

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SERVICE DELIVERY COMMITTEE HELD AT THE
COUNCIL OFFICES, STATION ROAD, WIGSTON ON TUESDAY, 23 JANUARY 2018
COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM**

PRESENT

Councillor G A Boulter (Chair)
Councillor F S Broadley (Vice Chair)

COUNCILLORS

L A Bentley
Miss A R Bond
J W Boyce
Mrs L M Broadley
D M Carter
Miss M V Chamberlain
R F Eaton
Mrs L Eaton JP
Mrs S Z Haq
Dr T K Khong
K J Loydall JP

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

S J Ball (Senior Democratic Services Officer / Legal Officer)
D M Gill (Head of Law & Governance / Monitoring Officer)
S Glazebrook (Interim Head of Community Services)
M Hone (Interim Director of Services)
C Raymakers (Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits)

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

38. APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES

None.

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

40. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 10 OCTOBER 2017

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 10 October 2017 to be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

41. ACTION LIST ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 10 OCTOBER 2017

The Committee was advised that in respect of the action point marked 'Community Services Update' (min. ref. 10) regarding 114 Uplands Road in Oadby, although some

expense was incurred to the Council by boarding up the property at some point in the past, the likelihood of recovering these costs from the now deceased's estate was considered negligible and, therefore, not in the public interest to pursue.

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The Action List be noted by Members.

42. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None.

43. COMMITTEE BUDGET REVENUE AND CAPITAL REVIEW (APRIL - NOVEMBER 2017)

The Committee gave consideration to the report and appendices (at pages 10 - 15) as delivered and summarised by the Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.

It was raised by Members and accepted by Officers that the comment recorded against 'Horsewell Lane Pavilion' at Appendix B (at page 15) was inaccurate and, therefore, should be removed from the record insofar as the scheme had since received approval by Full Council at its extraordinary meeting on 31 October 2017.

The Committee noted its concern in respect of there being at present no clear mechanism by which the yet unspent allocation for Disabled Facility Grants (DFG's) for 2017/18 was to be carried forward. In this regard, the Committee was advised that that current reported spend was understated as the Lightbulb Project's quarterly financials were yet to be received. It was understood that this information would be presented at its Programme Board and Steering Group meeting on 26 January and, therefore, would subsequently be reported at the next Committee meeting.

The Committee also heard that approximately £900k of the £1.2m allocation had already been expended on a considerable amount of work underway to fully realise the refurbishment project at Brocks Hill in Oadby by mid-February. In respect of the replacement of the children's play equipment at Florence Wragg Way in Oadby, Officers undertook to provide Members with an update outside the meeting.

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

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

44. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2018/19

The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 16 - 18) as delivered and summarised by the Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.

It was raised by Members and accepted by Officers that, with reference to Appendix B of the previous report at agenda item 7, the £135k recorded against 'Ervin's Lock Pedestrian Footbridge' at paragraph 3.4 of the report (at page 17) represented the entire project

allocation, including the carry forwards from previous financial years.

The Committee also heard that the scheme marked 'New Refuse Truck 7.5 Tonne' at paragraph 3.4 of the report represented an allocation identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the purchase of one of four new vehicles in 2018/19 in order to successfully deliver the new, all-year-round Garden Waste Service offering.

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

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

- (i) The Schemes put forward for 2018/19 (as outlined in paragraph 3.4 of the report) be considered and recommended to the Policy, Finance and Development Committee for approval; and**
- (ii) The Schemes to be carried forward from 2017/18 (as outlined in paragraph 3.5 of the report) be considered and recommended to the Policy, Finance and Development Committee for approval.**

45. COMMUNITY SERVICES UPDATE

The Committee gave consideration to the report and appendices (at pages 19 - 29) as delivered and summarised by the Interim Head of Community Services which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.

The Committee was verbally updated regarding the latest financial statistics in respect of the ongoing commercialisation of the Pest Control Service. It was reported that currently the service was projected to lose £20k by the end of the financial year which represented a reduction of £4,000 on the original budget. However, it was said that, if the service was to be disbanded altogether, the savings would only amount to c. £15k as central overhead charges would have to be allocated elsewhere.

37 Newton Lane, Wigston

It was raised by the Committee and advised upon by Officers that should Members be minded to approve a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) in respect of the above property, the costs to be incurred to the Council amounted to Officers' time in preparing the CPO and the those arising from the sale of the property once the General Vesting Declaration had been made. The subsequent sale of the property by way of public auction was said to be the best method to establish the property's true market value, the proceeds from which would be ring-fenced for any resulting compensation claim. The possibility of a challenge thereto was also to be noted. In considering the number of stages involved, it was acknowledged that, if resolved, the threat of CPO action could encourage the owner in the fullness of time to re-consider a more realistic approach whilst, at the same time, providing the Council with an initial footing to move forward with compulsory acquisition if necessary.

