

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Date: 7 November 2016

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30pm

Present: Councillors: Richard Lewis (Chairman)
Steven North (Leader of the Council)
Glenn Harwood MBE (Deputy Leader of the Council)

Tony Boto
David Brackenbury
Wendy Brackenbury
Val Carter
Roger Glithero JP

Helen Harrison
Dudley Hughes JP
Andy Mercer
Sarah Peacock
Philip Stearn

240. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Glenvil Greenwood-Smith and Marika Hillson.

241. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2016 were approved and signed by the Chairman, subject to the addition of Councillors Helen Harrison and Andy Mercer to the list of those present.

242. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

243. QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

244. MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES

a) Housing Policy Working Party – 7 September 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing Policy Working Party held on 7 September 2016 were received (see pages 199 to 202).

b) Community Facilities Fund Working Party – 19 October 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Facilities Fund Working Party held on 19 October 2016 were received (see pages 203 to 207).

RESOLVED:

1. That the award of CFF grants to the projects asking for less than £5,000 as set out in the report be confirmed.
2. That approval is given for inviting those projects scoring 20 points or more to submit stage 2 applications on the basis of the conditions set out for each application.
3. That approval is given for those projects scoring below 20 to be rejected.
4. That the Working Party considers completed stage 2 applications and makes recommendations on CFF Grant awards at the February 2017 meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.

c) Welfare Reform Sub Committee – 19 October 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the Welfare Reform Sub Committee held on 19 October 2016 were received (see pages 208 to 210).

245. FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

The Community Partnerships Manager presented a report on proposals for making financial contributions to external organisations that contributed to the achievement of our Corporate Plan outcomes.

For 2016/17, the following financial support had been provided:

Groundwork Northamptonshire - £1,500 (core) and £8,500 (project)
Northamptonshire Sport (NSport) - £7,500
Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) - £1,897

It was proposed to have a three year SLA of £10K per annum with Groundwork Northamptonshire to part-fund two JAM projects per year with match funding from town or parish councils or through other streams such as Member Empowerment. The SLA would commence on 1 April 2017 and terminate on 31 March 2020 and would be subject to annual reviews.

For NSport, it was proposed that a one year SLA be agreed with a financial contribution set at £7.5K. This would allow time for options to be drawn up in relation to a longer-term arrangement.

The Council had statutory duties under section 11 of the Children's Act 2004, along with other statutory partners, to the NSCB. It was proposed that our current contribution of £1,897 continued in future financial years in line with our statutory responsibilities.

Councillor Andy Mercer asked for it to be minuted that when he had previously chaired a Licensing Panel he had not found the NSCB very helpful when they had been asked to provide information to support a taxi licensing hearing, which he believed they should do when requested.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Equality Implications relating to the report be noted.

2. That a three year Service Level Agreement for Groundwork Northamptonshire at £10,000 per annum to support JAM projects be approved.
3. That a one year Service Level Agreement for Northamptonshire Sport at £7,500 for 2017/18 be approved.
4. That an annual contribution to Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board of £1,897 be approved

(Reason – to ensure we have effective arrangements with partnership bodies and organisations that support us to achieve our corporate outcomes and / or discharge our statutory duties around safeguarding children)

246. URGENT ITEM

The following item of business had been added to the published Agenda with the consent of the Chairman in accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 as a decision was required before the next scheduled meeting of the Committee as the Boundary Commission for England’s consultation ends on 5 December 2016.

247. MOTION

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Helen Harrison and seconded by Councillor Andy Mercer:

“Having studied the Boundary Commission for England's proposals in detail, this Committee believes that there is needless displacement of voters across East Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire more widely, when other proposals are both available, and viable. As such, the Boundary Commission for England should look at this again and amend its proposals - in particular, we believe the local authority wards of Irthlingborough John Pyel and Irthlingborough Waterloo, should remain in the Corby constituency; thus meaning that no voters are displaced in East Northamptonshire. This Committee believes that, unless absolutely necessary; constituencies should remain as close to how they are currently configured.

