

Minutes



Meeting name	Cabinet
Date	Wednesday, 16 November 2022
Start time	4.30 pm
Venue	Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH

Present:

Chair Councillor J. Orson (Chair)

Councillors M. Graham MBE (Vice-Chair) R. Bindloss
R. Browne R. de Burle
A. Freer

Observers

Officers Chief Executive
Director for Corporate Services
Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)
Assistant Director for Governance & Democracy
Democratic Services Officer (HA)
Democratic Services Officer (CT)
Senior Corporate Policy Officer

Minute No.	Minute
32	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE There were no apologies for absence</p>
33	<p>FORMER COUNCILLOR BRENDA SMITH The Leader informed the Cabinet of the recent death of former Councillor Brenda Smith, he said she had been a popular councillor and asked for the room to stand for a minute's silence in memory of her.</p>
34	<p>MINUTES The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2022 were confirmed.</p>
35	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Councillor Orson declared an interest in any items relating to Leicestershire County Council, due to his role as a County Councillor.</p>
36	<p>MATTERS REFERRED FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset Management Plan <p>In accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, this item had been referred from the Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Robert Child was due to introduce the report, but in his absence the Leader asked if the report had been read by all Members present and that they were content to accept the recommendations within the report.</p> <p>Cabinet AGREED</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) that, upon the recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee, that the Council: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) works within the remit presented; b) prioritises reducing tenant's bills through the installation of energy saving measures; c) removes all remaining storage heaters from Council-owned properties as soon as possible, and; d) continues to prioritise the insulation of properties. 2) to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism in the Melton Borough Area <p>In accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, this item had been referred from the Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Robert Child, was due to introduce the report, but in his absence the Leader asked if the report had been read by all Members present and that they agreed to note the report</p>

Cabinet AGREED to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

- Police and Crime Commissioner Meeting

In accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, this item had been referred from the Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Robert Child was due to introduce the report, but in his absence the Leader asked if the report had been read by all Members present and that they agreed to note the report

Cabinet AGREED to have regard to the Scrutiny Committee's feedback.

37

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET MONITORING 1 APRIL 2022 - 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

The Director for Corporate Services, Mrs Dawn Garton, introduced the report, the purpose of which was to provide information on actual expenditure and income incurred on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), compared to the latest approved budget for the period 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022 for revenue and capital budgets.

Mrs Garton said the overall expenditure is forecast to overspend and there is a shortfall in rental and other income, however additional interest on investments will help offset some of the shortfall.

With regard to capital, the Asset Management Plan has given clarity to capital spending needs and therefore there is a recommendation to council to move some of the Capital Budgets from underspends and historical budgets to those identified as higher priority.

In moving the recommendations, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Finance and Resources, Councillor Ronnie de Burle, said he fully supported the report. He added that the report shows there is a need to be flexible with expenditure and be able to redirect to areas of greater need. He added that he was disappointed in the rental income shortfall but was delighted to recognise the treasury team being able to deliver additional interest on investments of £133,000.

Councillor Graham commented on the underspend at Gretton Court and asked if there were any outstanding reasons for this. In response, Councillor de Burle said that there have been many void properties, which is why there is the underspend. Councillor de Burle added that work had been done to reduce the number of void properties and there is now a higher occupancy rate than has been previously.

The Leader thanked Councillor De Burle and seconded the recommendations.

Cabinet:

- 1) NOTED the financial position on the HRA at 30 September 2022 and the year-end forecast for both revenue and capital.
- 2) RECOMMENDED that Council approve the proposed virements and realignment of the HRA capital programme for 2022/23 as outlined in paragraph 5.8 of the report.

Reason for Recommendations

The Council, having set an agreed budget at the start of the financial year, needs to ensure that the delivery of the budget is achieved. Consequently, there is a requirement to regularly monitor progress so that corrective action can be taken when required, which is enhanced with the regular reporting of the financial position.

