

# Minutes

<b>Meeting name</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>Wednesday, 22 January 2020</b>
<b>Start time</b>	<b>4.00 pm</b>
<b>Venue</b>	<b>Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH</b>

## **Present:**

**Chair** Councillor J. Orson (Chair)

**Councillors** L. Higgins (Vice-Chair) R. de Burle  
A. Freer-Jones

**Observers** Councillor P Cumbers (Scrutiny Chairman)  
Councillor J. Douglas  
Councillor C. Evans  
Councillor M Glancy

**Officers** Chief Executive  
Director for Corporate Services  
Director for Governance & Regulatory Services  
Assistant Director for Planning and Delivery  
Revenues and Benefits Manager  
Regeneration Manager  
Corporate Asset Manager  
Democratic Services Manager (NT)

Minute No.	Minute
61	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Illingworth and Councillor Pearson.</p>
62	<p><b>MINUTES</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 27 November were confirmed and authorised to be signed by the chair.</p>
63	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>Councillor Orson declared an interest in any items relating to Leicestershire County Council, due to his role as a County Councillor.</p>
64	<p><b>MATTERS REFERRED FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES</b></p> <p>The following item of business had been referred from Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules.</p>
65	<p><b>FINAL REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP - HOUSING VOIDS MANAGEMENT AND TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION</b></p> <p><b>KEY DECISION</b></p> <p>Councillor Pat Cumbers, Scrutiny Chairman, introduced the report, highlighting that the task and finish group had been careful to remain within the scope and purpose of the review. They had taken care to build a sound evidence base before jumping to conclusions about the problems and how they might be solved. The Group were also aware through the review that changes and improvements were already happening in parallel to the work of the Group and that it was clear that Officers and Members alike were keen to see changes in the delivery of services in these areas.</p> <p>The evidence collated was empirical, current, and based on up to date statistics and performance measures, thanks to the numerous internal and external officers and stakeholders who assisted with the research. The proposals for improvement put forward in the report were based on the evaluation of the evidence and had been endorsed by Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members congratulated the Task and Finish Group on the report and thanked them for the work that had gone into it;</li> <li>• The Leader proposed some small amendments to some of the recommendations to take account of the management response, Cabinet were in favour of those amendments. The Scrutiny Chairman was also content with the minor variations. The amended recommendations are</li> </ul>

detailed in the decision below;

- The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities had been provided with a copy of the report following approval by the Scrutiny Committee;
- Members were supportive of introducing the Golden Goodbye on a trial basis and were aware that it had worked in some Council's and not in others. The Chief Executive confirmed that the introduction of any new scheme would require monitoring and evaluation of outcomes in order to establish whether it was successful and met the intended objectives. Members agreed that any introduction of a Golden Goodbye Scheme should be on a trial basis.

## **DECISION**

Cabinet **APPROVED** the report and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group – housing Voids Management and Temporary Accommodation, subject to some minor amendments as detailed below.

Cabinet **APPROVED**:

- 1) A review of the voids module within the Northgate Housing Management System is undertaken and recommendations proposed to Senior Leadership Team as to how an improved system can be implemented along with revenue expenditure required.
- 2) To consult tenants in relation to the implementation of a Golden Goodbye scheme that incentivises tenants to return their home in a good standard that in turn reduces void time and void costs to Melton Borough Council. Subject to the outcomes of this consultation, to introduce the Golden Goodbye Scheme on a temporary basis for one year after which time continuation of the scheme to depend on the evaluation of outcomes and success factors.
- 3) The development of a framework that includes TFEC in the monthly monitoring of voids and includes a written protocol from both parties so as to clarify expectations.
- 4) To reduce, with the aim of eliminating, use of private Bed and Breakfasts by introducing alternatives with options developed by officers for consideration by Cabinet by the end of July 2020.
- 5) To review contract arrangements with contractors to ensure sufficient quality and control and explore the potential to move to a single trusted contractor to manage all aspects of voids work.
- 6) A review of the Allocations Policy by July 2020.
- 7) The development and implementation of a new Voids Policy by July 2020.
- 8) The implementation of new Tenant visits on occupation and again after 6 weeks.
- 9) To provide an interim report to Scrutiny Committee in July 2020 detailing progress against recommendations and a full report in January 2021 to evidence the impact of improvements.