Furthermore, the names of the two constituencies covering East Northamptonshire should be reviewed, in recognition of the invaluable contribution that local residents and our communities make to constituency life. In terms of the Corby constituency, there are clearly two distinct parts – the Borough of Corby and the towns and villages of East Northamptonshire. As such, the Corby constituency should be renamed ‘Corby & East Northamptonshire’ – a proposal the Commission both accepted, and advocated, during the previous review in the last parliament. The same principles apply to the Wellingborough constituency, which should be renamed ‘Wellingborough & Rushden’ – in recognition that there are two major towns in the constituency, of roughly equal size.

*The Committee therefore **RESOLVES** that:*

1. *The Chief Executive write to the Boundary Commission for England, enclosing a copy of this motion and urging them to reconsider their proposals, ensuring:

 - a. *that no East Northamptonshire voters are displaced by the boundary changes;**

- b. *that the minimum number of electors are disrupted across North Northamptonshire as a whole;*
 - c. *that the two constituencies covering East Northamptonshire should be renamed 'Corby & East Northamptonshire' and 'Wellingborough & Rushden'.*
2. *The Chief Executive writes to all of the Town and Parish Councils in the District, drawing the Boundary Commission for England's proposals to their attention, enclosing a copy of this motion, encouraging them to participate in the consultation process, and furnishing them with the details of how to do so."*

In support of the Motion, Councillor Harrison stated that under the Boundary Commission's proposals a large number of voters in North Northamptonshire would be displaced, particularly in Irthlingborough. The changes being proposed were far greater than needed when other proposals were both available and viable. East Northamptonshire was also not acknowledged in either of the two constituencies' names.

On being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Chief Executive write to the Boundary Commission for England, enclosing a copy of the motion and urging them to reconsider their proposals, ensuring:
 - a. that no East Northamptonshire voters are displaced by the boundary changes;
 - b. that the minimum number of electors are disrupted across North Northamptonshire as a whole; and
 - c. that the two constituencies covering East Northamptonshire should be renamed 'Corby & East Northamptonshire' and 'Wellingborough & Rushden'.
2. That the Chief Executive writes to all of the Town and Parish Councils in the District, drawing the Boundary Commission for England's proposals to their attention, enclosing a copy of this motion, encouraging them to participate in the consultation process, and furnishing them with the details of how to do so."

248. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business as it was likely that exempt information, as defined under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 may be disclosed.

249. FUTURE PROVISION OF THE PEST CONTROL SERVICE

The Head of Environmental Services presented a report that set out the options for future delivery of the pest control service currently provided by the Council through an external contractor.

In discussing the options, Members felt that charging for the treatment of rats may discourage people reporting a problem. The principles of Option 2, with the first treatment for rats being free for all, a charge for all subsequent treatments and the administration costs being passed on was supported.

RESOLVED:

1. That option 2, as amended, be approved for the future delivery of the pest control service.
2. That the procurement of option 2, as amended, be approved and that authority to award the contract be delegated to the Head of Environmental Services in consultation with the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee.

(Reason – to ensure we meet our duties under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949)

Chairman

Present

Councillors **Tony Boto (Chair)**
Steven North
Helen Harrison
Richard Lewis

Also in attendance

| | | |
|---|----------------|----|
| Executive Director | Sharn Matthews | SM |
| Head of Planning Services | Paul Bland | PB |
| Planning Policy and Conservation Manager | Richard Palmer | RP |
| Housing Enabling Officer | Aine Cooper | AC |
| Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager | Carol Conway | CC |
| Planning Policy Officer | Louise Jelley | LJ |
| Environmental Protection Manager | Jenny Walker | JW |

