

# POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

**Date:** 06 November 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 Dudley Hughes JP  
 Wendy Brackenbury David Jenney  
 Val Carter Andy Mercer  
 Roger Glithero JP Sarah Peacock  
 Helen Harrison Phillip Stearn

## 220. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Brackenbury.

## 221. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2017 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

## 222. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor/Officer	Item	Nature of Interest	DPI	Other Interest
Councillor Andy Mercer	Capital Programme 2017/18 – Request to transfer EDRMS funding from the Development Pool to the Approved Capital Programme	Owens business which advises local authorities on debt management	Yes (left meeting)	
David Oliver, Sharn Matthews, Julia Smith, Michelle Drewery	Minutes of Personnel Sub-Committee – 30 October 2017	Change to management structure		Yes

## 223. QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

No questions were submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

## **224. MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES**

### **a) Housing Policy Working Party – 13 September 2017**

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing Policy Working Party held on 13 September 2017 were received (see pages 271 to 272).

### **b) Welfare Reform Sub-Committee – 19 October 2017**

The minutes of the meeting of the Welfare Reform Sub-Committee held on 19 October 2017 were received (see pages 273 to 276).

## **R.11 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL**

That the Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19 for East Northamptonshire adopts the existing Council Tax Support Scheme with no amendments.

## **225. MODERN SLAVERY STATEMENT**

The Executive Director presented a report which provided Members with information about the Council's obligations under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and sought approval of the Council's first Modern Slavery Statement which outlined the steps taken to ensure human trafficking and slavery did not occur within the Council or its supply chains.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 consolidated the current offences relating to trafficking and slavery and specified the duties incumbent on organisations. The transparency in supply chains provision in the Act meant that every large commercial organisation had a responsibility to publish a statement about what it was doing to prevent slavery in its business and supply chain. When read in conjunction with Home Office Guidance, the wording and purpose of the Act would suggest that the term "commercial organisation" would also apply to public sector bodies.

During debate on the item, in response to a question from Members about whether the European Commission on Human Rights would still apply in the UK following Brexit, the Executive Director advised that she did not know but the Modern Slavery Act was an English piece of legislation and had not been introduced throughout Europe. Members also asked whether as a Licensing Authority we also now had similar obligations in relation to modern slavery as we did for checking that licenced premises were only employing people with the legal right to work in the UK. The Executive Director responded by saying that she assumed that the checks we undertook offered some protection but it would be something that officers could check when they visited premises.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Modern Slavery Statement be approved and published, subject to minor amendments being made.

*(Reason: To meet legislative requirements.)*

**226. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2017/18 – REQUEST TO TRANSFER ICT FUNDING FROM THE DEVELOPMENT POOL TO THE APPROVED CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

The Finance Manager presented a report which requested authorisation to transfer a number of projects from the Development Pool to the Approved Capital Programme.

ICT had requested that two areas of budget were now transferred in to the Approved Capital Programme to allow for the furtherance of the ICT Transformation Programme and progression of the Capita Payments Project so that these procurements could take place.

There was currently £99,625 in the Development Pool in 2017/18 for Data Infrastructure, from which the following amounts were being requested for approval:

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Amount £</b>
SAN Procurement	25,500
Network Switches	10,500
Crown Hosting Set Up	3,500
Network Infrastructure	11,000
Southern Installation	13,500
Back Up Storage	5,500
Replacement Switches	10,000
Data Migration	11,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>92,250</b>

There was also currently £135,000 in the Development Pool for 'Business Transformation Resource'. ENC/BCW had received a quote for £41,800 for the initial implementation of the combined payments solution. This would be split 50/50 between BCW and ENC, so it was recommended that £20,900 of this budget was transferred in to the Approved Capital Programme to support the implementation of a consolidated Payments Solution with BCW. This project would look to provide a consolidated implementation of Paye.net, AIM (Income Management) and ACR (Cash Receipting), which were the functions the Council used to process payments. This combined implementation would reduce the ongoing maintenance contract from £29,557 to £22,000 per annum. The split of this saving between ENC and BCW would still need to be determined.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) To approve the transfer of £92,250 for the cost of ICT Infrastructure from the Development Pool to the Approved Capital Programme; and
- (ii) To approve the transfer of £20,900 from the Development Pool to the Approved Capital Programme for the cost of implementing a shared Payments Solution with BCW.

