

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY, FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, STATION ROAD, WIGSTON ON TUESDAY, 18
SEPTEMBER 2018 COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM**

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs S B Morris (Chair)
Councillor D A Gamble (Vice Chair)

COUNCILLORS

L A Bentley
G A Boulter
J W Boyce
Mrs L M Broadley
M L Darr
B Dave
R F Eaton
R E R Morris

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs A E Court (Chief Executive)
Ms K Pollard (Head of People & Performance)
C Raymakers (Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits)
M Smith (Community Safety & Youth Coordinator)
S Tucker (Democratic & Electoral Services Manager)

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

A Persaud (Internal Auditor, CW Audit)

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillors E R Barr, F S Broadley, J Kaufman, Mrs L Kaufman and T K Khong.

14. APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES

None.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

16. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 17 JULY 2018

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 17 July 2018 be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

17. ACTION LIST ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JULY 2018

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The Action List be noted by Members.

18. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None.

In accordance with Rule 7.3 of Part 4 of the Constitution, the Chair moved for the order of business to be altered and taken in the order as reflected in the minutes.

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The order of business be altered accordingly.

19. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT (Q1 2018/19)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 11-20 of the agenda, which asked it to note the progress made in delivering the 2018/19 Audit Plan and the implementation of the associated recommendations.

Mr Anand Persaud, Audit Manager at CW Audit Services, provided the Committee with a summary of the report. Mr Persaud confirmed that the Internal Auditors were satisfied with the rate of progress achieved to date in delivering the 2018/19 Audit Plan, with five reviews having been completed and seven of the ten recommendations made having been implemented, whilst the remainder continue to be progressed.

With regard to the five completed reviews, it was confirmed that an opinion of Limited Assurance had been provided in respect of the Council's Capital Programme and Taxi/Hackney Carriage Licensing service areas. Whilst the Internal Auditor confirmed that a number of improvements had already been made in these areas, the Chair of the Committee expressed particular concern in relation to the Limited Assurance opinion concerning the Capital Programme, and requested a report to the next Committee outlining in greater detail the reasons behind this rating and the measures recommended/taken to ensure improvements. Similarly, the Chair of the Licensing & Regulatory Committee expressed concern regarding the findings of the Taxi/Hackney Carriage Audit, as well as a concern that the results had not been brought to the Chair's attention prior to receiving the Internal Auditor's report. It was therefore requested that a report be provided to a future meeting of the Licensing & Regulatory Committee to provide an understanding of the issues identified and the steps taken to address them.

In relation to the Council's cleaning contract, a number of Members of the Committee expressed concern about the current standard of service being delivered, which was falling significantly below expectation levels. The Internal Auditor confirmed that generally satisfactory measures were in place to ensure adequate monitoring of the contract, resulting in an opinion of Moderate assurance being provided. The Auditor stated that the importance of keeping detailed records of issues regarding the contract had been emphasised to the Council's management. It was requested by the Chair of Service Delivery Committee that an Action Plan be brought to the next meeting of that Committee, outlining the Council's strategy for driving up the current level of service.

A Member of the Committee raised a further concern in respect of the 'High Risk' outstanding issues contained within the Recommendation Tracking section of the report. It was noted that a recommendation had been in place for some considerable time to introduce a formal programme of post inspections in the Housing Repairs & Maintenance service area, however due to no Responsive Repairs Officer being in position, insufficient resource existed to implement/test the programme. It was also noted that the rescheduled target date for introduction of the programme by 31/08/18 had been missed. A request was made that the Chief Executive look into this as a matter of urgency and provide a written update to Members.

In spite of there being some areas of significant concern identified within the report, it was noted by the Chair that when viewed as a whole, a lot of good results had been achieved and very pleasing progress continued to be made in delivering the 2018/19 plan.

It was moved by Mrs L M Broadley, seconded by R E R Morris and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report and Appendix be noted by Members.

20. PROPOSED ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 55-80 of the agenda, which asked it to adopt the proposed Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy contained at Appendix 1, and in accordance with the Policy, approve the Council becoming a signatory to the 'Respect: ASB Charter for Housing' as set out at Appendix 2.