| | | <u>ACTION</u> |
|-----------|--|----------------------|
| 1. | Apologies and introductions | |
| 1.1 | Apologies were received from Cllr Sarah Peacock and Louise Bagley | |
| 2 | Minutes of the meeting of 13th July 2016 | |
| 2.1 | The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman | |
| 3 | Matters arising | |
| 3.1 | Item 8.1 Policy and Resources Committee had agreed at their September meeting that S106 funding held for affordable housing provision be allocated to facilitate the development of the Grenson's building in Rushden. | |
| 4 | Updates | |
| 4.1 | There were no updates to report. | |
| 4.5 | Work Plan | |
| 4.6 | Housing allocation policy – A draft policy will be presented to the | CC |

| | | |
|----------|--|--------------|
| | October HPWP meeting prior to going to P&R in December. | |
| 4.7 | Accessible properties - Olympus Care has been taken back in house by NCC. DFGs will be raised again at the next Chief Housing Officer Group meeting with concerns over a potential backlog of cases.. | JW |
| 4.8 | Property investment opportunities – discussions still in progress regarding the purchase of 2 properties. | JW/CC |
| 4.9 | Housing mix requirements SPD to be moved into the current work category. Affordable housing completions have increased in line with the upturn in development in the area. In 2015 there were 90 affordable homes constructed, and in 2016 there have already been 100 so far. | CC |
| 5 | District-wide Housing Mix – Needs and Aspirations | |
| 5.1 | A paper was presented to the meeting proposing options for members to consider in relation to gathering improved information on future housing mix requirements for new housing sites which would take into account future economic development aspirations for the district. | |
| 5.2 | It was suggested that a study for the district could include the Rushden East and Deenethorpe Airfield Garden Village projects which would provide cost savings and efficiencies. | |
| 5.3 | <p>Members agreed that it would be crucial to clearly outline the council's requirements in a brief to potential consultants. Areas to be considered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The requirement for a variety of employees in the district to be able to live locally • Place shaping to include facilities offered • Demand for larger, more aspirational homes. <p>It was agreed that an outline brief for consultants would be submitted to the Working Party by the end of September. Funding for the study would be sourced internally.</p> | PB/RP |
| 6 | Homelessness Prevention Grant Fund | |
| 6.1 | A draft paper was brought to the meeting prior to presentation to Policy and Resources committee. HPG funding in the MTFS has been set at £29,525 for 2017/18. It was noted that internal funding requirements are increasing, and if not met could lead to extra costs for homelessness and B&B accommodation. | |
| 6.2 | <p>The additional requirements were outlined as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most RPs are now requesting up to 4 weeks rent in advance which can prevent applicants being rehoused and may therefore mean they have to go into B&B or increase the time they have to stay there. A fund for rent in advance would assist with moving applicants into permanent housing. • A tenancy training programme in partnership with RPs, would | |

