

Minutes



Meeting name	Cabinet
Date	Wednesday, 19 July 2023
Start time	4.30 pm
Venue	Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH

Present:

Chair Councillor P. Allnatt (Chair)

Councillors M. Glancy (Vice-Chair) S. Butcher
S. Cox P. Cumbers

Observers Councillor A. Thwaites

Officers Chief Executive
Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)
Director for Corporate Services
Interim Assistant Director for Governance & Democracy
Director for Growth and Regeneration
Assistant Director for Housing Management
Tenancy Services Manager
Senior Corporate Policy Officer
Democratic Services Officer (HA)

Minute No.	Minute
8	<p>Apologies for Absence There were no apologies received for this meeting.</p>
9	<p>Minutes The minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2023 were confirmed and authorised to be signed by the chair.</p>
10	<p>Declarations of Interest Councillor Cox declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in relation to the Discretionary Relief Policy, as being an employee of one of the charities.</p> <p>Councillor Butcher declared an other registerable interest with no financial interest, in relation to the Discretionary Relief Policy.</p> <p>Councillor Cumbers declared an other registerable interest in relation to the Discretionary Relief Policy, as being the Council's representative for the Melton Furniture Project.</p>
11	<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>
12	<p>General Fund Revenue and Capital Budget 2022/23 Provisional Year End The Director for Corporate Services introduced the report, the purpose of which provided Members with information on the provisional year-end for the General Fund services 2022-23 and the subsequent implications on the Council's balances and reserves.</p> <p>The Director for Corporate Services advised members that with the audit for 2020-21 accounts remaining in progress and dates for 2021-22 and 2022-23 remain unclear, with regulatory bodies looking at solutions to the current audit resourcing issues and associated backlog, figures in the report would remain provisional until the audit arrangements are resolved.</p> <p>The Director for Corporate Services clarified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Melton Lifeline – the member of staff for Melton Lifeline was moved on secondment to the Ukrainian support community which had been funded by a grant from Leicestershire County Council. That grant is being used to backfill the officer's post. ➤ Environmental Health overspend was due to a complicated case where the costs were high and there were no grants that could be applied for. Recovery for the costs from the perpetrators would depend on what assets they have to draw down on.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property and Resources advised the team had done exceptionally well with the challenges the Council was facing and thanked the budget holders and finance staff for working so hard with the budgets during the year which had resulted in a positive outcome for the General Expenses fund, and stated that Members need to work on the development of the corporate strategies over the next four years and be clear not only on the priorities but also the areas where there can be additional income generated or reduce costs for sustainability of the Council.

Cabinet:

- 1) **NOTED** the provisional year end provision, variations to the 2022-23 approved budget and the resultant effect on the council's balances and reserves for the General Fund and Special Expenses at set out in the report in the appendices for both revenue and capital.

Reason for Recommendation:

It is important that Cabinet are aware of the financial position of the General Fund and Special Expenses to ensure they can make informed decisions that are affordable and financially sustainable for the Council.

13

Housing Revenue Account Revenue and Capital Budget 2022/23 Provisional Year End

The Director for Corporate Services introduced the report, the purpose of which set out the provisional year-end position for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), subject to external audit approval for 2022-23 and provided information on the Council's HRA balances and reserves.

The Director for Corporate Services advised members that the report compared the provisional outturn with the original budget as set out at the rent setting meeting in February 2022 and the latest approved estimate which incorporated in-year approvals.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property and Resources thanked the team for the report and highlighted there was significant amount of work to do on voids.

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services advised the Cabinet he had been on a visit to view the void properties and reported he was very impressed both in preparation of the officers and the work that is being carried out.

Cabinet

- 1) **NOTED** the provisional year end position, variations to the 2022-23 approved year end position, and the resultant effect on the Council's HRA balances and reserves as set out in the report and the appendices, for both revenue and capital.

Reason for Recommendation:

It is important that Cabinet are aware of the financial position of the HRA to ensure they can make informed decisions that are affordable and financially sustainable for the HRA.

14

Treasury Management and Actual Prudential Indicators 2022/23

The Director for Corporate Services introduced the report, the purpose of which was to provide a summary of the Treasury Activities in 2022-23 and the actual position of the Prudential Indicators in accordance with the Prudential Code.

The Director for Corporate Services advised members that for the new financial year, reports would be moving to a quarterly basis from the 6-monthly basis in line with new requirements.

The Director for Corporate Services advised members that due to the decrease in property values the Property Fund value had decreased and a fund had been set up to recognise the risk should such a reduction need to be written off to the income and expenditure account in the future.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property and Resources advised the team perform well, compared to other councils with regard to the rate of return with the security of investment being the primary concern, but borrowing should be kept to a minimum to fund priorities at the present time due to high interest rates.

The Director for Corporate Services advised the following limits are set by the Council based on individual circumstances ie capital spend and affordability:

- The Capital Financing Requirement, being the underlying need to borrow is £31m.
- The Authorised Limit, the limit above which the council cannot borrow is £46m.
- The Operational Boundary, which allows for temporary borrowing above the capital financing requirement, is £34m.

Cabinet:

- 1) **RECOMMENDED** to Council the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2022-23 is approved.
- 2) **NOTED** the actual position on Prudential Indicators for 2022-23

Reasons for Recommendations:

It is important that Cabinet are aware of the Council's Treasury Management performance to ensure they can make informed decisions that protect the Council's financial assets while taking regard of financial stability and potential returns.

The Annual Treasury Report is a requirement of the Council's reporting procedures.

The report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. The Council is required to comply with both codes through Regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003.

