



POLICY, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

PARKSIDE, STATION APPROACH, BURTON STREET, MELTON MOWBRAY

25 JANUARY 2012

PRESENT:-

Councillors J.B. Rhodes (Chairman)
S.Dungworth, J.T.Orson, P.M.Posnett,
D.R.Wright

As Observers – Councillors Moncrieff and Wyatt

Chief Executive, Strategic Director (KA),
Head of Central Services, ICT Client Manager (CS),
Place Manager (MB),
Committee Support Officers (LS) and (JR),

P66. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barnes, Bush, M.C.R. Graham MBE, and Holmes.

P67. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2011 were confirmed and authorised to be signed by the Chairman.

P68. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Orson, Posnett and Rhodes declared personal and non-prejudicial interests in any matters relating to Leicestershire County Council due to their role as County Councillors.

P69. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

(1) OSA 13 December 2011: Electronic Working for Members

On behalf of the of the OSA Committee, the Strategic Director (KA) submitted the report of the Electronic Working for Members Task Group regarding the introduction of an ICT support package for Members. This report, previously considered by the OSA Committee, had been re-circulated to the PFA Committee. The Strategic Director (KA) outlined the background to the recommendation, drawing Members'

attention to appendix B to the report setting out the potential for electronic working. Following consideration by the OSA Committee, the recommendations had been accepted subject to amendment to para 2.4 and an additional recommendation that the Members' Remuneration Panel be asked to take into account the annual costs shown in appendix A when next reviewing allowances.

During discussion a suggestion was made that rather than specify equipment to be issued, Members be given an IT allowance that would enable them to acquire the ICT solution within set parameters that was best suited to their needs. A view was expressed that the current Members' allowance had been eroded over the last four years and that the inclusion of an IT allowance could be justified in terms of bringing Members up to date in new ways of working. The Strategic Director (KA) advised that the Task Group had wanted the provision to be outside the allowance scheme. The Chief Executive also advised that a cash allowance solution would create a potential conflict with the recommended actions proposed and that for information the Remuneration Panel was due to meet this year as required by law. Further debate ensued and a dual hatted Member explained how he used his IT equipment to deal with the two authorities' systems. Support for the Task Group's recommendations was indicated. Based on the views expressed about the allowance scheme the Chief Executive gave guidance on an alternative proposal to that contained in part (b) of the recommendation from the OSA Committee which was also supported by Members.

It was subsequently proposed and seconded to accept the recommendations contained in the Task Group's report as amended by the OSA Committee, subject to a revision to part (b) concerning the referral to the remuneration panel. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

RESOLVED

- (1) To approve the following recommendations on Electronic Working for Members:
 - (a) The Council approves an ICT Support Package for Councillors as detailed at Appendix A;
 - (b) Funding is provided in the 2012/13 budget for 15 packages as detailed in Appendix A1 and any remaining requests for packages in Year 2;
 - (c) Take up of the ICT Support Package by Members be stand alone and not reliant on use of Council passwords or the withdrawal of hard copy agendas at committees;
 - (d) In order to take advantage of the package Members demonstrate a commitment to move towards achieving ICT competence. Support will be provided to enable the ECDL or equivalent standard to be achieved;
 - (e) An 'ICT Download List' is available at Appendix C and should Members wish to download any products that are not included on the approved list ICT Support will be withdrawn and Members would be required to seek their own solutions to ICT problems. There is a procedure for adding new items to the Approved List outlined in Appendix C;

- (f) The ICT Protocol for Members be amended to reflect the proposals in the report and be referred to the Constitution Review Task Group for consideration;
 - (g) It be noted that the Council has subscribed to the Modern Councillor, ICT Learning Package for Members for a trial period of one year, at a cost of £1K to be funded from the Member Development Budget;
 - (h) A bid for additional resources for the one-off capital costs and the ongoing revenue costs be submitted as part of the budget setting process for 2012-13 as detailed in the financial implications section of the report.
- (2) The Remuneration Panel be asked to consider the methodology of inclusion of a part of the allowances made by the Council to support electronic working including taking into account standardisation as proposed by the OSA Committee.

(Councillor Moncrieff here left the meeting.)

