

# Minutes

<b>Meeting name</b>	<b>Policy, Finance and Administration Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>Wednesday, 24 January 2018</b>
<b>Start time</b>	<b>6.30 pm</b>
<b>Venue</b>	<b>Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray LE13 1GH</b>

## Present:

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

**Councillors** L. Higgins (Vice-Chair) P. Cumbers  
M. Glancy E. Holmes  
B. Rhodes J. Wyatt

## **Observers**

**Officers** Chief Executive  
Director for Corporate Services  
Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Regulatory Services  
Administrative Assistant (KW)

Minute No.	Minute
P53	<p><b>Apologies For Absence</b> Apologies were received from Councillors de Burle, Hutchison and Pearson.</p>
P54	<p><b>Minutes</b> The minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2017 and 7 December 2017 were confirmed and authorised to be signed by the Chair.</p>
P55	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b> Councillors Orson and Rhodes declared a personal interest in any items relating to Leicestershire County Council due to their positions as County Councillors.</p>
P56	<p><b>Recommendations From Other Committees</b> There were no recommendations from other committees.</p>
P57	<p><b>Update On Decisions</b> The update on decisions were noted.</p>
P58	<p><b>Items for Approval Under Financial Procedure Rules</b> The Director for Corporate Services submitted a report to provide requests for approval of this Committee under Financial Procedure Rules and to provide information on amounts approved under delegated powers and to report the impact of these on the Council's reserves and balances.</p> <p>The Director for Corporate Services explained that recommendation 2.3 of the report had been amended and the funding had increased from £25k to £29k.</p> <p>A Member questioned why and also expressed dissatisfaction at only timesage customers being targeted in relation to the business case as it was felt this excluded customers who did not have use of a computer.</p> <p>The Director for Corporate Services explained that the funding available is required to be spent by March so the money was allocated to timesage to enable equipment to be purchased. The Chief Executive further explained that timesage was originally promoted through social media as it is cheap and effective however timesage is also being promoted in other ways such as doctors surgeries and Age Concern to ensure that the service is available to all. A press release will also be conducted by the Chief Executive to publicise timesage further. A report will be brought back to this committee at an ad hoc meeting in mid-March. The Chief Executive also clarified to a Member that the timesage website is not available through a link from the Melton Borough Council website currently, however this is being addressed.</p> <p>A Member highlighted that there is only one taxi available for disabled persons within the Borough and the taxi is coming to the end of its life. Members enquired as to whether the DCLG (Department of Communities and Local Government) grant could be utilised to help the taxi service for disabled people within the town.</p>

The Chief Executive explained that the grant funding is very specific; however Officers will explore options regarding the service.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Orson and Councillor Glancy seconded.

All Members were unanimously in favour.

**RESOLVED** that:

1) the virements approved under delegated powers (para. 3.1.1 refers) be noted.

2) the budget reductions approved under delegated powers (para. 4.1 refers) be noted.

3) the business case for the additional £29k offered to Melton Borough Council by DCLG for wider social care capital projects be approved.

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### **Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals 2018-19**

The Director for Corporate Services submitted a report to outline the key budget issues that will be going forward to the Council's budget setting meeting on 7 February 2018 and provide the opportunity for Members to comment on these in advance of the meeting.

The Chair proposed the increase in Council tax.

The Director for Corporate Services explained that the report brought together the proposals made at the Budget Away Day for Members information before the budget is formally submitted for discussion and approval at Full Council.

The Director for Corporate Services explained that with regard to the general expenses revenue budget the proposal from the away day is for an overall council tax increase of 2.99%, to keep within the referendum limit, which for district councils was the higher of £5 or 3%. It was said that the finance settlement is still provisional and the consultation closed last week. There has been lobbying to increase the flat rate increase allowed for district councils as whilst the percentage was increased from the previous limit of 2% the flat rate was not meaning a large number of district council's did not benefit from this particular flexibility. Melton would benefit marginally. As such there could be some movement in the limits if this lobbying is responded to positively.

The Director for Corporate Services asked if Members could give a steer on this for the Full Council meeting as papers could be drawn up showing both options subject to the settlement being finalised prior to the Full Council meeting. It was said that savings are proposed as set out in appendix A and growth for general expenses and special expenses set out in appendices C and D. Those savings

set out in appendix B were not proposed at the away day to be taken forward. These proposals would result in a deficit of £269k for 2018/19 based on the position at this point which is still being refined. The proposal is to fund this from the spending pressures reserve and the corporate priorities reserve.

The Director for Corporate Services further explained that no proposals are put forward in respect of capital projects for special expenses. General expenses are set out in appendix E and the housing revenue account in appendix F. Members were asked to note however that following further prioritisation work mandates and business cases could be presented for consideration for funding during the financial year. It was explained that the waste procurement is still being finalised and prudential borrowing could be an option as a result of this in order to fund the necessary assets required to deliver the contract.

The Director for Corporate Services clarified to Members that the budget deficit does include the benefits of the waste contract for 6 months as a best estimate but extra benefits will be gained for a further 6 months. It was also said that this would result in the council budget being break even if everything remained equal.

A Member questioned if the £40k for the sinking fund in the leisure vision project was required. The Director for Corporate Services explained that the sinking fund was originally £60k and was reduced to £40k and factored in the budget for urgent repairs and maintenance for the site.

A Member explained that since taking over the site it is predicted that the project will be cost neutral and would like to pass on thanks to the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods and the team involved.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Orson and Councillor Higgins seconded.

All Members were unanimously in favour.

**RESOLVED** that:

1) Members supported the revenue and capital budget proposals as made by the Strategic Planning Away Day for submission to the Council meeting on 7 February 2018.

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**Proposals for use of Additional Planning Fees**

The Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Regulatory Services submitted a report making recommendations as to the proposed expenditure of the increase in statutory planning application fees.

The Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Regulatory Services presented the report and explained that the 20% increase of fees paid by applicants took effect from 17 January 2018 but will be fed into the 2018/19 budget. It is recommended that the fee increase is used to amend the staffing establishment

to include more staff. By increasing the staffing levels this will assist development control from the beginning to the end of the process, it will also fund a proportion of the local plan and also an innovation fund which could be used for IT, as an example.

A Member questioned if the council are anticipating a drop in planning applications because of the fee increase. The Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Regulatory Services explained that he is not anticipating a drop in the short term but there may be a drop when the local plan is underway. The Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Regulatory Services clarified that an application of 10 or more would be considered a major application.

A Member explained that he has received complaints from applicants that are getting frustrated with the length of time that it takes from planning permission to be granted to receiving the slip. The Assistant Director for Strategic Planning and Regulatory Services explained that with the extra staff that is proposed in the report this will speed up all stages within the applications.

Another Member stated that he is happy if it helps create a positive customer experience.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Holmes and Councillor Cumbers seconded.

All Members were unanimously in favour.

**RESOLVED** that:

1) the proposed recommendations as set out in para. 3.5 of the report as part of the wider budget setting exercise for 2018/19 be approved.

2) the staffing establishment be amended to include the additional posts described at para. 3.5 of the report.

P61	<b>Urgent Business</b> There was no urgent business.
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The meeting closed at: 7.10 pm

Chair