

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY, FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, STATION ROAD, WIGSTON ON TUESDAY, 27
NOVEMBER 2018 COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM**

PRESENT

Councillor D A Gamble (Chair)
Councillor Mrs L Kaufman (Vice Chair)

COUNCILLORS

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

D Gill (Head of Law & Governance / Monitoring Officer)
S Hinds (Director of Finance & Transformation / Section 151 Officer)
C Raymakers (Head of Finance, Revenues & Benefits)
A Thorpe (Head of Planning, Development & Regeneration)
S Tucker (Democratic & Electoral Services Manager)

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

M Watkins (Head of Audit, CW Audit Services)

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillors E R Barr, Mrs L M Broadley, F S Broadley, B Dave, Dr T K Khong and Mrs S B Morris.

33. APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES

None.

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor Mrs L Kaufman assume the Vice-Chair for the duration of the meeting only.

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

35. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S)

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 September 2018 and the extraordinary meeting of the Committee held on 12 November 2018 be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

36. ACTION LIST ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

In respect of Action 8 on the Action List, the Head of Law & Governance confirmed to the Committee that by 14 December 2018 all Members would be receiving a briefing note providing details of how the organisation will engage its contingency plans in the event of any incidents occurring during the Christmas/New Year closure period.

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The Action List arising from the meeting of the previous Committee held on 18 September 2018 be read, confirmed and noted.

37. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None.

38. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT (Q2 2018/19)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 13-37 of the agenda, which asked it to note the progress made in delivering the 2018/19 Audit Plan and management's implementation of the internal audit recommendations.

Mr Mark Watkins, Head of Audit at CW Audit Services, provided the Committee with a summary of the report. Since the last meeting of the Committee, three further reviews had been carried out in relation to Cyber Security (Moderate Assurance), Legal Compliance (Significant Assurance) and Food Safety (Limited Assurance).

With regard to Cyber Security, it was confirmed that the achievement of Significant Assurance was rare across Local Authorities, therefore the achievement of Moderate Assurance was to be taken as a positive. It was also confirmed that the responses received from the ICT Partnership to the audit recommendations had been encouraging, and these recommendations would now be progressed by the Partnership with the assistance of the Council's IT contractor. The implementation of these actions is to be monitored by the Project Board.

In relation to Food Safety, Mr Watkins confirmed that a number of encouraging and prompt actions had been taken by management to address the recommendations made in light of the Limited Assurance level reported. The Head of Law & Governance clarified that one of the recommendations related to a training need identified in respect of the Environmental Health Team Leader, however since the report was finalised this employee had subsequently left the organisation. In the meantime a comprehensive service review of Environmental Health and Licensing had commenced and an Officer with significant experience in the area of Food Safety was currently acting up in the Team Leader role. The service review was also looking into the potential benefits of upgrading the software system used by the team to automate and improve a number of processes which were currently labour intensive.

A Member of the Committee expressed concern that the Taxi Licensing assurance level remained Limited, and asked why this rating had not been revised in light of assurances provided by management at the previous meeting of the Committee that actions had been taken to address the audit findings. It was confirmed by the Director of Finance & Transformation that the assurance level provided when the report is finalised is effectively a 'snapshot' rating given at that particular moment in time, and the rating remains in place until such time as a full follow-up review is conducted. The Committee therefore requested that follow up reviews in respect of Food Safety and Taxi Licensing be added to the 2019/20 Audit Plan to assess whether the implementation of the audit recommendations and the Environmental Health and Licensing service review were resulting in improved outcomes.

With regard to the recommendation tracking contained within the audit report, a Member of the Committee noted that two items from the 2016/17 Housing Repairs & Maintenance service audit were still included on the list, and it was queried why these remained incomplete. The Head of Planning, Development & Regeneration confirmed that the items were nearing completion and it was anticipated that sign-off should be achieved in time for the next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee noted the audit report from September 2018 in relation to the Council's cleaning contract, and expressed disappointment in the finding that service delivery by the contractor had not been of an acceptable standard since the contract was let in September 2017. It was requested that the Service Delivery Committee be updated at its next meeting on any proposed actions to address the areas of concern identified by the audit.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report and Appendices be noted.

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.

39. PROPOSED ADULT SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 93-139 of the agenda, which asked it to approve and adopt the proposed Adult Safeguarding Policy.

The Committee requested that contact information for the relevant Safeguarding Officer(s) be circulated to all Members as soon as possible following adoption of the policy in order to provide readily accessible details as to who should be notified in the event that a Member is the first point of contact when a safeguarding concern is raised.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by M L Darr and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The proposed Adult Safeguarding Policy be approved and adopted.

40. PROPOSED CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 93-139 of the agenda, which asked it to approve and adopt the proposed Child Safeguarding Policy.

