



POLICY, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

COUNCIL CHAMBER, PARKSIDE, MELTON MOWBRAY

28 SEPTEMBER 2011

PRESENT:-

Councillors M.C.R. Graham (Chairman)
M.W.Barnes, G.Bush, S.Dungworth,
E.Holmes, J.T. Orson, P.M. Posnett, J.B. Rhodes, D.R. Wright

As Observer:

Councillors M.Sheldon and J.Wyatt

Chief Executive
Corporate Director (KA), Head of Central Services,
Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods,
Principal Policy Officer, Solicitor to the Council,
Committee Support Officers (LS) & (JR)

A one minute silence was observed in memory of Councillor Nigel Angrave.
On behalf of the Committee, the chairman proposed that a letter of condolence be sent to the family of Councillor Angrave.

P24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for late attendance were received from Councillors Orson and Rhodes

P25. MINUTES

a) The minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2011 were confirmed and authorised to be signed by the Chairman.

b) The minutes of the meeting held on 3 August 2011 were confirmed and authorised to be signed by the Chairman.

P26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Graham declared a personal and prejudicial interest in any matters relating to the Rural Community Council due to his role as Trustee.

Councillor Posnett declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in any matters relating to the Leicestershire County Council due to her role as County Councillor.

(Councillor Orson here joined the meeting at 7.12pm)

(Councillor Graham here left the meeting before the following item was presented.)

P27. GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Councillor Orson declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in any matters relating to Leicestershire County Council due to his role as a County Councillor.

Mr Jeremy Prescott, Director of the Rural Community Council, gave a presentation on the work of the RCC and how this supported the priorities of Melton Borough Council. The objectives of the RCC were to ensure that all those who worked and lived in rural communities were provided with access to a range of opportunities, services and facilities which were sustainable and inclusive to all and are empowered to influence and manage their own future. The RCC communicated to all areas of the community by newsletters, weekly bulletins and by signposting communities to each other. Partnership working was essential to all rural areas and the RCC encourages community led planning. Mr Prescott concluded by stating that the RCC regarded itself as a key partner for MBC. Mr Prescott then responded to a number of questions on how the RCC promoted localism, what evidence it could demonstrate to show efficiencies and delivery of effective services, and what support the RCC provided for village halls.

Mr Prescott left the meeting and during discussion Members queried whether there was duplication of involvement in projects by MBC and Leicestershire County Council. The Chief Executive advised that a new Service Level Agreement would be introduced next year so that districts could jointly specify what they wanted from the organisation to deliver and how funding could be spent.

The decision whether to grant fund would be made at the Community and Social Affairs meeting in January 2012.

RESOLVED that further work be undertaken by the LCC, MBC and the RCC to identify those areas for funding which would deliver the most effective outcome and the results of this work to be brought back for further consideration.

(Councillor Rhodes here joined the meeting at 7:25pm)

(Councillor Graham here rejoined the meeting)

The Chairman advised that in view of the presence of representatives of the Somerby Parish Council and Nottingham Community Housing Association the following item be brought forward on the agenda.

P28. DELIVERY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AT SOMERBY

Councillor Rhodes declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in any matters relating to the Leicestershire County Council due to his role as a County Councillor. He stated that he had not taken part in the County's cabinet decision on this issue.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which informed members of a request

for the Council to contribute funding towards an Affordable Housing Scheme at Somerby.

The Chairman explained the work involved by Officers and Councillors to bring about the success of this scheme. He expressed concern that whilst the Council supported affordable housing in the borough; the LCC had originally sought a single capital contribution towards this scheme which would have had a marked impact on this Council's reserves. Councillor Rhodes had negotiated with the officers at the County to arrange phased payments. As a result of these difficulties, he proposed that the Chief Executive be authorised to meet with the County's Chief Executive and/or senior officers. The motion was seconded.

A Member then spoke on the low numbers of parishes that had achieved affordable housing and how more should be done to bring parishes on board to pursue affordable housing for their villages. Officers of Melton Borough Council had been working on this scheme for many years with proactive support from Councillor Barnes. Particular thanks were made to Nicola Butcher, Housing Policy Officer, for her work on this scheme together with the Parish Council and the Nottingham Community Housing Association. There was now an urgency to get this scheme up and running. The Chairman expressed the view that procedures must be made easier, in the future, to achieve affordable housing in local parishes. A Member advised that the grant funding available through the LCC's New Homes Bonus could be used to assist rural affordable housing schemes.

RESOLVED that

- (1) A Capital allocation of £87,000 be allocated to the Affordable Housing Scheme at Somerby.
- (2) Subject to (3) below, the allocation be paid in a minimum of two instalments, one of £58,000 and one of £29,000 by 31 March 2012.
- (3) Subject to (2) above, liaison be carried out with Officers at Leicestershire County Council, to agree an equitable schedule of payments.
- (4) The Chief Executive to be authorised to discuss, with the Chief Executive and/or senior Officers at the County Council, arrangements to reduce difficulties of this nature.

