

Minutes



Meeting name	Cabinet
Date	Wednesday, 22 April 2020
Start time	4.00 pm
Venue	This meeting was held by remote access

Present:

Chair Councillor J. Orson (Chair)

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

Observers S. Carter P. Cumbers
C. Evans

Officers Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive & Director for People & Communities
Director for Corporate Services
Director for Growth and Regeneration
Director for Governance & Regulatory Services
Director for Housing and Communities
Assistant Director of Planning and Delivery
Democratic Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer (CR)

Minute No.	Minute
	<p>The Leader of the Council advised Cabinet that sadly, Sharon Ward had passed away yesterday, following a short period of illness.</p> <p>Sharon was a valuable team member within the Intensive Housing Management service and worked for the Council for just over 20 years.</p> <p>Sharon was well respected by both her colleagues and the tenants she worked with and was dedicated to her work and supporting others.</p> <p>Thoughts and deepest condolences were with Sharon's two children, wider family, friends and colleagues at this difficult time.</p> <p>[A moment of silence was held]</p>
80	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE There were no apologies for absence.</p>
81	<p>MINUTES The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2020 were confirmed and authorised to be signed by the Chair.</p>
82	<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>
83	<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>
84	<p>COUNCIL RESPONSE TO COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) Councillor Joe Orson, Leader of the Council introduced the report, which outlined work undertaken by the Council and other partners to date, in responding to the threat posed by the outbreak of COVID-19 and set out ongoing work being undertaken to ensure that all possible steps were taken to prepare and respond to the challenges arising.</p> <p>Before giving a summary of the report, Edd de Coverly, Chief Executive reiterated the Leader's comments about Sharon Ward and extended his personal condolences to Sharon's family, friends and colleagues.</p> <p>In summarising the report, Mr. de Coverly confirmed that the Council supported the</p>

Government's 'stay home, stay safe' message. Holding 'remote meetings' was an example of the Council undertaking its business differently as a result of public health messages.

Mr. de Coverly advised that thoughts were with those directly effected by the COVID-19 crisis, as well as respect and gratitude to the NHS, carers and key workers.

Mr. de Coverly acknowledged the work of the Assistant Director for Planning and Delivery in ensuring good preparation and business continuity during the crisis.

Council efforts had been increased on 13 March, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report. To comply with the Government's 'stay safe, stay at home' guidance, 75% of the Council's workforce were working from home and continued to provide effective service delivery. Staff who remained at their usual places of work had been subject to risk assessments and personal protective equipment (PPE) was in place for them. The Council had redeployed a number of staff to assist in priority functions and the vast majority of Council services were operational. Leisure and community centres had been closed in accordance with Government guidance. Emergency repairs to council homes were being prioritised and landlord health and safety compliance functions had been adapted, in response to the crisis (in line with the Regulator). All waste collections were fully operational, with the exception of bulky waste collections. Playgrounds had been closed but parks were open. Carparks were free to support NHS and other key workers.

Mr. de Coverly thanked the Director for Governance and Regulatory Services, the Democratic Services Manager and their team for working to maintain the Council's democratic functions. The Council's first remote meeting had been held on 9 April and preparations were underway for the Council's Annual Meeting on 14 May.

Mr. de Coverly highlighted the work of the Deputy Chief Executive (and Director for People and Communities), the Director for Housing and Communities, the Housing and Neighbourhoods Manager and the People Manager to facilitate direct support to those in the community effected during the crisis. This included delivery of nearly 500 food parcels and over 100 prescriptions. The Council had worked in partnership with local community groups and volunteers (Melton Learning Hub, Community Action Melton, Melton Vineyard).

Mr. de Coverly took the opportunity to express special thanks to the Deputy Chief Executive (and Director for People and Communities), advising that sadly, the Deputy Chief Executive's 30 years of service with the Council was ending but that he left an enviable legacy, which was highlighted by his work during the crisis and which embodied his people-centred approach.

Mr. de Coverly highlighted the work of the Corporate Improvement Manager, the Regeneration Manager and the Revenues and Benefits Manager and their teams to

support local businesses. Approximately £6.6m in grant funding had been issued to 535 businesses and work to identify the remaining 400 local business which may be eligible for funding continued.

