

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough on Thursday 29 July 2015 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Tom Regis (Chairman)
Councillor Ian Fleetwood (Vice Chairman)

Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Alex Bridgwood
Councillor David Cotton
Councillor Adam Duguid
Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor John McNeill
Councillor Jessie Milne
Councillor Anne Welburn

In Attendance:
Ian Knowles Director of Resources
Jeanette Anderson Team Manager - Corporate Systems Development
Dinah Lilley Governance and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Reg Shore
Councillor Jeff Summers

Membership: Councillor Milne substituted for Councillor Summers

17 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

18 MINUTES

- i) **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on 18 June 2015 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

19 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this point.

20 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE SETTING OUT CURRENT POSITION OF PREVIOUSLY AGREED ACTIONS AS AT 22 JULY 2015 (CPR.12 15/16).

Members gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule which set out the current position of all previously agreed actions as at 22 July 2015. The Governance and Civic Officer gave updates on a number of items. The Members' visit to the Forum had been arranged for 26 August and 21 September. A meeting date had been arranged for 7 September with the Deputy Leader for consideration of the Committee Timetable.

RESOLVED that progress on the Matters Arising Schedule as set out in report CPR.12 15/16 be noted.

21 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE TREASURY MANAGEMENT SERVICE (CPR.13 15/16)

The Director of Resources presented the report which was a requirement of the Council's reporting procedures. It covered the treasury activity during 2014/15 and the actual Prudential Indicators for 2014/15.

The report showed a comparison with previous years' performance and showed no breaches of the statutory borrowing limit (the Authorised Limit). Comments were sought from Members of the Committee.

Members commended the report and the Council's current financial position which was encouraging to see. Comparisons were made with the status of the position prior to the Icelandic crash, and it was noted that rates of interest were currently particularly low. It was suggested that the Council be more creative with resources and questioned how big a risk would be acceptable.

Much of the Council's investment portfolio showed that the majority was in short term (less than one year) investments. The amount invested in the property fund was for a longer period and yielded a rate of over 4%. This fund was exclusively for Local Government investment. Investment had to be in A, or higher, rated vehicles most of which were in the UK.

Given the Government cutbacks there was the possibility of losing up to 40% of funding in future years, so it was important that alternative income generation be considered. The Director of Resources noted that a commercial approach was being taken to investment, any decisions would need to be carefully balanced and gain Committee approval. Members requested that as s151 officer the Director give consideration to a more creative approach.

The recommendation was then moved, seconded and voted upon.

RESOLVED that the Annual Treasury Management Report for 2014/15 and be accepted and recommended to Council for the

approval of the actual 2014/15 Prudential and Treasury Indicators contained therein.

22 BUDGET AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING REPORT PERIOD 1 (CPR.14 15/16)

The Director of Resources introduced the report which set out the revenue, capital and treasury management activity during the period 3 April to 31 May 2015.

The forecast Revenue Budget out turn for the 2015/16 financial year was a surplus position of £115k, the significant variances were;

- salary costs were forecast to be £99k less than revised budget;
- due to the termination of the lease at Beaumont Street car park lease costs were £17k less than budget;
- a legal shared service refund of £21k had been received;
- increased sales at the Trinity Arts Centre had resulted in additional income of £10k;
- noise and landscape consultants in Development Control had resulted in additional spend of £20k;
- maintenance at the Leisure Centre had resulted in additional spend of £10k as a result of essential maintenance due to the age and condition on the building.

Discussion ensued on various aspects of the report. Members questioned the necessity of an IT refresh after just two years, however it was clarified that this would be a rolling programme and was essential due to the current models no longer being available or supported by the provider.

The report had been overtaken by recent events, e.g. the Devolution agenda, and the report to Council changing the Terms of Reference for the Prosperous Communities Committee, and the Investment for Growth Fund.

Questions were asked about the staffing costs underspend. This was explained as being due mainly to the start dates of the new Strategic Lead posts, and also vacancy management.

Members expressed concerns regarding the Housing Benefits overpayments and questioned the likelihood of this being recouped, and would this cause cases of hardship to residents? Members were assured that every effort was made to recover overpayments and residents were supported and worked with to ensure equitable arrangements where possible.

Successful Grant Bids were set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report.

