presentation to Planning Policy Committee
- v. To consider the consequences for housing in the district, and report any recommended action to the appropriate committee, as a result of
 - a. Changes to the Right to Buy and rent setting legislation for housing associations
 - b. Welfare reform and in particular the introduction of Universal Credit
 - c. The current refugee crisis.
- vi. If appropriate following the review of the Allocations Policy and changes to legislation, to review the Tenancy Strategy for presentation to Policy & Resources Committee

Agreed by Policy and Resources Committee 21.9.15

Suggested additions

To consider the development of a policy in relation to the clawback provisions in the Stock Transfer agreement from 2001.

To ensure housing and planning objectives are closely reflected through the plan making process, in assisting future policy development



Finance Sub-Committee

Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 22 December 2015 at 11.00am, East Northamptonshire House, Thrapston

Present: Councillors: Steven North (Chairman)
Roger Glithero
Richard Lewis

Officers: David Oliver (Chief Executive)
Sharn Matthews (Executive Director)
Glenn Hammons (Chief Finance Officer)
Michelle Drewery (Finance Manager)

1.0 MINUTES

1.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 30 November 2015 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

2.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Brackenbury, Val Carter, Glenvil Greenwood-Smith and Glenn Harwood MBE.

3.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4.0 QUESTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

4.1 There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

5.0 DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND PLAN

5.1 The Chief Finance Officer presented a report updating the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015/16 – 2018/19, which had been approved by Council in February 2015.

5.2 The report had been updated following the release of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement last week. As a result of the provisional settlement, a revised Appendix 1 of the report, Draft MTFs Summary 2016/17 – 2019/20, was circulated.

- 5.3 There had been no additional announcements around the 100% business rates retention scheme proposed by the government. The government intended to consult on the implementation of the scheme during Summer 2016. It was agreed that the consultation should be considered by the Sub-Committee when it was available.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the revised Appendix 1 of the report, Draft MTFS Summary 2016/17 – 2019/20, be approved; and
- (ii) That the contents of the report be noted, specifically the:
- Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) & Plan (MTFP)
 - Draft Revenue Budget 2016/17
 - Draft Capital Programme for 2016/17-2024/25 (subject to the on-going review of schemes within that programme)

(Reason: To ensure that the Council complies with its Constitution in setting its budget)

Chairman

Welfare Reform Sub-Committee

Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 7 January 2016 at 2.00pm, The Kasen Room, East Northamptonshire House, Thrapston

Present:

Councillors: Andy Mercer (Chairman)
 Helen Harrison (Vice-Chairman)
 Glenvil Greenwood-Smith
 Richard Lewis
 Steven North

Officers: Sharn Matthews – Executive Director
 Glenn Hammons – Chief Finance Officer
 Lucy Hogston – Benefit Manager

1.0 MINUTES

1.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2015 were approved as a correct record.

2.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 There were no apologies for absence.

3.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4.0 QUESTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

4.1 It was reported that no questions had been submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

5.0 COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS

5.1 Further to the meeting held on 12 October 2015, the Sub Committee considered a report which informed members of the outcome of an internal review on empty properties being subject to a council tax charge whilst undergoing renovations. It had been suggested that this added an additional burden and might disincentivise improvements to properties and in such cases it could be argued that those pursuing economic growth would be penalised.

5.2 The Sub Committee were reminded that in January 2013, the Council had resolved to maximise income from owners of empty properties by removing exemptions, discounts and applying a premium to long-term empty properties after two years. The changes were:

Exemption/Discount	Council Tax paid pre 1 April 2013	Council Tax paid post 1 April 2013
Second Homes Furnished but main home elsewhere or empty	90%	100%
Uninhabitable Empty requiring major repair work	None for a year Then 50%	100%
New, empty and unfurnished Any unfurnished and unoccupied property	None for 6 months Then 50%	100%
Long term empty Unoccupied and unfurnished	None for 6 months Then 100%	100% then 150% after 2 years of being empty

