



Finance and Performance Sub Committee

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting held on Monday 14 December 2020 at 7.20pm

Present:	Councillors:	Steven North (Chairman) David Brackenbury Glenvil Greenwood-Smith David Jenney Richard Lewis
	Officers:	David Oliver Chief Executive Glenn Hammons Chief Finance Officer Kelvin Turner Head of Resources Amy Eyles Finance Manager Katherine Hayward Assistant Finance Manager Lucy Hogston Head of Customer and Community Services Greg Macdonald Head of Economic and Commercial Development Samantha Jeffrey Corporate Support Manager Matt Lineham Facilities Manager Duncan Bisatt LGSS Law

1.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Roger Glithero.

2.0 MINUTES

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2020 were approved as a correct record.

3.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 No declarations of interest were made.

4.0 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

4.1 There were no questions received from Members.

5.0 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORTING – QUARTER 2 (2020-21)

5.1 The Corporate Support Manager presented a report which provided high level information about performance across the Council in relation to agreed performance indicators and other statistics that supported the monitoring of performance for Quarter 2 of 2020/21.

5.2 69% of Key Priority Measures had performed at or above the required standards. 11 measures had underperformed but only four were recorded and explained in detail as they had underperformed for two or more consecutive periods, which indicated a longer term issue, with a common theme of the re-prioritisation of work due to the COVID-19

pandemic.

- 5.3 Members acknowledged the extra work which all staff were delivering in supporting residents and businesses through the pandemic, as well as maintaining business as usual.

RESOLVED:

That the Quarter 2 2020/21 performance report be noted.

(Reason: To improve service provision against performance measures.)

6.0 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

- 6.1 The Assistant Finance Manager presented a report which provided an update on the forecast revenue and capital positions against the approved budgets for the period ended 30 September 2020 in financial year 2020/21.
- 6.2 Since the budget was set in March 2020, the total budget as at 30 September 2020 had been revised to £13,209,936. Since the last meeting of the Sub Committee, drawdowns from reserves into the revenue budget or budgets funded from ring-fenced grants totalling £3,426,841 had been approved. The estimated services outturn for the year was an overspend of £1,077k, which was almost entirely attributable to Covid-related pressures. The Covid-19 pandemic and resulting economic impacts were forecast to have a significant negative impact on the Council's revenue budget outturn position for 2020/21 as a result of additional costs and forecast loss of income.
- 6.3 In July 2020, the Government announced a new local government income compensation scheme for lost sales, fees and charges. This one-off scheme was designed to compensate for irrecoverable and unavoidable losses in the delivery of services. Calculations based on the current forecasts of lost income indicated that the amount the Council may be able to claim under this scheme was up to £141k.
- 6.4 When all known sources of funding were considered, the forecast use of reserves to fund COVID-19 related pressures was £32k.
- 6.5 The Council's capital programme for 2020/21 of £1,031k was approved by Council in March 2020. Since then, the budget had increased to £3,699k as a result of changes within the financial year. As at 30 September 2020, an underspend of £656k was forecast on the capital programme.
- 6.6 The overall forecast saving on the Enterprise Centre as at 30 September 2020 was £347.5k, of which £191.4k was a saving in the approved capital programme and £156.1k was within the development pool. Although the approved funding package for the project included an assumption of borrowing of £2.785m, no actual external borrowing had been undertaken, as cash supporting the Council's balances and reserves was used to support internal borrowing.
- 6.7 On 3 December 2020, it was announced that an additional capital funding allocation had been made by the Government for Disabled Facilities Grants in 2020/21. The Council's allocation was £68,439 and approval was now sought to increase the 2020/21 capital programme in line with this additional allocation.
- 6.8 When the Council set its budget in March 2020, it included a £91k contribution from reserves. The forecast position for the year was now £164k.

RESOLVED to:

- (i) note the revenue, capital and reserves positions for 2020/21 as at 30 September 2020
(Reason: For information/monitoring purposes.)
- (ii) note the supplementary estimates approved since the last meeting of the Sub Committee.
(Reason: For information/monitoring purposes.)
- (iii) note the funding of the Enterprise Centre.
(Reason: For information/monitoring purposes.)
- (iv) note the collection and write off performance for sundry debtors, local taxation and benefit overpayments.
(Reason – This is for information / monitoring purposes)
- (v) note the amendments to the published Fees and Charges schedule.
(Reason – This is for information / monitoring purposes)

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

That Full Council be recommended to approve an increase of £68,439 to the 2020/21 approved capital programme in relation to Disabled Facilities Grants to be funded from capital grant income.

