

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Date: 11 July 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
Wendy Brackenbury
Val Carter
Roger Glithero JP
Helen Harrison

Marika Hillson
Dudley Hughes JP
Andy Mercer
Sarah Peacock
Philip Stearn

82. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Brackenbury.

83. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2016 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

84. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor	Item	Nature of Interest	DPI	Other Interest
Sarah Peacock	Taxi Policy Consultation Review	Family member is in the taxi trade as a private hire operator	Yes (left meeting)	

85. QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

86. MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES

a) Housing Policy Working Party – 20 April 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing Policy Working Party held on 20 April 2016 were received (see pages 59 to 64).

b) Communities Facilities Fund Working Party – 9 March 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Communities Facilities Fund Working Party held on 9 March 2016 were received (see pages 65 to 66).

RESOLVED:

That the application from Higham Ferrers Town Council for a Heritage Centre be rejected as it was substantially different to the original project.

(Reason – to ensure effective and efficient use of the Communities Facilities Fund.)

c) Communities Facilities Fund Working Party – 15 June 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Communities Facilities Fund Working Party held on 15 June 2016 were received (see pages 67 to 68).

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the amended Terms of Reference for the Communities Facilities Fund Working Party be approved;
- (ii) That the amendments to the application and evaluation processes be approved;
- (iii) That Round 4 of the Communities Facilities Fund be launched;
- (iv) That Irthlingborough Cricket Club be permitted to draw down 50% of the costs of the fencing work undertaken so far with the remainder of the grant being held until 31 March 2017 on the basis that the equivalent match funding can be secured; and
- (v) That Rushden Town Council's CFF award is held to 31 March 2017 on the basis that the equivalent match funding can be secured.

(Reason – to ensure effective and efficient use of the Communities Facilities Fund.)

d) Finance Sub-Committee – 13 June 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 13 June 2016 were received (see pages 69 to 72).

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the revenue and capital carry forward requests be approved;

(Reason – for formal approval to carry forward expenditure into the revenue and capital budgets for 2016-17.)

- (ii) That the use of the 2015/16 underspend be approved;

(Reason – for formal approval to incur expenditure in 2016/17 and strengthen reserves.)

(iii) That the reserves position be approved;

(Reason – for approval of strengthened reserves to mitigate some future financial risk.)

(iv) That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance Sub-Committee, be authorised to:

i) Enter into a new lease with Kings Cliffe Parish Council on the same terms as the existing lease, to ensure that the management and maintenance of this land is secured for years to come and allows the land to be used by the public for free and for uninterrupted use for informal leisure activities; and

ii) Enter into a permitted use, either by licence or as an added clause to the lease, for access across ENC-retained land to enable safe access to the school and congestion avoidance in Kings Forest Road at peak school times.

(Reason – to ensure that the Council's land holding is used for the maximum benefit of the community and that the Council's interests in the land are protected.)

e) Personnel Sub-Committee – 20 June 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 20 June 2016 were received (see pages 73 to 78).

R.3 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL:

(i) That an additional resource to assist with planning consultations be approved for a fixed-term appointment of two years on a part time basis (18.5 hours per week), with the post to be reviewed after 18 months and to be funded from any income above budget received from planning application fees in 2016/17, or from reserves in the absence of any such surplus, and to be built into the base budget for the appropriate period thereafter.

(Reason – to ensure that the environmental implications of proposed developments can be adequately assessed during the planning process.)

(ii) That the establishment of two Business Account Manager posts be approved, one to be based in Environmental Services and one to be based in Planning, the grade of the posts to be determined by job evaluation and the working hours to be 18.5 hours per week per post, to be funded from the Improvement Reserve for 2016/17 only and built into the base budget thereafter.

(Reason – to ensure the Council has adequate resources in order to support our new and existing businesses.)

f) Welfare Reform Sub-Committee – 30 June 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Welfare Reform Sub-Committee held on 30 June 2016 were received (see pages 79 to 83).

