



POLICY, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

PARKSIDE, STATION APPROACH, BURTON STREET, MELTON MOWBRAY

10 APRIL 2013

PRESENT:-

Councillors J.B.Rhodes (Chairman),
G. Bush, P. Cumbers, E. Hutchinson;
M. O'Callaghan; P. Posnett;
D.R. Wright, J. Wyatt

Chief Executive, Strategic Director (KA);
Strategic Director (CAM); Head of Central Services,
Head of Regulatory Services; Corporate Property Officer,
Committee Support Officer (LS)

P68. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for late attendance was received from Councillor Hutchison. Councillor O'Callaghan apologised as he would need to leave the meeting early due to another commitment.

P69. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2012 were confirmed and authorised to be signed by the Chairman.

P70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rhodes and Councillor Posnett declared personal and non pecuniary interests in any matters relating to Leicestershire County Council due to their roles as a County Councillors.

Councillor Cumbers declared a personal and non pecuniary interest in Minute 79: Parkside Update as she had attended the meeting of the Development Control Committee on 31 January 2013 at which the application for the Burton Street Improvement Scheme had been considered and the associated footpath link proposal discussed. She indicated that she would leave the meeting before this item was discussed.

Councillor Wyatt stated he had attended the same meeting as Councillor Cumbers but had absented himself from the meeting during consideration and determination of the application.

P71. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

There were no recommendations from other committees.

P72. UPDATE ON DECISIONS

The Chief Executive submitted an update on decisions from previous meetings of the Committee.

RESOLVED that the Update on Decisions document be updated to reflect progress and work completed.

P73. SECTION 106 OBLIGATIONS

Following a request made at the last meeting, the Head of Regulatory Services submitted a report previously circulated which advised Members of the contributions received through Section 106 agreements with developers. S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allowed Local Planning Authorities to enter into agreements with developers to develop obligations for a range of matters which could not be secured by planning conditions. The Officer explained that the report set out the theories and practices of S106 agreements as it was commonly misunderstood what could be done through this mechanism.

The report also provided an update on current issues relating to Section 106 agreements. In an appendix to the report, details were given of S106 contributions that had been received as a result of developments taking place and were held in accounts awaiting assignation to a project. Further information was also given on those S106 agreement that were in place but not yet 'activated' because the development concerned had either not started or not reached the stage at which payments were due.

In response a Members' questions the Head of Regulatory Services confirmed that utilisation of the monies from the Windsor Street development was subject to the Development Committee's approval. He also advised that there would be no planning gain as a result of the development at the site of the former Working Men's Club on Norman Way.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED that the Public be excluded during the consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (Access to Information: Exempt Information) under Paragraph 3.

In an exempt portion of the appendix, Members were also advised on some current and emerging issues relating to S106 agreements and the approach developers had made. This was anticipated to be a developing trend reflecting market conditions and costs. Central government was sending out strong encouragement to local planning authorities to adopt a 'flexible approach'. After the Officer had responded to Members' questions on the potential consequences of making concessions to developers over S106 agreements, it was

RESOLVED to note the contents of Appendix A to the report setting out the position with regard to S.106 receipts.

[Councillor Hutchison entered the meeting during the closed session of the above item.]

RESOLVED that the Committee resume in open session.

P74. PROVISIONAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME YEAR END POSITION 2012-13

Members had before them a report prepared by the Head of Central Services previously circulated with the agenda which provided information on the provisional Capital Programme year end position for 2012-13, including a range of performance measures and which considered requests for carrying forward unspent budgets in 2012-13 to 2013-14 in respect of specific schemes. Members' attention was drawn to the appendix to the report which set out a summary of the year end position. The Head of Central Services explained that whilst this showed an underspend of 59% against the budget, a significant proportion of this was committed and requested to be carried forward to 2013/14 thereby leaving only a residual underspend.

A request for clarification was sought on the year end position as set out in tabular form to which the Head of Central Services explained that the end column was not intended to be a calculation but the amount of the budget required for a specific scheme to be completed in the following year.

Concern was raised at the 100% carry forward for the Scalford Brook Play Area Improvements. The Head of Regulatory Services confirmed that the use of the S106 monies was subject to the Development Committee consent and the budget holder was aware that a report was required for submission to the Committee in order to obtain that consent. A Member queried what had been achieved during the past year on the Cattle Market scheme to which the Strategic Director (CAM) replied that the expenditure related to an acquisition and land settlement matter. Discussion concluded with a question on why provision continued to be made for Private Sector Major Minor Loans when there was no take up. The Strategic Director (CAM) stated that SAGA were offering loans on more favourable terms which had impacted on demand for the Council's scheme. She confirmed that a review of this provision would be made. The recommendations contained in the report were moved by Councillor Wright and seconded by Councillor Bush, following which it was

RESOLVED that

(1) those schemes in the 2012-13 Capital Programme totalling £3,045,000 and

shown in the column headed "Amount C/Fwd to 2013-14 Scheme Specific" at Appendix A be carried forward and included in the Capital Programme as funded schemes;

- (2) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Central Services to vary the amount of the agreed carry forward on any scheme subject to the spending on any scheme not exceeding the total approved amount;
- (3) an increase in the approved level of spending be approved on the Job Centre Plus relocation project and the associated funding as outlined in para 5.5 of the report.

