



POLICY, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

PARKSIDE, STATION APPROACH, BURTON STREET, MELTON MOWBRAY

23 JANUARY 2013

PRESENT:-

Councillors J.B.Rhodes (Chairman),  
G. Bush, P. Cumbers,  
D.R. Wright, J. Wyatt

As Substitute

Councillor Moncrieff for Councillor O'Callaghan

Chief Executive, Head of Central Services,  
Estates Officer, Committee Support Officers (LS and JR).

P56. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barnes, Hutchison, O'Callaghan, and Posnett.

P57. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2012 were confirmed and authorised to be signed by the Chairman.

P58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

P59. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

There were no recommendations from other committees.

P60. 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.

P61. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Head of Central Services submitted a report previously circulated 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.

The Officer drew Members' attention to the section of the report concerning Central Government funding; the formula grant had now been replaced with two different elements – the business rate retention scheme and the revenue support grant (RSG). The provisional figures for RSG in 2014/15 showed a reduction of some £400K and looked set to reduce further in subsequent years. It was anticipated that in the future the RSG would disappear to be replaced by the business rate retention scheme and other income. Turning to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Head of Central Services explained that this was now self financing and outside the subsidy system. It was important that the reserves were there to cushion the impact as, other than capital receipts, the RSG, and other income, the authority was very reliant on this. Members were advised about the pressures on the Council's budget over the next three years and the importance of aiming to be as efficient as possible. The Transformation Programme projected potential savings towards this aim. Also highlighted in the report was the increasing reliance upon the New Homes Bonus as the RSG reduced. However, as there was a need to fund a significant spend on the additional properties, it was important to reduce the revenue reliance on this funding stream. Whilst concluding on the positive aspect of the savings from the Waterfield Leisure Contract, caution was urged on managing the Council's finances in moving forward.

The Head of Central Services then responded to questions and comments from Members on the HRA and the information contained within service plans. A Member raised a query about how much Section 106 money was available to be used and if a report could be provided on this matter. The Head of Central Services explained that in terms of monies actually received, this was detailed in the budget book where some was specifically allocated and other monies were for general purposes. The Development Control section kept a record of monies due from S.106 agreements and she confirmed that she would ask the Head of Regulatory Services to provide this information to Members. The recommendations contained in the report were moved by Councillor Rhodes and seconded by Councillor Wright and upon being put to the vote, carried.

**RESOLVED**

- (1) to approve the MTFFS as attached and to note the budget forecast information and the assumptions on which it is based, including the impact of ongoing reductions to central government support;
- (2) that the HRA Working Balance be increased to £750,000 by 31 March 2013;
- (3) to note the estimated availability of funding for capital spending 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) that 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.

**P62. ITEMS FOR APPROVAL UNDER FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES**

Members had before them a report prepared by the Head of Central Services previously circulated with the agenda which set out requests for approval under Financial Procedure Rules and provided information on amounts approved under delegated powers and the impact of these on the Council's reserves and balances. The Head of Central Services explained that all the proposals had been before the relevant committees and, following the CSA Committee held the previous evening, reported a change to the net cost for the Sauna/Steam Room refurbishment at the Waterfield Leisure Centre. As the contractor, SLM, was now providing additional funding, the net cost was now reduced from £24K to £19K.

The Chairman drew Members' attention to the reinstatement of the bus shelter budget to the 2012-13 capital programme and advised that the bus shelter on Asfordby Road, Melton had been completed that day. Referring to the project brief for the Fuel Poverty and Green Deal, a question was raised on the means by which some households would be selected for free electricity from solar panels. Councillor Wright, as Chairman of the CSA Committee, explained that it was to help those in fuel poverty and those properties which relied on storage heaters would be considered. It was moved by Councillor Rhodes and seconded by Councillor Wright to accept the recommendations in the report. Accordingly it was,

