



COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

19th September 2012

PRESENT:-

Councillors D.R. Wright (Chairman) V.J. Manderson (Vice Chairman), P.M Chandler, M.C.R. Graham, E. Holmes, T. Moncrieff, J. Moulding, P.M Posnett, J.B. Rhodes, J. Wyatt.

Observer
Councillor M. Gordon

Chief Executive
Corporate Director (CM), Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods, Chief Accountant, Housing Policy Officer, Community Policy Officer, Administrative Assistant for Communities and Neighbourhoods.

C19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

C20. MINUTES

C10.) Councillor Chandler and Councillor Gordon declared an interest in this item and Item 12 at this point and left the meeting.

27th June 2012- Councillor P.Chandler was present at the meeting.

C14.) Councillor J. Moulding, E. Holmes and M. Moncrieff voted against the recommendation.

The public and exempt minutes of 20th June 2012 and 27th June 2012 were confirmed and authorised to be signed by the Chairman subject to the amendments above.

C21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rhodes and Councillor Posnett declared a personal interest in any matters relating to Leicestershire County Council. Councillor Gordon declared a personal interest in Item 12 and Item 16 by virtue of living in a council house.

C22. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

There were no recommendations from other committees.

UPDATE ON DECISIONS

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report for Members to note the update on decisions from the previous meetings in June.

RESOLVED that the Update on Decisions be noted.

C23. COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods presented a report seeking Members decision to allocate the land for the Grow Your Own Project Melton and the other residents of Melton to use of an area in the Country Park as a community garden.

Members raised concern about the ragwort covering the site and expressed the importance of a safe clearance of the whole area and the possibility of the site being fenced off to avoid spreading of the plant.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the cost of fencing the area needs to be dealt with within existing budgets and that once the area is cleared the community will fund the running of the site.

RESOLVED that the use of the area in the Country Park for the use of a community garden for the residents of Melton be supported, subject to the appropriate clearance of the site and surrounding areas in light of the issues of ragwort.

C24. BUDGET MONITORING APRIL TO JUNE 2012

The Head of Central Services submitted a report providing Members with information on actual expenditure and income on this committees services.

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

C25. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING TO 31 AUGUST 2012

The Head of Central Services submitted a report asking Members to note the capital scheme progress.

The Chief Accountant brought Members attention to para 5.3 explaining that the stated Tenants Forum Executive Committee should read the Affordable Warmth Steering Group. The Chief Accountant also pointed out that both grants in point 5.4 were funded externally.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The progress made on each capital scheme be noted.
- 2) The increases in the approval levels of spending as set out in paragraph 5.3 and 5.4 be submitted to the Policy, Finance and Administration committee for approval.

C26. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2012-17

The Head of Central Services submitted a report to determine the Committee's Capital Programme for 2012-17 based on a review of spending in the current year's programme and schemes included in the programme for later years.

The Chief Accountant drew Members attention to para 3.2.4 explaining that there are a number of new projects that are in the early stages of development and therefore the figures for these will be included in the capital programme at a later date when costs become clearer.

It was suggested that the Cemetery Natural Burial site Feasibility study mentioned in Appendix B could be brought to the committee for Members approval.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The committee notes the Capital Programme for 2012-17
- 2) Members consider the schemes being submitted in 2012-17 for funding as part of the budget setting process to ensure they meet the Councils priorities.

C27. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT- BUDGET MONITORING 1 APRIL 2012- 30 JUNE 2012

The Head of Central Services submitted a report to provide information to Members on actual expenditure and income occurred on the Housing Revenue Account compared to the latest approved budget for the period 1st April 2012 to 30th June 2012.

The Chief Accountant explained that there will be an ongoing review of the working balance to take into account the implications of the HRA reform.

Members asked questions about the Bad and Doubtful debts mentioned in Appendix A, and were reassured by the Chief Accountant and the Corporate Director that each tenant in debt to the Council is sent reminder letters, contacted and court action takes place if required, however these debts may be repaid over a large period of time.