7.0 TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

- 7.1 The Finance Manager presented a report which noted the current position for Treasury Management for the period to 30 September 2020.
- 7.2 The Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21 was approved as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) in March 2020. An amendment to the Strategy was approved by Full Council on 13 May 2020 to provide a delegation to the Chief Finance Officer (or their nominee), following consultation with the Chairmen of the Finance and Performance Sub Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee, to temporarily increase the HM Treasury (Debt Management Office) counterparty limit from £10m to unlimited if required due to exceptional circumstances.
- 7.3 The estimated outturn was based on the current forecast that Bank Rate would remain at the historic low of 0.10% for the duration of the 2020/21 financial year. Although the average return on the Council's portfolio for the period to 30 September 2020 was 0.30%, maturing investments would have to be re-invested at much lower rates of return due to changes in the market as a result of the reduction in Bank Rate. The forecast investment return for 2020/21 was:

Investment Return Budget vs. Estimated Outturn			
	Budget	Estimated Outturn	(Surplus)/Deficit
	£	£	£
Investment income	£150,000	£75,000	£75,000

- 7.4 The delegation to the Chief Finance Officer to temporarily increase the HM Treasury (Debt Management Office) counterparty limit was invoked once in Quarter 2 2020/21 on

17 August 2020. Following consultation with the Chairmen of the Finance and Performance Sub Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee, the HM Treasury (Debt Management Office) counterparty limit was temporarily increased from £10m to £12m for two days with the balance returned to the £10m limit on 19 August 2020.

RESOLVED:

That the Treasury Management performance for the period to 30 September 2020 be noted.

(Reason: In accordance with CIPFA guidance and best practice in Treasury Management.)

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL:

That the Treasury Management performance for the period to 30 September 2020 (Quarter 2) in financial year 2020/21 be noted.

(Reason: In accordance with CIPFA guidance and best practice in Treasury Management.)

8.0 COVID 19 – BUSINESS GRANTS UPDATES

8.1 The Head of Customer and Community Services presented a report which provided an overview and update on the business grants schemes delivered by the Council in response to the national lockdown from 5 November to 2 December 2020.

8.2 In response to the lockdown for England, the Government had announced a business support funding package to be administered by local authorities. The package included two grant schemes which were being delivered as part of the local Recovery Through Enterprise initiative.

Local Restrictions Support Grant (closed)

8.3 ENC had been allocated £1,284,444 for the period of the lockdown. The grant was not cash limited and could be topped up if expenditure exceeded the funding allocated. The scheme supported businesses that had been open as usual, provided services in person to customers from their business premises, but which were then required by law to close for 28 days due to the national lockdown restrictions imposed by the government. To date, 305 grants had been awarded totaling £460k

Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG)

8.4 ENC had been allocated £1,890,540. The grant was aimed at providing a discretionary grant scheme to support local businesses during the recent lockdown (and any future lockdowns) and also wider business support to drive recovery. Although the grant was for the financial year 2020/21 it could be used for activities that continued up to 31 March 2022. The government had indicated that no further business grants would be provided for these purposes for the financial year 2020/21, regardless of the number of lockdowns or any specific local measures. To date, 31 grants had been awarded totaling £56k.

8.5 Since the publication of the agenda for this meeting, two additional grant schemes had been announced by the Government.

Local Restriction Support Grant (open)

- 8.6 This grant would provide support to businesses in Tiers 2 and 3 and was particularly aimed at hospitality, hotel and leisure businesses. Details of the funding package were awaited.

Christmas Support Payment for Wet-Led Pubs

- 8.7 This grant would provide a one off payment of £1,000 to pubs where less than 50% of their income came from food sales. Businesses would have until the end of January 2021 to apply.
- 8.8 In response to a question from Members, the Head of Customer and Community Services confirmed that the discretionary grants scheme was open to those businesses that had a base in the district and if they had multiple bases they could apply to other authorities as well.
- 8.9 Members thanked the Head of Customer and Community Services and her team in delivering the grants process quickly and efficiently and this had also been commented on by local businesses.