38

GENERAL FUND AND SPECIAL EXPENSES - BUDGET MONITORING 1 APRIL 2022 TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

The Director for Corporate Services, Mrs Dawn Garton, provided details of the quarterly service and financial performance. It was noted that this is a requirement of the budget monitoring procedure.

Mrs Garton highlighted the forecast overspend and the reasons for this. She said that officers are looking for options for savings to reduce this forecast overspend, however the situation is extremely challenging. In addition, attention was drawn to the risk section in the report and that it is at the highest risk on the council risk register due to existing financial pressures as a result of several years of cuts in funding, the uncertainty regarding the future funding of local government and the added pressure caused by inflation.

In moving the recommendations, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Finance and Resources, Councillor Ronnie de Burle, said the report sets out the challenges that have been made worse by inflation, and added that it is expected that these will run into next year. He added that the budgets for the next financial year are currently being worked out however as the budget holders have already reduced their budgets as much as possible all areas will be looked at to reduce spending. Councillor de Burle said that we have always been proud of our ability to manage our finances previously, but the situation is extremely precarious as we will have to use our reserves to meet costs.

The Leader commented that the Council needs to have an agreed budget and ensure that it is delivered. He also thanked Councillor de Burle for his work in this area.

Cabinet NOTED the year end forecast and financial position for the General Fund and Special Expenses at 30 September 2022 for both revenue and capital.

Reason for Recommendations

The Council, having set an agreed budget at the start of the financial year, needs to ensure that the delivery of this budget is achieved. Consequently, there is a requirement to regularly monitor progress so that corrective action can be taken when required, which is enhanced with the regular reporting of the financial position.

39

TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2022-23

The Director for Corporate Services, Mrs Dawn Garton, introduced the report, which provided a summary of the Treasury activities until the end of September 2022 including the actual position to date on the Prudential Indicators.

Mrs Garton said that there have been challenges for a number of years in terms of maximising investment returns, but that we are now seeing much higher interest rates this has helped to mitigate overspends. These higher rates are expected to continue to rise presenting further opportunities to maximise returns. In light of this, Cabinet are asked to amend the investment criteria from investments only being allowed to be placed with banks for up to 12 months to allow investments to be placed for a maximum of 3 years. This will allow a higher rate of return whilst always keeping in mind the balance between security, liquidity, and yield.

In moving the recommendations, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Finance and Resources, Councillor Ronnie de Burle, said that the Finance Team have done an excellent job in maximising investment income.

Councillor Graham commented about the increase in interest rates that are favourable and was in favour of increasing the time the Council's investments are placed.

The Leader commented on rising interest rates being offset against inflation and stated that he was also in favour of longer-term investments.

Cabinet **RECOMMENDED** that Council:

- 1) Notes the mid-year position on treasury activity for 2022/23;
- 2) Notes the mid-year position on the Prudential Indicators for 2022/23, and;
- 3) Approves the proposed change to the Investment Strategy as outlined in paragraph 5.2 of the report, to increase the maximum investment period with banks and building societies to three years.

Reason for Recommendations:

The Treasury Management Code requires the Council to provide a mid-year update on Treasury Management activities to the Council. It is a requirement that Treasury Management performance is scrutinised during the year prior to consideration by the Council which falls within Cabinet's remit.

To facilitate the decision-making process and support capital investment decisions the Prudential Code requires the Council to agree and monitor a minimum number of prudential indicators.

40

RESIDENTS SURVEY 2022

The Senior Corporate Policy Officer, Martin Guest, introduced the report which was an update of the 2022 Residents Survey. The survey supports the delivery of the aspirations set out in the Council's Corporate Strategy 2020 -2024. It included a breakdown of analysis against each question and is supported by the full findings which are appended to the report.

Mr Guest said the report gave a positive message, there had been an increase in the number of responses since the last survey in 2019 and satisfaction had increased in several areas in the services the Council provides. There was increased satisfaction in the level of engagement the Council has with residents and an increase in the use of the website and social media channels, although face to face contact is still essential.