(2) Full Council 14 December 2011: Consideration of the Introduction into the Council's Arrangements of a Governance Committee

The Chief Executive presented her report on the introduction of a new Governance Committee previously considered by the Full Council at its meeting held on 14 December 2011. She advised that the reference to the Audit Task Group on the agenda should read the 'PFA Committee' as this Task Group had been stood down following completion of its remit. The Committee's attention was drawn to the sections in her report concerning the proposed areas that could be covered by a Governance Committee. Members indicated their agreement to the proposed terms of reference and functions, including the audit function which had been the subject of a previous decision to set up a separate committee for this purpose. It was proposed and seconded to recommend that a paper be submitted to Full Council before the annual meeting proposing the establishment of a Governance Committee with the terms of reference and functions outlined in the Chief Executive's report. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

RESOLVED that a paper be submitted to the Full Council before the annual meeting recommending the introduction of a new Governance Committee with the terms of reference and functions of this committee be worked up to follow those specified in paragraphs 3.3 to 3.7 as set out in the Chief Executive's report to the Full Council on 14 December 2011.

P70. 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.

P71. **MARKET PLACE ENHANCEMENT SCHEME**

On behalf of the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods, the Place Manager submitted a report previously circulated to Members, the purpose of which was to provide an update on the proposed essential highway repairs and maintenance scheme scheduled for Melton's Market Place by the Leicestershire County Council Highways for January 2012. Support was sought from the Committee to provide a financial contribution towards the scheme from within the capital programme to develop the basic maintenance scheme to a more substantial enhancement scheme for the town's historical Market Place.

Following comments on the work to the Market Place which had already begun, it was

RESOLVED

- (1) That the mandate and business case as attached at Appendices A and B be approved and the scheme be included in the 2011/12 capital programme;
- (2) That a supplementary estimate of £10,000 be approved from the corporate priorities reserve.

P72. **CALCULATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE 2012-2013**

On behalf of the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods, the Place Manager submitted a report, copies of which had previously been circulated to Members, which stated:

- (a) The Local Government Finance Act 1992 required each billing authority to calculate a council tax base. The base was used in determining the level of council tax based on budget decisions within each billing and precepting authority and in the calculation of the amount of a precept payable by each billing authority to a major precepting authority;
- (b) to calculate the amount of council tax that needed to be paid by tax payers in Melton, the budget (amount required to be raised through Council Tax) was divided by the tax base. The report calculated the tax base.

In response to a question on the Special Expense Area for Broughton and Dalby, the Head of Central Services confirmed that reference could now be removed as it was no longer separately calculated but included in the total.

RESOLVED

- (1) the report on the calculation of the Council's council tax base for the year 2012/13 be approved;

(2) pursuant to the report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 as amended, the amounts calculated by the Melton Borough Council as its council tax base for 2012-13 be approved.

(The Place Manager here left the meeting.)

P73. STANDBY POLICY

The Head of Communications submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which sought approval for a standby policy to cover staff being on call in case of an incident of a dangerous building or an urgent homelessness case. The Standby Policy appended to the report set out the formal on call rota arrangements and the payments applicable for people contractually on call. The Head of Communications confirmed that the unions had been consulted and were satisfied with the policy.

RESOLVED

(1) That the Standby Policy be approved;

(2) That the Head of Communications in consultation with Management Team be granted delegated authority to amend the Policy in line with changing employment legislation and good practice.

P74. ADOPTION OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP – SINGLE EQUALITIES SCHEME

The Head of Central Services presented a report, copies of which had previously been circulated, to update Members on comments received since the last Council meeting on 12 October 2011 from Cllr Horton and external consultation. A summary of the comments received and the proposed action was appended to the report.

A comment was made on work still to be done on the completion of Equality Impact Assessments (EIA'S). The Head of Central Services referred to a recent meeting of the Equalities Steering Group who had identified a need to make internal improvements involving the process around the EIA's.

RESOLVED To note the amendments made to the Single Equality Scheme as a result of consultation.

P75. DISASTER RECOVERY BACK UPS

The ICT Client Manager submitted a report which set out proposals to improve the Council's back up facilities following the move to Parkside. As a result of the move to the new offices and the virtualisation of the Council's servers to create the Melton Cloud, the backup processes previously used were no longer viable. It was anticipated that it will be necessary in the future to mirror the Council's data offsite

in real time; a number of solutions had been considered and the most cost effective solution would be to use The Cove to host the necessary equipment for a real time offsite backup facility. This would entail a WAN link which would also improve the experience of staff and customers using the facility. Details of the costs associated with the proposal were set out in the report.

