



POLICY, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

PARKSIDE, STATION APPROACH, BURTON STREET, MELTON MOWBRAY

13 APRIL 2016

Present:-

Councillors J.B Rhodes (Chairman), P.M Posnett (Vice Chair), R. de Burle, M. Glancy, L. Higgins, E. Holmes, D.R Wright, J. Wyatt,

As Substitute:-

A. Pearson for T. Greenow

As Observer:-

J. Illingworth

Chief Executive, Head of Central Services,
Head of Communications, Head of Regulatory Services,
Manager of HR and Communications, People and Place Manager,
Committee Support Officer (KW)

P60. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Greenow.

P61. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2016 were agreed to be amended. P55. Paragraph 8 should read:

“A Member commented that there is talk in the media that the Government are considering changes to the system for allocating New Homes Bonus Grant. Possible changes are: no grant payable for housing constructed after the Planning committee have refused the application which is subsequently approved on appeal; finding restricted to numbers of housing units above a threshold (possible that that could be as low as 57 in Melton); funding timescales reduced from 6 years to 3 years. All these would put Melton at a disadvantage and might lead to the Planning Committee coming under pressure to put political considerations above objectivity.”

The exempt minute was confirmed and authorised to be signed by the Chairman.

P62. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Rhodes, Posnett and Pearson declared personal interests in any matters relating to the Leicestershire County Council due to their positions as County Councillors.

Councillors Rhodes and Pearson declared pecuniary interests in Item 14 due to their involvement with Leicestershire County Council and the Better Care Fund and left the room during this discussion.

P63. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

There were no recommendations from other committees.

P64. UPDATE ON DECISIONS

The updates on decisions were agreed.

P65. SYRIAN REFUGEE SETTLEMENT PROGRAMME

The Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods submitted a report to update Members on the Governments request in relation to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and the Asylum Seekers Dispersal Area. A request for Members to approve an allocation in regards to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme was made.

The People and Place Manager presented the report to Members and highlighted the difference in the two schemes, the Asylum Seekers Dispersal Area and the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. The Government has asked how many families Melton Borough Council can accommodate under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. The People and Place Manager recommended that Members approve that two families per year are accommodated. MBC will be in partnership with other districts in the County and Charnwood Borough Council will take the lead to liaise with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to identify cases. MBC will help identify privately rented houses that would be suitable for the families and stressed that council houses would not be provided to accommodate the families. The funding that MBC will receive from the Government is currently under discussion but some of the funding will go to Charnwood Borough Council as the lead agency.

A Member explained that he has no hesitation to move the recommendations and feels that the UK Government is more compassionate towards refugees as they provide a safe passage into the country rather than other countries where refugees are required to make long and dangerous trips to get to safety.

A Member asked about providing religious facilities for the refugees and it was explained that Melton Borough Council will not have to provide religious facilities in the town as there are facilities in Leicester and other towns. The benefits that the families will receive will pay for transport that they require to ensure they have access to religious facilities.

It was explained that Harborough District Council will take on 1 family per year and that Charnwood Borough Council will take 4 families per year, all other Councils in the scheme will take 2. Families will be classed as adults with children, or a single parent with children. Under 18's travelling alone are not expected to be accepted under this scheme. It is expected that 40 days' notice will be provided before the family comes to the UK to ensure places at schools are available and where possible the children will be placed at the same school to reduce costs on interpreters and other resources.

Questions were raised about extended families coming across to the UK and it was explained that each member of the family will have a visa and it will be the Home Office's decision to bring other individuals to the UK. Each member of the family will receive funding, initially around £20k per year but this will be reduced as the family integrate into the community. All funding will be provided by the Government so there will be no demand on the Council's budgets. The People and Place Manager explained that regular updates will be provided to Members as costing is difficult due to each family having different demands.

All recommendations were moved by Councillor Wright and Councillor Higgins seconded.

All members were unanimously in favour.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The update on the Governments request in relation to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme and the Asylum Seekers Dispersal Area be noted.
- 2) An allocation of 2 families (up to 10 persons) per annum in relation to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme be approved.

