

## **WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL**

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 10 May 2018 commencing at 6.30 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Jeff Summers (Chairman)  
Councillor Owen Bierley (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Mrs Sheila Bibb  
Councillor Michael Devine  
Councillor Steve England  
Councillor Stuart Kinch  
Councillor John McNeill  
Councillor Tom Regis

**In Attendance:**

Cllr Maureen Palmer	
Eve Fawcett-Moralee	Executive Director of Economic and Commercial Growth
Ian Knowles	Executive Director of Resources and S151 Officer
Tracey Bircumshaw	Finance & Business Support Manager
Andy Gray	Housing and Enforcement Manager
Angela Matthews	Benefits Manager
Gary Reeve	Property & Assets Manager

**Apologies:** Councillor Matthew Boles  
Councillor David Cotton  
Councillor Trevor Young

### **119 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD**

There was no public participation.

### **120 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING/S FOR APPROVAL**

The minutes from the previous meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee held on 12 April 2018 were agreed as a true record.

The minutes from the Concurrent Meeting of the Prosperous Communities and Corporate Policy and Resources Committees held on 25 April 2018 were also agreed as a true record.

### **121 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations at this point of the meeting.

### **122 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE**

**RESOLVED** that progress on the Matters Arising Schedule, as set out in the report be received and noted.

### **123 DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS (DHP) POLICY REVIEW**

Members considered a report on the policy review of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). The West Lindsey DHP policy had been updated to take account of Full Service Universal Credit.

The Benefits Manager introduced the report to Members, and outlined that the funding received over the last seven years was growing, although in the last year this funding had remained relatively static.

Following a question from a Member, the Benefits Manager provided the Committee with the following information:

- There was no actual right of appeal or the right for a claimant to take an appeal to tribunal; however, there was a reconsideration process which would be dealt with by another senior member of the benefits team;
- Individuals that were refused DHP during a reconsideration usually have their own means of paying the shortfall between rent and housing benefit;
- West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) recover overpayments and it goes back into the overall pot. It can be spent out on a different claimant;
- There were not many overpayments on DHP; it only occurs when there was a delay in stopping housing benefit.

**RESOLVED** to adopt the new Discretionary Housing Payment Policy, listed as option 2 in the report.

**Note:** Councillor Stuart Kinch arrived during the discussion on this item.

### **124 HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY 2018 - 2022**

Members considered a report on an updated Housing Assistance Policy that had already been to Prosperous Communities Committee on 1 May for prior approval. At Prosperous Communities, there had been one slight amendment to the policy - all references to the First Time Buyer initiative were amended to read 'Empty Property Buyer initiative'.

The Housing and Enforcement Manager gave an introduction to Members, and highlighted the following points:

- The available budget in terms of reserves was £825,000. Additional money on top of this would be made up of receipts from the £825,000, and would fund later years of the programme;
- The scheme would not include anyone buying a second home, and was aimed at

someone gaining a primary dwelling;

- The disabled facilities grant would apply throughout West Lindsey, but the private sector renewal grant would only apply in Gainsborough.

**RESOLVED** to approve that the earmarked reserve allocated for private sector renewal is released to fund the housing assistance policy, as recommended and amended by Prosperous Communities Committee on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2018.

## **125 WEST LINDSEY COMMERCIAL LOAN POLICY AND FRAMEWORK**

Members considered a report on the viability and implications of a West Lindsey Commercial Loan Policy and framework that would allow the Council to lend money to third party organisations.

The framework proposed that companies would be directed to other funders in the first instance, such as the Midlands Engine Fund. The policy would not be actively promoted, but it was something the growth team can work with the entice people to the West Lindsey area.

All loans would require approval from the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, and would need to comply with state aid rules.

**RESOLVED** to approve the Commercial Loan Policy for West Lindsey that would allow the Council to award discretionary commercial loans to third party organisations in support of local growth and economic development.

## **126 BUDGET CONSULTATION PROPOSAL 2018**

Members considered a budget consultation proposal for the 2019/20 budget. The Executive Director for Resources introduced the item, and highlighted the following points for Members:

- 2017 was the first year that the dedicated budget consultation software had been used. The same software was due to be used in 2018, but with more detail included;
- It would be of particular interest to see which areas citizens would look to reduce the budget spend;
- The Citizens' Panel had doubled in size since it last provided an opinion on this software;
- The Budget Consultation would be promoted through a number of mediums, including in paper form;
- Response rates to the budget in 2017 were down on previous years.

**RESOLVED** to agree the proposal for consulting on the 2019/20

budget.

## **127 BUDGET AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING - PERIOD 4 2017/18**

Members considered a report on the Budget and Treasury Management Monitoring for Period 4 2017/18.