*(Reason: To follow the formal process for approval of the amendment to the Capital Programme Budget for 2017/18.)*

**Councillor Andy Mercer left the room for the following item.**

**227. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2017/18 – REQUEST TO TRANSFER EDRMS FUNDING FROM THE DEVELOPMENT POOL TO THE APPROVED CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

The Head of Community and Customer Services presented a report which requested authorisation to move the Electronic Documents Record Management System (EDRMS) funding from the Development Pool to the Capital Programme, and to note the intention to utilise some revenue funding for a capital investment and increase the capital provision.

ENC had been exploring options to share a Revenues and Benefits service with the Borough Council of Wellingborough (BCW) and through this process the savings that could be realised as part of a shared service had been investigated. A business case had been developed which recommended the consideration of two options:-

- a. To develop a full shared revenues and benefits service with BCW
- b. To introduce a shared ICT system, a shared EDRMS system and align working practices.

The business case had identified that significant savings could be made by jointly procuring a revenues and benefits ICT system and EDRMS and on this basis option b above was identified as the most beneficial in terms of savings and efficiencies. There may be further savings available from moving to a full shared service, and that would be revisited as a subsequent phase of the project once the EDRMS installation was on its way to being completed.

The costs of the new system and EDRMS were broken down below:-

New system and EDRMS implementation	£117,000
Project Management Support for Implementation	£ 80,000
Back scanning of current records	£ 75,000
<b>Total cost</b>	<b>£272,500</b>

This cost would be shared with BCW, so the cost to ENC would be £136,250. The back scanning element could not be capitalised and must be funded from revenue.

Within the Development Pool, £30,000 had been identified for an EDRMS system and which could be utilised towards this cost. In addition, the Council had received £68,750 through a series of new and existing burdens funding received this year or carried forward from last year from the Government relating to changes in benefits processes. It was proposed that we capitalised £68,750 of this revenue funding to meet the full capital costs. It was therefore proposed that the capital programme provision be increased by £69,000 to £99,000 to enable the project to be completed. A further £37,500 of revenue budget from within the Revenues and Benefits service area would be used to meet the back scanning (revenue) costs.

The revenue savings that would be realised as a result of this investment for both ENC and BCW were shown in the table below:

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total over 5 years
Current Expenditure on ICT system	132,830	136,151	139,555	143,043	146,619	698,198
With investment:						
New ICT System and EDRMS	75,000	76,875	78,797	80,767	82,786	394,225
<b>Savings</b>	<b>57,830</b>	<b>59,276</b>	<b>60,758</b>	<b>62,277</b>	<b>63,833</b>	<b>303,973</b>

As a result of the introduction of EDRMS we expect that through the efficiencies created there could be further savings to be realised through reduced staffing, estimated to be £150K over the five years again, for both ENC and BCW.

During debate on the item, Members asked whether the project was part of the paperless project and whether the back scanning costs could be funded through the Business Transformation budget. In response, the Head of Customer and Community Services confirmed that whilst it was part of the paperless project it had not been identified in the Business Transformation budget.

**RESOLVED:**

To approve that £30,000 EDRMS funding be moved from the Development Pool to the Capital Programme.

**R.12 RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:**

- (i) To increase the Approved Capital Programme budget to £99,000 to implement the new ICT and EDRMS system.
- (ii) To move £69,000 from the Housing Benefit revenue budget to the capital programme.

*(Reason: To ensure a cost effective and efficient Revenues and Benefits service.)*

**Councillor Andy Mercer returned to the meeting.**

**228. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**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 paragraphs 3 and 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, may be disclosed.

**229. MINUTES OF THE PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE – 30 OCTOBER 2017**

The minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 30 October 2017 were received.

**Chairman**



**Housing Policy Working Party Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 13 September 2017 at 2pm in the Kasen Room**

**Present**

<b>Councillors</b>	<b>Tony Boto (Chair)</b> <b>Richard Lewis</b> <b>Steven North</b> <b>Sarah Peacock</b>	<b>CIlrTB</b> <b>CIlrRL</b> <b>CIlrSN</b> <b>CIlr SP</b>
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**Also in attendance**

Carol Conway, Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager (CC)  
Aine Cooper, Housing Enabling Officer (AC)  
Richard Palmer, Planning Policy and Conservation Manager (RP)

		<b><u>ACTION</u></b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies</b>	
	Sharn Matthews, Paul Bland, Louise Bagley, Jenny Walker & CIlr Helen Harrison	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of the meeting 5 July 2017</b>	
	The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Matters arising</b>	
	It was noted that the advertisement for the Homelessness Prevention post would be going out shortly. Information on the homelessness prevention fund would be provided at the meeting in October.	<b>CC</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Updates</b>	
4.1	Housing No update to report	
4.2	Welfare reform No update to report	
<b>5</b>	<b>Older People’s Accommodation and Support Needs report</b>	
5.1	A lengthy discussion took place regarding the key issues of the report and members concerns with the many recommendations included in the report.	
5.2	HPWP Members noted the general principles of the report but strongly agreed that local needs would need to be taken into account when moving forward as the report covered the whole county and did not necessarily fit the specific needs of the District.	
5.3	CC advised that the report would be accompanied with a toolkit to analyse the needs of each specific ward and to demonstrate the prevalence of dementia locally.	