The Council had undertaken to maintain regular communication with residents and businesses during the crisis. It continued to deal with enquiries efficiently and had sent letters to all household in the Borough, detailing the Council's response and useful sources of information. The Hr and Communications Manager and Customer Services Lead and their teams had demonstrated great care, professionalism and efficiency in this work.

The Director for Corporate Services and Corporate Services Manager and their team had worked to direct the Council's resources and ensure Government followed through on its commitment to support the Council.

Mr. de Coverly advised that as well as having focus on its response to the crisis, the Council was considering Melton's recovery. The Director for Growth and Regeneration was working to begin this process, looking at how the Council would support the community and economy.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- Members commented that for many, the Council was seen as the fourth emergency service. They were pleased with the work the Council had undertaken and thanked officers and their teams for the incredible team spirit they had demonstrated.
- Members commented on the public's positive response to this work in, particular that of the Community Hub, delivery of prescriptions and groceries, sending of letters to every household in the Borough, waste collections and free car parking
- The Council continued to advocate for local business in respect of Government funding.
- Inevitably, there would be considerable financial implications for the Council as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and the Council's high level service provision during the emergency.
- Members thanked Councillor Bindloss for his work on local food parcels.
- Members commented that Melton's community and business hubs had been set up very quickly, in response to the emergency and they encouraged those who needed help and support to contact these hubs. They thanked community volunteers for their work.
- It was clarified that 91% of eligible businesses who had applied for grant funding had been processed.

Cabinet **CONSIDERED** and **ACKNOWLEDGED** the work undertaken to date by the Council, in response to COVID-19.

MELTON SOUTH SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD MASTERPLAN

Councillor Joe Orson, Leader of the Council introduced the report, which updated Members on progress and next steps in relation to production of a Masterplan for the South Sustainable Neighbourhood.

Jim Worley, Assistant Director for Planning and Delivery gave a brief summary of the report and advised that the Council was reinvigorating its efforts on the Masterplan and was doing this at pace.

Integral to the Masterplan was Leicestershire County Council's successful Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Bid. This presented a demanding timetable for the Council, as detailed at paragraph 5.5 of the report. The County Council had stated it intended to inform Homes England of its intention to accept HIF monies by 31 May and the Masterplan would be brought before Cabinet in June.

Mr. Worley highlighted the recommendations at paragraphs 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 of the report. The Council's key partners were the County Council, and developers (there were two main developers). Next steps included contracting consultants immediately.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- Members highlighted that the Masterplan would provide important information, including the number and placement of homes, affordable homes, schools, open spaces etc. This Council, as local planning authority was best placed to lead on this. It would proceed unilaterally and would engage with stakeholders.
- Although much of Melton's infrastructure featured heavily in the north, the south was also crucial to Melton's economy. It was incumbent on all stakeholders to deliver what the community needed, housing for the next generation, green areas, play areas etc.
- Business was also crucial. Challenge of the kind of work and earnings available in Melton was necessary and investment and reinvestment was key to driving Melton's economy.
- The aspirations of residents needed to be realised. Residents in the south wanted the road in place before any housing and the Council had worked in support of this.
- The Council was ready to move forward with the Masterplan
- Members thanked the Leader, Deputy Leader, Chief Executive and Assistant Director for Planning and Delivery for their work on the Masterplan.
- The Leader thanked MP for Melton and Rutland, Alicia Kearns for her work to move the Masterplan forward.

DECISIONS (NON-KEY)

(1) Cabinet **ACKNOWLEDGED** the existing requirement, established within the

Local Plan, to produce a masterplan for the Melton South Sustainable Neighbourhood;

- (2) Cabinet **ACKNOWLEDGED** that in line with current understanding, to meet the requirements of the Housing Infrastructure Funding, the Melton South Sustainable Neighbourhood masterplan needed to be completed and approved by the end of June 2020;
- (3) Cabinet **ACKNOWLEDGED** the key issues that the Melton South Sustainable Neighbourhood masterplan needed to address and **ENDORSED** the approach Melton Borough Council would take to deliver it and the requirements and expectations placed upon partners and developers in delivering it within the required timescales;
- (4) Cabinet **NOTED** that in line with the appropriate provisions within the Contract Procedure Rules, the Council had appointed a consultant to support development of the Masterplan. The decision took into account previous work undertaken and time constraints and the costs of appointing the consultant would be funded from the Local Plan reserve.
- (5) Cabinet **DELEGATED AUTHORITY** to the Director for Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Leader to make any amendments to the timescales, deliverables and contents of the masterplan following changes in advice and guidance provided by Homes England and through discussions with Leicestershire County Council.