(Councillor Sheldon here left the meeting)

P29. **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

Community & Social Affairs Committee – 21 September 2011

Exempt item: Waterfield Leisure Pools – Management and Redevelopment Update

To manage the operational and maintenance obligations for the new contractors at Waterfield Leisure Pools.

RESOLVED that the amendment to the Communities and Neighbourhoods Service establishment, to include the additional post of 0.6 FTE Client Officer, be approved.

P30. UPDATE ON DECISIONS

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

RESOLVED that item P.7/2011 Service Plans 2011/12 be taken forward to the next PFA meeting in December 2011.

(The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods and the Principal Policy officer here left the meeting)

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

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

P31. IT SERVICE DELIVERY

Councillors Orson and Rhodes declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in any matters relating to the Leicestershire County Council due to their role as County Councillors.

The Head of Central Services submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which updated Members on the outcome of a review of the Council's IT service and the recommendation made as a result. The report proposed a way forward to implement the recommendations made in the report concerning the future operational and strategic delivery of IT services to the Council. Approval was sought from Members to increase IT resources to the level recommended in the report until such time as the long term service delivery option was implemented.

RESOLVED that the recommendations contained in the report be implemented.

Councillor Rhodes declared a personal and prejudicial interest by virtue of his involvement in ICT discussions at LCC in his role as County Councillor. He left the meeting before this item was considered.

P32. PROVISION OF IT SERVICES FROM LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

The Solicitor to the Council submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which provided information for Members to make a decision as to the legal arrangements for the Leicestershire County Council to provide part of the IT function to the Council at its new offices, Parkside. Members were requested to consider the legal options available and to decide which was the best option available and how to proceed.

RESOLVED that

(1) Option B be approved.

(2) Delegated authority to be granted to the Solicitor to the Council in consultation with the Strategic Director (CAM) and the Head of Central Services to complete the necessary legal arrangements.

(3) The existing contract be extended for a further one month to allow for implementation.

Resumption into open committee.

(Councillor Rhodes here returned to the meeting)
(Solicitor to the Council here left the meeting at 8pm)

P33. UPDATE ON PLANS FOR WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

A report by the Head of Communications to advise Members of the Plans to improve and update the Council web site as requested at the last PFA Committee meeting had been circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED that this report be deferred to the next meeting of the Policy, Finance and Administration Committee to be held in December 2011.

P34. MAYORAL ROLE: OSA REVIEW

A report by the Head of Communications on the recommendations from the OSA Review of the Mayoral Role had been circulated with the agenda.
Members were requested, by the Chairman, to review the report in readiness for the next meeting.

RESOLVED that this report be deferred to the next meeting of the Policy, Finance and Administration Committee to be held in December 2011.

P35. LOCALISING SUPPORT FOR COUNCIL TAX IN ENGLAND

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which informed Members of the issues arising from the Government's consultation document on Localising Support for Council tax in England and propose a way forward regarding the Council's response.

Members were advised to notify the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods of any comments by the deadline of 7th October 2011.

RESOLVED that delegated authority be given to the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods to consider and, where relevant, support suggested submissions for response to the consultation in addition to specifying any specific issues to this Council.

P36. BUSINESS RATES CONSULTATION

The Head of Central Services submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which informed Members of the issues arising from the Government's document on the Business Rates Consultation and propose a way forward regarding the Council's response.

Members were advised to notify the Head of Central Services of any comments by the deadline of 17th October 2011.

RESOLVED that delegated authority be given to the Head of Central Services to consider and, where relevant, support suggested submissions for response to the consultation in addition to specifying any specific issues to this Council.

P37. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ESTABLISHMENT

The Head of Central Services submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which requests approval to permanently vary the establishment for an additional 0.6 full time equivalent (fte) Senior Accountant post based in the Central Services Department to manage additional responsibilities and debt transferred from the government following the reform of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

RESOLVED that

- (a) An additional 0.6 fte Senior Accountant post be appointed on Band 10 was approved.
- (b) A supplementary estimate of £6,250 was approved from the HRA working balance to fund the part-year cost in 2011-12

P38. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING TO 31 AUGUST 2011

The Head of Central Services submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which updated the Committee on the progress of schemes within the Capital programme to 31 August 2011.

RESOLVED that

- (a) The progress made on each capital scheme was noted.
- (b) An increase, of £169k, in the authorised cost of the new build project for 2011/12 was approved.

