

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY, FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, STATION ROAD, WIGSTON ON TUESDAY, 5 FEBRUARY
2019 COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM**

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs S B Morris (Chair)

COUNCILLORS

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

D M Gill (Head of Law & Governance / Monitoring Officer)
S Hinds (Director of Finance & Transformation / Section 151 Officer)
T Maccabe (Anti-Social Behaviour Officer)
C Raymakers (Head of Finance, Revenues & Benefits)
S Tucker (Democratic & Electoral Services Manager)

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

A Persaud (Audit Manager, CW Audit Services)

50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillors D A Gamble, T K Khong and R E R Morris.

51. APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES

None.

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

53. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting of the previous Committee held on 27 November 2018 be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

54. ACTION LIST ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The Action List arising from the meeting of the previous Committee held on 27 November 2018 be read, confirmed and noted.

55. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None.

56. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT (Q3 2018/19)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 11-18 of the agenda, which asked it to note the progress made in delivering the 2018/19 Audit Plan and to provide an update in relation to the implementation of internal audit recommendations.

Mr Persaud from CW Audit Services provided the Committee with a brief summary of the Audit Progress Report, which showed that of the five audits completed during the third quarter, four had been given significant assurance and one had been given moderate assurance. It was confirmed that with regard to the moderate assurance opinion in relation to Housing Repairs and Voids, responses received from management to address the remaining recommendations had been positive. The Committee requested that an update in relation to the implementation of these remaining recommendations be provided to the next meeting of the Committee in March 2019.

Overall, the Committee expressed a high level of satisfaction with the current progress made in delivering the 2018/19 Audit Plan. In particular, staff were commended on the achievement of reducing the number of actions still to be completed to 15, all of which were less than 3 months overdue.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by J W Boyce and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report and appendix be noted.

57. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) UPDATE (FEBRUARY 2019)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 19-28 of the agenda, which asked it to note the projected General Fund Base budget position for 2019/20 and to consider the draft Capital Programme for 2019/20.

The Committee commended the Council's continued prudent approach to balancing its finances and welcomed the risk-averse approach to managing reserves in order to provide long-term stability to the authority. It was noted that many local authorities were continuing to draw down on reserves in order to balance their budgets, an approach which is ultimately unsustainable.

The Committee stated that it was disappointing that Local Government continued to remain largely in the dark with respect to funding post 2019/20, as a result of a lack of clear direction from Central Government.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by J Kaufman and

RESOLVED THAT:

- (i) **The overall draft Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget for 2019/20 be recommended in principle, subject to a further report to Full Council on 21 February 2019; and**
- (ii) **The levels of reserves outlined in the report be approved.**

Votes For **10**
Votes Against **0**
Abstentions **2**

58. FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT (Q3 2018/19)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 29-36 of the agenda, which asked it to note the overall Council position for the financial year 2018/19 after the third quarter.

With regard to the Capital Programme details attached at Appendix 1, a Member requested that the comments concerning the Grand Union Canal Footbridge be amended to reflect the fact that negotiations aimed at resolving the dispute over design of the bridge were ongoing, as it was felt that the description of the project being "on hold" implied that nothing was being done to move matters forward.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by L A Bentley and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report and appendix be noted.

59. COLLECTION AND WRITE-OFF OF MISCELLANEOUS DEBTORS (Q3 2018/19)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 37-40 of the agenda, which asked it to note the levels of debt owed to the Council from the third quarter of 2018/19.

A Member of the Committee sought assurance from the Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits that the 2018/19 collection targets for Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) would be met by the end of the next quarter, as both were slightly behind target for the current stage of the year. The Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits stated that there was high confidence that the NDR target would be met; however there was less confidence in respect of the Council Tax collection target, which had been narrowly missed the previous year and remained an ambitious figure during a challenging climate. Assurance was however given that even where the target is missed, the collection process continues until the debt has been fully recovered.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by G A Boulter and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report be noted.

60. THIRD SECTOR AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUNDING REQUESTS (Q3 2018/19)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 41-47 of the agenda, which asked it to note expenditure in the voluntary sector and consider the approval of grants

requested.