P66. SETTING UP A MELTON LOTTERY

The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods submitted a report to gain agreement to undertake an assessment of the viability of a local community lottery for the Borough of Melton. The aims being to support the voluntary and community sector, also easing the financial strains on the Council and to enable good causes to raise funds directly.

The People and Place Manager presented the report to Members and explained that Aylesbury Vale District Council are already running a Lottery which was started in September 2015. If Melton set up a Lottery then voluntary sector and community organisations could receive extra funding as the funding that the Council is able to provide is reduced. The Lottery could help the Council with commercialisation to provide savings, the exact figures of the savings have not yet been confirmed, however business models have been looked at and a full business model will be brought back to members if the recommendations are approved.

There was concern that the scoping exercise will cost and it was confirmed that the only costs involved will be Officer time, and it was assured that other duties will not be affected whilst the scoping exercise is on-going. If the scoping exercise is successful then the results would be brought to the Committee in summer with a view to implement the scheme in November.

A Member expressed the positivity with the Lottery and it was felt that the community organisations taking part may receive more funding than the grants from the Council could provide and it was felt that giving the public an option of which organisation the funding goes to and to keep the lottery local was wonderful.

It was explained that the scheme will be underwritten and unlike the National Lottery there is scope for the top prize not to be divided amongst the winners and there will be a guaranteed amount for each winner for the top prize.

All recommendations were moved by Councillor Posnett and Councillor Glancy seconded.

All members were unanimously in favour.

RESOLVED that

1) A scoping exercise on the viability of a lottery for the Borough and, if viable, to return to the Policy, Finance & Administration Committee with a fully worked up business case be approved.

2) The project mandate be approved as attached at Appendix A.

(Councillor Higgins here left the meeting)

P67. AUDIO RECORDINGS OF MEETINGS- REPORT BACK ON PUBLIC INTEREST

The Head of Communications submitted a report to provide feedback on public interest of audio recordings at Full Council Meetings. There were only two recordings downloaded for Full Council in July 15, December 15 and February 16 so there is not a great deal of public interest.

A Member explained that the continuation would not be cost effective. It was clarified that this report was only concerning the recording of Full Council Meetings and downloading onto the website and that the Planning Committee would continue to be recorded for internal use only.

All recommendations were moved by Councillor Wyatt and Councillor Wright seconded.

All members were unanimously in favour.

RESOLVED that

1) Audio recordings at Full Council meetings to be discontinued.

(The People and Place Manager and Councillor Holmes here left the meeting)

P68. LIVING/ NATIONAL LIVING WAGE

The Head of Communications submitted a report to seek approval to make changes to the Pay Policy from 2017/18 in relation to the Living Wage as recommended by the Budget and Strategic Planning Working Group.

The Head of Communications explained that the National Living Wage is statutory and the Living Wage Foundation rate is voluntary. The report that was taken to the Budget and Strategic Planning Working Group (BSPWG) recommended that the living wage foundation rate is replaced with the National Living Wage. There are 17 staff members paid at the foundation living wage and no new employees will be placed on this rate with Pay increases being covered across the Council no matter what the age of the employee except for employees on apprenticeships.

A Member asked if the implication of cost across other service areas have been factored in and it was explained that the question was raised at BSPWG but nothing was flagged up by services in respect of outsourced services. It was discussed that Leicestershire County Council are re-doing all of their pay scales to ensure that people on higher pay scales currently are not paid the same as the lower paid jobs.

All recommendations were moved by Councillor Posnett and Councillor Wright seconded.

All members were unanimously in favour.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Recommendation be made to Full Council that the Pay Policy for 2017/18 takes into consideration the recommendations by the Budget and Strategic Planning Working Group in relation to the Living Wage;
- 2) Recommendation be made to Full Council the adoption of the National Living Wage to replace the Living Wage Foundation rate from 1 April 2017;
- 3) Staff receiving the Living Wage Foundation rate at 1 April 2016 be retained at the current rate until the National Living Wage is equal to or exceeds that rate;
- 4) The National Living Wage be applied to employees under the age of 25 with the exception of those on an approved apprenticeship programme.

(The Head of Communications left the meeting at this point)

P69. CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROVISIONAL YEAR END POSITION 2015/16

The Head of Central Services to submitted a report to provide information on the provisional Capital Programme year end position for 2015-16, including a range of performance measures, and to give consideration for requests for carrying forward unspent budgets in 2015-16 to 2016-17 in respect of specific schemes.