The two main areas where there was dissatisfaction was enforcement action against littering and dog fouling, which had shown an increase since 2019, although work is in place to redress this issue. The other area was the use of drugs and dealing of drugs.

Portfolio Holder for Climate, Access and Engagement Councillor Alison Freer stated she was pleased the Council have been able to deliver the survey that was committed to. She added that the results are good, and that targets set had been exceeded in many areas especially as they had been carried out in turbulent times. She stated that it was good to see there was an increase in the number of people who trust the Council and feel safe in their local area. She said that work had been in place over the last year to improve is issues with littering, dog fouling and antisocial behaviour.

Councillor Freer added that it is good to see that the Council are increasing the ways that people are contacted, taking into account that different age demographics prefer different ways of communicating.

Councillor Freer said she is proud of the results from the survey and that benchmarking against other councils is favourable. She said the Council will need to continue the good work as we are heading into challenging times. It was noted that the next survey would be due in 2024.

The Leader gave his congratulations to the team for compiling such a good report, he thought it had so much detail with some strong points and he was very pleased with the results. He said we are heading in right direction and need to continue this work. He commented that the local press should see it to give some positive reporting.

Councillor Bindloss commented that it was an excellent report, very meaningful. He added that the Council will be able to take information from it to see what needs to be done going forward. He added that he particularly liked how it had been split into wards, so readers can see exactly what areas each ward needs to concentrate on.

Cabinet **NOTED** the contents of the report and provided observations and actions to the relevant officers accordingly.

Reason for Recommendations:

Having established a new Corporate Strategy in September 2020, it is important the Council regularly receives and considers feedback from residents to evaluate progress against its priorities. The results of the Residents Survey will be used to focus improvements on key priority services and projects and seek to help inform the Cabinet, Members and Officers regarding the formation of policy and oversight of delivery. This information will also be used to inform the development of the next Corporate Strategy in 2023/2024.

41

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023-2028

The Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive), Michelle Howard, introduced the HRA Asset Management Plan 2023 – 2028, the purpose of the plan is to provide a clear delivery plan based on the recommendations in the HRS Business Plan and set a five-year capital programme. Mrs Howard explained that the plan placed an emphasis on decent and safe homes, was informed by tenant feedback on priorities and was underpinned by detailed stock condition data for over 90% council homes.

Mrs Howard said this was an important piece of work and she highlighted certain areas of the report, such as the acceleration of the replacement of Storage Heaters in all properties.

She said that they had engaged the support of Savills, who are a sector specialist to check and validate the plan and a summary feedback report will be included with the report when presented to Council.

Mrs Howard reported that the service is confident that, despite high financial uncertainty, the HRA is still considered sustainable, although the rent ceiling the government is proposing could have an impact on this. She is positive that this is a robust plan, and that the Council will be able to deliver it.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services, Councillor Ronan Browne, said that this report shows that we are in touch with the communities as we are putting the needs of tenants as the highest priority. The plan also aims to help tenants to save money with the acceleration of the replacement of storage heaters and replacement windows to improve the energy efficiency of homes. He praised the team for the number of properties that they had gained access to, to compile the stock condition survey, noting that it is an excellent figure in comparison with

other councils. Councillor Browne added that the Council needs to be committed to improving our housing stock.

Councillor Browne said he has written to both Michael Gove and the local MP regarding the proposed ceiling on rent that has been proposed and the detrimental effect a cap could have on the funding needed to improve and provide social housing.

Councillor Browne thanked the Senior Corporate Policy officer for all his hard work in supporting the team and thanked all the officers that have been involved in developing the Asset Management Plan. He also thanked the Scrutiny Committee as they have played a big part in a lot of the work that is being carried out.

The Leader also thanked the Scrutiny Committee, the officer team, and the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Ronan Browne. He said he had supported Councillor Browne's letter to Michael Gove and was confident that he would get a response from him.

Cabinet

- 1) **ENDORSED** the HRA Asset Management Plan, and;
- 2) **RECOMMENDED** to Council that the HRA Asset Management Plan and associated action plan be approved and is used to inform the revenue and capital budget proposals for 2023/24.

