



COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

22nd January 2014

PRESENT:-

Councillors D.R. Wright (Chairman) V.J. Manderson (Vice Chairman), P. Chandler, M. Graham, L. Horton, S. Lumley, J.B. Rhodes, M. Twitney, P. Posnett

As Observer

M. Gordon, J. Illingworth.

As Substitute

T. Moncrieff (as substitute for J. Moulding)

Strategic Director (CAM), Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods, Senior Accountant, Community Policy Officer, Welfare, Housing and Revenues Manager, Waste and Environmental Maintenance Manager, Administrative Assistant for Communities and Neighbourhoods. Young Mayor, Deputy Young Mayor.

C46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J. Moulding

C47. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th November 2013 were confirmed and authorised to be signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Graham left the meeting.

C48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rhodes declared a personal and non pecuniary interest in relation to any issues concerning the Leicestershire County Council by virtue of him being a County Councillor. Councillor Gordon declared a personal and pecuniary interest in Item 6 by virtue of her living in a council house and a personal interest in Item 8 by virtue of a family member having dementia. Councillor Twitney declared a personal and non-pecuniary interest in Item 10 by virtue of him being a CAP money course coach. Councillor Chandler declared a personal and pecuniary interest in the Urgent Item by virtue of her being on the Planning Committee.

C49. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

There were no recommendations from other committees.

C50. UPDATE ON DECISIONS

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted an update on decisions from the previous meeting of this committee.

RESOLVED that the update on decision be noted.

Councillor Graham returned to the meeting.

C51. HRA BUDGET/RENT SETTING REPORT

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

The Head of Central Services and the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a joint report to set the rents for Council dwellings, approve the HRA estimates for 2014/15 and set the working balance for 2014/15.

The Senior Accountant drew Members attention to para 3.2 and the proposed rent increase. Members noted that this was the final year of the rent-restructuring policy and the convergence of requirements. The rent increase proposal was also compared to other authorities in the county, which showed this Council's to be the lowest increase.

A Member raised concern that the increase in rents coincided with the Governments welfare reform changes. Discussions took place about the bad and doubtful debt provision for rents.

Councillor Posnett entered the meeting.

The recommendations were proposed by The Leader of the Council and were seconded by Councillor Graham.

Councillor Horton and Moncrieff voted against the recommendation.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The average rent increase of 4.63% be approved for Council dwellings for 2014-15 with effect from 31 March 2014 and that when a property is re-let the rent continues to be brought into line with the Governments formula rent
- 2) The estimates for 2014-15 be approved subject to the receipt of the limit rent determination, with delegated authority being given to the Head of Central Services in consultation with the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods to amend the estimated working balance based on changes to this determination.
- 3) The working balance of £949,369 be budgeted for at 31st March 2015 based on an average 4.63% rent increase.

Councillor Gordon returned to the meeting.

C52. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING TO 31 DECEMBER 2013

The Head of Central Services submitted a report to update the committee on the progress of schemes within the Capital Programme to 31 December 2013. Discussion took place about the Appendix C- Melton Skate park, the potential for external funding and the potential of setting a fund raising target.

A Member queried the lack of expenditure from the Disabled Facilities Grants. It was agreed that a report be brought back to this committee to investigate the reasons for the low referral rates.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded by Councillor Posnett and Councillor Chandler.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The progress made on each capital scheme be noted and a report be brought back to committee with reference the Disabled Facilities Grant fund.
- 2) The business case for the Country Park Pavillion be approved as attached at Appendix B subject to the remaining funding being approved as part of the budget for 2014/15
- 3) The Project mandate for the Melton Skate park attached at appendix C and inclusions in the 2014/15 capital programme be approved.

C53. LEICESTERSHIRE DEMENTIA ACTION ALLIANCE

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report to seek Members approval to sign up to the National Dementia Declaration and become a member of the Leicestershire Dementia Action Alliance.