RESOLVED:

That the details of the grants schemes be noted.

(Reason: To support the local economy through the COVID-19 pandemic.)

9.0 ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROSPECTUS – UPDATE

- 9.1 The Head of Economic and Commercial Development presented a report which provided an update on progress with the Recovery Through Enterprise Prospectus Phase 2 which continued to address the impact of the economic shock resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 9.2 A new collaboration, which included local and strategic partners, had already helped local people and businesses and was going from strength to strength with a number of key activities delivered over the last couple of months. Details of the proposed activities for the next four months were provided.
- 9.3 It was noted that moving into unitary arrangements the Additional Restrictions Grant would be a substantial funding stream to help continue driving support for local businesses.
- 9.4 Members thanked the Head of Economic and Commercial Development and his team for all of the excellent work they were doing to support businesses at this difficult time.

RESOLVED:

That the progress to date on the Recovery Through Enterprise Prospectus Phase 2 be noted.

(Reason: To ensure effective member oversight of the initiative.)

10.0 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, because exempt information may be disclosed.

11.0 FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE FUNDING

- 11.1 The Chief Executive presented a report which sought approval to spend some of the funding allocated to the Football Development Centre at Higham Ferrers in 2016 to help further the project.

The report was not for publication in accordance with Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED to:

- (i) approve the allocation of up to £20k of the £250k reserve already set aside for this project to enable outstanding archaeological and drainage studies on the Northants FA element of the site to be completed.
- (ii) approve up to £3k of funding from the same reserve to enable Rushden and Diamonds FC to carry out initial archaeological investigations.

(Reason: To put the project in the best position to proceed by enabling final determination of the planning application.)

12.0 ASSET MANAGEMENT UPDATE

- 12.1 The Head of Economic and Commercial Development presented a report which provided an update on the Council's Asset Management Strategy and sought approval for various actions to be taken in relation to specific assets.

The report was not for publication in accordance with Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the updates in the asset tracker be noted.
(Reason: To deliver and monitor the Asset Management Strategy.)
- (ii) With regards to 4 St James Close, Rushden, note the legal advice and agree to proceed with Option 1 and to provide delegated authority to the Head of Economic and Commercial Development, in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance and Performance Sub Committee, to execute the agreed option.
(Reason: To deliver and monitor the Asset Management Strategy.)
- (iii) To note the performance report regarding the Enterprise Centre East Northants project.
(Reason: To ensure effective governance and oversight of the performance of the operation of the Enterprise Centre East Northants project.)
- (iv) To approve the allocation of £8,588 from the ECEN project contingency to fund the installation of antenna to boost the phone signal at the Enterprise Centre East Northants building
(Reason: To ensure effective and timely delivery of the Facilities Management and Property Audit Action Plan.)

- (v) With regards to the garage site at Oundle, to provide delegated authority to the Head of Economic and Commercial Development, in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance and Performance Sub Committee, to undertake negotiations and complete the sale of the site ensuring best value is achieved.
(Reason: To ensure effective and timely delivery of the Facilities Management and Property Audit Action Plan.)
- (vi) With regards to the proposal for lift replacement, to agree the proposal as detailed in the report, to release £160,000 from the development pool facilities management budget and to provide delegated authority to the Head of Economic and Commercial Development, in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance and Performance Sub Committee, to undertake and approve all aspects required to procure and deliver all the associated works.
(Reason: To ensure effective and timely delivery of the Facilities Management and Property Audit Action Plan.)
- (vii) With regards to the electrical works, approve the movement of £20,000 from the development pool into the facilities management budget.
(Reason: To ensure effective and timely delivery of the Facilities Management and Property Audit Action Plan.)

13.0 MINUTES OF THE ENTERPRISE CENTRE EAST NORTHANTS WORKING PARTY HELD ON 26 OCTOBER 2020

- 13.1 The minutes of the Enterprise Centre East Northants Working Party held on 26 October 2020 were noted.

The minutes were not for publication in accordance with paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972.

14.0 MINUTES OF THE BUDGET WORKING GROUP HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2020

- 14.1 The minutes of the Budget Working Group held on 18 November 2020 were noted.

The minutes were not for publication in accordance with paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Chairman