| | <p>assist younger and more vulnerable tenants to save for a deposit and understand the responsibilities involved in taking on a tenancy. It is hoped this work would also help prevent future homelessness due to rent arrears, anti-social behaviour etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All new tenancies entered into from April 2016 will have their benefit capped at the LHA rate from April 2018. Older tenants will be affected by this restriction, particularly in sheltered housing where service charges can be high. Single tenants under 35 will only be entitled to the single shared accommodation rate, considerably below the rent for a one bedroom flat. A fund to bridge the gap between the LHA rate and the full rent will assist with the prevention of homelessness for cases where the council would have a duty to accommodate should the tenancy be lost as a result. The police will no longer pay for target hardening (lock changes etc) and sanctuary installations (provision of a secure panic room within a property), for those at risk of domestic violence, A fund to enable such work would prevent homelessness where the victim wishes to remain in the home. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|---------|---------|----------------------------|---------|---------|-------------------------------------|--|---------|----------------------------|---------|---------|--------------|----------------|----------------|--|
| | <p>It was suggested that additional funding was required internally as follows:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2017/18</th> <th>2018/19</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Rent in advance</td> <td>£ 5,000</td> <td>£ 5,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tenancy training programme</td> <td>£ 5,000</td> <td>£ 5,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Local Housing Allowance Gap Funding</td> <td></td> <td>£10,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Target hardening/Sanctuary</td> <td>£ 2,000</td> <td>£ 5,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>£12,000</td> <td>£25,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | Rent in advance | £ 5,000 | £ 5,000 | Tenancy training programme | £ 5,000 | £ 5,000 | Local Housing Allowance Gap Funding | | £10,000 | Target hardening/Sanctuary | £ 2,000 | £ 5,000 | Total | £12,000 | £25,000 | |
| | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rent in advance | £ 5,000 | £ 5,000 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tenancy training programme | £ 5,000 | £ 5,000 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Local Housing Allowance Gap Funding | | £10,000 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Target hardening/Sanctuary | £ 2,000 | £ 5,000 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | £12,000 | £25,000 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6.4 | Members expressed serious concerns on this funding proposal and further consideration of the issues and financial implications would therefore be required before any recommendation could be made to P&R committee. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | Voluntary Right to Buy Clawbacks | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7.1 | Government guidance on how the voluntary right to buy process will work has not yet been issued, and pilot exercises are currently being carried out around the country which will inform future guidance. Registered Providers will have discretion when deciding the types of properties that will be sold under VRTB. Clear policies must be set out for tenants and staff to follow. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7.2 | It is not mandatory for the council to facilitate the operation of VRTB, but members agreed it would be appropriate and reasonable to do so. It was therefore considered that requests to clear title restrictions contained in transfer agreements should be viewed favourably, subject to a legal agreement that any proceeds would be reinvested into affordable housing in the East Northamptonshire District. It was | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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|-----------|---|-----------|
| | suggested that sale proceeds could be used for homelessness prevention, although it was noted such proceeds are likely to be ring-fenced to new replacement affordable housing provision. | |
| 7.3 | A further paper will be brought to a future meeting of the Working Party, once more government guidance and information regarding the VRTB is available, with a view to putting a comprehensive clawback policy in place. | CC |
| 8 | Risk Review | |
| 8.1 | The risks were reviewed, noting that Risk 6 – Introduction of Local Housing Allowance Cap - had been added at the last meeting. | |
| 9 | Any other business | |
| 9.1 | None. | |
| 10 | Next and future meetings | |
| 10.1 | <p>The next meeting will be held on 19 October at 2pm in the Kasen Room</p> <p>Future meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 December <p>Meetings to be held every 6 weeks</p> | |
| | The meeting concluded at 15.50pm | |
| | | |

Community Facilities Fund Working Party
Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 19 October 2016
at 11.30 in the Kasen Room

Present:

Councillors: Councillor Steven North (Chair) Cllr SN
 Councillor Roger Glithero Cllr RG
 Councillor Richard Lewis Cllr RL
 Councillor Helen Harrison Cllr HH
 Councillor Wendy Brackenbury Cllr WB
 Councillor Glenn Harwood MBE Cllr GH

Officers: Julia Smith, Head of Customer & Community Services JS
 Mike Greenway, Community Partnerships Manager MG
 Michelle Drewery, Finance Manager MDwy
 Lucy Hawes, Community Development Officer LH

Minutes: Charlie Hall, PA to Executive Director <mailto:chall@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk>

ACTION

1. Apologies

1.1. Councillor Richard Lewis had sent his apologies.

2. Declarations of interest

| 2.1 | Councillor/Officer | Item | Nature of interest | DPI | Other |
|-----|--------------------|--------------------------|---|-----|-------|
| | Glithero | Eligibility Applications | Grandson is Chair of the Bulwick Village Centre | | Yes |
| | Harwood | Eligibility Applications | Social Member of the Rushden Historical Transport Society | | Yes |

- 2.1.
- Cllr Glithero - Grandson was chair of Bulwick Village Centre
 - Cllr Harwood - Social member of the Rushden Historical Transport Society

3 Financial position update

MDwy provided an update on the position of the New Homes Bonus reserve. It was confirmed that £378,916 had been brought forward this year for stream 2 projects. All round 1 (year 1) projects had now been completed and monies drawn down in full.