P39. REVIEW OF CHARGES 2012/13

The Head of Central Services submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulate to Members) which provided information on the various fees and

charges that are made by this Committee. Discussion regarding the room hire charges at Parkside indicated that more research within the local community was required. Members expressed concern that any changes did not undercut local providers.

RESOLVED that

- (1) The Committee decided the level of charges for 2012/13 for each of the services with the exception of the room hire charges at Parkside.
- (2) Delegated authority is given to the Chief Executive following consultation with the Chair of the Committee to set an interim rate with Property Professionals until recommendations can be returned to the next PFA meeting in December 2011.
- (3) The setting of Local Land charges for individual enquiries for each of the specific questions on the LLC1 form are delegated to the Head of Regulatory Services in consultation with the Head of Central Services be approved.

P40. **BUDGET MONITORING APRIL TO JUNE 2011**

The Head of Central Services submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which provided information on actual expenditure and income incurred on this Committee's services compared to the latest approved budget for the period 1 April 2011 to 30 June 2011.

Members were advised on ongoing work with Budget Holders to reduce any surplus spend in a gradual way. The Head of Central Services responded to questions on election expenditure.

RESOLVED that the financial position on each of this Committee's services to 30 June 2011 be noted.

P41. **ITEMS FOR APPROVAL UNDER FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES**

The Head of Central Services submitted a revised report to that previously circulated to Members which detailed requests for approval of this Committee under Financial Procedure Rules, provide information on amounts approved under delegated powers, and report the impact of these on the Council's reserves and balances. A Member deferred to the decision of the CSA Committee on 21.09.11 to approve a virement of £100,000 and pointed out this should read from the kitchen and bathroom improvement works programme. He had been informed that the virement would not affect the improvement works scheduled for the current year.

RESOLVED that

- (a) The virements approved under delegated powers be noted.
- (b) The business cases for the schemes of the purchase of ride on mower (15k), private sector major/minor repairs loan scheme (100k) and the Income Management System (20k) were approved.

- (c) The virement of £100k be made from the kitchen & bathroom improvement works programme to a new fire safety works programme be approved.

P42. BUDGET FRAMEWORK 2012/13

The Head of Central Services submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which requested consideration be given to a number of key items which would feed into the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the 2012/13 budget and service planning preparation process.

RESOLVED that

- (1) The proposed service and financial planning timetable for 2011/12, in respect of the 2012/13 financial year, be approved.
- (2) No inflation to be provided in the 2012/13 budget for non pay costs and pay and related costs unless adjusted for known prices by Budget Holders.
- (3) The Council retains its objective of setting a balanced budget for 2012/13.
- (4) The target working balance on General Expenses remain at £640,000, Special Expenses (Melton Mowbray) at £50,000 and the Housing Reserve Account (HRA) at £250,000.
- (5) The Programme Board determine the relative priority of schemes for Members to consider and allocate funding based on the information set out in the project mandates.
- (6) The key dates for the budget process were noted.

P43. CORPORATE ISSUES

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which updated members on a variety of Corporate issues and to develop the Council's approach to the "Big Society".

The Chief Executive advised Members that Voluntary Action Melton had been successful in gaining the Community Organisers Award. Councillors Freer and Dungworth both wrote endorsements for Voluntary Action Melton. A Member commented on 'Big Society' activity suggesting that the issues facing rural areas were very different to big cities. Rural areas did support a number of voluntary groups and the Council needed to be mindful of the costs. The Member suggested that the Council was already supporting the concept by providing assistance and support to organisations like Voluntary Action Melton. It was also mentioned that community forums had funds of £12.5k and MBC should encourage groups to apply for this funding.

The Chief Executive advised that the Annual Governance Report would now be taken to the Full Council meeting in December as the Honorary Alderman was to be presented at the October meeting. Members indicated their agreement to defer this item.

RESOLVED that

- (1) The report was noted.
- (2) The Council engages with representatives of active community organisations, Parishes and business to understand the current positioning of Big Society activity in Melton Borough.

P44. ANNUAL REPORT ON EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The Head of Central Services submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which updated Members on the progress made by the Council to embed Equality and Diversity within service and policy development and delivery, work undertaken to meet its public sector equality duty as required by equality legislation, but more importantly to deliver services which are accessible and meet the needs of Melton residents.

RESOLVED to note the progress made between November 2010 to August 2011 embedding equality and diversity across the Council.

P45. AWARD OF MERIT TASK GROUP – TERMS OF REFERENCE

At the last meeting of the Committee, the previous terms of reference of the Award of Merit Task Group were approved rather than the latest version that was approved by the Committee on 8 December 2010.

Therefore the Committee was requested to reaffirm the latest Terms of Reference for this Civic Year.

RESOLVED that the latest Terms of Reference for this Civic year be approved.

P46. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business to discuss.

The meeting which commenced at 7 p.m, closed at 8:26 p.m.

Chairman