



RURAL, ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

5th March 2014

Present:

Councillor P. Baguley, G.E Botterill, G.Bush, J. Douglas, E. Holmes, E. Hutchinson, J. Illingworth, T. Moncrieff, J.T Orson (Chairman), , M.R. Sheldon.

As Substitute

Councillor P. Posnett (substitute for Councillor Rhodes)

As Observer

Councillor M. Gordon.

Strategic Director (CM), Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods, Economic Development Officer, Head of Central Services, Central Services Manager, Head of Regulatory Services, Lead Enforcement Officer, Administrative Assistant for Communities and Neighbourhoods.

R49. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rhodes.

R50. MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting of the 8th January 2014 were confirmed and authorised to be signed by the Chairman.

R51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Posnett and Councillor Orson declared a personal and non-pecuniary interest in relation to any issues concerning the Leicestershire County Council by virtue of them being County Councillors.

Councillor Gordon declared a personal and non-pecuniary interest in the urgent item.

R52. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

There were no recommendations from other Committees.

R53. UPDATE ON DECISIONS

The Chair welcomed a new Member, Councillor Bush, to the committee.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted an update on decisions from the previous meeting on the 8th January 2014, which was noted by the committee.

R54. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING APRIL TO JANUARY 2014

The Head of Central Services submitted a report to update the Committee on the progress of schemes within the Capital Programme from April 2013 to January 2014.

The Central Services Manager summarised the report, and brought Members attention to the £17,000 budget reduction as seen in Appendix A.

A Member referred to paragraph 5.2 and asked where the contribution towards the budget comes from. The Central Services Manager responded to the Members question stating that the contribution comes from the Town Estate.

RESOLVED that: the progress made on each capital scheme be noted.

R55. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING APRIL TO DECEMBER 2013

The Head of Central Services submitted a report to Members providing information on actual expenditure and income incurred on this Committee's services compared to the latest approved budget for the period 1st April 2013 to 31st December 2013

The Central Services Manager summarised the report and brought Members attention to Appendix A referencing the shortfall in income which should be partly if not fully met.

The Central Services Manager also brought Members attention to para 3.6.1 onwards, highlighting overspends and underspends

RESOLVED that: the financial position on each of this Committee's services to 31st December be noted.

R56. REVIEW OF CHARGES 2014-15: TAXI LICENSING

The Head of Regulatory Services submitted a report to recommend changes to the level of charges for taxi driver, vehicle and operator licence applications to operate from 1st April 2014, as set at the meeting on 4th September 2013.

The Head of Regulatory Services brought Members attention to paragraph 3.3 referencing the time recording exercise undertaken, and also brought

Members attention to paragraph 3.7 in the report referencing a similar increase to be made for 2014/15

The Chair highlighted the recommendation at 2.1 and invited Members to discuss.

A Member asked how the increased total would compare to the fees charged by other authorities. The Head of Regulatory Services, from memory, advised that even with the proposed increase Melton Borough Council would still be towards the bottom end of the table in comparison to other authorities.

The Head of Regulatory Services brought Members attention to the table in paragraph 3.8 and clarified that the only truly applicable costs had been taken into consideration.

A Member asked whether the knowledge test could be passed on to the taxi company or taxi association in way to cut back costs. The Chair asked that this option be looked at.

Members showed support for the recommendation.

RESOLVED that: the recommended level of charges from 2014-15 for each of the services set out in Appendix A to operate from 1st April 2014 be approved.

R57. **ALCOHOL INFORMATION SCHEME**

The Head of Regulatory Services submitted a report to update Members in respect of the Alcohol Information Scheme which was part of the Leicester and Leicestershire Alcohol Improvement Scheme.

The Head of Regulatory Services brought Members attention to paragraph 3.7 and explained that the scheme wouldn't be needed by Melton Mowbray as there are few off-licences in the Town, so would produce unnecessary extra work for staff.

The Head of Regulatory Services stated that the Alcohol Information Scheme can be adopted in the future.

Members showed support for the recommendation

RESOLVED that: the details of the scheme and the reasons why it is not proposed to adopt this scheme at this time be noted.

R58. **HACKNEY CARRIAGE TARRIFF INCREASE**

The Head of Regulatory Services submitted a report to present to the Committee a request made by the Melton Mowbray Taxi Drivers' Association (MMTDA) to consider an increase in the current tariff charges.

The Lead Enforcement Officer stated that he was approached by the Acting Chair of MMTDA regarding a proposal to increase fare tariff, which had already been reported to Licensing Committee on a consultation basis in January.

The Lead Enforcement Officer brought Members attention to Appendix 5 paragraph (3) referencing that if there were no objections to the proposed tariff within the prescribed period, the new Table of Fares would come into being the following day.

The Lead Enforcement Officer also brought Members attention to Appendix 5 paragraph (4) referencing that if objections were received a further date for the proposed increase in the Table of Fares would have to be set.