- 5.3 The changes to exemption and discounts had resulted in the Council generating additional income of around £900K each year since 2013/14 that had been used to mitigate the financial impact of the Council Tax Support Scheme. The additional income for 2015/16 was forecast to be £936K.
- 5.4 Three options had been looked at during the review:
- Option 1 – Retain the current post 1 April 2013 council tax charges
 - Option 2 – Reverse the council tax charges to the pre 1 April 2013 rates
 - Option 3 – Introduce an exemption for empty and unfurnished properties undergoing renovation
- 5.5 The Council no longer had an Empty Property Inspector and this meant that if either options 2 or 3 were introduced ways of monitoring the properties would need to be established to ensure that the Council was not open to potential fraudulent claims for discount. The proposed CTS scheme and Council Tax base for 2016/17 had already been modelled based on the existing discounts and exemptions and any changes at this stage would have a significant impact on the proposals and the budget setting process.
- 5.6 It was noted that the aim of the scheme was to encourage empty homes back into use. However, it was accepted that there were anomalies in the scheme especially around furnished and unfurnished properties. There were also concerns that a charge of 150% could encourage property owners to make homes uninhabitable or even demolish the property although there was no evidence available at this stage to support this..
- 5.7 The scheme had been a success as a number of properties had been brought back into use. The Council was required to declare the number of long term empty properties in the district and there had been a decline over the last few years.
- 5.8 Evidence was needed to see if there had been a reduction in housing stock due to the scheme and also whether empty properties were being brought back into use solely because of this scheme. As such a review was outside the remit of this committee it was suggested that the Scrutiny Committee or Housing Working Party may wish to look at the Council's empty properties arrangements and if felt necessary make any suggestions for change for 2017/18.

- 5.9 It was noted that the LGA had called on the government to let councils have additional powers to charge developers council tax if they let planning permission expire and if this proposal went any further forward the Policy and Resources Committee may want to examine any implications.

RESOLVED:

1. To keep the current council tax charges as detailed in Option 1 of the report.
2. That the long term element of the scheme for empty property be reviewed, in the context of overall approach to reducing empty properties.

(Reason – to maximise income in 2016/17 and future years.)

6.0 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2016/17

- 6.1 The Sub-Committee considered the outcome of the consultation on the local Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme proposal for East Northamptonshire and recommended a scheme for approval by full Council on 25 January 2016.
- 6.2 At the meeting on 12 October 2015, the Sub Committee approved consultation on five proposed amendments to the existing CTS scheme:
- Proposal 1 – Reduce the amount of liability used in the scheme to 80% meaning that working age people had to pay 20% of their bill as a minimum.
 - Proposal 2 – Freeze components within CTS (allowances and premiums) and remove the family premium for children born or new claims made after April 2016.
 - Proposal 3 – Reduce the period of backdating claims from 6 months to 4 months.
 - Proposal 4 – To align the period in which earnings were taken into account when calculating CTS and Housing Benefit.
 - Proposal 5 – To remove the advantage of extra help to Universal Credit claimants who are repaying debts.
- 6.3 Consultation on the proposed scheme had taken place between 26 October to 23 November 2015 and 310 responses had been received, which was an increase in the previous CTS consultation for 2014/15. There were two themes in a number of the comments made around the ideas that people on benefits should pay more as they used more services and council tax should not increase to offset CTS.
- 6.4 It was noted that the Autumn Statement had confirmed that proposed changes to tax credits would no longer take place during 2016/17 and that councils responsible for adult social care would be able to increase their council tax by a further 2%. Northamptonshire County Council had proposed to adopt the 2% increase for 2016/17.
- 6.5 As a result of these changes modelling showed that the current CTS scheme would not be cost neutral in 2016/17 and there would be a funding gap of around £209K, with ENC's element being £17.5K. To be broadly cost neutral the percentage reduction required would be 20.5%, 29% in 2017/18, 35% in 2018/19 and 40% in 2019/20.