Private-Sector Empty Properties

A further discussion took place regarding what work was being undertaken to identify other empty properties in the Borough and whereby further properties and dealings therewith were mentioned by Members. The Committee was advised that a working group of Officers continued to assess empty properties by information supplied by the Council Tax section with the aim of bringing these properties back into use. To this end, the Committee requested that bids should be submitted under the Homes and Communities Agency's Funding Programme to secure any available refurbishment allocations and that a

more detailed, stand-alone report be brought to a subsequent Committee meeting. Members also considered it necessary for an advice note to be prepared in respect of what was and was not legally permissible to discuss at meetings held in open session regarding the same, particularly in instances when prosecutions may be brought and thus subject to the sub-judice rule.

Pest Control Services

In consideration of the report and the latest financials (as verbally reported) it was agreed that an up-to-date financial appraisal in respect of service should be brought back to the Committee after six-months so that a view could then be taken as to its commercial viability in terms of any significant capacity to generate additional income or to breakeven in the future. In taking such a view, some Members noted the importance of retaining in-house service provision wherever possible and, alternatively, suggested a 12-month review period in lieu in order to provide a more flexible and reasonable timeframe to explore the service's continued viability.

Other Community Services

In respect of the Lightbulb Project and the administration of Disabled Facility Grants (DFG), the Committee again reiterated its concerns as mentioned in the foregoing minutes (at min. ref. 43) and, as such, requested that a report to be brought to the next Committee meeting confirming the legal position in respect of the statutory duties inherited and ring-fencing of allocations regarding the delivery of DFG's.

It was raised by Members and accepted by Officers that there had been a short delay in the commencement of work to the Council's own temporary homelessness accommodation facility at 134 Station Road in Wigston. This was said to be the result of undergoing certain processes in terms of planning and public consultation, the drawing-up of detailed specifications and the tendering-out of the works contract itself. It was reported that works were now underway and were progressing well.

It was moved the Chair, seconded by Councillor Mrs L M Broadley and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

- (i) The contents of the report and appendices be noted by Members;**
- (ii) Authority is given to seek a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) in respect of 37 Newton Lane, Wigston; and**
- (iii) The draft Capital Programme for 2018/19 (as set out at Appendix B to the report) be approved.**

46. HOMELESSNESS WITHIN THE BOROUGH

The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 30 - 33) as delivered and summarised by the Interim Head of Community Services which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.

The Committee was verbally updated regarding the latest statistics in respect of the number of households in temporary accommodation since the publication of the report. This was reported to have increased from 14 to 21 households, of which included use of nine of the Council's own social-rented properties which, as a result, were now not available to let to applicants currently waiting on the Housing Register.

General Homelessness in the Borough

The Committee acknowledged with notable concern the worsening situation and exposure to the risk of homelessness that an increasing number of individuals and households were finding themselves in through, more often than not, no fault of their own. Members equally expressed discomfort regarding the knock-on effects homelessness was having, and may continue to have, on the already stretched availability of suitable housing stock, the number of people waiting to be rehoused and the potential manipulation of the waiting list for Council-owned properties.

Officers advised that such concerns were to be managed and mitigated by carefully assessing applicants' needs and awarding the most suitable type of accommodation available. It was said that, although there was scope for some manipulation, the Housing Options section were able to competently evaluate whether or not individuals had made themselves intentionally homeless and, therefore, nullifying any entitlement to longer-term housing save for those deemed to be in priority need.

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA)

The Committee shared Officers concerns regarding the additional workload at the point of contact, in assessments and administration etc. to be delivered within the finite resources made available once the HRA came into effect. Whilst Members found the proactive objective of the HRA to be laudable, it was considered that, in reality, the evitable response was to be more reactive in the short-to-medium term, resulting in the temporary accommodation of more people for longer periods of time.

Members were advised that more temporary accommodation units were being acquired, including the forthcoming provision of the Council's own facility on Station Road in Wigston and that, in the long term, all available options to address the root causes of homelessness were being scoped out. This was said to involve partnership work with registered social housing providers in securing full nomination rights and re-letting opportunities and the bringing-forward of development of social and affordable market-rent housing by the Council's Wholly Owned Housing Company.

In summary, Members and Officers were confident in being able to realise the Council's action plan to fulfil its new statutory duties under the HRA, part of which was to include a review of its Housing Strategy Statement for the period 2018-2023 due to be first considered at the Place Shaping Working Group meeting on 24 January. It was announced that a further information seminar for Members regarding the requirements and the impact of the HRA had been arranged for 30 January.

Other Homelessness Matters

In respect of rough sleepers, it was confirmed that, in liaison with the local neighbourhood police team and Community Safety Partnership Board, the situation in the Borough was being monitored and all known affected individuals had been approached and signposted to the relevant help schemes accordingly.