The Finance and Business Support Manager introduced the report, highlighting the following points:

- The revenue outturn position at 31 March 2018 was £150,000 return to the general fund balance. Since that date, the accounts were closed and the actual return was £431,000; the difference of £281,000 was notified at the beginning of April as the Government had miscalculated the business rate relief grant.
- The capital outturn had resulted in £6.534 million being spent; there had been a request to carry forward £5.977 million, mainly for commercial investment;
- In terms of treasury management, an average interest rate of 1.25% had been achieved, that generated £263,000 of revenue income. There had been no external borrowing;
- It had previously been reported that there had been a breach of the counterparty limit. There followed a thorough investigation; the procedures were found to be robust;
- £384,000 of commercial income had been generated.

Following questions from Members, further information was provided;

- The function of Corporate Fraud now comes under the Finance directorate, and the fraud reports will come through the Governance and Audit Committee;
- There had been some health and safety issues with the Market Rasen depot. A portakabin forms the office and work area for staff; it was dangerous to have people and vehicles in the same space. There were only two years left on the lease; alongside the current depot, other facilities were being considered;
- The additional £500,000 being invested had no detriment on interest rates;
- The commercial income that the Council had generated was equivalent to a 9.9% Council Tax precept;
- Paragraph 1.2.2 on the former Lidl building was out of date and should not have been included in the report;
- West Lindsey District Council was able to lend to other councils in the form of short-term funding. They were AA rated investments;

- £3 million had been invested in a property bond with Churches, Communities and Local Authorities Investment Management (CCLA), which generated around 4.6%;
- The Debt Recovery Team had a process of chasing debts. Most of the debt related to housing benefit overpayments; the debt was not reducing swiftly, but it was being recovered. Services that had outstanding debts were proactively chasing them.

**RESOLVED to:**

- (1) Accept the draft out-turn position of a £150k net contribution to reserves as at 31 March 2018;
- (2) Note the Revenue budget carry forwards of £806k approved in year;
- (3) Agree that any further surplus variances be transferred to the Business Rates Volatility Reserve or General Fund Balance;
- (4) Approve the 2017/18 use of Earmarked Reserves of £118,900;
- (5) Note the 2017/18 use of Earmarked Reserves during the quarter approved by the Executive Director of Resources using delegated powers;
- (6) Note the 2018/19 use of Earmarked Reserves approved by the Executive Director of Resources using delegated powers;
- (7) Approve the Capital budget carry forwards of £6.010 million and accept the Capital out-turn position of £6.534 million;
- (8) Accept the Commercial Income position;
- (9) Approve the amendments to fees and charges detailed within Appendix C;
- (10) Accept the Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators to 31 March 2018.

## **128 BUSINESS RATE GROWTH POLICY**

**Note:** Councillor Stuart Kinch left the chamber at the start of this item.

Members considered a report on the Business Rate Growth Policy, which had the idea of attracting new and expanding businesses to locate in West Lindsey and specifically, to locate on the Strategic Employment Sites and the Central Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone and Somerby Park.

**Note:** Councillor Tom Regis declared a non-pecuniary interest on the basis that he owned a commercial property in Hemswell. He did not take part in, or vote on the item.

**RESOLVED to:**

(1) Approve the Business Rate Growth Policy for West Lindsey's Strategic Employment Areas as detailed in the report;

(2) Approve that the scheme enables a maximum of £300,000 in reliefs to be awarded with a maximum award of 100% over a 3 year period.

## **129 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY REPORT - QUARTER 4 (2017/18)**

Members considered a report on Progress and Delivery for Quarter 4 of 2017/2018.

The following points were highlighted:

- Licensing continued to give customer satisfaction;
- The Customer Experience Officer was having a positive effect on the complaints coming into the Council;
- Enforcement had seen increased demand; the new resource in that area had been made permanent;
- Street cleansing had not generated the expected income; officers are working to see how this service can be promoted;
- Markets were still underperforming;
- There was ongoing concern in the home choices section about nights spent in bed and breakfast accommodation;
- A new system for the allocation of homes had been implemented to support a reduction in homelessness.

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

## **130 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN**

The Executive Director for Resource reminded Members that the April 2019 meeting could be in a period of purdah.

Following this, the committee workplan was noted.

## **131 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 items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

## **132 PURCHASE OF SITE FOR LEISURE IN MARKET RASEN**

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Subject to Call-in. Call-in will expire at 5pm on 31 May 2018.

Members considered a report on the purchase of a site for leisure in Market Rasen.

**Note:** Councillor John McNeill declared an interest as he had friends in a property adjacent to the site in question. This did not preclude him from taking part, or voting on this item.

**RESOLVED** to approve the recommendations as written in the report.

### **133 INVESTMENT PROPERTY PORTFOLIO - INITIAL PROGRESS REPORT**

Members considered a progress report on the investment property portfolio.

**Note:** Councillor Stuart Kinch re-joined the meeting midway through this item at 1954.

**RESOLVED** to approve the recommendations as set out in the report.

### **134 EXEMPT RECORD FROM APRIL'S CONCURRENT MEETING**

Members received a copy of the minutes from the Concurrent Meeting of the Prosperous Communities and Corporate Policy and Resources Committees which contained the recommendations in full.

**RESOLVED** to note the exempt record.

The meeting concluded at 8.03 pm.

Chairman