The Community Safety & Youth Coordinator provided the Committee with a brief summary of the proposed Policy, which had been commissioned following the Council's recruitment of a new Anti-Social Behaviour Officer and subsequent review of the Council's existing ASB policies. Members welcomed the appointment of a specialist Officer to deal with ASB issues in the Borough, but enquired how long the post-holder was expected to remain in position and what contingency arrangements would be in place to cover the service in the event that the Officer ended their employment with the Council. The Chief Executive confirmed that the post was fully-funded and it was hoped that the newly appointed Officer would remain in post for the long-term, however in the event of the position becoming vacant, a recruitment process would immediately be carried out.

It was requested by the Committee that following adoption of the Policy, the new arrangements should be kept under review and a report be brought back to the Committee in six months' time to update Members on the outcomes achieved and any issues identified.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

- (i) The proposed Anti-Social Behaviour Policy be adopted; and**
- (ii) Under the proposed Policy, and as a Social Landlord, the Council become a signatory to the 'Respect: ASB Charter for Housing' as developed by the Chartered Institute of Housing.**

21. PEOPLE & PERFORMANCE UPDATE (SEPTEMBER 2018)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 49-54 of the agenda, which asked

it to note the work programme of the Policy & Performance team and endorse the proposed closure of the Council Offices during Christmas and New Year.

In relation to the work programme of the Policy & Performance team, it was noted by the Committee that the Council has stated an aim to increase its daily social media output and issue more press releases, however Members stated that they had not yet seen an increase. The Leader of the Council suggested that all Members should in future be notified when a press release is issued, to satisfy them that a regular output is being achieved. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Council's Communications Officer would now be meeting on a weekly basis with the Senior Management Team to consider newsworthy items, therefore improvements in this area were to be expected imminently.

It was noted by the Committee that new pay spines had been introduced for lower level bands, alongside a pay award of 2% for each of the next two years. The report stated that the full impact of the changes was still not clear, and it was acknowledged that this could be further complicated by any future adjustments made to the Real Living Wage. A Member of the Committee requested that Members be updated once the options had been evaluated.

With regard to proposed closure of the Council Offices for Christmas & New Year, assurances were sought by the Committee that essential services would continue to operate and that satisfactory 'on-call' procedures would be in place to ensure appropriate cover in the event of any incidents. The Chief Executive confirmed that the arrangements would only apply to back-office service areas and the Customer Service Centre, meaning that frontline services such as waste collection, street cleaning and homelessness prevention, would continue unaffected throughout the period. In addition, the out of hours emergency service would remain fully operational, whilst all Heads of Service would remain on call. It was also confirmed that staff would be working the same number of overall hours during the year in lieu of the closure period. A Member of the Committee expressed concern that whilst a staff survey had demonstrated employee support for the proposed closure, there had been a lack of public consultation. The Chief Executive confirmed that the proposal had arisen because customer contact statistics clearly demonstrated that demand for services during Christmas and New Year in previous years was proven to drop-off significantly. In addition, the closure of the Offices would achieve a small cost saving, improve staff morale and bring the authority into line with a number of other Leicestershire authorities who have successfully operated Christmas closure for a number of years.

A Member of the Committee requested that as well as Senior Officers being on call during the proposed closure, a protocol should be put in place whereby Members can be called upon and/or kept apprised in the event of any incidents, as residents often use their Councillor as a first point of contact. It was also confirmed that the introduction of the proposed closure during 2018/19 would effectively be used as a trial exercise which would be fully reviewed to enable any issues identified during the closure to then be given further consideration.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

- (i) The work programme of the People and Performance Section be noted; and**
- (ii) The proposal for closing the Council Offices over Christmas and New Year be endorsed by Members.**

22. PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN 75% BUSINESS RATES RETENTION SCHEME

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 21-24 of the agenda, which asked it to approve the Council's participation in a Leicester/shire-wide application to participate in a 75% Business Rate Retention Scheme for 2019/20.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT

- (i) The Council's application to participate in a pilot scheme allowing for 75% Business Rate Retention in 2019/20 in accordance with the principles set out in the report as part of the Leicester/shire-wide proposal be approved; and**
- (ii) Delegated authority be given to the Director of Finance & Transformation, in consultation with the Chair of the Policy, Finance and Development Committee and the Leader of the Council to agree on behalf of the Council, and the other authorities within Leicester and Leicestershire, the detail contained within the application to participate in the pilot scheme.**

23. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT (2017/18)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 25-37 of the agenda, which asked it to note the actual performance and activities of the Council's treasury management function for the financial year 2017/18.

The Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits provided the Committee with a brief summary of the report. The Committee welcomed the fact that during the 2017/18 financial year the treasury management function was operated efficiently with no breaches in the boundaries set, however it was requested that the content of the report be revised to make it more accessible for Members, given the volume and complexity of the information provided. The Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits noted the request and undertook to review the report style where possible, although it was noted that much of the content was prescriptive and was required to be included for Members' information.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by the Vice Chair and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report and the Appendices be noted by Members.

24. FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT (Q1 2018/19)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 1-6 of the agenda update, which asked it to note the summary of the Council's overall financial position for the financial year 2018/19 after the first quarter.

The Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits provided the Committee with a summary of the report.

A Member of the Committee expressed concern that a comment in the Appendix to the report regarding Ervins Lock Footbridge stated that planning permission 'should' be gained at the Development Control Committee in October 2018. It was asked to be clarified that this was an Officer comment which had been poorly chosen, and in no way reflected any level of pre-determination by Members of the Development Control Committee.

A Member of the Committee expressed concern about the projected use of earmarked reserves to achieve a balanced budget. The Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits acknowledged the concern but assured the Committee that every effort was being made by Officers to minimise the use of reserves by identifying savings elsewhere.

Following discussions held at the recent meeting of Oadby Residents Forum, the Committee requested clarification regarding when the replacement of children's play equipment at Brocks Hill was due to be carried out. The Chief Executive confirmed that a short consultation would be commencing imminently, after which the options would be appraised and a contractor appointed to carry out the works. It was therefore likely that the new equipment would be in place by Spring 2019. This scheme was not to be confused with the separate installation of adult gym equipment in Uplands Park, for which a consultation had already commenced.

It was confirmed that in relation to the review of the Senior Management Team referred to in the report, the Leader of the Council would provide an update containing further detail on this matter to all Members at the next Full Council meeting scheduled for 02 October 2018.

It was moved by the Leader of the Council, seconded by the Chair and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report and Appendix be noted by Members.

25. COLLECTION AND WRITE-OFF OF MISCELLANEOUS DEBTORS (Q1 2018/19)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 38-41 of the agenda which asked it to note the levels of outstanding debt owed to the Council from the first quarter of 2018/19.

The Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits provided the Committee with a brief summary of the report and confirmed to Members that there were no write-offs for approval at this Committee.

The Committee welcomed the progress made in minimising Council Tax, benefit overpayments and sundry debts. It was noted that Business Rates and Housing Rents had seen arrears rise, however additional resource was being allocated to address this. A Member of the Committee noted that in relation to other local authorities, the authority was actually performing very well in relation to Housing Rents and asked for the gratitude of the Committee to be passed on to the relevant Officers.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by the Vice Chair and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report be noted by Members.

26. THIRD SECTOR AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUNDING REQUESTS (Q1 2018/19)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 42-48 of the agenda, which asked it to note the contents of the report and Appendix and approve the expenditure requests received from the Residents' Forums.

The Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits provided the Committee with a brief

summary of the report.

A Member of the Committee expressed concern that Council's contract with the Helping Hands Trust and the Citizens Advice Bureau fell due for renewal on 31 May 2019 but arrangements beyond that date had not yet been discussed. It was suggested that urgent work should be undertaken to review the adequacy of the current arrangements before simply signing a rolling renewal. The Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits agreed to establish contact with both organisations in the near future to commence this process.

With regard to the 'Sam Says Stop' campaign, the Committee reiterated its wholehearted support for the initiative, despite there being a delay in securing funding. It was confirmed that funding was no longer being sought from the Resident Forums, for which the Chair of Licensing offered an apology. It was confirmed however that alternative sources of funding were now in the process of being identified. The Committee requested that an update on funding be provided to Members prior to the next cycle of Resident Forums.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

- (i) The contents of the report and Appendix be noted; and**
- (ii) The Forums' expenditure requests be approved.**

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.13 PM



Chair

Tuesday, 27 November 2018

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