The Committee noted the proposal to extend the current contracts for advice services carried out by Helping Hands Trust and Citizens Advice for a further 12 months. A Member of the Committee suggested that beyond this period, it may be preferable for the Council to reach an arrangement with a single provider, although the Director of Finance and Transformation advised that the decision would ultimately be based on quality rather than quantity of providers.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by J Kaufman and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

- (i) The contents of the report and appendix be noted; and**
- (ii) The contracts for advice services currently carried out by Helping Hands Trust and Citizens Advice (Leicestershire) be extended for a further 12 months under the same arrangements as currently in operation.**

61. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR UPDATE: PROGRESS, ISSUES & OUTCOMES (FEBRUARY 2019)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 48-54 of the agenda, which asked it to note the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) related work undertaken by the Council since the adoption of its new ASB Policy in 2018.

The Committee welcomed the increased reporting of ASB in the Borough, although some Members expressed concern that the problem remains under-reported due to fear of reprisals. It was acknowledged that the number of reports was likely to have risen in part due to the Council's decision to employ a dedicated ASB Officer, which was seen as a positive in terms of producing a clearer idea of the extent and types of ASB occurring.

Whilst the Council's capacity to respond to complaints had been increased through employing a dedicated ASB Officer, Members asked what was being done to proactively enforce against ASB and what preventative measures were being pursued to stop it occurring in the first place. The Head of Law & Governance confirmed that the Council continues to work closely with partner authorities such as the Police on enforcement activity, as was demonstrated with the successful obtaining of a Closure Order for a property in Oadby. In addition, the Council is looking to organise cross-departmental enforcement activity through targeted deployment of Officers in Planning and Licensing to deal with a range of issues.

In light of a continued abuse of parking regulations outside a tanning salon in Wigston Town Centre, a Member of the Committee asked whether parking violations could be dealt with under ASB powers. The Head of Law & Governance confirmed that this type of issue was best dealt with through a civil penalty issued by the Police, as ASB powers were primarily designed for more serious offences which carried a far more punitive fine, therefore an ASB sanction could be considered disproportionate to the offence being committed in this instance. The ASB Officer undertook to liaise with the owner of the premises to see whether informal advice might be sufficient to resolve the problem.

A Member of the Committee noted that the authority had recently issued a Community Protection Notice (CPN), following an identified breach of the Council's newly adopted Drone and Model Aircraft Policy in one of the Borough's parks. It was requested that a press release should be made in respect of the CPN issued, to reinforce awareness of the new Policy and demonstrate that breaches would be dealt with swiftly through the use of

available powers.

With regard to the Council being successfully granted a Closure Order in January 2019, the Head of Law and Governance informed the Committee that the Council's ASB Officer, Thomas Maccabe, along with Faruk Bhayat from the Council's Housing team, had each received a Commendation from the Inspector at Wigston Police Station, recognising their significant contributions to securing a successful outcome.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by G A Boulter and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report and appendices be noted.

62. BUSINESS RATES RELIEF FOR RETAIL PROPERTIES (2018-19)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 55-58 of the agenda, which asked it to approve the adoption of a discretionary scheme to allow a one-thirds rates relief to retail businesses.

It was moved by J W Boyce, seconded by the Chair and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

- (i) The discretionary business rate relief scheme be approved and adopted; and**
- (ii) The criteria for determining eligibility for relief be delegated to the Revenues Team Leader, with any appeal to be made via the Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits.**

63. PROPOSED FOOD SAFETY ENFORCEMENT POLICY (FEBRUARY 2019)

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 59-84 of the agenda, which asked it to approve and adopt the proposed Food Safety Enforcement Policy.

The Committee welcomed the detailed and comprehensive nature of the Policy, but requested the insertion of additional information to provide greater clarity on the frequency of inspections. The Head of Law & Governance confirmed that the frequency of inspections is determined by legal requirements, but agreed to insert a line into the Policy to clarify that inspections would be carried out in accordance with statutory timeframes.

It was moved by the Chair, seconded by J W Boyce and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The proposed Food Safety Enforcement Policy (as set out at Appendix 1) be approved and adopted.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.10 PM



Chair

Tuesday, 26 March 2019

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