

Minutes



Meeting name	Cabinet
Date	Thursday, 26 September 2019
Start time	4.00 pm
Venue	Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH

Present:

Chair Councillor J. Orson (Chair)

Councillors L. Higgins (Vice-Chair) R. de Burle
A. Freer-Jones J. Illingworth
A. Pearson

Observers

Officers Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive & Director for People & Communities
Director for Corporate Services
Director for Law and Governance
Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Regulatory Services
Democratic Services Officer (CR)

Minute No.	Minute
31	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE There were no apologies for absence.</p>
32	<p>MINUTES The minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2019 were confirmed and authorised to be signed by the Chair.</p>
33	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Councillors Orson and Pearson each declared an interest in any items relating to Leicestershire County Council, due to their roles as County Councillors.</p>
34	<p>MATTERS REFERRED FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES No items had been referred from Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules.</p>
35	<p>ANNUAL LETTER FROM THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT In the absence of Councillor Alison Freer-Jones, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Access and Engagement, Adele Wylie, Director for Law and Governance introduced the report, the purpose of which was to inform Cabinet of the contents of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) Annual Report Letter and to provide a summary of the complaints received by the Council for the year ended 31 March 2019 by the LGSCO.</p> <p>Mrs. Wylie provided a brief summary of the report, highlighting that the LGSCO had made decisions on seven of the 11 complaints it had received:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One complaint was upheld in relation to housing (all upheld complaints would be reported to Cabinet. However, this complaint did not fall within the timeframe of the Council's newly formed Cabinet model of governance. • One complaint was considered to be incomplete/invalid. • Two complaints were referred back to the Council for local resolution. • Three complaints were closed after initial enquiries. <p>The Categories/Departments subject to these complaints were detailed at paragraph 6.2 of the report. This was consistent with complaints received the previous year and to other local authorities. There was nothing particularly contentious about these complaints.</p> <p>The Council started recording compliments in January 2019 and had received 3 to date. Services should forward compliments to the Complaints team for recording, to ensure accurate capture of data.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were noted:</p>

- i. This was a positive report and officers were thanked for their work. However, even 1 upheld complaint was too many.
- ii. It would be useful to Members and the public to have further information regarding costs to the Council in terms of resources associated with handling complaints. There was no doubt that dealing with complaints was time consuming and the Council could look at the work other local authorities had done on this and learn from it.
- iii. Members highlighted the Council's 'customer is king' approach to service delivery. Complaints were used to improve the quality and efficiency of service provision.

DECISIONS (NON-KEY)

Cabinet **NOTED** the Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2019.

Reason for decision:

It was a constitutional requirement for Cabinet to have strategic oversight of complaints data.

Councillor Freer-Jones here entered the meeting.

36

CEMETERY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Councillor Leigh Higgins, Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity introduced the report, the purpose of which was to inform Cabinet of the actions taken so far and to propose a series of actions to improve the facilities at the Thorpe Road cemetery owned by the Council.

Councillor Higgins provided a brief summary of the report, thanking Members for their feedback and the public for their engagement. The public had taken ownership of this issue and this report was a huge testament to them.

Councillor Higgins commented that the cemetery was a key community facility and the Council needed to invest in this. One-off improvement works, detailed at Appendix A of the report were estimated at £17k. He highlighted the proposed charges for the cemetery services, as detailed at Appendix B of the report. While it was proposed to increase most charges, all child (age 0-12), infant and still-born burials charges were proposed to be removed.

Councillor Higgins highlighted that the cemetery had an estimated supply of five years worth of space left and it was important to plan ahead. Measures were being taken in view of this and were detailed at paragraph 6.9 of the report.

Councillor Higgins proposed an amendment to the recommendation at paragraph 3.2 of the report (that changes to service charges take effect from 1 December 2019 instead of 1 April 2020). Cabinet approved this amendment.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- i. Members noted the excellent work undertaken by Councillor Higgins, officers and the public on the Improvement Plan. The public, town and ward Councillors had led on this issue. Action had been taken on concerns raised by the public and the feedback received from town and ward Councillors had been vital.

DECISIONS (NON-KEY)

- 1) Cabinet **APPROVED** the Cemetery Improvement Action Plan;
- 2) Cabinet **APPROVED** the proposed changes to service charges to take effect from 1 December 2019;
- 3) Cabinet **RECOMMENDED** that Council approve the use of special expense reserve to cover the one-off cost for the improvement plan;
- 4) Cabinet **APPROVED** the commencement of works to explore options on how to make optimum use of Thorpe Road Cemetery and consider options for available sites for future provision.

Reasons for decision:

The Cemetery was a key element of community facilities offered and managed by the Council. It was important to provide a good quality environment and service to the customers choosing to use this service.

37

MELTON SPORTS VILLAGE TENNIS FACILITIES

Councillor Leigh Higgins, Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity introduced the report, the purpose of which was to set out proposals for the Council to submit a bid to enable improvements to be delivered.

Councillor Higgins circulated proposed amendments to the recommendations as noted below. He provided a summary of the report, advising that the Council had let the tennis courts at the site to Melton Mowbray Tennis Club since 2016 (on an initial one year agreement and they currently had the right to use it until 2022) and the club had grown quickly, investing approximately £25k of its own funds in the courts.