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report be noted by Members.

47. LEISURE SERVICES UPDATE

The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 34 - 39) as delivered and

summarised by the Interim Director of Services which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.

The Committee heard that an oft-cited complaint received by Members from their constituents concerned longer than anticipated waiting times in being unable to see a doctor due to a general lack of available GP appointments in the Borough.

Whilst it was acknowledged that the provision of local healthcare services was beyond this Council's direct control, the Committee was advised that a proactive and open dialogue between the East Leicestershire and Rutland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Council's Health and Wellbeing Board, its Members and Lead Officers was ongoing to explore ways and means to improve the situation.

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report be noted by Members and the range of opportunities available be endorsed and promoted to the wider audience.

48. FACILITIES SERVICES UPDATE

The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 40 - 44) as delivered and summarised by the Interim Director of Services which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.

The Committee reiterated that Ervins Lock Footbridge in South Wigston and the development at Horsewell Lane in Wigston both continued to be urgent priorities in view of the delays known to have beset both projects in recent months, even years.

In particular, the installation of the footbridge at Ervins Lock was said to be essential to enable public access, sooner rather than later, to one of the most significant leisure corridors in the Borough and to mitigate the inconvenience, danger and possible illegality posed by the current use of unauthorised means to crossing the waterway. In this respect, Members were advised that once the capital bid of £83k was approved by Full Council at its meeting on 22 February, the next steps would be undertaken imminently and in parallel thereafter and, as such, there was no foreseeable reason as to why the project could not progress through to completion.

The Committee was also advised that the refurbishment of the Borough's remaining entry signs was a rolling programme with the necessary budgetary provision in place.

It was moved by Councillor L A Bentley, seconded by Councillor D M Carter and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

- (i) The contents of the report be noted by Members;**
- (ii) Subject to the approval of the capital bid of £83,300 submitted for 2018/19 by Full Council at its meeting on 22 February, that the building of the Ervins Lock Footbridge over the canal proceed; and**
- (iii) William Saunders be retained to carry the project forward at Ervins Lock Footbridge as project managers.**

49. GREENING OF THE BOROUGH AND OPERATIONAL SERVICES UPDATE

The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 45 - 51) as delivered and summarised by the Interim Director of Services which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.

The Committee commended the various project and initiatives outlined in the report and, in particular, warmly-recognised the vital contribution of volunteers and the role of the wider community in achieving their successful and respective outcomes.

Garden Waste Service Update

The Committee was verbally updated regarding the initial uptake to the new Garden Waste Service to be effective from the 1 April. It was reported that between 22 January to date, 229 households had subscribed to the service totalling an income of £7,950.00 thus far of which included £880.00 from additional bin requests. It was also noted that a proportionally low amount of five complaints from disgruntled residents had been received relating to charging as opposed to the offering itself.

Although being welcomed as a promising start, concerted and continued efforts were said to be going in order to meet, and even exceed, the anticipated 40% participation rate in line with projections set out in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and that, going forward, a monthly update would be circulated to all Members regarding the rolling uptake of subscriptions as the project progressed.

It was raised by the Committee and advised upon by Officers that tamper-proof, self-adhesive permits to be affixed to bins - displaying the customer's address, unique permit number and expiry date - would provide an added visual identification as to a valid service subscription and, in addition to quarterly audit checks, would act as a deterrent against theft and fraudulent activity: any proven abuse of the service was said to warrant an immediate and indefinite ban from future use by all guilty parties.

Other Borough Greening and Operational Matters

The Committee was advised that, as part of the Council's strategy to meet the target set by the Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC) to recycle 50% of household waste by 2020, it was hoped the closure of the Council's own Materials Recycling Facility and, by direction of the County Council, the subsequent transfer of all recycling operations to Casepak from 1 April would improve recycling rates further.

In respect of the tree planting action plan for grass verges, Members were keen to insist that due consideration be given to protect highway and pedestrian safety when assessing suitable areas for tree planting along major routes across the Borough. Officers also undertook to monitor the situation regarding any increased risk of fly-tipping in the Borough that may result from charging for the Garden Waste Service.

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report be noted by Members and the range of opportunities available be endorsed and promoted to the wider audience.

50. CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION UPDATE

The Committee gave consideration to the report (at pages 45 - 51) as delivered and summarised by the Interim Director of Services which should be read together with these

minutes as a composite document.

The Committee commended the work already undertaken and underway by the project team in respect of the implementation of the new Garden Waste Service and the improved quality of service and savings anticipated by its bringing forward.

Members furthermore requested that all future reports to Committee in terms of transformation specifically identify the improvements made by each project in terms of its savings and service-delivery in addition to noting the change(s) effected.

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

The contents of the report be noted by Members.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.38 PM



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Chair
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Tuesday, 20 March 2018
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