RESOLVED that the financial position on the HRA to 30th June 2012 be noted.

C28. A CORPORATE REVIEW OF CHARGES 2013-14

The Head of Central Services submitted a report to provide Members with various information on fees and charges that were made by this committee.

The Chief Accountant explained that Deloitte have carried out a benchmarking exercise across 18 Councils across the East Midlands, focussing on fees and charges.

Discussions took place regarding Appendix A in relation to public conveniences and it was explained that £107,040 was the Net cost of the operation of this service. A Member stressed the importance of covering the costs from users because the only alternative is to decrease the level of service. The installation of solar panels onto the roofs of the public conveniences were also suggested.

Members raised concern about seeing a thorough review of charges before the reopening of the Waterfield Leisure facility and after some discussion it was decided that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of this committee and the Leader of the Council to set charges for Waterfield Leisure Centre Facilities.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the proposed level of charges for 2012-14 for each of the services set out in the attached table to operate from 1st April be approved.
- 2) Delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of this committee and the Leader of the Council to set charges for Waterfield Leisure Facility.

C29. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)- REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2012/14

The Head of Central services submitted a report to provide information on the various fees and charges that are made by this committee for the HRA.

A Members drew attention to para 3.4 Guest room Charge and several Members questioned why the existing and proposed charge for this service was so low. The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods explained that the proposed charge would be per person, per night and read out current charges that other local authorities charge. A Member suggested that it was important to find out whether this charge covers the cost of the service, and it was suggested that the Officers come back to the next meeting with an outline of the actual charge.

Councillor Holmes left the meeting.

A Member questioned why there was such a wide range of existing fees and charges of accommodation in Appendix A and why the price variance was so great and it was decided that the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods would respond to this at the next meeting once more information had been gathered.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The committee determines the level of charges for 2013/14 for each of the services set out in the attached table as per Appendix A
- 2) An outline of the actual charge of servicing the guest rooms be brought back to the next meeting.

Councillor Holmes returned to the meeting

C30. **HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

Councillor Gordon left the room because of a personal interest in this item.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods presented a report to provide Members with an update on the Major Housing related projects for the Council. The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods explained that a meeting had taken place on the 13th September with G Purchase to further discuss the mobilisation process and to embed the responsive repairs service and the ambitions of the new contractors will be brought back to Members

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods drew Members attention to recommendation 2.4 and explained that the negotiations with home owners regarding the Fairmead Regeneration had already taken place to ensure seamless progression once stage one is ready.

A Member queried the progression of the Housing Foyer project and asked if there was any update. The Chief Executive explained that discussions with the County Council were underway regarding this.

A Member expressed how impressive some of the savings to residents had been in regards to para 3.5.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The progress update be noted and that a further report be made on the Garage Sites Project to this Committee setting out further details
- 2) The progressing regarding the implementation of the Housing Responsive Repairs contract be noted and that the Task Group be monitoring progress and report back to this committee in due course.
- 3) The update on the Fairmead Regeneration Project be noted
- 4) Delegated authority be given to the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods in consultation with the Head of Central Services and the Solicitor to the Council following successful negotiations with the affected home owners that the Regeneration and Development reserve be used to fund the cost of acquisitions and be added to the Capital Programme subject to the approval of the Policy, Finance and Admin Committee.
- 5) The update on the Housing Foyer Project be noted
- 6) The update on the Affordable Warmth Project be noted.

C31. **THORPE ROAD CEMETERY REVIEW OF SERVICE CHANGES SINCE APRIL 2012**

Councillor Gordon returned

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report to provide an update in regards to changes in the way the Cemetery Service has been delivered since April 2012 following receipt of a petition to Full Council on 18th July 2012.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods brought Members attention to para 3.3 outlining a number of actions that have been taken. The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods stated that there has not been an increase in Anti Social Behaviour issues since the changes have been made, and that signage will be displayed by the 20th September and that the CCTV will be installed by 28th September.