### **Reason for the decision**

*Following careful evaluation of the evidence, the Task and Finish Group believe that the recommendations contained within the final report will ensure that alternative, more cost effective options for Temporary Accommodation are explored and void times are significantly reduced. The Group are confident that if these recommendations are accepted and implemented they will lead to better outcomes for tenants and prospective tenants and also have a positive impact on the Council's financial position.*

*At their meeting on 7 January 2020 the Scrutiny Committee approved that the report and the recommendations should be forwarded to Cabinet for approval.*

*Cabinet agreed with the outcomes of the Task and Finish Group Report subject to some minor amendments to the proposed recommendations in light of the management response provided at Appendix B of the report.*

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Councillor Pat Cumbers left the meeting and did not return.

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#### **PERFORMANCE REPORTING FOR QUARTER 2 2019/20**

Councillor Joe Orson, Leader of the Council, introduced the report which advised Members of the Council's performance against the defined performance reporting measures for the priority themes within the Council's Corporate Priorities for the second quarter of the financial year 2019-20.

The Leader provided a summary of the performance results for quarter two focusing on the good performance in relation to planning decisions; business rate collection; town centre vacant units; new dwellings; waste collection services; attendance at leisure facilities; Council Tax and Business Rates collection. He noted that the numbers of calls answered in the contact centre had fallen and highlighted the importance of getting this right for customers.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- Although the figures regarding town centre vacant units were favourable at 5.1% when compared to the national average of 10%, this might be further improved by the proposed investment in the Borough in leisure facilities, Melton in Bloom, the Cattle Market and inward investment and economic growth as a result of the approval of the bypass;
- Members agreed it would be helpful to have some comparisons with regard to vacant units with towns which were similar to Melton Mowbray;
- The Chief Executive clarified that the reduction in answered calls had been as a result of an acute set of circumstances which had left the call centre under-resourced as a result of staff sickness. This had now been addressed and performance was expected to improve. The Director for Corporate Services assured members that support mechanisms were in place for staff suffering from ill health through a variety of mediums including monitoring of sickness performance and support for staff on return to work from line

managers, counselling service, health and fitness activities, mental health and mindfulness support and activities and the Disability Confident Scheme.

## **DECISION**

Cabinet **NOTED** the Council's performance for the second quarter of the financial year 2019/20 as shown at Appendix One of the report.

### **Reason for decision**

*The performance information for the second quarter of 2019-20 in the Performance Dashboard and the current position with regard to delivery against the Council's priorities is used to help inform the Cabinet, and assist Members and Officers with regard to the formation of policy and oversight of the Council priorities.*

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## **REVIEW OF CAR PARKING CHARGES CONSULTATION KEY DECISION**

Councillor Leigh Higgins, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity, introduced the report, the purpose of which was to highlight key proposed variations to the proposed Off Street Car Parking Order following the period of public consultation and set out the implications associated with the proposals as set out in the report, which would be effective from April 2020.

Councillor Higgins provided further information regarding proposed amendments to the Order which he would exercise under the delegation if approved by Cabinet. He confirmed that following discussion internally it had been decided that it would be prudent to bring the cattle market southern section car park within the car parking order. This would be to enable enforcement on the site should the Council wish to do so. Inclusion within the order did not mean we have to employ the area as a pay and display car park but gives us the option of doing so should we wish to over the course of the car parking order. Parking in car parks assigned for social housing by those who were not residents was becoming a more consistent problem. These car parks were currently listed within the car parking order which gave the Council the ability to develop a permit system for residential use only, the feasibility of developing such a system was currently being looked into.

Councillor Higgins also confirmed that Scrutiny Committee had expressed they were in favour of the equalisation of car parking fees at their meeting on 21 January 2020.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- The proposals had been largely supported by respondents to the recent consultation, but there would be a review following implementation to evaluate the outcomes;
- Clarification was provided that the proposed Order would provide greater powers to ensure that the Wilton Road Car Park was not misused by school buses.

## DECISIONS

- 1) Cabinet **APPROVED** the draft Melton Borough Council (Off Street Parking Places) Order 2020 as shown at Appendix 1 and the commencement of statutory consultation;
- 2) Cabinet **DELEGATED** authority to the Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity to consider and address any objections and amend the proposed Order if necessary following statutory consultation;
- 3) Cabinet **NOTED** that any additional income received from the two additional chargeable parking bays at St Marys Way shall be used to fund initiatives in support of the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency.