Reasons for the decision

The Melton Mowbray Distributor Road 'southern link' was the subject of a bid for funding under the Housing Infrastructure Fund in 2019. The bid was successful and was presented to Leicestershire County Council's Cabinet for acceptance on 24 March 2020. The County Council's Cabinet resolved that the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) award would be accepted only if Melton Borough Council agreed to the County Council's proposal that they undertook, at their own expense, a fresh masterplanning exercise on the understanding that the Borough Council would cooperate fully.

Transferring responsibility for delivery of the masterplan to the County Council was not appropriate. The masterplan was a planning document directly associated with the Local Plan. It was appropriate and necessary that it be undertaken by the Borough Council as Local Planning Authority though the engagement of key stakeholders, including the County Council, which as the key infrastructure agency, was essential.

Delivery of a masterplan would, subject to confirmation by the County Council, meet the requirements of them being able to accept the HIF to support the earlier

delivery of the southern section of the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road.

Delivery of a masterplan would support the wider aspirations of the Local Plan and delivery of homes and infrastructure required within the community.

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ACCEPTANCE OF BUSINESS RATE POOL GRANT FUNDS

Councillor Leigh Higgins, Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity (and Deputy Leader) introduced the report, which sought approval to enter the relevant grant agreements and accept the funding.

Pranali Parikh, Director for Growth and Regeneration gave a brief summary of the report, highlighting that that this was a positive step forward for delivery of the Council's key priorities and key strategic regional projects from the Corporate Plan. The Council had been successful in receiving funding from Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) for three major regeneration projects:

- i. Food Enterprise Centre – work on this project had been undertaken over the past year through funding from various sources and in partnership with the University of Nottingham. It would be key to advancing Melton's 'Rural Capital of Food' title. The total amount of funding for this project was £200k (£100k business rate pool grant and match funding of 50k from the Council's regeneration reserves and £50k officer time). The funds would be used to progress the project.
- ii. Development of Council Owned Sites – again, the Council had been working on this project for the past year to create jobs, homes, community facilities etc. The total amount of funding for this project was £1m (£500k of business rate pool grant and match funding of £375k from the Council's capital receipt reserves, £50k staff time and £75k, which had already spent over the past year).
- iii. Melton Health and Leisure Park – this was a long standing aim of the Council and much work had been undertaken. £100k of business rate pool grant funding would help secure the Council's proposals, inform the next level of funding and accelerate delivery of the project.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- Members thanked the Director for Growth and Regeneration and her team for their work. It was important to look past the current Covid-19 emergency and give focus to shaping Melton's economy and future.
- Food enterprise and food design were important to people and Melton could take credit for moving this forward.
- Boosting the health and wellbeing of the community was important.
- Asset owners would benefit from the development of Council owned sites because the value of their assets would increase with a healthy economy around them. Appropriate sites for new housing, leisure and health provision needed to be explored.

- Regeneration was a key element of the Corporate Strategy. The projects would help fulfil the aspirations of the community.
- The report was comprehensive, setting out opportunities and highlighting risks.
- Any draw on capital receipts to support the development of Council owned sites would be subject to submission of detailed business cases to Cabinet for its approval.
- The deadline for LLEP submission was 1 May. Following this quarterly updates would be submitted to Cabinet.
- Regeneration was crucial and delivery of the projects would be both exciting and challenging.
- There was concern about capital receipts and the level of reserves decreasing (as identified in the report). However, the business case would provide a better understanding of where the £375k capital receipt monies would be spent. Delivery of this project would release assets for sale and would generate capital receipts.