**RESOLVED**

- (1) the virements approved under delegated powers (para 3.1.1 refers) be noted;
- (2) the supplementary estimates approved under delegated powers (para 4.1.1 refers) be noted;
- (3) to approve the delegated authority given to the Head of Central Services to use up to £50K of the general fund working balance to fund the wind farm planning appeal (para 4.2.1. refers);
- (4) to note the reinstatement of £18K bus shelter budget to the 2012-13 capital programme as approved by the Chief Executive under delegated authority (para 4.2.2. refers);

- (5) the business case discussed in para 5.1 be approved, and additional funding of £6K be approved for the Scalford Brook play area improvements from Section 106 monies;
- (6) to approve the business case in respect of Fuel Poverty and Green Deal discussed in para 5.1;
- (7) to approve the business case in respect of the Waterfield Leisure Centre Sauna/Steam Room refurbishment discussed in para 5.1, and that the revised net cost of £19K be funded from capital receipts.

**P63. PARKSIDE CIVIC SUITE – EXTERNAL BOOKING CHARGES AND SERVICE DELIVERY**

On behalf of the Head of Central Services, the Estates Officer presented a report which had previously been circulated that sought approval to adopt a new set of fees and charges for the Parkside Civic Suite that would be simpler to administer, to adjust the existing concession arrangement and to authorise officers to investigate options for enhancing future service delivery.

Concern was raised that local community organisations should be able to use the meeting room facilities at the offices without charge given that the Council was trying to promote volunteering. The same Member also voiced her concerns about the options put forward for the running of the external lettings function. Members were advised that the council still allowed community groups, subject to certain criteria, to have access to smaller meeting rooms free of charge. There was not the capacity to generate a significant income from letting the civic suite area as the Council used the rooms for much of the time for its own meetings. However, officers acknowledged that external lettings could be improved and to do so would require a professional 'front of house' resource to ensure an event booking ran smoothly. In response to the Member's concern previously raised, the Chairman pointed out that recommendation at para 2.3 was to allow officers to investigate ways in which this could be better managed and he so moved the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor Wyatt and carried following a vote.

**RESOLVED**

- (1) to approve the fees and charges for external bookings at Parkside as set out in Appendix A;
- (2) to agree the removal of the concession system for Civic Suite Rooms 1 and 2;
- (3) that officers investigate the options for future service delivery as set out in para. 3.3. and report back to this Committee.

**P64. PARKSIDE RECEPTION IMPROVEMENTS - ACOUSTICS**

Members had before them a report prepared by the Head of Central Services which sought approval for some acoustic improvements to Parkside Reception at a cost of

up to £11,000 and to approve a capital sum of up to £11,000 to be funded from the Council's reserves and balances.

In presenting the report on behalf of the Head of Central Services, the Estates Officer sought approval for the project mandate to move forward with the acoustic treatment in the light well in the reception area, and sought an indication from Members as to which of the acoustic treatments they preferred. She pointed out that all the options presented were equal in terms of effective treatment, it was a question of which design was preferred. The Chairman suggested that the suspended geometric shapes would be the most appropriate and that he had been advised that the shapes could be suspended horizontally rather than vertically as shown in the appendix to the report.

A Member expressed concern why the problem of noise and voice travel had not been identified at the design stage. The Chief Executive explained that she understood it was an expected issue with the open design of the atrium but it had been decided to accept such treatment as was standard and advised at the time. However, at that stage the success of the building which had generated the noise travel had not been appreciated and it was always known that a little more work would be needed. The Head of Central Services added that the partners would be contributing to this work but the recommendation before the Committee was that this should be put into the capital programme.

### **RESOLVED**

- (1) to approve the project mandate circulated as Appendix B for inclusion in the 2013/14 capital programme;
- (2) that the preferred option for the acoustic treatment be option 1 (acoustic rectangular ceiling raft panels) and option 2 (hanging geometric shaped acoustic panels).

### **P65. COUNCIL TAX BASE REPORT 2013-14**

On behalf of the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods, the Head of Central Services presented a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which stated that

- (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.