5.4	It was also agreed that the report would be published on the Council's website for evidence to support future strategy and policy formulation.	
<b>6</b>	<b>Work Plan Update</b>	
6.1	Members reviewed the work plan and noted that the work on property investment opportunities had been completed.	
<b>7</b>	<b>Risk Review</b>	
7.1	Members noted Risk 6: Accommodation offered to applicants is not safe or fit for purpose and CC explained that the homeless team would not use B&Bs which did not meet fire standards.	
<b>8</b>	<b>AOB</b>	
	No items noted	
<b>9</b>	<b>Next and future meetings</b>	
	Wednesday 25 October, 2pm Wednesday 13 December, 2pm Wednesday 7 <sup>th</sup> February, 2pm Wednesday 28 <sup>th</sup> March, 2pm Wednesday, 9 <sup>th</sup> May, 2pm	

## Welfare Reform Sub-Committee

Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 19 October 2017 at 10am, in the Council Chamber, East Northamptonshire House, Thrapston

### Present:

- Councillors: Andy Mercer (Chairman)  
Steven North (Leader of the Council)  
Val Carter  
Helen Harrison  
Richard Lewis  
Sarah Peacock
- Officers: Lucy Hogston – Benefit Manager  
Julia Smith – Head of Customer and Community Services  
Michelle Drewery – Finance Manager
- Also Present: Bharat Keshwala (DWP)  
Barry McGuinness (DWP)  
Sonia Rea (DWP)

### 1.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 There were no apologies for absence.

### 2.0 MINUTES

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2017 were approved as a correct record.

### 3.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1

Councillor	Item	Nature of Interest	DPI	Other Interest
Richard Lewis	Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19	Is of pensionable age.		Yes
Andy Mercer	Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19	Is of pensionable age.		Yes

### 4.0 QUESTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

4.1 No questions had been submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

### 5.0 UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE

5.1 The Chairman welcomed Bharat Keshwala, Barry McGuinness and Sonia Rea from the DWP to the meeting.



- 5.2 Mr Keshwala confirmed that Universal Credit would be rolled out to Rushden Job Centre in February 2018. Plans were currently being put in place to support customers including holding workshops for budgeting, upskilling clients in IT skills and verification of identification. The DWP had held a number of meetings with ENC, as well as with a number of landlords in the district to improve communications and interactions. Information packs were also being developed for customers and there would also be a dedicated service centre, where customers would be allocated to a fixed agent. Customers were also being given hints and tips now about what information and evidence they would need for February.
- 5.3 It was noted that last night there was a vote in the House of Commons on Universal Credit, which sought to pause its rollout. Mr Keshwala confirmed that at this time, the Government had no intentions to pause the rollout, however there was a built in natural break in January to review progress to date.
- 5.4 Ms Rea explained that new claimants had to wait six weeks before they received their first payment but those customers who had transferred over to Universal Credit had a five week wait. This was because new claimants had seven working days when they would not be entitled to the benefit. However, from day one of an application, claimants were able to request an advanced payment of 50% of their entitlement, which would be repayable over six months. The availability of the advance payment was fully highlighted and around 50% of claimants were asking for advanced payments.
- 5.5 As at July 2017, 81% of new claimants were receiving their full payment at first assessment, 9% were receiving part payment and 10% were receiving no payment. This was due to a number of factors including DWP error, missing evidence and agreements not being signed.
- 5.6 In response to questions from Members, it was confirmed that direct payment to landlords was already available if a customer was two months in rent arrears, when either they or their landlord could request direct payment. However, it was now being considered whether this could be a universal offer to all claimants. Ms Rea agreed to provide an answer outside of the meeting as to whether a tenant who had two months rent arrears with one landlord and then moved to another, would be classed as having two months arrears or whether the time period started again.
- 5.7 Members asked what was able to be done for those customers who did not have photo identification such as a passport or driving licence. It was confirmed that the DWP would look at secondary identification such as bills and bank statements, but their advice was to bring any identification.
- 5.8 Members were pleased to note the Government's announcement yesterday that all Universal Credit telephone helplines would be free of charge and this would happen over the next month.
- 5.9 It was highlighted that Northamptonshire County Council had begun a consultation on the future provision of libraries and Members enquired how customers would be supported if they used libraries as a means of accessing online services. Ms Rea advised that there were some PCs in the job centre and there were also a number of local providers who had PCs available. They were very conscious that a small number of people would not be able to cope with the new system but they would be supported.
- 5.10 The Chairman thanked the DWP for attending.
- 5.11 The Benefits Manager advised that she had raised with the other councils in the county whether they provided any type of grant funding to support customers during the initial six week period.