A Member raised concern about the changes that had been made and questioned whether the installation of this equipment costs less than getting an employee to open and shut the gates. The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods explained he didn't know the exact costs but the changes in the long run would cost less.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The contents of the report be noted.
- 2) Further cemetery performance and cemetery issue reports be sought periodically.

Councillor Holmes abstained from voting.

C32. CITIZEN ADVICE BUREAU

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report outlining the current CAB service until 30th September 2012, when a further update report outlining the longer term proposal will be presented to this committee.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods brought Members attention to para 3.3 and stated that figures of users of the CAB service are on par with the amount before the relocation to Parkside.

Clarification was given about para 5.1 that the £50,000 stated includes the CAB service as well as Money Advice Service and Clockwise Credit Union Services that are currently being offered.

The Head of Community and Neighbourhoods brought Members attention to para 5.3 updating Members that discussion are taking place with CAB on a proposed licence fee.

A Member congratulated the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods and the team on the work that had been done in expanding this Service.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The current CAB service in Melton be noted and the extension of the current service until 30th September 2013 be approved, when a further update report outlining the longer term proposal will be presented to this committee.

C33. LOCAL AUTHORITY MORTGAGE SCHEME (LAMS)

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report to consult Members of the proposal to participate in Leicestershire County Councils Local Authority Mortgage Scheme and to inform members that participation in the LCC LAMS Scheme requires a capital investment of £1,000,000 from the authority.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods explained that the Local Authority Mortgage scheme exists to stimulate an increase in first time buyers.

A discussion took place about the capital investment being spent within the Melton Borough and the importance of the money not being spent elsewhere in the County.

The Housing Policy Officer was asked if this scheme can be used on shared ownership properties and replied that although the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme does not cover this area, LAPP a shared ownership version of LAMS, will cover this. The Housing Policy Officer explained that currently it doesn't stack up financially, but Sector are looking into this, along with various authorities, with Melton Borough Council being included in these discussions.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the recommendation to participate in LCC's LAMS Scheme be approved and the attached project mandate and business case for inclusion in the capital programme for 2012-13 be approved
- 2) the Policy, Finance & Administration Committee (PFA) be asked to approve £1,000,000 in 2012-13 as a capital investment in the LAMS Scheme funded by capital receipts.
- 3) the investment of the capital in the LAMS scheme via the Cash-Backed Indemnity option be approved (para. 5.6 refers).
- 4) PFA be recommended that the annual interest be set-aside in a specific reserve for the period of the indemnity (para. 5.7 refers).
- 5) Full Council be recommended that the Annual Investment Strategy be amended in accordance with paragraph 5.10.
- 6) delegated authority be given to the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods in consultation with the Chair of Community & Social Affairs Committee, Head of Central Services and the Solicitor to the Council to agree the Service Level Agreement between LCC, Melton Borough Council and the chosen financial institution.
- 7) The £1,000,000 be applicable only to those buying houses in the Borough of Melton.

C34. TENANCY POLICY

Councillor Gordon left the meeting due to an interest in this item.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods presented a report seeking Members approval of the Tenancy Policy (2012-17)

The Housing Policy Officer explained that the Tenancy Policy follows on from Melton's Tenancy Strategy that was approved by this committee on the 20th June 2012.

Members raised concern about the lack of authority to review peoples' financial positions to explore whether they are eligible for affordable housing and the importance of taking peoples changing financial situations into account.

After a short discussion Members felt that the Council Tenancy Policy needed to implement fix term tenancies with appropriate exceptions, whilst still having in place insecure probationary and introductory tenancies as needed.

It was suggested that the report be taken through the task group and back to this Committee

RESOLVED that the Tenancy Policy be brought back to the Community and Social Affairs Committee.

Councillor Moncrieff left
Councillor Gordon returned

C35. AGEING WELL STRATEGY

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report seeking Members comments and approval on the Melton Ageing Well Strategy statement 2012-2015.