Reason for Recommendations:

The Asset Management Plan will support the Council to achieve its commitments to deliver high quality council homes across Melton and to manage its available finances and associated capital investment plans effectively.

The Asset Management Plan provides a clear plan through which recommendations from the HRA Business Plan will be implemented.

The Council has made significant improvements to its housing and landlord services and whilst it is still on its housing improvement journey, is ready to transition from delivery of the Housing Improvement Plan to a more proactive, assurance led approach.

The Asset Management Plan is a significant programme of work for the Council. It marks another a key transitional step in how the Council manages its homes and the evidence led investments it makes to ensure homes are fit for the future.

It is also important to note that the Asset Management Plan has been developed at a continuing time of significant regulatory and financial change for the housing sector. The ability to review and respond to this changing context in a planned and managed way is key to the way in which the Council manages its Housing Revenue Account. This is particularly important given the uncertainty relating the recent Government consultation on a rent ceiling between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024, the outcome of which is awaited.

CCTV - MODERNISATION AND REVISED OPERATING ARRANGEMENTS

The Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive), Michelle Howard, introduced the business case that has been developed to modernise and improve the CCTV system and associated operating arrangements, due to the current system no longer offering an effective or value for money solution.

Mrs Howard said that delivery of the new system would include 10 new, high-quality cameras, and revised monitoring and maintenance arrangements, and added that the Council would benefit from working in partnership with Harborough District Council. The new system would have high quality equipment which will be more effective as well as value for money. It will help with tackling anti-social behaviour by cutting down on crime and increasing safety within the town.

In moving the recommendations, the Portfolio Holder for People and Communities, Councillor Malise Graham, said that after a lot of hard work by the safety community team with the key stakeholders, they are now able to bring the proposal forward. He added that it cannot be underestimated the importance of making communities feel safe. Councillor Graham said that our current system is ageing and needs replacing with higher quality equipment and better way of monitoring and that had visited the control room at Market Harborough and was impressed by the quality and service they can offer. Subject to Council approval in December it is hoped the new monitors can be in place early next year.

The Leader said it is important for communities to feel safe and this was shown in the residents' survey. He also wanted to pass on thanks to the Police and Crime Commissioner for his role in this and requested that his thanks are passed on.

Councillor Alison Freer stated that it is important to say how the Council had made a commitment to improving the CCTV after discussions with businesses and people involved. It is important to show the Council are improving the system to solve the problems they have encountered and show the Council's commitment to helping the community and local economy to improve safety and reduce crime.

Cabinet

- 1) **ENDORSED** the proposed replacement of CCTV cameras and collaboration with Harborough District Council for maintenance and monitoring arrangements.
- 2) **RECOMMENDED** to Council that:
 - a) the capital investment to modernise the CCTV system be approved, with the capital programme updated accordingly and £41,670 being allocated from the General Fund capital receipts and £17,770 being allocated from the HRA Regeneration and Development Reserve.
 - b) authority is given to collaborate with Harborough District Council for CCTV maintenance and monitoring arrangements.
- 3) **DELEGATED** authority to the Director for Housing and Communities to finalise and enter into associated contractual arrangements.

Reason for Recommendations:

The Council has a CCTV system in place however it is now over 26 years old and no longer offers an effective or value for money solution. Without investment and modernisation, it cannot offer an effective crime prevention solution.

The approved Capital Programme for 22/23 refers to the need to invest in CCTV equipment / modernisation of CCTV, subject to approval of a business case. This report brings this commitment forward and sets out the associated capital investment and operating arrangements required.

Although not a statutory requirement, there is a significant reputational risk associated with the lack of an effective CCTV monitoring system which impacts on our ability to:

Tackle anti-social behaviour

Take enforcement action

Address our priorities as part of the Safer Melton Partnership (SMP)

Help our businesses and communities to feel safe

Enable us to effectively detect and prevent crime

The meeting closed at: 5.30 pm

Chair