It was confirmed that £40,000 remained committed for the round 2 (year 2) Rushden Historical Society Project and £4,147 has been drawn down to date on round 3 (year 3) projects. There is approximately £157,000 remaining to be drawn down for projects in round 3.

MDwy confirmed that for 2016/17 there is an allocation of £1,313,022 available in the NHB reserve to allocate between stream 2 and 3 projects. It was suggested that what is not spent on stream 2 projects is allocated to spend on stream 3. There is currently £1.6m held in reserves which is allocated to stream 3, with £620,000 of this already committed to specific projects.

4. Applications to Round 4 Eligibility Stage

4.1 MG presented a report detailing the evaluation of the eligibility applications for the fourth round of the Community Facilities Fund. It was noted that this round had been launched in July 2016. Members were reminded that a new process for Round 4 had been agreed (Policy and Resources Committee minute 86c – 11 July 2016). This consisted of an Eligibility stage, to which all applicants had applied to and then a Second (full application) stage for applications seeking £5,001 to £50,000. A total of 26 applications had been received and evaluated at the Eligibility Stage. Members noted that an application from Laxton Church had been rejected on receipt as it involved works that were part of an insurance claim.

4.2 It was confirmed that the Working Party was required to consider the evaluation findings and recommend or reject a grant award to those applications seeking £5,000 or less. For those applications seeking between £5,001 and £50K, the Working Party would confirm which applications would be invited to submit a second stage application. These recommendations would require confirmation by Policy and Resources Committee

4.3 MG reminded Members of the approved Eligibility Stage Scoring Criteria, which had been part of the report.

4.4 The Working Party considered the Eligibility applications **seeking £5K or less**

| App. No | Applicant | Project detail | Amount requested £ | Recommendation |
|---------|--------------------------|---|--------------------|----------------|
| 2 | Bulwick Village Centre | Toilet upgrade and disabled access ramp | 4,500 | Award grant |
| 7 | Benefield Parish Council | Provide bus shelter | 3,500 | Award grant |
| 1 | Deene and Deenethorpe | Kitchen replacement | 5,000 | Reject |

Members requested that the letter to Deene and Deenthorpe would state the reasons why their application had been rejected, which was largely due to missing information and a lack of evidence.

4.5 The Working Party considered the Eligibility applications **seeking between £5,001 and £50K**. Members were reminded that applications were required to score a minimum of 20 points, as set out in the evaluation criteria, in order to proceed to stage 2. Members considered

the applications in the order of their scores starting with the highest.