The Head of Central Services explained that in the past the Government had implied that calculation should be approved at Committee level but it had now indicated that it was acceptable for the matter to be determined at officer level

under delegated authority. Accordingly, approval for this delegation to the Section 151 officer was sought. A Member raised a point about Central Government lowering the tax base thereby increasing the cost to the council tax payer. The Head of Central Services explained that this was part of an overall package that meant the collection fund became a more risky element of the Council's budget. The Government's changes to council tax benefits had become another substantial element of pressure upon local authorities in terms of balancing their budgets. The recommendations contained in the report were moved by Councillor Rhodes, seconded by Councillor Wright and carried following a vote.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) the report on the calculation of the Council's council tax base for the year 2013/14 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 2013-14 be approved;
- (3) the calculation of the council tax base be delegated to the Head of Central Services (Section 151 Officer) from 2014-15 and for future years.

P66. **NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATES RETURN (NNDR1) 2013-14**

On behalf of the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods, the Head of Central Services presented a report (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which set out the calculation of non domestic rating income as required by legislation and for the provision of information to Central Government for statistical purposes. The report calculated the NNDR1 return for Melton Borough.

Members were advised that 2013-14 was the first year of the business rates retention scheme and the Council had been advised that the NNDR1 form (previously completed and certified by the S.151 Officer) should now be approved in the same way as the council tax base.

Noting the background to the return, Members indicated their agreement to approve the delegation for submission of the return form to the S.151 Officer. The recommendations contained in the report were moved by Councillor Bush and seconded by Councillor Wright and upon being put to the vote, were carried.

**RESOLVED**

- (1) the NNDR1 return form at Appendix A to the report be approved for submission to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and to the Leicestershire County Council and the Leicestershire Fire Authority;
- (2) to approve the delegation for the submission of the NNDR1 for 2014-15 and future years to the Head of Central Services (Section 151 Officer).

P67. CORPORATE ISSUES

The Chief Executive presented her report which had previously been circulated to advise Members on a series of corporate issues which affected the Council and its corporate operations.

The first issue concerned the “City Deal” Programme, whereby the Government had approached certain cities to see if they would be willing to enter into negotiations to take forward the concept of economic deals for city areas. As part of the second wave, the Government had invited certain areas to submit an ‘Expression of Interest’ to the concept and the Leicester, Leicestershire Economic Partnership (LLEP), in which Melton Borough Council was a partner, had engaged in discussions to move forward the potential of a City Deal for Leicester and Leicestershire. The Chief Executive stressed that at this stage the expression of interest submitted on behalf of LLEP was non binding and indicative only.

Members were then updated on the Social Fund. As local agreement could not be reached upon the delivery of a coherent scheme in the locality, the County Council had now moved toward the commissioning of a standalone scheme through an external provider. As part of the arrangements being put in place, the County had negotiated roles for those Districts who wished to take part and Melton would be participating in these arrangements in order to gain whatever benefits were possible for local people from this external arrangement.

Members noted that this Council, along with four other Districts, could proceed towards the finalisation of local delivery of the Supporting Leicestershire Families programme and that officers were considering final draft specifications and agreements to complete the arrangements in readiness for a formal start on or around 1 April 2013.

The Chief Executive concluded her report by advising Members that the Parkside Partners had been able to pull together the required match funding to continue the work of the remaining Community Organiser in Melton and briefly summarised the areas of work in which the post holder would be involved.

**RESOLVED**

- (1) that the position with the submission of Expression of Interest for the “City Deal” be noted and that a report be made to the Rural, Economic and Environmental Affairs Committee at its next meeting;
- (2) that the progress with the Supporting Leicestershire Families Programme be noted and that appropriate authority be sought at the relevant time for the service delivery model;
- (3) that the position with the Social Fund roll out be noted with regret and that the Council participates actively in any future discussions upon local delivery.

The meeting which commenced at 6.30 p.m., closed at 7.30 p.m.

Chairman