[Councillor O'Callaghan left the meeting during consideration of the above item.]

P75. CARRY FORWARD OF REVENUE BUDGETS

The Head of Central Services presented a report which had previously been circulated which submitted for approval requests from budget holders to carry forward under spent budgets from 2012/13 to 2013/14. Authority was also sought for the Head of Central Services to amend the actual amount carried forward; this refinement would be part of the account close down process.

A question was raised on the funding of the recent planning inquiry on the Core Strategy. The Head of Central Services explained that the cost of these events was not necessarily confined to one year and therefore a local plans reserve fund had been created. There was a reasonably healthy balance on this fund which, together with some residual monies, is estimated to be sufficient to meet the costs of the inquiry.

A Member asked for an update on the delay to Grantham Canal dredging project. The Chairman advised that the Grantham Canal Partnership had not met for some considerable time and a number of officers who were closely involved with the project had now moved on. In an attempt to move the project forward, he had contacted the Partnership's representative of the successor body to British Waterways, the Canal Trust, who would carry out the work. A response was still awaited. The Chairman agreed with a point made that if there was no further progress in the future, then the funds should be put back for use on other schemes. The Chairman moved the recommendations in the report which were seconded by Councillor Wyatt and agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the requests set out in Appendix A to the report for budgets to be carried forward from 2012/13 to 2013/14 be approved; and
- (2) once the final year end position is known the actual under spends be compared to the amount requested and the Head of Central Services be given delegated authority to amend the actual amount carried forward.

[Councillor Posnett declared a personal and non pecuniary interest in the following item by virtue of her position as Chairman of The Hub. Councillor Posnett remained in the room but did not take part in the discussion nor vote on the item.]

P76. ITEMS FOR APPROVAL UNDER FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES

Members had before them a report prepared by the Head of Central Services which sought approval for requests made under the Financial Procedure Rules and provided information on amounts approved under delegated powers.

Referring to the rental refund request from The Hub for their occupation of the Melton Country Park Visitor Centre, a Member advised the Committee that he had been made aware of a complaint concerning the use of the back room at the centre by students from John Ferneley College. During the period before the activity began a certain amount of unruly behaviour was putting off customers who wanted to use the cafe facilities. The Corporate Property Officer undertook to raise this with The Hub. Support for The Hub was expressed with an acknowledgement of the difficulties of running a profitable enterprise at that location. As the matter had previously been considered by the CSA Committee on 20 March 2013, it was suggested that it would have been useful to have had a link to the earlier report with these papers. The Head of Central Services noted the request for the future and undertook to action this for future reports. After she had responded to a question on the Wheels to Work budget, the recommendations in the report were moved by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Wright and agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED

- (1) to note the virements approved under delegated powers (para 3.1.1. refers);
- (2) to approve the refund request to The Hub in the sum of £1,800 as outlined in para 4.1;
- (3) that a new post of Housing Capital Programme Team Leader be recruited as a permanent addition to the establishment at a cost of £35,000 to be funded from the Housing Revenue Capital Programme (para 4.2 refers).

P77. BROADBAND PROJECT – NEXT STEPS

Before officers presented the report, the Chairman advised Members that although he had previously held responsibility for the Broadband project within his County Council Cabinet portfolio, this had ceased in May 2012.

In a report jointly prepared by the Chief Executive and Strategic Director (CAM), authority was sought from the Committee to proceed to the next stage in relation to the Broadband project and to authorise the Chief Executive to exercise urgency powers in respect of the Collaboration Agreement, once this had been finalised between the parties.

Members were reminded that in July 2012, approval had been given to allocate £360,000 to enable Melton to participate in a countywide scheme to facilitate Broadband access across the Borough. An ERDF bid for additional funding had been submitted and a significant programme of activity was now underway regarding this project. The Strategic Director (CAM) had been attending the programme board meetings on behalf of the Districts in conjunction with the Chief Executive of Harborough District Council.

The Strategic Director (CAM) reported that as part of the next steps for this project, this Council would need to sign up to a Collaboration Agreement with the County Council along with the other districts engaged in this project. This document was close to being finalised and would need to be completed as soon as practicably possible. In order to facilitate this, Members were asked to note that the Chief Executive would be making use of her urgency powers to enable this to be undertaken at the earliest opportunity.

In commending the recommendation to Members, the Chairman advised that the project was moving forward with the other agencies involved although it was in the hands of BDUK. Essentially, money was being put towards what would normally have been a commercial enterprise in order that super speed broadband could be provided to the rural areas. He so moved the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Posnett. The Committee indicated its agreement and accordingly, it was

RESOLVED that the position with respect to the negotiations concerning the Collaboration Agreement and the development of the Countywide Broadband Project be noted, together with the use by the Chief Executive of her urgency powers in respect of the Collaboration Agreement once finalised.