15

Gretton Court Wellbeing Service

The Director for Housing and Communities introduced the report the purpose of which was to seek approval from Cabinet to commence the implementation of the proposed changes to the service and charges for the Gretton Court extra care facility following the withdrawal of the Leicestershire County Council 'Wellbeing Service'.

The Director for Housing and Communities advised members that there were some slight amendments to the Proposals for Recommendations in the report, following consultation with the Friends of Gretton court, since the agenda was published.

The Leader read out the amendments to the Recommendations

- 2.1 – in addition to the original recommendation - The entertainment budget will be used flexibly by officers to support general operational and resident requirements.
- 2.3 – new recommendation - That a formal review takes place no less than three months after implementation of the revised wellbeing offer.

The Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services thanked the director and the team for the work that is done both at Gretton court and in the office.

Members agreed that it was important for the council to continue with a Wellbeing Service at Gretton Court following the withdrawal of this package from Leicestershire County Council and to work with Friends of Gretton Court to get the right level of care and support for the residents at an affordable price.

The Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services thanked Councillor Alan Thwaites for coming to the meeting to represent the Friends of Gretton Court.

Cabinet:

- 1) **APPROVED** the introduction of a Wellbeing Officer provided by Melton Borough Council to residents of Gretton Court, funded through a service charge arrangement, noting that the entertainment budget will be used flexibly by officers to support general operational and resident requirements.
- 2) **AGREED** that authority be delegated to the Director for Housing and Communities to enter into the necessary actions to implement the new service including the associated charge.
- 3) **AGREED** that a formal review takes place no less than three months after implementation of the revised wellbeing offer.

Reasons for Recommendations:

Gretton Court is designated as an Extra Care Scheme offering accommodation to older residents with care and support needs. Melton Borough Council is the landlord, whilst Leicestershire County Council has responsibility for resident care.

The offer at Gretton Court includes additional (paid for) services such on site care and support, midday meals and social activities. Gretton Court provides an alternative supported housing option for older residents, enabling them to maintain their independence and reducing their need to access residential care.

The withdrawal of the Wellbeing Service by Leicestershire County Council has reduced the offer to residents. An alternative offer is proposed, which represents a more effective, efficient, and resilient service offer for residents and responds directly to tenant feedback about the services they receive. It also results in a reduced weekly wellbeing charge for residents compared to the previous service offer from LCC.

16

Corporate Performance and Progress Report for Quarter 4, 2022/23

The Policy and Communications Manager introduced the report the purpose of which updated Members on the progress on delivering the aspirations set out in the Council's Corporate Strategy 2020-24.

The Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holder for Governance, Environment and Regulatory Services commented that the report shows the council in a positive light and is performing well across a range of services and delivering against the corporate strategies.

The Director for Housing and Communities, Deputy CEO, confirmed there had been challenges around rent collection and that it is an area that needs improvement to maximise income. There has been some additional resource support brought in since the report was written to try and accelerate progress and tackle rent arrears. Reports will be brought to Cabinet more frequently regarding rent arrears.

The Director for Housing and Communities, Deputy CEO confirmed there had been challenges around voids which is receiving a huge amount of investment to address the backlog. Historic voids are an issue and some of which have been empty for a long period of time and there was a higher-than-average void rate at Gretton Court. There had been an audit on the void performance which had a number of recommendations which would further support improvements.

The Chief Executive Officer advised members that there is a very broad definition of what a complaint is, and the Council does not constrain peoples' ability to make a complaint.

The Complaints Policy had now been written giving clear information on how staff are to respond to a complaint and attention is being paid as to how a complaint is passed to the correct person and that it is responded to in time.

The report gives assurances that there is a transparency about the number of complaints received and the processes of how a complaint is managed. There is currently a review of our customer service interactions underway, and the results would be reported back to Cabinet in due course.

The Portfolio Holder for Customers, Communities and Neighbourhoods enquired if the Golden Goodbye scheme be considered to be reintroduced where tenants are paid a small amount of money to leave their properties in good condition to allow for a quick turnover for the next tenant.

The Assistant Director for Housing advised that the golden goodbye scheme is under consideration and that members also receive the voids report every month so progress can be seen.

The Leader, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services enquired if officers could possibly produce a report regarding the golden goodbye in due course.

Cabinet:

- 1) **NOTED** the contents of the report and provided any observations or actions to the relevant officers accordingly.

Reason for Recommendation:

Having established a Corporate Strategy in September 2020, is it important the Council regularly receives and considers performance information to evaluate progress. The Council's Corporate Performance Measures are used to focus 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 report will be provided to Cabinet twice a year and will also be provided to the Scrutiny Committee to enable them to consider appropriate areas for their Workplan.

17

Discretionary Relief Policy

The Director for Corporate Services introduced the report, the purpose of which was to propose a revised Discretionary Charitable Relief Scheme from 1 April 2024 to allow the scheme to be more transparent and clearer.

Members agreed that charity shops are an asset to the economy and recycling attracting a mixture of disposable income from antique dealers to, teenagers to low-income families.

The Portfolio Holder for Town Centre, Growth and Prosperity advised members that 10% of carbon footprint is from the using of charity shops as it is classed as recycled, and the biggest trend genre currently for using charity shops are teenagers.

Cabinet:

- 1) **APPROVED** the new Discretionary Charitable Relief Scheme to operate from 1 April 2024.
- 2) **AGREED** that authority be delegated to the Director for Corporate Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Finance and Resources, to make any future amendments to the Scheme.

Reasons for Recommendations

To ensure there is transparency when awards are made under the Discretionary Charitable Relief Scheme.

To enable sufficient flexibility to make changes to the Discretionary Charitable Relief Scheme going forward by delegating this to an officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

The meeting closed at: 5.40 pm

Chair