The Community Policy Officer brought Members attention to Appendix B-Section 3, which outlined the overall aims of the Leicestershire Local Alliance. Members attention was also brought to para 3.1.5 of the report and the Community Policy Officer explained that a staffing resource may be needed to attend various meetings, however, should any financial resource be required, a further report will be brought back to this committee.

Members congratulated The Community Policy Officer on the quality of the work that had been carried out.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded by Councillor Moncrieff and Councillor Posnett.

It was decided that Councillor Posnett be appointed as the Dementia champion.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The National Dementia Declaration be signed up to
- 2) The Council become a Member of the Leicestershire Dementia Action Alliance

C54. NATURAL BURIAL FEASIBILITY PROJECT.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a revised report providing Members with an update with regards to the potential of forming a partnership or joint agreement, with a local landowner expressing interest in working together with the council, with a view to establishing a local 'Natural Burial' site.

The Waste and Environmental Maintenance Manager explained that the report outlined 4 possible locations, the next step being a feasibility study of the recommended site/s to assess the suitability of the land and its accessibility.

Discussion took place about the location of the sites with regard to future development of the town as well as a wider cemetery services review that could also include the feasibility of a crematorium.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded by Councillor Rhodes and Councillor Lumley.

RESOLVED that Option 1 and 4 be taken forward for further detailed work to be undertaken regarding the development of establishing a local 'Natural Burial' site.

C55. MONEY ADVICE REPORT

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods presented a report asking Members to note the recent report published by the Money Advice Service and the actions of the Council to mitigate some of the issues raised.

The Welfare, Housing and Revenues Manager brought Members attention to para 2.2 and highlighted the statistic stating that 41% feel that they lack the skills and confidence to deal with creditors. Attention was also drawn to the table at 3.9 which outlines that the majority of people prefer to access services face to face.

Discussion took place about the accessibility of services and the possibility of signposting debt services on the council tax bills being sent to all tenants.

Members congratulated the Welfare, Housing and Revenues Manager on the work that him and his team had done

Councillor Illingworth left the meeting.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded by Councillor Twitney and Councillor Manderson.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The recent Money Advice Service report Indebted Lives: the complexities of life in debt be noted.
- 2) The responses on how the council is tackling the issues raised in the recent Money Advice report be noted and supported.

C56. GOOD PRACTICE PRINCIPLES TO SUPPORT THE SELF-FINANCED HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report asking Members to note and comment on the Good Practice Principles outlined in the Self-Financed Housing Revenue Account document, after considering the councils response to those principles.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods brought Members attention to para 3.4 outlining the principles and officers responses.

The recommendations were proposed and seconded by Councillor Rhodes and Councillor Posnett.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The Good Practice Principles set out in the document be noted.
- 2) The responses outlined in section 3.4 to the Good Practice Principle be noted and supported

C57. THE HUB- MELTON COUNTRY PARK

Councillor Posnett declared an interest in this item by virtue of her being the Chair of the Board at the Melton Learning Hub.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods and the Head of Central Services submitted a joint report to approve the basis of agreement for the Hub to continue to occupy the Visitors Centre in the Country Park and to grant delegated powers to enter into a new arrangement.

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods drew members to para 3.2 outlining the proposals.

It was clarified by Councillor Posnett that none of the option listed in para 3.2 will impact on the groups currently using the function room.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Delegated powers be granted to the Head of Central Services in consultation with the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods to enter into an appropriate agreement to enable The Hub to continue to occupy the building on the with a preference of Option 2 as set out in para 3.2.

C58. URGENT BUSINESS

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RECOMMENDED 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

Councillor Chandler left the meeting due personal and pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of her being on the Planning Committee.

HOUSING FOYER

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods presented an urgent report which advised Members of the progress of a redevelopment opportunity.

Discussion took place about the viability of the site.

RESOLVED that the recommendations were approved.

The meeting which commenced at 6.30p.m, closed at 8:32 p.m.

Chairman