The Community Policy Officer brought Members attention to Appendix A stating that the strategies priorities have been developed after Local consultation and in partnership with the Seniors Forum and Associates. The Community Policy Officer stated that this was a three year strategy that will be reviewed on an annual basis.

2 Members congratulated the Community Policy Officer, welcoming the strategy and expressing it importance in Melton.

RESOLVED that the Melton ageing well strategy statement 2012- 2015 be approved.

C36. BENEFIT FRAUD SECURITY STRATEGY

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report seeking Members approval of the updated Benefit Fraud Strategy (September 2012)

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods explained that the Benefit Fraud Security strategy had been updated to incorporate new Government Guidance and legislation and that now incorporated into the strategy (Appendix 5) is the arrest policy.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods drew Members attention to para 5.1 which explains that the Council can now claim back the higher of an additional 50% of any overpaid monies compared with a previous 30%.

Councillor Moncrieff returned.

RESOLVED that the new updated Benefit Fraud Security Strategy be approved to ensure it meets the guidelines and legislation as set by Government.

C37. LEISURE VISION

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods presented a report updating Members on the progress taken towards the development of the Leisure Vision for Melton Borough and seeking Members approval to recommend to the Policy, Finance and Administrative Committee the allocation of £30,000 from the working balance to provide pump priming funding for the project.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods stated that the Council is looking at wider leisure and culture vision for Melton after further consultation (Appendix A). Appendix B outlined the consultation development plan which would provide a more detailed audit of what is available in the town centre.

A Member raised concern about what the Council would get for the £30,000 operation, other Members expressed the importance of a consultation to learn how people spend their leisure time resulting in knowing the best way to spend the money.

The Chief Executive explained that on the past there had been clear instruction to officers that Members wanted to fully understand what the community wanted. The Chief Executive also explained the importance of consultation in applying for funding and the importance of taking your community with you and getting people onboard.

A Member highlighted the importance of establishing the demands of the community to provide the revenue to support the project.

Further discussions took place about the need for a large multi-purpose room in the Borough, the need for regular updates to the committee to ensure value for money and the importance of making sure the age group of 15-25 is fairly represented to ensure their input.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The progress taken towards the development of the Leisure Vision be noted
- 2) The allocation of £30,000 from the working balance to provide the pump priming funding for the projects be recommended to Policy, Finance and Administration and that the Project Mandate and Business case be approved.

C38. HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report asking Members to note and comment on the Housing Related Support Service provided to vulnerable tenants.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods drew Members attention to para 3.7 and 3.8 outlining recent performance and significant improvements in services.

RESOLVED that the Housing Related Support Service provided to tenants be noted.

C39. COMMUNAL CLEANSING CONTRACT SPECIFICATION FOR COUNCIL TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods presented a report updating Members on the communal cleansing contract to the general needs block of flats.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods explained that feedback via various tenants forums was that bi-monthly cleans were not enough and a monthly cleaning was suggested.

RESOLVED that the Communal Cleaning Contract specification that was used as part of the procurement process be noted and approved.

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 Paragraph 3.

C40. APPROVAL TO AWARD A COMMUNAL CLEANSING CONTRACT FOR COUNCIL TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS (FLATS ONLY)

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report seeking Members approval to award a communal cleansing contract to the general needs blocks of flat following a procurement process.

Councillor Moncrieff and Councillor Moulding proposed and seconded recommendation 2.1 (iii) to cease delivering the service, however no other Members were in favour of this.

Councillor Graham left the meeting

RESOLVED that recommendations 2.1 (i) and 2.1 (ii) be approved.

2 Members abstained from voting and 2 Members were against the vote.

C41. CCTV CO-ORDINATOR

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods presented a report to update

Members on the CCTV system in Melton and the current monitoring arrangement for the CCTV system and to seek approval from the committee for Melton Borough Council to become the employment body for the CCTV co-ordinator from April 2013 onwards.

RESOLVED that the recommendation be recommended and noted

The meeting which commenced at 6.30 p.m, closed at 9:43p.m.

Chairman