The Committee requested that contact information for the relevant Safeguarding Officer(s) be circulated to all Members as soon as possible following adoption of the policy in order to provide readily accessible details as to who should be notified in the event that a Member is the first point of contact when a safeguarding concern is raised.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by M L Darr and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The proposed Child Safeguarding Policy be approved and adopted.

41. FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT (Q2 2018/19)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 38-43 of the agenda, which asked it to note the overall Council position for the financial year 2018/19 after the second quarter.

In respect of the Capital Programme attached at Appendix 1 of the report, the Committee expressed surprise that there was a reported £23,470 underspend on the CCTV camera scheme, as Members claimed to have been informed previously that all money allocated to the scheme had already been spent. The Committee therefore requested clarification regarding how many cameras have been ordered, how many have already been installed and how many were awaiting installation, as well as clarity on whether the quoted underspend was accurate. It was requested that if the scheme has not been completed by the time of the next meeting of the Committee in February 2019, a report should be brought to that Committee explaining the reasons for any delay.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report and Appendix be noted.

42. COOMBE PARK PAVILION EXTENSION

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 85-88 of the agenda, which asked it to approve an extension to Coombe Park Pavilion, subject to the grant of Planning Permission.

Those Members in attendance which also sit on the Development Control Committee requested advice from the Monitoring Officer in respect of whether voting to approve the extension subject to the grant of Planning Permission could lead to a suggestion of pre-determination. The Monitoring Officer advised that in his view, there was no conflict between Members approving this item and reserving their judgement on a future planning application, as the planning application would need to be judged entirely on its own merits.

In view of the fact that the report recommended the Council should manage the build, including the procurement exercise, the Committee sought reassurance that sufficient capacity existed within the Economic Regeneration team to take on these responsibilities.

The Head of Planning, Development and Regeneration confirmed that whilst the Council would oversee the project, externally appointed construction project management support would be required. In addition, a new member of staff had been appointed to the Economic Regeneration team and was due to commence employment in early 2019.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

- (i) The construction of an extension to the existing Coombe Park Pavilion be allowed, subject to the grant of Planning Permission;**
- (ii) Approval be given for the Council to be the Project Lead applying for funding from the Football Foundation; and**
- (iii) Approval be given for the Council to manage the build, including the procurement exercise, supported by an externally appointed construction project manager.**

43. REVIEW OF SCALE OF FEES & CHARGES (2019/20)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 44-69 of the agenda, which asked it to consider, review and approve the Council's proposed scale of fees and charges for the 2019/20 financial year.

The Committee requested that in line with the amended recommendation at the previous meeting of Service Delivery Committee, the delegation to the Director of Finance and Transformation be amended to include reference to maximising community use of Council owned facilities.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

- (i) The proposed Scale of Fees and Charges for 2019/20 be approved**
- (ii) Delegated authority be given to the Director of Finance & Transformation to allow flexibility to charging charges to encourage greater community use and a more commercial approach to maximising income.**

44. COLLECTION AND WRITE-OFF OF MISCELLANEOUS DEBTORS (Q2 2018/19)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 70-73 of the agenda which asked it to note the levels of debt owed to the Council from the second quarter of 2018/19.

The Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits provided the Committee with a brief summary of the report. It was noted that Council Tax, Benefit overpayments and sundry debts had all fallen during quarter two. Business Rates and Housing Rents had seen arrears rise, however remedial action was being taken to bring this back under control.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report be noted.

45. THIRD SECTOR AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUNDING REQUESTS (Q2 2018/19)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 74-79 of the agenda, which asked it to note the update on expenditure in the voluntary sector.

The Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits provided the Committee with a brief summary of the report. It was confirmed that discussions were now underway with Helping Hands Trust and Citizens Advice to continue to provide their advice services to residents in 2019/20. The Committee stressed that careful consideration would need to be given to the contractual arrangements beyond 2019/20, as it was anticipated that demand from residents for independent advice would continue to increase, particularly in light of recent schemes such as Universal Credit where the full implications were still being realised.

With regard to Resident Forum Funding Requests, the Chair of Oadby Forum noted that the progress report in respect of three schemes simply stated "not commenced yet", without any accompanying explanation. It was also noted that two schemes from Wigston Forum were also listed in this manner. The Committee therefore requested that where future reports contain schemes which have yet to commence, additional narrative explaining the reason(s) why this is the case should also be provided. The Chair of Wigston Forum also expressed concern at the apparent omission of some funding requests which had been agreed by the Forum some time ago. The Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits undertook to check whether or not the correct application procedure had been followed in respect of these requests, and to report back accordingly.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report be noted.

46. PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCE UPDATE (Q2 2018/19)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 80-84 of the agenda, which asked it to note the work undertaken by the People and Performance Team during the second quarter of 2018/19.

