

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 22 July 2021 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Mrs Anne Welburn (Chairman)
Councillor Jeff Summers (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor John McNeill
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee
Councillor Trevor Young
Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers

In Attendance:

Ian Knowles	Chief Executive
Sue Leversedge	Business Support Team Leader
Caroline Capon	Corporate Finance Team Leader
Gary Reeve	Property & Assets Manager
John Bingham	Assistant Data Protection and Freedom of Information Officer
Ele Snow	Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Giles McNeill

Membership: Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers sat as substitute for Councillor Giles McNeill

9 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

There was no public participation.

10 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING/S

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on 17 June 2021 were approved and signed as a correct record.

The minutes of the Concurrent Meeting of the Prosperous Communities and Corporate

Policy and Resources Committees held on 14 June 2021 were approved and signed as a correct record.

The minutes of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee meeting held on 1 July 2021 were noted.

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

12 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

A Member of the Committee requested further information as to replacement bins. With this additional enquiry, the schedule of matters arising setting out the position of previously agreed actions as at 14 July 2021 was **NOTED**.

13 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION POLICY

The Committee gave consideration to a report from the Assistant Data Protection and Freedom of Information Officer regarding the review of the policy outlining the council's approach to responding to requests for information made under the Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR). He explained that the policy provided a framework to make sure that the principles of Freedom of Information were consistently applied and that the council met the standards set out in the Lord Chancellor's Section 46 Code of Practice on satisfying public authorities' obligations under the FOIA and the EIR. The minor changes made to the policy were summarised for Members, and, having clarified the input of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee was to refer the paper to the CP&R Committee, it was

RESOLVED that:

- a) the amendments to the policy be approved; and
- b) any future housekeeping amendments be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and the Chairman of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee.

14 DATA PROTECTION POLICY

The Committee heard again from the Assistant Data Protection and Freedom of Information Officer regarding amendments to the Data Protection Policy. It was explained that the policy had been reviewed, with amendments such as the change throughout from GDPR to UK GDPR. Members noted the importance of such policies and suggested that the council should be mindful of any concerns in relation to the ongoing directive to work from home.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for his reports and it was

RESOLVED that:

- a) the amendments to the policy be approved; and
- b) any future housekeeping amendments be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee and the Chairman of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee.

15 ANNUAL TREASURY REPORT

Members gave consideration to the Annual Treasury Report, presented by the Corporate Finance Team Leader. She explained that the Council were required to receive, as a minimum, three reports per year. These being an annual treasury strategy in advance of the year (March 2020); a mid-year, (minimum), treasury update report (November 2020) and an annual review following the end of the year describing the activity compared to the strategy, (this report). She stated that, in addition, the Committee had received quarterly treasury management update reports.

Members heard that the regulatory environment placed responsibility on Members for the review and scrutiny of treasury management policy and activities. This report was, therefore, important in that respect, as it provided details of the outturn position for treasury activities and highlighted compliance with the Council's policies previously approved by Members. The council confirmed that it had complied with the requirement under the Code to give prior scrutiny to all of the above treasury management reports by either the Governance and Audit Committee, who provided scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategy, or the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee who monitored in year performance and mid-year updates. Member training on treasury management issues was undertaken during the year in order to support Members' scrutiny role.

It was stated that during 2020/21, the council complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements and the presented report summarised the following:

- Capital activity during the year;
- Impact of this activity on the Council's underlying indebtedness, (the Capital Financing Requirement);
- The actual prudential and treasury indicators;
- Overall treasury position identifying how the Council had borrowed in relation to this indebtedness, and the impact on investment balances;
- Summary of interest rate movements in the year;
- Detailed debt activity; and
- Detailed investment activity.

Members thanked the Officer for her report and stated it was clear and concise. Members wished to commend the Team Leader and her team for their hard work. It was therefore

RESOLVED that the Annual Treasury Management Report and actual Prudential Indicators 2020/21 be recommended to Full Council for approval.

16 BUDGET AND TREASURY MONITORING PERIOD 1 2021/2022

Members heard from the Business Support Team Leader regarding Budget and Treasury Monitoring for period 1 2021/2022. The purpose of the report was to set out the revenue, capital and treasury management activity from 1 April 2021 to 31 May 2021. The contents of the report were summarised as follows:

REVENUE

- 'Business as Usual' Revenue Forecast Out-Turn (after carry forwards) - Deficit £0.005m. (-0.04% of Net Revenue Budget)
- There was no forecast pressure above Covid-19 Support Grants from Government and contingency funds held within Earmarked Reserves at this time

CAPITAL

- Capital Forecast Out-Turn £11.118m, a variance of £3.234m against current budget £14.352m, this was made up of:
 - Anticipated Slippage into 2022/2023 of £3.364m
 - There was a request to increase the budget for the Disabled Facilities Fund by £0.094m. This was due to additional grant funding which was received in March 2021.
 - £0.036m Budget was requested for Member Laptop refresh – the budget was to be funded from the revenue Covid Expenditure Support Grant. This was to ensure that Members had equipment which was fit for purpose, and supported remote working. There were associated revenue costs of £0.022m, which would also be met from the revenue Covid Expenditure Support Grant. Total cost £0.058m.
- Members were also asked to approve a capital budget of £0.1m funded by Section 106 monies for renovation of empty homes in Gainsborough and approve an initial spend of £0.02m for the renovation of the first two homes.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT

- Treasury Management Report and monitoring:
 - Average investment interest rate for April to May was 0.86%.
 - Total Investments at the end of Quarter 1 was £16.376m.