P78. CORPORATE ISSUES

The Chief Executive presented her report which had previously been circulated to advise Members on a series of corporate activities and issues which affected the Council and its corporate operations. She explained that this time her report to Members had a theme of employment and skills.

The first key issue covered related to the Work and Skills Agenda: two recent opportunities/initiatives (Sainsbury's recruitment process and a proposition arising from the Countywide Work and Skills Board to establish Work Clubs within certain areas of the County) had brought into focus the use and occupation of Phoenix House as a one stop shop for life/business/employment skills. Having such a facility based at Phoenix House could be very advantageous as the Work and Skills Agenda develops. From recent discussions held at the Countywide Work and Skills Board, support was indicated in principle for this opportunity and the Board has commissioned a paper to be presented at the next meeting.

Members commended the proposed use of Phoenix House in this way to help promote the prosperity and wellbeing of some of the more vulnerable residents of the Borough.

The second key issue covered in the report concerned another opportunity arising from residual funding which was being utilised to not only offer support to those vulnerable previous offenders who wish to move on and so reduce the incidence of re-offending but also to develop a proposal for the Police and Crime Commissioner as part of his 6 month review period to gain sustainability for this service within the Borough. This work would sit alongside the Leicestershire Family activity complimenting it by the focus on re-offenders and offering a focus to those with families in need of support.

The report also mentioned an opportunity offered by the County's Children and Young People Services to develop proposals to consider further services being managed within the locality. Officers were considering this proactively as a way to create synergies within the integrated services for Supporting Leicestershire Families as well as the activities described earlier. It was anticipated that the CSA Committee would consider a report at its next meeting on how this opportunity could and should be taken further.

By way of an update on the Expression of Interest to BIZ for a City Deal for Leicester and Leicestershire, Members were advised that this had been successful and a report on how to move this forward would be presented through the REEA Committee. Support for the Chief Executive's recommendations was indicated which would now be cascaded to the relevant policy committees to implement.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the sum of £10,000 be made available as part of a proposal to start a Work Club in Melton Borough with adequate supported co-ordination;
- (2) a feasibility study be carried out to assess if Phoenix House could be productively be utilised as a base for delivering life/business/employment skills;
- (3) the approach to support offenders in the Community be noted as part of the Team around the family and that a proposal be developed to submit to the Police and Crime Commissioner as part of his six months review, as considered appropriate.

[Councillor Cumbers here left the meeting.]

P79 PARKSIDE UPDATE

In a report previously circulated, the Corporate Property Officer provided an update on the operation of Parkside and associated matters including an update on the Burton Street Improvement Scheme.

Members were advised that since the last meeting, Job Centre Plus had signed the Licence to occupy Parkside and accommodation works had already begun. In addition, a multi agency project team was being established to review the ground floor usage and face to face services at Parkside which will compliment the arrival of Job Centre Plus. As part of this process, a space utilisation study would start week commencing 15 April 2013.

Noting that the Citizens Advice Bureau had relocated to the second floor, the Chairman commented on the observation that their activities appeared to vary day to day. The Corporate Property Officer confirmed this but stated that the new location arrangements were working well.

Members' attention was then drawn to the Burton Street Improvement Scheme and an additional plan of the proposed footpath link from the railway station to the town centre which had been circulated at the meeting. The Corporate Property Officer explained that some issues with the site being in the flood plain and the Environment Agency had prolonged the planning process and slowed the project down but with tenders due back on 25 April, works were expected to commence in late May/early June. As part of this scheme, there was now the opportunity to create the footpath link from the station to the Play Close footpath which had been identified as being desirable during the public consultation exercise when the new council offices were under consideration. If Members approved the footpath link, there could be sufficient funds from the existing project budget to incorporate these works. If the tender process revealed this not to be the case, then an additional £15K from capital receipts would be required.

Members commented on the proposal which was considered very worthwhile and would be popular with residents and visitors alike; the creation of the footpath link had always been an aspiration of the Council following relocation to Parkside. A query was raised as to the treatment for the area of scrub land at the corner of the Burton Street car park facing the Play Close. The Corporate Property Officer confirmed that part of this would be surfaced as car park and part retained for drainage but would be tidied up and grass seeded. After the Corporate Property Officer had responded to a question on the intentions of the owners of the Anne of Cleves pub concerning the rear wall facing the Play Close, the recommendations in the report, including endorsement of the footpath link proposal and the recommended means of funding, was moved by Councillor Wright and seconded by Councillor Wyatt. It was accordingly

RESOLVED that

- (1) the updated financial position relating to Parkside as attached at Appendix A be noted;
- (2) the update on partners at Parkside as outlined in para 4.0 be noted and that Job Centre Plus will be moving to Parkside in October 2013;
- (3) the update on the Burton Street Improvement Scheme be noted and that a new footpath link from the Church Path to the Melton Mowbray railway station, with an additional link into Parkside, be incorporated into the scheme to be funded from any under spend from the Burton Street Improvement Scheme or from capital receipts if this should prove necessary following the tender process.

The meeting which commenced at 6.30 p.m., closed at 7.34 p.m.

Chairman