- 6.6 It was noted that the collection rate for council tax was 97.98% for all Council Tax payers in 2014/15 and was slightly above target for this year. However, the in year collection rate for Council Tax Support customers had fallen, with 88.2% collected for 2014/15 and 48.7% for the first quarter of 2015/16 which was 5% down on the same point last year. It was suggested that collection rates for council tax were high as this was a debt which could lead to imprisonment for non payment.
- 6.7 It was noted that across Northamptonshire Kettering Borough Council was proposing an increase in their reduction from 25% to 45%, with Northampton Borough Council increasing from 21% to 29%.
- 6.8 The Sub Committee considered the Equality Impact Assessment for the Scheme and noted that it showed negative impacts to a number of the equality groups but the proposed changes did not impact on one particular group more than another.
- 6.9 It was noted that CTS was subsumed into the Revenue Support Grant and the government was also expecting a large increase in the tax base of 3% per annum. The assumption by the government was that councils would maximise discounts etc and not just assume growth.
- 6.10 It was suggested that one of the risks which needed to be managed was reputational damage. The aim of the scheme was to try to avoid hardship for residents and these proposals could mean that increased hardship was a risk which needed to be managed. These issues should be addressed in future reports.
- 6.11 It was noted that the Government was considering localising housing benefit to pensionable age people as well as possibly administering attendance allowances. This would be an area which needed to be monitored going forward.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Equality Impact Assessment be noted;
2. That the consultation responses received be noted;
3. To recommend to Council that the Council Tax Support Scheme 2016/17 for East Northamptonshire adopts the existing Council Tax Support Regulations with the following amendments:
 - a) the scheme is based on 80% of the annual Council Tax liability
 - b) freeze components within CTS (allowances and premiums) and remove the family premium for children born or new claims made after April 2016
 - c) reduce the period of backdating claims from 6 months to 1 month
 - d) align the period in which earnings are taken into account when calculation CTS and Housing Benefit
 - e) remove the advantage of extra help to Universal Credit claimants who are repaying debts
4. To review the scheme during 2016/17 to ensure that a financially sustainable scheme is in place for 2017/18.

(Reason – to deliver a Council Tax Support scheme for 2016/17 that meets all statutory requirements)

Chairman



Personnel Sub-Committee

Minutes of a meeting held on Monday 11 January 2016 at 10.30am, East Northamptonshire House, Thrapston

Present: Councillors: Roger Glithero (Chairman)
Steven North
Sarah Peacock

Officers:

David Oliver	Chief Executive
Sharn Matthews	Executive Director
Mike Deacon	Head of Environmental Services
Paul Bland	Head of Planning Services
Julia Smith	Interim Head of Customer and Community Services
Aime Armstrong	Human Resources Manager
James McLaughlin	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Karen Pell	Interim Environmental Protection Manager
Angela Hook	Corporate Support Manager

1.0 MINUTES

1.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 2 November 2015 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

2.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

3.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 The following interests were declared in the items listed below:

Officer/Member	Item	Nature of Interest	DPI	Other Interest
All Officers present except David Oliver and Sharn Matthews	Implementation of the National Minimum Wage	Members of staff affected by the proposed new pay scales.	Yes	.

4.0 QUESTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

4.1 There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

5.0 WORKFORCE STATISTICS

- 5.1 The Sub-Committee reviewed data concerning staff sickness, turnover and the number of staff employed, which had been prepared following a review of the data as reported to the meeting of the Sub-Committee on 2 November 2015.
- 5.2 It was noted that the employment status of people working for the Council under contractual arrangements would need further consideration to ensure that the Council was complying with employment legislation and HMRC requirements.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

6.0 ON-CALL AND CALL OUT PAYMENTS

- 6.1 The Interim Environmental Protection Manager presented a report reviewing the on-call and call out payments which formed part of the Council's Pay Policy. The payments had been set at £70.50 per day when the policy had been adopted in 2011. Had the annual pay rise increase been applied since 2011, the payment would have increased to a rate of £73.50 per day.

RESOLVED: That

- i) the out of hours/on-call payment fee set out in the pay policy each year be automatically increased in line with any annual pay increase agreed nationally or locally.
- ii) the rate for 2015/16 be set at £73.50, backdated to 1 April 2015.
- iii) data on the circumstances and number of occasions out of hours and on-call payments are made be submitted periodically to the Personnel Sub-Committee.

(Reason: To enable effective services to be delivered out of hours and in emergency situations.)

7.0 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 1, 2 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, may be disclosed.