The Head of Central Services explained that Appendix A shows the position at the year end on all of the schemes within the Council's capital programme. The summary in the table on page 2 shows an overall spend of 61% against approved budgets for all Council funds.

It was requested that a number of underspends be carried forward into 2016/17 as set out in Appendix A. Any small residual underspends will be added back into the appropriate reserves. There was also requests to allow some of the DFG underspend to be used to fund warm home grants and an adjustment in the spend on the HRA between projects in addition a revised spending profile and associated funding is submitted for approval for the cattle market.

It was questioned why in Appendix A the Melton Country Park-Car Park was at £0 in all the columns. It was clarified that this is because a mandate has been approved but no business case has been put forward, there is a delay in the car park because of the uncertainty around the pavilion and staff shortages in the property team mean that this has not progressed.

All recommendations were moved by Councillor Rhodes and Councillor Posnett seconded.

All members were unanimously in favour.

RESOLVED that

- 1) those schemes in the 2015-16 Capital Programme totalling £2,132,000 and shown in the column headed "Amount to Carry Forward to 2016-17 Scheme Specific" at Appendix A be carried forward and included in the Capital Programme as funded schemes.
- 2) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Central Services to vary the amount of the agreed carry forward on any scheme subject to the spending on any scheme not exceeding the total approved amount.
- 3) A request to carry £7,000 from the Disabled Facilities Grant, underspend, over to the Warm Homes Grant for 2016/17, be approved.
- 4) the revised profile and funding of spending for the Cattle Market re-development project as outlined in para 3.7 be approved.
- 5) the adjusted HRA capital programme, as referred to para 3.9 be approved. It should be noted that the budgets are being adjusted between projects and the total programme has not changed.

P70. REVENUE ESTIMATES CARRY FORWARD REQUESTS

The Head of Central Services submitted a report for approval requests from budget holders to carry forward under spent budgets from 2015/16 to 2016/17.

The Head of Central Services explained that this report summarises those requests that have been made by budget holders to carry forward unspent revenue budgets into 2016/17. Since the report was written an increase to the amount requested from the Communities and Neighbourhoods budget is requested to fund the on going work with the Revenue and Benefits. The requests have been scrutinised by Management Team and consideration given to services that carried forward amounts last year and also what the year end position was previously for those services. This is to enable a balance to be struck between allowing flexibility and not allowing budgets to be built up above a level that can be resourced. Those requests in excess of £50k to go to Full Council for approval in line with the financial procedure rules.

A revised appendix A was circulated and the last item before the sub total in respect of Communities and Neighbourhoods has increased from £17,620 to £45,120 and the sub total updated amending the general underspend to £145,140 from £116,640.

It was questioned as to why the scooters are costing £4,500 each on the Wheels to Work scheme and to why they are not leased. Leasing is not the Councils policy as it is not cost effective it is speculated that the cost is due to the scooters being three wheeler and electric however The Head of Central Services is to investigate the cost of the wheels to work scooters and ensure evidence is produced for cost effectiveness.

All recommendations were moved by Councillor Rhodes and Councillor Posnett seconded.

All members were unanimously in favour.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the requests set out in Appendix A for budgets to be carried forward from 2015/16 to 2016/17 be approved;
- 2) The requests in excess of £50,000 be submitted to Full Council for approval; and
- 3) once the final year end position is known the actual under spend be compared to the amount requested and the Head of Central Services be given delegated authority to amend the actual amount carried forward.

P71. BUDGET MONITORING APRIL TO DECEMBER 2015

The Head of Central Services submitted a report to provide information on actual expenditure and income incurred on this Committee's services compared to the latest approved budget for the period 1st April 2015 to 31st December 2015.

The Head of Central Services explained that the report sets out the financial position for all Council's services as well as the committees own services to the end of December 2015 including a forecast to the year end. The information has previously been supplied to Members in the Members Bulletin.