The Director of Finance and Transformation provided the Committee with a brief summary of the report. The Committee noted the progress made in respect of the team's nine Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), but felt that these lacked context without the Red/Amber/Green ratings applied to the KPIs which are reported to Service Delivery Committee, and as such needed to be reported consistently. The Committee also stated that in respect of the sickness percentages provided in the report, these would be more informative if they were supplemented by the actual numbers of employees recorded under each sickness category.

With regard to the 90.6% completion rate for mandatory e-learning training courses, the Committee enquired why close to 10% were failing to complete. The Director of Finance and Transformation confirmed that the figures as they stood included staff on long-term absences such as maternity leave and sickness, for whom it would not be feasible to complete the training within the regular timeframe. It was confirmed that the method of reporting would be looked at again in order to separate these particular cases from the remainder of the data.

A Member of the Committee expressed disappointment that although the number of press releases had increased since the last quarter, the total number issued was still below target. It was suggested that an explanation should be provided to the Committee if the

target continued to be missed.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report be noted.

47. PROPOSED CHANGES TO COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 89-92 of the agenda, which asked it to approve a number of changes to discretionary Council Tax discounts.

The Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits provided the Committee with a brief summary of the report. The Committee in particular welcomed recommendations C and D, which proposed increasing the premium on properties standing empty for more than two years from 50% to 100%, and allowing a 100% discount to care leavers from the age of 18 to 25.

The Committee noted that recommendation A, which proposed the discontinuation of Council Tax discount on empty properties for the first 28 days, would require the Council to pay Council Tax on all void properties where previously they were subject to a 28 exemption. The Committee therefore sought assurances that capacity was sufficient to manage the required reduction in void turnaround times in order to bring properties back into use quicker. Concern was also raised that in some cases where Council properties required more substantial alterations to bring them back up to an acceptable living standard, either substantial costs might accumulate whilst these works took place, or some works might be put back to allow such properties to be quickly re-let. The Director of Finance and Transformation confirmed that resources would need to be carefully monitored in order to sensibly balance these considerations. The Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits also advised the Committee that administering the current 28 day discount was currently a time consuming process, therefore its discontinuation would be a welcome simplification.

A Member of the Committee requested that once the proposed changes came into effect from 01 April 2019, Key Performance Indicators should be introduced, firstly to monitor the time taken to bring void properties back into operation and secondly to monitor the total additional costs incurred on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) once the current 28 day discount is discontinued.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

- (i) The Council Tax discount currently allowed for all empty properties for the first 28 days be discontinued from 01 April 2019;**
- (ii) The Council Tax discount currently allowed for empty properties undergoing renovation for a maximum of 12 months be discontinued from 01 April 2019;**
- (iii) The additional premium of 50% currently charged to properties which have been empty for more than 2 years be increased to 100% from 01 April 2019; and**
- (iv) A new 100% discount be allowed to care leavers from the age of 18 to 25 who are resident in the Borough and solely or jointly liable for Council Tax.**

48. PROPOSED CLOSED-CIRCUIT TELEVISION (CCTV) POLICY

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 185-204 of the agenda, which asked it to approve and adopt the proposed Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Policy.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The proposed Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Policy be approved and adopted.

49. PROPOSED DRONE AND MODEL AIRCRAFT USAGE POLICY

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 205-209 of the agenda, which asked it to approve and adopt the proposed Drone and Model Aircraft Usage Policy.

The Head of Law & Governance provided the Committee with a brief summary of the report. It was explained that the policy was intended to restrict the use of unmanned model aircraft in order to avoid any potential danger to the public at large, therefore it was proposed that the public would not be authorised to fly personal aircraft or drones from any Council land unless the land is designated for such a purpose under the policy.

A Member of the Committee queried why the policy had not to their knowledge been publicised via the Council's normal communication channels, and also noted that the report did not state how the restrictions would be enforced. The Head of Law & Governance confirmed that the policy had been drafted at short notice following a request from a Member of the Committee, therefore there had been no opportunity to carry out publicity as yet. However, subject to its approval the adopted policy would be publicised in a future edition of Letterbox magazine and on the Council's website. With regard to enforcement, it was confirmed that any breaches of the policy would likely be dealt with through existing powers available, as a number of Officers were authorised to issue Community Protection Notices (CPNs). There would also be scope to consider any repeat offenders for action under Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) powers.

It was requested by a Member of the Committee that signage be provided in the Council's parks and open spaces to alert the public to the restrictions introduced. The Head of Law & Governance confirmed that as a short-term measure, laminated notices could be placed on appropriate notice boards, but as a number of other prohibitions exist in respect of Council owned land, future consideration could be given to creating a composite notice covering all applicable prohibitions.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The proposed Drone and Model Aircraft Usage Policy be approved and adopted.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.30 PM



Chair

Tuesday, 05 February 2019