| Applications scoring 20 or more points | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| App. No | Applicant | Project detail | Amount requested £ | Recommendation (with conditions) |
| 8 | Rockingham Forest Trust | Revitalise play areas at Stanwick Lakes | 13,993.50 | Stage 2 |
| 2 | Friends of Easton Church | Create a Peace Labyrinth | 44,514.80 | Stage 2 - (applicant be required to justify high level of reserves and whether more can diverted to match fund this project) |
| 13 | Thrapston Bowls Club | Clubhouse development | 23,410.00 | Stage 2 |
| 24 | Raunds Town Council | Bandstand project | 36,033.75 | Stage 2 - (applicant be required to justify high level of reserves and whether more can diverted to match fund this project) |
| 17 | Collyweston Playing Fields | New clubhouse development | 50,000.00 | Stage 2 – (The deliverability of the project requires more examination as well as the requirement for a project timeline. There was also a requirement for more evidence of consultation. |
| 25 | Rushden Heritage Centre | Heritage Chapel development | 50,000.00 | Stage 2 – (applicant be required to set out clearly that project is for benefit of whole community and not an exclusive group). |
| 16 | Rushden Historical Transport Society | Platform restoration | 16,800.00 | Stage 2 – (applicant be required to justify high level of |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|-----------|---|
| | | | | reserves and whether more can diverted to match fund this project). |
| 15 | Woodford Parish Council | Development of a Greenway link | 21,000.00 | Stage 2 |
| 9 | Kings Cliffe Parish Council | Community pathway | 30,000.00 | Stage 2 |
| 14 | Higham Ferrers Town Council | Improvements to Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) | 14,952.00 | Stage 2 |
| 6 | Benefield Cricket Club | Refurbishment and upgrade project | 18,900.00 | Stage 2 |
| 19 | Higham Ferrers Town Council | Development of a Greenway link | 40,000.00 | Stage 2 |
| 20 | Denford Church | Building improvements including provision of toilets | 37,593.00 | Stage 2 |
| Applications scoring below 20 points | | | | |
| 18 | Stanwick Parish Council | Olympic legacy – play equipment | 18,750.00 | Reject |
| 4 | Serve | Nearly new mini-bus | 9,000.00 | Reject |
| 12 | Rushden Cricket Club | Secure fencing | 14,175.00 | Reject |
| 22 | Rushden West Community Association | Play equipment | 11,953.70 | Reject |
| 26 | Rushden Town Council | Play equipment | 48,000.00 | Reject |
| 23 | Oundle Rugby Football Club | Expansion and refurbishment of facilities | 15,000.00 | Reject |
| 5 | St Peter's Church Rushden | Replacement of boiler | 13,500.00 | Reject |
| 10 | Islip Parish Council | Renovation of recreation facilities | 25,000.00 | Reject |
| | | | | |

| | | | | |
|----|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------|--------|
| 21 | Barnwell Parish Council | Install new playground | 49,920.00 | Reject |
|----|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------|--------|

5. **Recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee 07 November 2016**

5.1 The Working Party **Resolved to Recommend** to Policy and Resources Committee:-

1. That the awards of CFF grants to the projects set out in table 4.4 above are confirmed.
2. That approval is given for inviting those projects scoring 20 points or more (as set out in table 4.5) to submit stage 2 applications on the basis of the conditions set out for each application.
3. That approval is given for those projects set out in table 4.5 scoring below 20 to be rejected.
4. That the Working Party considers completed stage 2 applications and makes recommendations on CFF Grant awards at the February 2017 meeting of the Committee.

6. **Date of Next Meeting**

- 5.1. It was agreed that a date for the next meeting of the Working Party would be scheduled for the end of January 2017.

Meeting concluded at 13:00

JS/MG/LH/CH 19.10.16

Welfare Reform Sub-Committee

Minutes of a meeting held on Wednesday 19 October at 10.00am,
in the Kasen Room, East Northamptonshire House, Thrapston

Present:

Councillors: Andy Mercer (Chairman)
Steven North (Leader of the Council)
Helen Harrison
Sarah Peacock

Officers: Julia Smith – Head of Customer and Community Services
Lucy Hogston – Benefit Manager
Michelle Drewery – Finance Manager

1.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Richard Lewis.

2.0 MINUTES

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2016 were approved as a correct record.

3.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 No declarations of interest were made.

4.0 QUESTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

4.1 No questions had been submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

5.0 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2017/18

5.1 The Benefits Manager presented a report which gave options for a local Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme for 2017/18 prior to public consultation.

5.2 Since its introduction in 2013/14, the CTS scheme had increased the minimum amount of Council Tax liability households were required to pay from 0% to the current 20%. Since that time the number of claimants had reduced from 5,550 to 4,835.