8.0 RESOURCING ELECTORAL ACTIVITY

- 8.1 The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager presented a report concerning the resourcing of Electoral Registration and electoral administration over the coming months. The Sub-Committee had considered the impact of the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration in July 2014 when two fixed-term posts in the Elections team had been approved. A Neighbourhood Plan Referendum would be held early in 2016, with the Police and Crime Commissioner election taking place in

May 2016 and possibly the EU Referendum taking place in the Summer of 2016. These commitments would require adequate staff resources to be in place in the Elections team where there was currently a member of staff on long-term absence.

RESOLVED: That

- i) the post of Electoral Services Visiting Officer be permanently established.
- ii) authority be delegated to the Head of Resources and Organisational Development and the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Personnel Sub-Committee, to determine the best option to maintain the necessary level of resource to support electoral activity up to the end of May 2016.

(Reason – to ensure that there are sufficient resources available to the Electoral Registration Officer/Returning Officer to undertake his statutory responsibilities in the most cost effective way.)

9.0 CUSTOMER SERVICES RESTRUCTURE

- 9.1 The Interim Head of Customer and Community Services submitted a report setting out proposals for the restructuring of Customer Services, together with a request for flexible retirement.
- 9.2 It was also proposed to extend the flexi-time scheme to members of the Customer Services team which would have the benefit of enabling greater flexibility in the provision of the service.

RESOLVED: That

- i) the flexible retirement request in respect of Post Number 02/450 be approved.
- ii) the creation of two Senior Customer Service Advisor roles be approved and be subject to job evaluation.
- iii) the creation of one Customer Services Manager (subject to job evaluation) and the deletion of the other Customer Services Manager role in January 2018 be approved..
- iv) the use of flexi-time scheme in Customer Services be approved.
- v) a 40 hour increase to the Customer Services team at the Customer Service Adviser level be approved as a result of the increased contribution from Revenues and Benefits and the reduced hours of one of the Customer Service Advisers.
- vi) consultation with affected staff on the proposed structure be authorised.
- vii) the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of the Personnel Sub-Committee, be authorised to approve the final arrangements taking into account the consultation responses.

(Reason: To ensure the Customer Services Team has appropriate resources to deliver its outcomes as set out in the Customer and Community Services Service Plan and contribute to the achievement of the Customer Services Strategy).

10.0 CORPORATE SUPPORT TEAM STRUCTURE

- 10.1 The Corporate Support Manager presented a report setting out proposals for the restructuring of the Corporate Support team. The proposal would replace the existing Business Apprentice post with a part-time Performance Officer post and would accommodate a request made by the current Performance Officer to return to work on a part-time basis following maternity leave.

RESOLVED: That the proposed change to the Corporate Support Team structure detailed in the report be approved.

(Reason – The option outlined will result in the most effective, appropriately-skilled team, providing support to ENC in a cost-effective way)

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE

(All officers with the exception of the Chief Executive, Executive Director and Human Resources Manager left the meeting during the consideration of this item.)

- 11.1 The Chief Executive presented proposals to form the basis for consultations with staff to implement the recently announced new National Minimum Wage (NMW) and provide a fair and competitive pay structure.
- 11.2 The new NMW would be £7.20 per hour from 1 April 2016, rising to 60% of median earnings by 1 April 2020 which was estimated to be £9.40 per hour. Whilst it would be straightforward to implement the NMW in 2016 as almost all ENC employees were already above the NMW, the longer term implications were more complex as the new NMW equated to an increase of almost 7% per year.
- 11.3 The points on the Council's pay scale affected by the NMW would increase year on year and this would lead to staff currently several pay points apart, and possibly on different grades, being paid the same amount. As the pay structure was based on jobs being evaluated on their complexity, this could undermine the pay structure. It was recognised that pay differentials needed to be maintained to some degree in order to maintain staff motivation and morale and to provide a fair pay structure.
- 11.4 It was also recognised that the current grading structure was possibly a contributing factor to recruitment and retention difficulties which ENC had experienced for a number of years, particularly for higher graded posts.