### Reason for decisions

- i. To ensure the order and charging schedule is reasonable and proportionate for residents and visitors to Melton Borough.*
- ii. To ensure the content of the parking order enables proper enforcement within MBC owned car parks.*
- iii. To cover the increasing costs of car parks to the Council following the freeze in prices over the last 4 years.*
- iv. To enable the introduction of cashless payment systems throughout Council owned car parks increasing choice for residents and visitors.*

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## **FIRE SAFETY UPDATE KEY DECISION**

Councillor Joe Orson, Leader of the Council, introduced the report in the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities. The purpose of the report was to provide an update on how the Council continues to manage fire safety within its housing properties and propose a capital programme of works over the next three years to improve fire safety in the housing properties.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- All high risk impacts identified by the Fire Risk Assessments had now been addressed;
- Members requested assurance that Tenants would be appropriately communicated with and kept updated and that any communications were appropriate and took into account any special needs of the tenant. The Corporate Asset Manager confirmed that a communication and engagement plan would be instigated and information would be provided in a variety of mediums included written material, drawings and diagrams. There would be a person centred approach to ensure that those that required more support were identified and provided with that support and information could be tailored to the needs of the tenant;

- The table in Appendix A contained inaccurate figures, these would be updated as soon as possible and provided to Cabinet and republished on the website.

## DECISIONS

- 1) Cabinet **NOTED** the progress that has been made so far in managing fire risk in housing assets and the ongoing management approach to continuous improvement on fire safety management.
- 2) Cabinet **APPROVED** the portfolio approach to the prioritisation of work and the implementation of the capital spend as identified in Section 6 albeit being subject to change over the 3 year life time of the programme.

### Reason for decisions

- The Housing Improvement Plan (HIP), adopted in November 2019, focussed on compliance across all areas of property safety including fire safety. The HIP noted that while the Council has undertaken fire risk assessments over the years, there has been previously no overall plan on how fire precautions will be improved across the purpose built flats.*
- This proposed plan sets out a 'direction of travel' over three years to ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005. This plan also demonstrates the Council's commitment to deliver significant change to how fire precautions are managed and improved and to be able to communicate this commitment to key stakeholders and regulatory bodies.*

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## INTERIM HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN KEY DECISION

Councillor Joe Orson, Leader of the Council, introduced the report in the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities. The purpose of the report was to provide a review of activity undertaken since the HRA Business Plan was last published in 2012 and alongside a range of proposed measures sets out an interim plan for the next three years, supported by a programme of projects to be funded through both revenue and capital budgets. These projects correspond with the Housing Improvement Plan and respond to the current challenges and risks faced by the Council in relation to HRA assets. Only when the full reappraisal of stock condition had been completed would it be possible to establish a new and meaningful 30 year plan, this is expected by Autumn 2022.

The Leader provided a summary of the report and highlighted the significant capital programme of improvement and compliance over the next three years at an estimated cost of £13m; robust financial management controls in place through the introduction of a minimum working balance on the HRA Revenue Budget and the use of the Development and Regeneration Reserve; and continued investment in the Council's housing stock.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- Providing high quality council homes was a Council priority and the business plan would be integral to the achievement of this;
- Although the use of a Council owned housing company was identified in the report as a possible means of alleviating the pressure of the cost of temporary accommodation, any such commercial enterprise would have as a primary objective income generation to improve the Council's financial position and provision of increased opportunities for residents who did not qualify for social housing to get on the property ladder. Should the Council pursue the option of creating a housing company, it was anticipated that any income generated would primarily be used to alleviate pressures on the General Fund.
- Options for income generation for the HRA were also being looked at through the review of service charges and other opportunities were also being explored.

## DECISIONS

- 1) Cabinet **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** approval of the Interim HRA Business Plan as set out in Section 6 of this report.
- 2) Cabinet **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** approval of the proposed Capital programme as proposed in Appendix A of this report.

### Reason for the decision

*The interim plan will allow the Council to complete the projects and actions identified and approved in the HIP over the next 3 years. It will also allow for the stock condition survey to complete which is key for the next iteration of the full and detailed long term business plan.*

## EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Cabinet RECOMMENDED that the Public be excluded during the consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (Access to Information : Exempt Information) under paragraph 3.

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## WRITE-OFF IRRECOVERABLE DEBTS KEY DECISION

Councillor Ronnie De Burle, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Resources, introduced the report, the purpose of which was to seek approval to write off debts, over the value of £2,500, where officers believe that there is little or no prospect of recovering them.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Resources provided a summary of the report and highlighted that robust financial management was a key priority and that was evidenced by the Council's ability to bring forward a balanced budget for



2020/21. Every effort had been made to collect the debts identified in the report and the Council would continue to work hard in this area and would take every opportunity available to realise outstanding debt.

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Following debate and discussion on this item Cabinet returned to public session.

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## **DECISION**

Cabinet **APPROVED** the write off of debts shown in the Exempt Appendices.

### **Reason for decision**

- i. All recovery methods had been considered and where appropriate pursued, before making the decision to write off.*
- ii. Officer time can be maximised on greater returns, at the same time as ensuring robust procedures for debt management are in place across all revenues streams.*

The meeting closed at: 17.20

Chair