Councillor Higgins advised that the Council had to invest in the tennis courts if they were to be retained and meet the necessary standards. No action would result in decommissioning the courts, with a loss of income from rent.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- i. Councillor Higgin's was thanked for his work on this issue.
- ii. The Release of Council funding to improve the facilities at the tennis courts

was conditional on the identification of a trusted partner, match funding being achieved, evidence of a financial business case and suitable tenure arrangements being in place for the future. All of this would require a report to Cabinet before any release of funding.

- iii. It was noted that Members were in favour of the Council being commercial and securing its financial future. This was an opportunity to secure an income for the Council based on an asset and it was vital that the Council made a financial return on its investment.
- iv. It was noted that the Council had received significant public engagement through its Health and Fitness survey. The tennis courts contributed to the positive health and wellbeing of the community.
- v. Concern was raised about the Council investing such a large amount of money when currently it received only £5k per annum rental income in return. Further information would come forward in the business case which was a condition of the funding.
- vi. Members noted and agreed the amendments and addition to the recommendations at 3.0 of the report.
- vii. Members agreed to fund the Council's £40k contribution to the investment in the tennis courts from capital receipts.

DECISIONS (NON-KEY)

- 1) Cabinet **APPROVED** that the Council submit a bid to secure funding to deliver the required improvements to the tennis courts at the Melton Sports Village. The total investment required was anticipated to be £120k, to include principle match funding of £40k from the Council and £20k from a community partner;
- 2) Cabinet **AGREED** that release of £40k Council funding was conditional upon:
 - Identification of and ability to work with a trusted partner.
 - Receipt of £20k of community funding.
 - Receipt of up to £60k of grant funding.
 - Evidence of a suitable business case showing payback for the Council inclusive of the potential to lose £5k rental.
 - Prior to release of the Council funds, Cabinet would be satisfied with future arrangements for the tenure of the site, to include future arrangements for maintenance and investment.
- 3) Cabinet **RECOMMENDED** that Council approve the allocation of a sum of £120k (access subject to the above conditions being met) be included within the Capital Programme 2019/20 for improvements to the tennis courts at Melton Sports Village (to be funded £60k from grant funding, £20k community funding and £40k from the Council's own resources);
- 4) Cabinet **DETERMINED** to fund the Council's £40k contribution from capital receipts.

Reasons for decision:

An Independent Report from the Lawn Tennis Association had highlighted concerns that the courts required investment and were reaching the end of their lifespan, as the macadam had become weak and was breaking away causing cracking on the surface.

There was an existing agreement between Melton Mowbray Tennis Club and SLM until March 2022 for use of the courts and without investment the Council/SLM would lose rental income due to the courts being unsafe and hazardous.

The Council wanted to continue to provide tennis facilities at the site and therefore needed to invest in the facilities to effectively manage its assets. Pursuing a funding bid represented a cost effective way of securing investment in its assets. Working to secure a long-term partner on the site would also help to generate additional community investment and usage.

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INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING WITH LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

This item was withdrawn.

39

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND SELF SERVE PLATFORM

Councillor Freer-Jones, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Access and Engagement introduced the report, the purpose of which was to seek Cabinet approval to award the contract (for a customer engagement and self-service platform) and the necessary funding to support the implementation.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director for People and Communities, Keith Aubrey provided a summary of the project, highlighting that it involved replacing a number of the Council's key customer information management systems. The systems were used to record telephone contact and website transactions etc, enabling the Council to track contact with customers easily and efficiently. The new Customer Engagement and Self-Service Platform would provide an improved, integrated and intuitive service, encouraging customer self-service but not being a barrier to those who did not wish to use the self-service option. The project had been subject to a comprehensive procurement process.

Councillor Freer-Jones advised that the Council had been working to improve its systems with a view to improving its customer service. The supplier had significant experience dealing with public sector clients and provided assurances concerning system implementation, data migration and staff training. The Council had ensured that critical dates, priorities, risks and mitigation had been identified.

Councillor Freer-Jones highlighted that Appendix A of the report was 'exempt'.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- i. Members noted the excellent work undertaken by Councillor Freer-Jones

- and Mr. Aubrey and thanked them.
- ii. The Customer Engagement and Self-Service Platform would help the Council to deliver efficient and effective customer service and had the potential to make cost savings.
 - iii. Members wanted assurance that the contract included ongoing support and training, following the initial implementation period and Councillor Freer-Jones confirmed that users would receive training direct from the supplier and would themselves be able to train other users.
 - iv. The Council's 'customer is king' approach to service delivery was reiterated. Encouraging customers to use self-service was important and would result in efficiencies for the council and a better service for the customer.

DECISIONS (KEY DECISION)

- 1) Cabinet **AUTHORISED** the award of the contract for a customer engagement and self-service platform to support the implementation of the chosen supplier;
- 2) Cabinet **APPROVED** that £120K be allocated from funding received from the Business Rates Pilot to the project and **NOTED** that the previous intended use of the Corporate Priorities Reserve was no longer required;
- 3) Cabinet **DELEGATED** authority to the Director for Law and Governance to draft and/or finalise any necessary legal documentation.

Reasons for decisions:

The Council undertook a full procurement process which identified the chosen supplier as the preferred bidder against the award criteria.

The meeting closed at: 5.03 pm

Chair