

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Date: 24 April 2017

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 Roger Glithero JP
David Brackenbury Andy Mercer
Wendy Brackenbury Sarah Peacock
Val Carter Phillip Stearn

529. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Greg Macdonald, the new Head of Economic and Commercial Development, to his first meeting of the Committee.

530. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Marika Hillson and Dudley Hughes JP.

531. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2017 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

532. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

533. QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

534. MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES

a) Housing Policy Working Party – 1 March 2017

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing Policy Working Party held on 1 March 2017 were received (see pages 447 to 450).

b) Personnel Sub-Committee – 20 March 2017

The minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 20 March 2017 were received (see pages 451 to 453).

c) Homelessness Prevention Grant Panel – 29 March 2017

The minutes of the meeting of the Homelessness Prevention Grant Panel held on 29 March 2017 were received (see pages 454 to 456).

RESOLVED:

To award grant funding totalling £43,994 to the following applications:

Application	Award Given
Midland Heart – Shoemaker Court	£11,247
Midland Heart – High Street South	£11,247
ENCS – Night Shelter running costs, counselling and support*	£10,000
ENCS – Recovery House**	£5,000
Internal Homelessness Support Services including Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) provision	£6,500
Total to be awarded	£43,994

*The Panel noted their concerns about the standard of accommodation at the Night Shelter and the grant was awarded in the expectation of a plan being put in place during 2017/18 to improve the facilities, together with improved accounting procedures.

**The Panel noted that the Recovery House was now showing a potential for substantial surpluses and would be expected to be self-financing in future years.

d) Finance Sub-Committee – 5 April 2017

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Sub-Committee held on 5 April 2017 were received (see pages 457 to 459).

535. ECONOMIC GROWTH, TOURISM AND REGENERATION STRATEGY

The Executive Director presented the report which informed the Committee on the outcome of the consultation on the Draft Economic Growth, Tourism and Regeneration Strategy 2017-2020 and presented a revised version for adoption. The consultation draft had been publicised on the Council's website, via Destination Nene Valley Stakeholders and county Economic Development Officers.

The most significant number of changes had been proposed by the new Head of Economic and Commercial Development. His input had strengthened the business focus of the document and had expanded the overall vision. He had also sharpened the titles of the five thematic priorities.

Omissions noted in the responses related to the lack of public transport connectivity around the district, particularly north to south, and a lack of recognition of the role that arts festivals and other cultural activities played in the visitor economy. The strategy had been amended to reflect these comments.

Members welcomed the Strategy and the continued support for the Government's proposals for the dualling of the A45 between Stanwick and Thrapston, which was a key route in the district.

RESOLVED:

That the Economic Growth, Tourism and Regeneration Strategy be approved.

(Reason: To enable the effective implementation of the related outcomes in the Corporate Plan.)

536. CHARGING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Finance Manager presented the report, which sought approval for the revised Charging Policy Framework. The Framework had been implemented in 2010 in recognition of the need to have a robust policy for charging of services and to ensure that fees and charges were set in a fair and consistent manner across the organisation.

To provide assurance on the implementation of the Framework, an audit had been carried out by Internal Audit, who recognised that there were still some actions that could improve the process. Following the audit, a number of changes had now been included in the document.

During discussion on the Framework, it was highlighted that paragraphs 3.1 and 10.3 of the document appeared to contradict each other. In response, the Finance Manager agreed to amend the wording of paragraph 10.3 to provide clarity.

RESOLVED:

That the revised Charging Policy Framework be approved, subject to the wording of paragraph 10.3 of the Framework being amended to provide clarity.

(Reason: To ensure the Council has in place a properly considered, consistent and informed approach when reviewing fees and charges it makes for its services.)

537. HOUSING WHITE PAPER AND BUILD TO RENT CONSULTATIONS

The Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager presented the report, which provided a summary of the Government's Housing White Paper and of the Build to Rent consultation document, which had both been issued by DCLG in February 2017.

The Housing White Paper set out a programme of reforms to tackle the long-standing national problems in the housing market and to ensure that more homes were built in the right places. It also outlined changes proposed to planning policy and legislation required to implement the proposals and set out some wider changes to national planning policy in relation to the definition of affordable housing, sustainable development and the environment.

The Government believed local authorities should consider the potential of the Build to Rent sector to help meet housing needs and it wished to revise the National Planning Policy Framework to support Build to Rent.

A revised response to the Housing White Paper consultation was tabled following consideration by the Housing Policy Working Party.

During discussion, Members raised a number of concerns with the proposals contained within the White Paper, including the additional burdens which would be placed on planning authorities and how these would be funded; the number of affordable housing units built in rural areas; land banking by developers; and that design should still be available as a valid reason to refuse a planning application. Planning in East Northamptonshire was working well and it was clear that the White Paper was aimed at those authorities who were not in our position. The issues within the housing market were not just planning related but also economic.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the key measures proposed through the Housing White Paper and Build to Rent consultations be noted; and
- (ii) That the final responses to the consultations be delegated to officers, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, with any comments raised to be referred back to the relevant Member if not clear.

(Reason: To inform the development of planning policy and housing strategy through providing consultation responses to the Government's Housing White Paper and Build to Rent proposals.)

538. HEALTHY AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLES STRATEGY

The Head of Customer and Community Services presented the report which looked to adopt the new Healthy and Active Lifestyles Strategy.

The Strategy had been developed to help build healthier and more active communities through participation in sport, physical activity and active recreation. The Strategy had been subject to an external consultation process involving First for Wellbeing, NSport, Freedom Leisure, Kings Cliffe Active and the NHS. With the development of the Strategy we had been able to link the healthy and active lifestyles programme to the Community Facilities Fund. We now ask that where we have given over £5,000 worth of funding to a facility they allowed us to use it for two hours a week, to help provide a variety of venues for the new outreach service.

During discussion, Members asked how any policy to restrict fast food outlets near schools could fit in with this Strategy. In response, officers advised that the developing local Neighbourhood Plans would be the most appropriate forum but it was accepted that not all areas of the district would be covered, so reference in the developing Local Plan Part 2 would also be appropriate.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To approve the Healthy and Active Lifestyles Strategy for public consultation; and
- (ii) That following satisfactory consultation, to delegate authority to the Head of Customer and Community Services, in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, to adopt the Healthy and Active Lifestyles Strategy.

(Reason: To encourage healthy and active lifestyles across East Northamptonshire.)

539. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item 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.

540. STANWICK LAKES LEASE

The Head of Customer and Community Services presented the report which sought Members agreement to sign a revised lease for Stanwick Lakes.

The land on which Stanwick Lakes sits was owned by ENC and was subject to a 125 year lease between ENC and Rockingham Forest Trust (RFT). In consultation with RFT, via the Stanwick Lakes Management Board, it was agreed that the lease should be updated to reflect current working arrangements.

RESOLVED:

To delegate authority to the Head of Customer and Community Services, in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, to sign the revised lease for Stanwick Lakes.

(Reason: To encourage health and active lifestyles across East Northamptonshire.)

541. CHAIRMAN'S THANKS

The Chairman thanked all Members and officers for their support during the municipal year, especially the Vice Chairman, Councillor Greenwood-Smith.

Chairman