RESOLVED that

- (1) The Project Mandate attached as Appendix 1 and the Business Case attached at Appendix 2 be approved;
- (2) A supplementary estimate from the Corporate Priorities Reserve be approved to fund the installation of the solution at a cost of £33,910;
- (3) A supplementary estimate from the Corporate Priorities Reserve be approved to fund the first year running costs at a cost of £3,000;
- (4) A supplementary estimate from Melton Special Expenses Reserve be approved to fund half the WAN installation at a cost of £1,000;
- (5) A supplementary estimate from Melton Special Expenses Reserve be approved to fund half the first year WAN running costs at a cost of £2,100.

P76. ITEMS FOR APPROVAL UNDER FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES

The Head of Central Services submitted a revised version of her report which had been updated since the despatch of the agenda to reflect the external funding for the Warm Homes grant scheme. The report sought approvals for and information on amounts approved under delegated powers and to report the impact of these on the Council's reserves and balances.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the virements approved under delegated powers (para. 3.1.1 refers) be noted and;
- (2) the supplementary estimates approved under delegated powers (para. 4.1 refers) be noted;
- (3) the supplementary estimate in relation to the revision to the Waste Management service be approved;
- (4) the revised phasing of the Waterfield Leisure Pool projects be approved, as set out in paragraph 5.1 and;
- (5) the changes to the authorised spending on HRA schemes be approved as set out in paragraph 5.2;
- (6) the business case in respect of the Warm Homes Grants scheme be approved as set out in paragraph 5.3.

P77. REVENUE BUDGET 2012-2013

Members had before them a report prepared by the Head of Central Services which had previously been circulated. The report outlined the key budget issues that would be going forward to the Council's budget setting meeting on 1 February 2012. This included the revenue implications of the option of using the forthcoming capital receipt to repay general fund debt and transfer the outstanding loans to the HRA. This option being available due to the reform of the HRA and the requirement for the council to buy itself out of the current subsidy system.

The Head of Central Services went through the key issues discussed at the Budget Away Day held on 9 January concerning the Council's financial position with regard to general and special expenses including proposals for growth and savings to net expenditure. She emphasised that the figures in the report were as at the time the report was published and that there would be some variances in the report going forward to Full Council on 1 February 2012.

RESOLVED That Members note the budget proposals including the proposed list of reductions and enhancements for submission to the Full Council budget meeting on 1 February 2012.

P78. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2011-2016

The Head of Central Services submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) the purpose of which was to consolidate the Capital Programme across all committees, to revise authorised spending as appropriate and to consider the overall funding position for 2011/12, and make recommendations to Full Council on the Capital Programme for all funds for 2012/13. Circulated at the meeting was the second part of appendix A to the report on general expenses within the Capital Programme which had been omitted from the circulated hard copies of the agenda.

A question was raised on the resurfacing work to the Wilton Road bus station. Although the surfacing to the car park area was new, there were issues with the area of the bus park near the cafe and the rear entrance to Egerton Lodge. The Chairman expressed concern that these issues be resolved with the various parties concerned.

RESOLVED that

(1) That the revised capital programme and funding for 2011/12, as shown at Appendix A be approved, and;

(2) Full Council approve funding for the capital schemes in respect of General Expenses, Special Expenses and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the sources that funding will be taken from 2012/13 as set out in Appendices B to D.

P79. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Head of Central Services submitted a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which reviewed the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) in light of the key financial issues that would affect the Council in the next and later financial years. Since the publication of the agenda, figures on the HRA and the HRA budget forecast for 2010/11-2015/16 had been updated and revised information was circulated at the meeting.

During discussion, clarification was sought on items within the budget forecast for the general fund general expenses and caution expressed due to the level of uncertainty over key issues facing the Council in the future.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the MTFS as submitted be approved including the budget forecast information and the assumptions on which it is based be noted;
- (2) The HRA Working balance be increased to £500,000 by 31st March 2013;
- (3) The estimated availability of funding for capital spending be noted and the policy of seeking external funding for capital projects and working in partnership with other local authorities to attract funding to supplement the Council's own resources be continued;
- (4) The amounts in the corporate priorities reserve and general reserve (special expenses) be available to help fund projects (non-recurring cost element) which are in line with Council priorities.

P80. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting which commenced at 6.30 p.m. closed at 7.59 p.m.

Chairman