Both Daventry and Corby confirmed that they did not have such a fund due to the advances available from DWP and the other authorities were also not planning to introduce such a fund. It was confirmed that ENC would ring all Universal Credit customers to advise them of the support available and staff would also be available to support customers if they came in to use the PCs which were available in council buildings. Also, Council Tax payments were put on hold for six weeks so customers did not receive reminders or other enforcement during that period. Some landlords were also offering tenants the opportunity to pay a little bit more on top of their rent to build a cushion for them during transition.

- 5.12 It was suggested that officers provide a Members Briefing for all councillors on the issues and where to signpost any constituents who approached them with any problems.

**RESOLVED**

That the update be noted.

**6.0 DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS**

- 6.1 Further to the last meeting, where it was agreed officers would look at whether the discretionary housing payments policy needed to be revised to take into account those families with children in care, the Benefits Manager provided a verbal update.
- 6.2 The policy had been looked at and it was clear that those cases where children were in care were already covered in other elements of the policy. There had been no further cases since the last meeting.
- 6.3 It was proposed to wait until after the rollout of Universal Credit in Rushden and then look at what the impact was before reviewing the policy.

**RESOLVED**

That the update be noted.

**7.0 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2018/19**

- 7.1 The Benefits Manager presented a report which asked the Sub-Committee to consider the options for a local Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS) for 2018/19.
- 7.2 The number of Council Tax Support claimants was reducing, with 4,643 to date in 2017/18, compared to 5,550 in 2013/14.
- 7.3 The overall grant funding used to calculate the CTS was:

	2012/13 £	2013/14 £	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	2017/18 £	2018/19 £	2019/20 £
<b>RSG</b>	N/A*	3,164,518	2,438,130	1,709,463	1,201,968	705,377	413,931	88,394
<b>Business Rates Baseline</b>	N/A*	2,675,419	2,146,279	2,187,291	2,205,518	2,250,546	2,322,952	2,405,580
<b>Total</b>	4,831,611	5,839,937	4,584,409	3,896,754	3,407,486	2,955,923	2,736,883	2,493,974
<b>Change £</b>	N/A	1,008,326	(1,255,528)	(687,655)	(489,268)	(451,563)	(219,040)	(242,909)
<b>Change %</b>	N/A	21%	(21%)	(15%)	(13%)	(13%)	(8%)	(9%)

\*Total figure is shown as grant funding was not split until 2013/14

- 7.4 It was noted that RSG would be removed in the medium term and we would need to be realistic in the future about how CTS would be funded.
- 7.5 As discussed earlier in the meeting, Universal Credit was being rolled out for Rushden Job Centre in February 2018, but the impacts at present were unknown but it was likely that the caseload would reduce with more people being supported into work.
- 7.6 Two options had now been put forward for Members' consideration:
- Option 1 – Maintain the current scheme, with working age people being required to pay at least 20% of their Council Tax liability. This would present an estimated overall funding gap in 2018/19 of around £146K, of which £12K related to ENC.
  - Option 2 – Increase the percentage reduction in the current CTS scheme so that it broke even. This would require working age people being required to pay at least 27% of their Council Tax liability.
- 7.7 If Members proposed to change the scheme then public consultation would be required and would cost around £3K.
- 7.8 Whilst the Sub-Committee supported the current minimum payment of 20%, some members believed that there needed to be a full review of the Scheme going forward.

#### **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

That it be recommended to Full Council that the Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19 for East Northamptonshire adopts the existing Council Tax Support Scheme with no amendments.

#### **RESOLVED**

To review the Scheme during 2018/19 to ensure that it is fit for purpose for 2019/20.

*(Reason: To deliver a Council Tax Support Scheme for 2018/19 that meets all the statutory requirements.)*

**Chairman**