The Lead Enforcement Officer referred back to 2.2 summarising that when dealing with objections the authority is delegated to The Head of Regulatory Services in consultation with The Chair and nominated Group spokespersons.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The tariff be advertised for increase in line with the tariff proposed by the Melton Mowbray Taxi Drivers Association (MMTDA) and as detailed in the proposed Table of Fares.
- 2) Authority be delegated to the Head of Regulatory Services in consultation with the Chair and nominated Group spokespersons for this Committee to consider any objections against an increase of the tariff (if an objection is considered to be contentious, the objection be reported back to the Committee for consideration).

R59. TAXI LICENCING AND ENFORCEMENT POLICIES

The Head of Regulatory Services presented a report to invite members to consider and approve a new Hackney Carriage and Private Hire policy.

The Chair highlighted recommendations at 2.1 and 2.2

The Lead Enforcement Officer stated that both policies needed reviewing, the main Taxi Policy received minor changes; however the Enforcement Policy is considerably different.

The Lead Enforcement Officer detailed the Enforcement Policy to members and stated that it would now include a penalty point system; and brought members attention to appendix B.

The Lead Enforcement Officer responded verbally to additional comments submitted by Peter Faulkner the Acting Chair of the MMTDA.

The Head of Regulatory Services stated that the new policy had been submitted to Licensing Committee before being released to the public and expressed wishes to conclude the matter on the night.

A Member requested that the condition regarding the age of the vehicle be revised, as he had concerns over limiting the age of licensed vehicles.

The Lead Enforcement Officer made reference to a case which was presented to Licensing Committee regarding a disability adapted vehicle that was over the 10 year age limit, and responded to members comments stating that it would be difficult to establish what is 'good condition' which would be challenging to enforce.

The Lead Enforcement Officer brought members attention to Appendix A paragraph 2.3 referencing the maximum age of vehicles. Further discussion took place around flexibility of the policy regarding the age limit of taxi vehicles.

A Member voiced concerns that the Policy may discourage taxi firms investing in disability adapted vehicles if they can only be used for 10 years. The Head of Regulatory proposed that an amendment stating that; vehicles that exceed the 10 year age limit can be assessed on individual merits according to the policy.

The Strategic Director requested the amendment to be noted with the additional words 'by exception'. The Head of Regulatory Services has been given the delegated authority to insert such amendment into the policy.

A Member voiced opinion that the policy should not be changed.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the proposed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy at Appendix A be adopted and Vehicles that exceed the 10 year age limit can be assessed on individual merits according to policy by exception_the exact words of which are delegated to the Head of Regulatory Services to provide and input into the policy.
- 2) Comments put forward by Members of the trade and the public be considered as a result of the consultation process.

R60. TOWN CENTRE PERFORMANCE 2013

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report seeking Members comments on the Town Centre Performance Report 2013 and

brought Members attention to paragraph 3.3 in the report referencing the fall in vacancy rates in the last year.

He also referenced the Business Survey Analysis which reflected the internet and online shopping as the greatest competitor for the Town Centre businesses, the services offered to those businesses and the support provided around using the internet and social media.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods brought Members attention to paragraph 3.4 asking members to note the Car Parking Strategy which is to be presented to the Committee, and the Town Centre Masterplan which is to commence in April 2014. He also referred to paragraph 3.5 referencing the successful progress made in the Revive and Thrive Challenge Bid in which Melton Borough Council have been shortlisted.

The Chair and a Member praised Officers regarding the work they are doing to get businesses on the internet.

A Member voiced concerns about the entrance to Sherrard Street and that it should be opened up to promote businesses in that area. A Member voiced a concern on behalf of a local shop owner asking whether the sign stating 'End of High Street' could be removed. Both concerns raised were noted by Officers.

A Member drew attention to the footfall counts table shown in Appendix A and questioned the validity of the statistics for 2011. The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods clarified that the anomaly is due to a special event that occurred.

The Members showed support for the recommendation.

RESOLVED that: the Town Centre Performance Report 2013 be noted by Members.

R61. BUSINESS SURVEY

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report to update Members with respect to the evaluation outcomes of the business surveys undertaken by Melton Borough Council in August 2013

The Economic Development Officer brought Members attention to Appendix A referencing the full evaluation report, and the learning collated as a result of the survey. She explained the methodology of conducting the survey, and informed members that the survey was distributed to every business in the Borough, 1300 in total. It was explained that the findings of the survey provided a detailed insight into a variety of topics.

Members were informed that 72.1% of businesses had the intention to grow, which reflects that business confidence is improving as outlined in the EDS. The findings of the survey showed 37.3% of businesses in the Borough rated their broadband connection as reasonable and 1.7% didn't have broadband, which will be improved due to the Broadband Project.

The Economic Development Officer mentioned that the survey also queried business perception in relation to recruitment and skills, where 63.4% indicated a local skills shortage which will be addressed by the EDS in addition to the Me and My Learning Centre based at Phoenix House.

The Chair praised the Economic Development Officer and expressed support for the Broadband Project.

The Communities and Neighbourhood Manager stated that the ESF Bid will help link business needs to those skills which are needed.

The Strategic Director explained the plans to restructure apprenticeships and secure funding for education.

