

# Minutes



<b>Meeting name</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>Wednesday, 9 June 2021</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. Browne  
R. de Burle A. Freer  
M. Graham MBE

**Observers** Councillor R. Bindloss

**Officers** Chief Executive  
Director for Corporate Services  
Director for Growth and Regeneration  
Assistant Director for Housing Management  
Assistant Director for Governance & Democracy  
Interim Assistant Director for Communities / People Manager  
Democratic Services Officer (HA)  
Democratic Services Officer (CR)

<b>Minute No.</b>	<b>Minute</b>
168	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> There were no apologies for absence.</p>
169	<p><b>MINUTES</b> The minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2021 were confirmed and authorised to be signed by the Chair.</p> <p><u>Minute 164 – Economic Recovery Support Programme</u></p> <p>Councillor Higgins provided an update to the Committee, highlighting that this report had been deferred to the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 21 April 2021, which had subsequently been cancelled and thanked the Grants Panel. He advised that all grant monies would be allocated today to businesses. The Council continued to receive applications for assistance and these businesses would also receive funding. It was anticipated that having met Government criteria, the Council was eligible to receive the next tranche of Government funding.</p>
170	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b> Councillor Orson declared an interest in any items relating to Leicestershire County Council, due to his role as a County Councillor.</p>
171	<p><b>MATTERS REFERRED FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES</b> No items had been referred from Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules.</p>
172	<p><b>HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) STOCK CONDITION SURVEY UPDATE AND PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK CONTRACT PROCUREMENT</b> Craig Spence, Assistant Director for Housing Management introduced the report, the purpose of which was updating Members on progress made in relation to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Stock Condition Survey programme and seeking approval to award contracts on a rolling basis from a DPS (Dynamic Purchasing System) via Westworks, to enable the Council to deliver an efficient and effective Capital Programme of work robustly and responsively to the needs of its housing stock.</p> <p>Mr. Spence advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>HRA Stock Condition Surveys</u> - Earlier today, the Council had released contracts for signature in relation to undertaking this work, which would provide data to inform the Capital Programme. Stock condition data would help the Council to understand its stock. The data would provide the foundations to build the Capital Programme and would also form a firm foundation for the Capital Programme and HRA Business Plan.</li> </ul> <p>The Council approved the Housing Improvement Plan in 2019. Good</p>

progress had been made to date but there was much work to be undertaken to achieve the aspiration of ensuring a high quality landlord function.

The surveys would be undertaken over 4 years, with 1400 (of 1800 properties) being surveyed in the first year. This included structural surveys on balconies, walkways and garage condition surveys. The draft contract schedule outlined commitments within the 4 years within the four years of the contract.

- Property Improvement Framework Contract Procurement - The Council had approximately £750k per annum within its capital budgets (earmarked for the next 2 years). As a result of stock condition data there would be a need to have contractors in place to deliver and improve decency standards within the housing stock. The current practices of seeking ad hoc quotations for work was both time consuming and did not represent best value for the Council. The DPS would give the Council access to a pool of pre-qualified suppliers. It would ensure that future contracts were compliant with procurement guidelines and were positively delivering against the Corporate Strategy and priorities. The DPS would enable the Council to act responsively to the needs of its housing stock and deliver of a variety of Capital Programme schemes (kitchen and bathroom refurbishments, roofing and structural works and any significant Capital Programme requirements as a result of the stock condition data).

Consultations with suppliers had been undertaken and a number of contractors had been engaged locally to ensure they were available on the framework and DPS. The Council had also worked with the Tenants Forum Executive Committee (TFEC) to promote tenant involvement on kitchen and bathroom choices.

Councillor Ronan Browne, Portfolio Holder for Council Homes and Landlord Services thanked Mr. Spence for his work and welcomed the progress made to date, the proactive sourcing of local contractors and the future work (outlined in the report).

During discussion the following points were noted:

- Members thanked Mr. Spence for his work.
- Stock condition data was key to delivery of the Corporate Strategy

Cabinet:

- 1) **NOTED** the contents of the Report in relation to the updated position on the HRA Stock Condition Survey Programme;
- 2) **APPROVED** the award of contracts on a rolling basis from a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) via the Westworks Building Maintenance and Compliance DPS and procurement of future contracts from this DPS to support continued implementation of the Capital Programme demands of the Housing Service.

Reason for the decision

*Having current stock condition data is key to delivery of the Council's Corporate*

*Strategy 2020-24 Priority of 'Providing high quality council homes and landlord services'.*

*The stock condition surveys data shall inform the development of the HRA Business Plan ensuring that our Capital Programmes are tackling the needs of our properties to increase their decency in a cost-effective and structured manner.*

*A DPS (Dynamic Purchasing System) is an electronic system which suppliers can join at any time; this is designed to give the Council access to a pool of pre-qualified suppliers. The 'open' nature of a DPS enables engagement with local potential suppliers and supports wider aims of working with local businesses for economic growth, for the duration the DPS is in place for.*

*The proposed DPS ensures future contracts are compliant with procurement guidelines together with positively delivering against Corporate Strategy 2020-24 Priorities 1 and 2.*

*The DPS will provide us with a robust vehicle to deliver on a variety of Capital Programme schemes. Each individual contract shall be a mini competition, where all providers on the relevant DPS category are invited to submit a bid and must be evaluated by the Council. This will be conducted in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, as relevant to the value of the individual contract.*

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**WRITE OFF OF IRRECOVERABLE DEBT**

Aysha Rahman, Interim Assistant Director for Communities introduced the report, the purpose of which was seeking approval to write off debts over the value of £2.5k, where there is little or no prospect of recovering them.

Mrs. Rahman highlighted that a Write off of Irrecoverable Debts report was submitted quarterly to Cabinet, as financial good practice and in line with the Council's Corporate Debt Policy. The Policy aimed to maximise income to serve and secure the Council's financial future, balanced with the recognition that there were some circumstances in which recovery action was unlikely to succeed and therefore 'write offs' may be appropriate.

Mrs. Rahman confirmed that in respect of the debts presented, the Corporate Policy had been followed and recovery action had been exhausted. The debts were detailed in exempt appendices 1 – 4 and the total debt was detailed at paragraph 5.3 of the report.

Councillor Ronnie de Burle, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Finance and Resources added that the total debt amount (approximately £54k) represented 12% of the council's average annual debt write off. This was mostly covered by Debt Relief Orders (DRO) or Involuntary Voluntary Arrangements (IVA).

Councillor de Burle highlighted that paragraphs 4 – 4.8 of the report detailed the Council's debt recovery efforts and how collection performance had improved against previous years. Officers had worked within the scope of powers provided in the Corporate Debt Policy and Income Maximisation Policy (approved by Council in 2019 to recover outstanding debt) but were mindful its social responsibilities and of

additional pressures on the community due to the Covid-19.

Cabinet

- 1) **NOTED** the action taken by the Council to recover outstanding debts;
- 2) **APPROVED** the write off the debts.

*Reason for the decision*

*All recovery methods have been considered and where appropriate pursued, before recommending that debts are written off.*

*Officer time can be maximised on greater returns, focusing on debts where there is more realistic chance of recovery.*

The meeting closed at: 4.22 pm

Chair