Those budgets which are high risk are also subject to more scrutiny on a monthly basis and the position on these budgets to the end of February is attached at Appendix B. The overall predicted position at the year-end based on the end of December 2015 is an overall breakeven position. More up to date reports to MT support this position. However historically when the accounts are finalised a number of small underspends often become apparent which places the overall result in a more favourable position. Were this to happen again this would be in line with the financial position that was reported to Members when the Council tax was set. The key variances for this Committees services are set out in paragraph 3.8.

The year end has not been finalised yet and the final figure is expected in early to mid May.

All recommendations were moved by Councillor Wright and Councillor de Burle seconded.

All members were unanimously in favour.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the financial position on each of this Committee's services 31st December 2015 be noted along with the year end forecast.

P72. ITEMS FOR APPROVAL UNDER FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES

The Head of Central Services submitted a report to provide requests for approval of this Committee under Financial Procedure Rules and to provide information on amounts approved under delegated powers and to report the impact of these on the Council's reserves and balances.

Recommendations 2.1 and 2.3 were moved by Councillor Wright and Councillor de Burle seconded. Recommendation 2.2 was removed as it was not approved by Governance Committee.

All members were unanimously in favour.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The virements approved under delegated powers (para. 3.1.1 refers) are noted;
- 2) The capital programme for the Melton Sports and Leisure Village project be increased from £90k to £140k, with the additional £50k funded by external funding, as recommended by the Community and Social Affairs Committee and outlined in paragraph 5.1.

(Councillors Rhodes and Pearson here left the meeting)

P73. CORPORATE ISSUES

The Chief Executive submitted a report to bring Members up to date with Corporate activities and issues which have occurred in the intervening period since the last report.

The Chief Executive briefed Members on the iESE and is looking at improving the relationship with the organisation by formally becoming a Member. In Paragraph 3.2 it gives Members an insight into the visits that the Council has received. Links with Aylesbury Vale District Council are developing.

Discussions are continuing regarding the Combined Authority the Constitution has been supplied in draft but there is no operating agreement yet provided.

The Better Care Fund assists in integration of Adult, Social care and Health. Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) were included in the Better Care Fund and previously full sums were “passported” to the District councils for delivery. This year the DFG monies were increased but due to Better Care Fund commitments, these were not forwarded to the Districts, who received funding at 2015/16 levels. The report explained how the Council’s priorities were supported by the use of these monies through the Better Care Fund. Therefore the Officers suggested the funding mechanism for 2016/17 be approved.

The Tourism Review was explained to Members and the concerns were raised about the promotion of Melton’s brand. There are three options out for consultation and the Chief Executive suggested to Members that the response attached at Appendix A is supported for submission.

A Member questioned the risks within the report and it was explained that the financial impact risk is a high corporate risk but is managed long term.

Consideration was given to Member involvement under the Efficiency Plan development this was supported by the Chief Executive who indicated this would be discussed in the report to this Committee at its next cycle.

All recommendations were moved by Councillor Wright and Councillor Wyatt seconded.

All members were unanimously in favour.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The progress with the Combined Authority is noted.
- 2) The arrangements for the funding of Disabled Facilities Grants be approved.
- 3) The consultation response to the Tourism review set out in appendix A be approved for submission.

(Councillors Rhodes and Pearson here re-entered the meeting)

P74. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

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.

P75. REQUEST FOR VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY

The Head of Communications to submit a report to seek authority to agree a request for voluntary redundancy. The application has been received as part of the implementation of the new Customer Services structure.

RESOLVED that all the recommendations in the report be approved.

P76. CATTLE MARKET ITEM FOR APPROVAL UNDER FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES

The Head of Central Services to submit a report to provide requests for approval of this Committee under Financial Procedure Rules and to provide information on amounts approved under delegated powers and to report the impact of these on the Council's reserves and balances.

RESOLVED that the recommendation in the report be approved.

P77. LEGAL CHALLENGE TO PLANNING APPEAL DECISION MADE BY SECRETARY OF STATE: PLANNING APPLICATIONS AT THORPE SATCHVILLE

The Head of Regulatory Services to submit a report inviting consideration of the role the Council should take in legal proceedings brought against a planning appeal decision made by the Secretary of State.

RESOLVED that all recommendations in the report be approved.

The meeting which commenced at 6.30 p.m., closed at 08.05 p.m.

Chairman