The Strategic Director informed members that she is speaking to employers alongside the Economic Development Officer as to why jobs are not being advertised through Job Centre Plus, after a member raised concerns regarding this.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The evaluation report and proposed next steps be noted.
- 2) The data gathered be noted and the findings from the business survey be approved in order to support further projects in relation to the economic development within the Borough.

R62. THORPE END CAR PARK ORDER

The Head of Central Services submitted a report seeking Members approval of the New Car Parking Order.

The Head of Central Service also sought members' approval to include the Rutland Arms site in the Car Parking Order for use as a short stay car park and enable enforcement of the use of the site.

The report was summarised and it was stated that by demolishing the Rutland Arms and adding car park spaces on the site, it would make up for the loss caused by Thorpe End ceasing its use for pay and display.

Councilor Moncrieff praised the thinking around this strategy and proposed in line with officers recommendations.

Councilor Posnett seconded the proposal.

It was clarified by Officers that the proposed car park would be a 'pay and display' for everyone, between the usual hours.

Chair asked The Head of Communities and Neighborhoods to report to the enforcement agency in reference to a members concern regarding lorries using the Car Park adjacent to Thorpe End Car Park.

RESOLVED that: the grant of the new car park order be noted and approved to;

- a) Allow the closure of the Thorpe End car park enabling the proposal to redevelop the site as a Foyer Housing Scheme, as and when the appropriate Committee Approvals are granted.
- b) Allow the use of the Rutland Arms site, subject to planning and other appropriate approvals, as a short stay pay and display car park.

R63. CATTLE MARKET UPDATE

The Strategic Director (CAM) and Corporate Property Officer submitted a report to update the Committee on the outcome of the recent meeting of the Cattle Market Working Group regarding ways forward in respect of the Cattle Market and the Leicestershire Food Enterprise Centre project.

The Strategic Director introduced the report and stated that the £50,000 will be used to procure expertise and plans regarding the cattle market, which it is hoped will be supported by an additional £60,000 from the LLEP.

She updated Members on the plans for the Cattle Market, and the funding options currently available. It was also stated that the business case will need to be at treasury standard, rather than just a general level of detail. She also stated that if the LLEP funding is not successful, the Cattle Market report may return back to REEA committee to request a 'top up' in funding.

The Strategic Director also added that the Food Enterprise Centre business case will be reviewed in the context of a 'visitor' concept for Melton Mowbray.

The Chair informed Members that the media have requested regular updates in relation to the Cattle Market, as they have expressed strong interest in the development of the cattle market.

The Strategic Director stated that agricultural architects have been appointed, and are planning to have a clear north and south section of the site; however she informed Members of the challenge for the architect of ensuring that there are access routes across the site, while also having to consider where the

Food Enterprise Centre and the Car Park will be placed. She stated that there is still work to be done in relation to the non-livestock side of the site.

The Strategic Director informed members that Melton Borough Council is currently talking to Brooksby Melton College in terms of their plans.

Members showed support for the recommendations

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED that the Public be excluded during the consideration of the following item(s) of business in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (Access to Information: Exempt Information under Paragraphs 1 and 2.

EXEMPT: CATTLE MARKET APPENDIX B

The Strategic Director (CAM) informed members of future proposals and arrangements in regards to the Cattle Market.

It was noted that the MMMP is a limited liability company rather than a limited liability partnership as stated in the report.

The Strategic Director brought members attention to the exempt recommendations and site map.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the update on progress and the opportunities for the Cattle Market Site be noted, in light of potential future funding opportunities, and in particular in respect of the need for the Cattle Market to be upgraded and a plan to be in place for the Cattle Market over the next 15-20 years.
- (b) The submission of both the Cattle Market Rationalisation and Food Enterprise Centre projects for potential inclusion in the LLEPs Strategic Economic Plan be noted.
- (c) The Project Mandate and project objectives attached at Appendix A be approved.
- (d) A supplementary estimate from the Corporate Priorities Reserve of £50,000 which will also act as leverage for a bid to the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) for match funding to support both projects as set out in paragraph 3.7 of the report be approved.

R64. URGENT BUSINESS - GREEN WASTE CLUB SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Head of Regulatory Services submitted a report, copies of which had been circulated, seeking members' approval on how to proceed with Green Waste Subscriptions and to consider approval of a supplementary estimate to be referred to Policy Finance and Administration Committee.

The Chair introduced the report and brought members attention to the recommendation at 2.1 and proposed that option 2 should be considered, to subsidise the service by £30,000, with the addition of officers to negotiate and explore options with BIFFA for the remaining 2 years of the contract.

Proposal seconded by Councillor Illingworth.

The Chair informed members that this may return to committee in September.

Councillor Bush and Councillor Moncrieff voted against the recommendation.

RESOLVED that:

The option to provide a subsidy of £30,000 for the Green Waste service be approved and the supplementary estimate be referred to Policy and Administration Committee, and additionally that officers be requested to negotiate and explore options with BIFFA in respect of the remaining two years of the contract.

The meeting which started at 6:35pm finished at 8:40pm

Chairman