5.3 In developing the various options for a CTS scheme for 2017/18 onwards, a number of assumptions had been made:

- Grant funding would be reduced
- CTS expenditure would be reduced by the same percentage levels as experienced during 2016/17

- CTS caseload would reduce by the same percentage levels as experienced in 2016/17
- Council Tax collection rates would stay the same

5.4 For a cost neutral CTS scheme in 2017/18, the percentage reduction required was 25%, with the figure remaining the same for 2018/19 and a 30% reduction in 2019/20.

5.5 A number of technical amendments to the scheme had been put forward to bring the CTS scheme in line with the nationally designed Housing Benefit and Universal Credit schemes and would ensure CTS administration was efficient and consistent with both of those schemes.

5.6 **Amendment 1 – To limit the number of dependent children within the calculation for Council Tax Support to a maximum of two**

This would lead to a restriction in CTS for customers that had a third or subsequent child on or after 1 April 2017.

5.7 **Amendment 2 – Reducing the period for which a person could be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Support to four weeks**

This would lead to a claimant who was absent from Great Britain for a period likely to exceed four weeks having their CTS stopped from when they left the country and they would need to reapply on return. There would be exceptions for certain occupations such as mariners and the armed forces or where a person had to go abroad due to the death of a close relative.

During discussion on the proposed amendment, the Sub-Committee agreed to amend the term 'Great Britain' to 'United Kingdom' and to include reserve forces in those who would be exempt.

5.8 **Amendment 3 – To remove the Work Related Activity Component in the current scheme for new Employment and Support Allowance claimants**

All new claimants of Employment and Support Allowance who fell within the Work Related Activity Group would no longer receive the work related activity component within the calculation of CTS.

5.9 **Amendment 4 – To remove entitlement to the Severe Disability Premium where another person is paid Universal Credit (Carer's Element) to look after them**

This amendment would align the scheme with Housing Benefit by treating persons who received the Universal Credit (Carer's Element) in the same way as others receiving Carer's Allowance.

5.10 Two options for the CTS had also been put forward for consultation:

Option 1 – Status Quo
No change to the percentage reduction in the current scheme

Working age people would be required to pay at least 20% of their Council Tax liability. This would present an estimated overall funding gap of around £31k of which £3k related to ENC.

5.11 **Option 2 – Breakeven**
Increase the percentage reduction in the current CTS scheme

This option would enable the scheme to be cost neutral and working age people would be required to pay at least 25% of their Council Tax liability.

5.12 For the two options, the minimum amount of council tax a household would have to pay each week, depending on their property band and the % of liability reduction was:

| | Option | 1 | 2 |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Average Band | Number of customers affected | 20% Reduction £ | 25% Reduction £ |
| A | 1,266 | 3.85 | 4.82 |
| B | 741 | 4.47 | 5.62 |
| C | 192 | 5.14 | 6.42 |
| D | 78 | 5.78 | 7.23 |
| E | 24 | 7.07 | 8.83 |
| F | 17 | 8.35 | 10.44 |
| G | 2 | 9.63 | 12.04 |
| H | 0 | 11.56 | 14.45 |

5.13 During discussion on the proposed options, Members were concerned at the impact that increasing the liability reduction would have on some households. The impact on ENC was relatively small and Members indicated that their preference was to maintain the existing reduction.

5.14 Councillor Steven North moved, seconded by Councillor Andy Mercer, that consultation should take place on the four amendments, as amended today, and Option 1 only. On being put to the vote, the Sub-Committee unanimously:

RESOLVED

- (i) That consultation on a new Council Tax Support Scheme for 2017/18 with the four amendments and Option 1 be approved; and
- (ii) That the Welfare Reform Sub-Committee meet on 21 December 2016 to consider the consultation responses and recommend a Council Tax Support Scheme 2017/18 to Policy and Resources Committee on 9 January 2017 and then approval by Council on 23 January 2017.

(Reason – to deliver a Council Tax Support Scheme for 2017/18 that meets all the statutory requirements.)

Chairman