It was proposed to approve increases in earmarked reserves from the £1.545m 2014/15 surplus, currently held in the General Fund Balance. These were explained in paragraph 2.4 of the report.

The recommendations were then moved, seconded and voted upon.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the forecast out-turn position as at 31 May 2015 be accepted;
- b) the use of Earmarked Reserves be approved;
- c) the amendments to the Capital and Revenue budget be approved, including creating expenditure budgets for projects funded by grants and not included in the original budget;
- d) the increase in Earmarked Reserves of £1,200k from 2014/15 surpluses be approved;
- e) the request of the Prosperous Communities Committee to delegate a budget of £300k to support the delivery of Economic Growth within the District be accepted;
- f) the Treasury Management position for the two months to 31 May 2016 be recognised;
- g) the Treasury Management report, the treasury activity and movement in the prudential indicators be accepted.

23 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY - PROJECTS - PERIOD 1 (CPR.15 15/16)

The Director of Resources presented the Progress and Delivery – Projects report which showed items at risk or off target by exception. Three projects were listed in the report:-

- Selective Licensing
- Rural Transport
- Comet – Flare in the field

It was questioned as to why Land Charges were not included in either the Projects or Services Progress and Delivery reports. The Director of Resources explained that there had been a big spike in requests, and staffing issues, but that the Council Leadership Team were looking to maintain a sustained improvement.

Concerns were expressed regarding the timeline for the resolution of the Selective Licensing. This could not be reduced due to the necessity of appropriate consultation and correct structure. The Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee updated the meeting. Case law was emerging and a report was due for submission to the Prosperous Communities Committee in 2016, following the next ten week round of consultation from 17 August.

Note Councillor Regis declared a personal interest in this item as being a landlord.

Rural Transport had been problematic for many years and it was important that this be addressed and driven forward as soon as possible.

Members sought clarification of the text in some of the tables.

RESOLVED that having examined the areas where a project was off target and assurance be sought from officers that the rectifications proposed would deal with the issues identified.

24 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY - SERVICES - PERIOD 1 (CPR.16 15/16)

The Director of Resources presented the Progress and Delivery - Services report which set out those Services which were determined as off-target in the appendix.

Members expressed concerns at the level of areas shown in the report as being off target, however the Director of Resources assured them that work was continually being done to address the issues, this not being reflected in the summary report. Not all items had baselines from which to determine targets. It was pointed out that this was the first report of the year and only covered the first two months, so it was anticipated that improvement would be shown by the year end report. It was acknowledged that it was good to see those areas identified as having weaknesses being highlighted as needing improvement.

The courageous decisions taken previously on Disabled Facilities Grants were commended as the service was now showing significant progress.

RESOLVED that having examined the areas where a service was off target and assurance be sought from officers that the rectifications proposed would deal with the issues identified.

25 CMS REPLACEMENT WEBSITE (CPR.17 15/16)

The Corporate Systems Development Team Manager introduced the report to update Members from the previous meeting. Attempts had been made to address the previously raised issues. The report set out the work done to date, the benefits that would be gained from the project and risks of not undertaking it.

The County Council was still involved with some aspects, however support was sought for the tripartite approach with the City of Lincoln and North Kesteven District Councils.

Members agreed that it was important not to duplicate work and questioned the cost implications.

The Corporate Systems Development Team Manager reminded Members of the decision to grant £75k at the last committee, this was a maximum cost, but a figure had had to be set and agreed to commence the procurement process. This was now ongoing and evaluation of suppliers was pending. Quote figures were available and could be shared with Members outside of the meeting.

The Committee agreed that it was imperative that the Council not be left without a website and it was not possible for this to be accomplished through the County Council and Serco.

Note Councillor Fleetwood declared a personal interest at this point as being a County Councillor.

RESOLVED that Members acknowledge the work of the team and support the tripartite arrangement, with North Kesteven and City of Lincoln.

26 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN (CPR.18 15/16)

The Governance and Civic Officer presented the Committee work plan which was self-explanatory.

The Chairman of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee noted that the Driving Policy had not come forward due to consideration by the JSCC having been delayed due to the last meeting not taking place. However it was possible that the report be revised to incorporate both staff and Members to be a generic report. Cllr Cotton would discuss with the Health and Safety Officer.

RESOLVED that the Committee Work Plan be noted.

The meeting concluded at 7.38 pm.

Chairman