The Chairman thanked the Officer and invited comments from the Committee. There was significant discussion regarding the intended use of S106 monies and it was stated that Officers had not consulted with Members regarding the intended use nor had the decision been made in any other forum. It was noted that a S106 report was due at the Committee in September however the use of S106 monies was separate to the arrangement with P3 for affordable housing.

There was also significant discussion regarding the capital in relation to a Member Laptop refresh. There was consternation that there had been no consultation with Members and the decision had not been discussed or made in any other forum. A Member of the Committee enquired as to the input of the working group and whether it was still in place. It was explained that the impact of the pandemic on working practices had highlighted a need for alternative device provision for Members and the capital mentioned in the report was on the basis of making provision to issue Members with a second device, should it be required. It would not impact the 2023 refresh and the Member working group would continue to be involved in Member IT testing and suchlike. There would be full consultation with all

Members in relation to the 2023 refresh.

There was continued discussion regarding the use of S106 monies as well as Member IT options and, having been proposed and seconded, the Chairman brought discussions to a close to take the vote. The recommendations were taken separately and it was

RESOLVED that:

REVENUE

- a) the forecast out-turn position of a £0.005m net deficit as at 31st May 2021 (see Section 2) relating to business as usual activity be accepted
- b) the use of Earmarked Reserves (2.4.1) be approved
- c) the use of Earmarked Reserves during the quarter approved by the Chief Finance Officer using Delegated powers (2.4.2) be accepted
- d) the addition to the statutory fees and charges schedule for Planning Applications (2.3.2) be accepted.

CAPITAL

- e) the current projected Capital Outturn as detailed in 3.1.1 be accepted
- f) the capital budget carry forwards of £3.364m detailed at 3.1.2 be approved
- g) a capital budget of £0.1m for renovation of empty homes in Gainsborough and an initial spend of £0.02m for the renovation of the first two homes, detailed at 3.1.2, be approved.

TREASURY

- h) the report, the treasury activity and the prudential indicators, be accepted.

17 FEES CHARGES AND CONCESSIONS POLICY REVIEW

The Business Support Team Leader introduced her next report, with the purpose of summarising the process of reviewing Fees & Charges for 2022/2023 and for the updated Fees Charges and Concessions Policy to be approved.

Members heard that the Fees Charges and Concessions Policy informed the approach to reviewing those fees and charges which were discretionary, and therefore within the Council's power to set. The Policy had been reviewed for 2022/2023 to align to the Corporate Plan 2019-2023, and to provide the key focus points required for a robust and transparent review, and would be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. The outcome of the review of fees & charges for the financial year 2022/2023 would be reported to Officers and Members as part of the budget setting and MTFP approval process.

On opening discussions amongst the Committee, it was suggested that the concessionary

ages should be standardised such as ‘school age’, ‘students’ and ‘pension age’. Members also enquired as to the green waste charges and bulky waste charges. It was noted there were ongoing discussions as to whether there was any correlation between bulky waste charges and fly-tipping.

Having discussed the definition of ‘school age’ and requirements of education up to the age of 18, there were no further comments and having been proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED that the amended Fees Charges and Concessions Policy, to be applied to the review of Fees and Charges for the 2022/2023 MTFP, be approved.

18 BUDGET CONSULTATION 2021

Members gave consideration to the proposals for the Budget Consultation 2021. The Business Support Team Leader explained that each year a consultation was undertaken on the following years’ budget prior to it being set. Although there was no legal requirement to undertake this, there was a legal requirement under the Local Government Act 1992 section 65 to consult ratepayers who were persons or bodies appearing to be representative of persons subject to non-domestic rates within the district and must be about the authority’s proposals for expenditure. Members heard that the council was a member of the Consultation Institute. Consultation according to the Institute was the dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based upon a genuine exchange of views, with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action.

Members heard the target audience of the Consultation, proposed timescales and methods of engagement. The objectives were also detailed to be:

- Raise awareness of the financial challenges.
- Raise awareness of the diversity of services the Council provided.
- Identify what areas of the Corporate Plan and the Business Plan should be prioritised.

Members thanked the Officer for the detail provided and noted the limitations because of the pandemic. A Member of the Committee enquired as to what, of previous consultations, had been taken forward and included in subsequent budgets. It was explained that the green waste charge and commercial property investments had been subject of the consultation previously. The point was made that it was important to listen to the input from residents in deciding where budget priorities should lie.

It was suggested that, rather than having no face to face sessions because of the pandemic, Officers and Members could ‘set up stall’ at the local markets and use it as an opportunity to talk with residents and engage them in the consultation process. This was considered to be a positive option and would be taken up.

Having been proposed and seconded it was

RESOLVED that the Budget Consultation process be approved.

19 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The Committee gave consideration to the work plan for upcoming meetings. The title of an upcoming report was clarified and with no further comment, the workplan was duly **NOTED**.

20 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Note: The meeting adjourned at 8.17pm and reconvened at 8.19pm

21 INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO REVIEW

The Committee heard from the Property & Assets Manager with a report providing Members with the performance of the Commercial Property Portfolio for 2020/21 and noting any emerging issues.

Members were appraised of any impacts encountered as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, although it was highlighted that the overall impact had not been as severe as had initially been predicted. It was accepted that there could be ongoing difficulties in the future and it was anticipated that the Property and Assets Manager would commence site visits in the near future as the usual visits had not been taking place during the pandemic.

There was significant discussion regarding the environmental impacts of the investment portfolio, in particular the carbon footprint, and it was suggested that a subsequent paper could be brought to the Committee exploring the matter in greater detail. It was also suggested that a review into the management of the portfolio should be undertaken and a report on such brought to the Committee.

Members thanked the Officer for his hard work and the contents of the report were **DULY NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 8.48 pm.

Chairman