Councillor Sarah Peacock left the meeting for the following item.

87. TAXI POLICY CONSULTATION REVIEW

The Environmental Protection Manager presented a report which updated the Committee on the consultation responses received following a six week consultation on proposed changes to the Taxi Licensing Policy documents.

At the same time as the consultation, all the documents had been sent to legal services for a full review to ensure that they were in line with legislation and guidance. At the request of the Licensing Committee, further legal advice had been sought in relation to the new Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 and whether amendments were required to the Criminal Policy in view of the new legislation.

At the previous meeting, the Committee had raised a question in relation to a mandatory English assessment, which was undertaken at Bedford Borough Council. Following review of Bedford's papers, the questions in their mandatory English assessment were in line with the questions within our Knowledge Test and it was therefore felt that it was not necessary to introduce an additional English assessment.

Thanks were given to Jenny Walker and Rita Groves for all their work in reviewing all of the documents.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to minor amendments, the changes to the policies be approved and implemented.

(Reason – to ensure that the Council complies with its legal and public safety obligations in respect of taxi licensing.)

Councillor Sarah Peacock returned to the meeting.

88. VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANTS

The Head of Customer and Community Services presented a report which sought approval of the process for providing Voluntary Sector Grants beyond March 2017.

The Council currently provided three grants to support the delivery of services across East Northamptonshire in three thematic areas. These grants covered a three year period and were now in the final year ending 31 March 2017.

The current grants by theme were:

Theme	Grant Agreement service description and outcomes to be achieved	Amount per annum £	Provider
Advice and Information	Provide an advice and information service for tackling debt across East Northamptonshire which will deliver the following outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced debt across East Northamptonshire	50,000	Community Law Service (Northampton and County)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising available income of the district's most financially deprived communities • Increased access to financial and legal advice • Increased benefit take up across the district. 		
Counselling and Support	<p>Provide a counselling and support service to individuals and families across East Northamptonshire. Priority will be given to areas where the council has specific legal duties. This theme will deliver the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of support available • Increased access to counselling and support to families and individuals • Increased take up of a range of specialist advice and counselling services for all individuals that may be experiencing issues/difficulties with regards to: equalities; family breakdown and relationships; mental health issues; and victims/witnesses of crime across the district. 	20,000	Service Six
Community Transport	<p>Provide a community transport service across East Northamptonshire to enable residents to access basic services at an affordable price, with medical services trips as the first priority. This theme will deliver the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to medical services as a priority. • Improved access to other basic services • Reduced isolation for residents in communities who have a high "Index of Deprivation" score for "access to services". 	20,000	Consortium led by Serve and includes Volunteer Action Oundle

The Council had formal Grant Agreements with each of the providers. To date all three grants had achieved the targets set and, in the majority of cases, exceeded them.

The Committee was now being asked to decide how these grants should operate beyond 31 March 2017 and it was felt important that a Member Panel be appointed to consider all the options and make recommendations on the way forward. The Member Panel would also oversee the application and evaluation processes prior to making recommendations to Committee on the final grant awards.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That support for providing voluntary sector grants beyond 31 March 2017 be confirmed;
- (ii) That the appointment of a Member Panel of three members of the Committee be approved, with membership being decided by the Leader; and
- (iii) That the indicative timetable for co-ordinating the process be approved.

(Reason – to support a voluntary sector whose services help us to achieve our corporate outcomes.)

89. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2016-17

The Finance Manager presented a report which requested authorisation to add a new project to the Approved Capital Programme.

The Nene Centre had two sand filters which were responsible for ensuring the water quality of the pool. One of the filters was currently out of service and required urgent repair. The cost of the repairs was dependent on the extent of the works required which could not be determined in full until the filter was removed and the cause of failure was investigated. These repairs were not identified at the time of setting the capital programme and therefore this was an additional cost to the Council.

A third quote had now been received in the sum of £21,764 and the proposed recommendation had been amended to accept this quote.