RESOLVED: That

- i) the pay scales set out at Appendix 1 be approved as a basis for consultation with staff.
- ii) it be noted that the proposal will be brought back to the Personnel Sub-Committee following that consultation to enable the Sub-Committee to make a recommendation to full Council.
- iii) the intention be noted that, subject to their being approved, the pay scales will be reviewed annually to ensure that they continue to comply with legislation and that they represent no deficit compared to the rates set through national agreements and remain appropriate in the context of the National Minimum Wage.

- iv) the Equality Impact assessment set out in Appendix 3 to the report be noted.

(Reason: To ensure that the Council complies with new employment legislation, has a predictable level of staff costs for the medium-term and has a competitive and fair pay structure to enable the Council to attract and retain the right calibre of staff)

Chairman

Proposed new pay scales up to grade 10 for 2016/17 to 2020/21

SCP	Current pay scales		Proposed new pay scales			
	15/16 £	16/17 £	17/18 £	18/19 £	19/20 £	20/21 £
57	N/A	60,728	61,335	61,948	62,568	63,194
56	57,814	58,392	58,976	59,566	60,161	60,763
55	55,585	56,141	56,702	57,269	57,842	58,420
54	53,449	53,983	54,523	55,069	55,619	56,175
53	51,394	51,908	52,427	52,951	53,481	54,016
52	49,417	49,911	50,410	50,914	51,424	51,938
51	N/A	45,547	46,298	47,062	47,838	48,628
50	43,873	44,553	45,243	45,944	46,655	47,378
49	42,958	43,580	44,212	44,852	45,502	46,161
48	42,055	42,623	43,200	43,783	44,375	44,975
47	41,140	41,662	42,192	42,727	43,270	43,819
46	40,217	40,701	41,190	41,685	42,186	42,694
45	39,269	39,724	40,184	40,650	41,120	41,597
44	38,406	38,821	39,241	39,665	40,094	40,528
43	37,484	37,876	38,273	38,673	39,078	39,487
42	36,573	36,945	37,321	37,701	38,085	38,472
41	35,663	36,020	36,380	36,745	37,112	37,484
40	34,746	35,094	35,445	35,800	36,159	36,521
39	33,857	34,195	34,537	34,882	35,230	35,582
38	32,778	33,148	33,521	33,899	34,282	34,668
37	31,846	32,223	32,605	32,991	33,382	33,778
36						

	30,979	31,356	31,737	32,123	32,514	32,910
35	30,179	30,547	30,919	31,296	31,678	32,064
34	29,560	29,889	30,221	30,557	30,897	31,240
33	28,747	29,077	29,412	29,750	30,092	30,438
32	27,925	28,263	28,605	28,951	29,301	29,656
31	27,123	27,468	27,818	28,172	28,531	28,894
30	26,293	26,655	27,021	27,393	27,770	28,151
29	25,441	25,827	26,218	26,615	27,019	27,428
28	24,473	24,907	25,349	25,799	26,257	26,723
27	23,699	24,149	24,608	25,075	25,552	26,037
26	22,938	23,405	23,881	24,366	24,862	25,368
25	22,214	22,693	23,183	23,683	24,194	24,716
24	21,790	22,230	22,679	23,137	23,604	24,081
23	21,108	21,559	22,020	22,491	22,971	23,462
22	20,512	20,961	21,421	21,890	22,370	22,860
21	20,001	20,436	20,880	21,334	21,798	22,272
20	19,307	19,764	20,231	20,709	21,199	21,700
19	18,635	19,112	19,600	20,101	20,615	21,143
18	17,973	18,470	18,981	19,506	20,045	20,599
17	17,631	18,094	18,569	19,056	19,557	20,070
16	17,228	17,670	18,123	18,588	19,065	19,554
15	16,831	17,253	17,687	18,130	18,586	19,052
14	16,490	16,885	17,290	17,704	18,128	18,563
13	16,200	16,561	16,929	17,306	17,692	18,086
12	15,782	16,218	16,666	17,126	17,599	18,086
11	15,466	15,958	16,465	16,988	17,528	18,086

10	14,580	15,480	15,892	16,592	17,322	18,086
9	14,286	15,186	15,699	16,458	17,252	18,086