DECISIONS (KEY)

- (1) Cabinet **APPROVED** acceptance of the following revenue fund grants funding:
 - a. £100,000 revenue fund for Food Enterprise Centre Stage 2 - building upon evidence case
 - b. £100,000 revenue fund for the Provision of Melton Borough Health and Leisure Park Stage 1 - project development phase
- (2) Cabinet **Approved** acceptance of the conditional offer of £500,000 capital fund grant for the Development of Council owned sites and **NOTED** that Cabinet and Council approval for inclusion in the capital programme and release of funding would be sought following the preparation of a detailed business case;
- (3) Cabinet **ACKNOWLEDGED** the conditional offer of £2m large capital fund grant for Melton Borough Health and Leisure Park and **NOTED** that Cabinet and Council approval would be sought following the preparation of a detailed business case;
- (4) Cabinet **DELEGATED** authority to the Director for Growth and Regeneration to appoint consultants to prepare relevant information required to meet the grant conditions using the grant and match funding.

Reasons for the decision

As set out in the Council's Corporate Strategy, there were a number of significant

growth and regeneration projects identified as key priorities. Collectively, these projects provided an opportunity to deliver important benefits; creating jobs, homes and infrastructure for Melton's communities.

The projects receiving Business Rates Pool (BRP) funding were specifically referenced within the Council's Corporate Strategy. The Council had invested in undertaking initial feasibility work on these projects and determined that further work and investment was required in order to take these projects to the next stage of delivery.

The objectives of these projects aligned well with the objectives of the funding and therefore acceptance of this funding presented a good opportunity for realising the Council's ambitions for Melton.

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WRITE OFF OF IRRECOVERABLE DEBTS

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

Andrew Cotton, Director for Housing and Communities gave a brief overview of the report, advising that Cabinet approval was sought to write off irrecoverable debts, in line with the Council's Corporate Debt Policy. A report on irrecoverable debts was submitted to Cabinet on a quarterly basis, as part of financial good practice.

Mr. Cotton advised that write off amounts were detailed at paragraph 5.4 of report. He reiterated that officers had worked in accordance with the Policy, in the cases presented and recovery actions had been exhausted.

Mr. Cotton highlighted the recommendations at 2.1 and 2.2 of the report.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- Regrettably, there were limits to recovery action and it was necessary for the Council, as a public body and provider of services to write off debts.
- The newly implemented Debt and Income Generation Policy provided a better structure for recovery.
- Grants to business in respect of the Covid-19 crisis were not related to the write off of debts and therefore could not be withheld from businesses who owed money to the Council. Businesses had to be in operation on 11 March to qualify for Government assistance and the Council only received funding on the condition it was issued to the business in need of assistance.

DECISIONS (NON-KEY)

(1) Cabinet **APPROVED** the write off of the debts;

(2) Cabinet **NOTED** the action taken by the Council to recover outstanding debts.

Reasons for the decision

All recovery methods had been considered and where appropriate pursued, before recommending that debts were written off.

Officer time could be maximised on greater returns, focusing on debts where there was more realistic chance of recovery.

Councillor Joe Orson, Leader of the Council paid tribute to Keith Aubrey, Deputy Chief Executive (and Director for People and Communities) who was standing down after over 30 years of service at the Council.

Mr Aubrey joined the Council on 5 March 1990, as Deputy Borough Treasurer. He had a 44 year career in local government, which included positions at Leicestershire County Council (July 1976 to December 1984) and Nuneaton and Bexworth Borough Council (January 1985 to March 1990).

At Melton Borough Council, Mr. Aubrey held the following positions:

- Assistant Chief Executive (appointed March 1997)
- Corporate Director (appointed August 2003)
- Acting Head of Paid Service (appointed October 2004)
- Deputy Chief Executive (appointed December 2016)
- Acting Head of Paid Service (appointed 31 July)
- Deputy Chief Executive and Director for People and Communities (2017 to date)

Mr. Aubrey would move into a consultancy role with the Council from May 2020, providing support for the Council's COVID-19 response and recovery and leading on IT Partnership review work.

Members thanked Mr. Aubrey for his work, noting his considerable and significant contribution to the Council.

The meeting closed at: 5.35 pm

Chair