In response to questions by the Committee, officers confirmed that the pool could remain open during the works as each of the filters would be looked at separately. Also, going forward the responsibility for repairs and maintenance would be with the new contractor and not the Council.

R.4 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:

The additional cost of the repairs to the Nene Centre sand filters (up to a maximum of £21,764) to the Approved Capital Programme be approved and the changes shown in the revised Capital Programme be noted.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the use of the management fee budget to cover the repairs to the sand filters (up to a maximum of £21,764) be approved; and

- (ii) To delegate to the Head of Environmental Services, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, the final cost of works required following review of the third quote and then on review of actual works carried out up to the maximum of £21,764.

(Reason – for formal approval of amendments to both revenue and capital budgets for 2016/17.)

90. 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 7 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, may be disclosed.

91. PLANNING DATA PROJECT

The Business Analyst presented a report which sought permission to progress with the Planning Data Project which aimed to digitise all planning development management records from 1948 to the present date. Permission was also requested to engage an external scanning company to back scan or migrate historical data to the new Document Management System (DMS).

The Chief Executive thanked Kirsty Squires and Lewis Gabb for all their work in getting the project to this stage.

R.5 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:

That inclusion in the Approved Capital Programme of the required budget of £145,830, to be funded from Council's improvement reserve, be approved.

RESOLVED:

That progression of the project be approved.

(Reason – the option proposed aligns most closely with the Council's strategic direction; is the most cost effective solution to the problem; will realise the maximum benefit for the Council and our customers and will enable us to meet our obligations under relevant planning and data protection legislation now and in the future.)

92. HOUSING INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

The Environmental Protection Manager presented a report which provided an update in relation to two properties that the Council may be able to purchase through a clawback provision which provided a housing investment opportunity, controlled and managed by the Council.

At the meeting of the Committee in April, Members were provided with information relating to two properties at Duck Street, Rushden that Riverside Housing Association wanted to sell. Following that meeting, an inspection of the two properties had been undertaken by officers and it was noted that the properties were generally in a good state of repair with no major

structural issues, however they did require general redecorating and would benefit from other improvements.

Riverside Housing had been advised that the Council would buy these properties back and requested finalised costs for the two properties in accordance with the agreement for sale and clawback terms. Legal Services had confirmed that the transfer documents required Riverside to offer the properties to be purchased back by the Council and only if we declined the offer were they able to look at other options.

R.6 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL:

- (i) That the purchase of the two properties in Duck Street at a sum of up to £20,000 (including the purchase price and purchasing costs) and that this is added to the Approved Capital Programme and funded from the Improvement Reserve be approved; and

(Reason – consistency with previous decisions.)

- (ii) That the refurbishment costs of up to £40,000 be added to the development pool to enable the chosen option be approved.

(Reason – to enable the Council to maximise the revenue income generation from the purchase.)

RESOLVED:

To delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, determination of which of the options as set out in Section 3 of the report provides the optimum value for money to the Council.

(Reason – the optimum solution cannot be determined until the business case is finalised.)

93. COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER

The Environmental Protection Manger presented a report which provided the Committee with information regarding a long term empty property that the Empty Homes Project considered further enforcement action was necessary to bring back into use.

The property had stood empty since June 2009 and had been registered with Council Tax as a second home. However, the evidence was clear that it had not been lived in at all. Neighbours had complained about the property due to the state of the overgrown gardens, it being insecure and causing damp to a neighbouring property.

Unsuccessful attempts had been made by officers to encourage the owner to refurbish the property to rent out or to sell it in its current state. No attempts had been made to clear the property or maintain it and Building Control had previously declared it to be a poorly maintained property.

R.7 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:

That Part 7 of the new Housing and Planning Act 2016 be added to the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

(Reason – to accord with legislation or the policy of the Council.)

RESOLVED:

That the start of the formulation stage of the Compulsory Purchase Order process be approved.

(Reason – the Council (or customers) will receive the maximum benefit from the proposed option.)

Chairman