

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Policy & Finance Committee** broadcast from the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, Notts NG24 1BY on Thursday, 24 September 2020 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor D Lloyd (Chairman)
Councillor K Girling (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor B Clarke-Smith, Councillor R Jackson, Councillor P Peacock,
Councillor T Wendels and Councillor R White

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor N Mison

The meeting was held remotely, in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

130 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS AND AS TO THE PARTY WHIP

Councillor R. Jackson and K. Girling declared personal interests in Agenda Item No. 7 - Local Government Re-organisation as Members of Nottinghamshire County Council. Councillor B. Clarke Smith declared a personal interest in the same item, given he was a current Member of Parliament.

Councillor K. Girling declared a personal interest in Agenda Item No. 13 - Active4Today - Covid update as a Director of Active4Today.

Councillor T Wendels declared a personal interest in Agenda Items No. 14 – Letter of Comfort for Southwell Leisure Centre Trust as a Trustee and in Agenda Item No. 24 - Litigation Matter.

131 DECLARATIONS OF INTENTION TO RECORD THE MEETING

The Chairman advised that the proceedings were being audio recorded by the Council and that the meeting was being broadcast from the Civic Suite.

132 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 JUNE 2020

The minutes from the meeting held on 25 June 2020 were agreed as a correct record to be signed by the Chairman.

133 FORWARD PLAN OF POLICY & FINANCE ITEMS

The Committee noted the Forward Plan items to be considered by the Committee over the next 12 months.

134 COMMUNITY PLAN 2020 - 2023

The Transformation Manager presented a report which set out a proposed refreshed Community Plan which had been updated to reflect our communities and Council priorities during the Covid-19 pandemic. The refreshed version included numerous examples of community spirit and communities coming together to support one another and the continuation of the Council's Humanitarian Assistance Response Team's (HART) approach, which was established during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The refreshed Plan covered the same period, up until 2023, and included the following objectives:

- Create vibrant and self-sufficient local communities where residents look out for each other and actively contribute to their local area;
- Deliver inclusive and sustainable economic growth;
- Create more and better quality homes through out roles as landlord, developer and planning authority;
- Continue to maintain the high standard of cleanliness and appearance of the local environment;
- Enhance and protect the districts natural environment;
- Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and increase feelings of safety in our communities; and
- Improve the health and well-being of residents.

AGREED (with 6 for and 1 against) That the refresh of the Community Plan 2020-2023 be recommended to Full Council for approval.

Reason for Decision

To approve the Community Plan refresh 2020-2023.

135 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report which sought approval to set aside the sum of £30,000 to support the Council to engage fully and proactively in the development of proposals for local government re-organisation and wider public services reform. The Government's Devolution and Recovery White Paper was expected to be published in October 2020, to include details of a fresh push to deliver more democratically elected Mayors, Combined Authorities and Unitary Councils.

Appended to the report were reports to Nottinghamshire County Council's Policy Committee seeking approval for the Leader of the County Council to seek support for a unitary local authority in Nottinghamshire, and a letter from the Leaders of all the Borough and District Councils in Nottinghamshire, along with the City Council, setting out their opposition to a single unitary authority.

In order to progress alternative proposals and respond promptly and collaboratively,

the Leaders had recommended engaging external support to assist with a range of key tasks, including preparation and appraisal of options for improving local services, financial assessments and community engagement.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the sum of £30,000 be set aside from the Change Management Reserve to support work associated with the forthcoming 'Devolution White Paper' and more specifically, the design and development of options to improve local government and public services more generally in Nottinghamshire;
- (b) the Chief Executive be requested to update this Committee on a regular basis on the progress of the above work; and
- (c) Members note the options for any future Local Government Reorganisation affecting Newark & Sherwood District Council would be referred to Full Council for consideration and debate.

Reason for Decision

To provide resource to enable the Council to participate effectively in the interests of its local community.

136 CLIMATE EMERGENCY UPDATE

The Policy & Projects Officer presented a report which provided an update of the work overseen by the Climate Emergency Working Group (CEWG) of Members, to produce a climate strategy and action plan for Newark & Sherwood District Council in response to the declared climate emergency. The conclusions from the CEWG, working with The Carbon Trust, were that the Council:

- defines its carbon footprint based on selected operational data as set out in the strategy;
- sets a target date of 2035 for carbon neutrality based on that data;
- is guided by the action plan to reduce carbon emissions in order to meet the target for neutrality; and
- monitors progress against the strategy and action plan by annual reporting to this Committee, with additional operational Committee updates as required.

The Committee welcomed the suggested virtual opportunity for all Members to view the strategy and action plan prior to submission to the Full Council.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the Council's carbon footprint to target be recommended for approval by the Full Council - the footprint is calculated as 2,165 tCO₂e – which incorporates selected emissions from scopes 1, 2 and 3 (this footprint does not include emissions from housing (17,130 tCO₂e), which have been considered separately);

- (b) 2035 be recommended to the Full Council as the target date for carbon neutrality (the action plan sets out a series of schemes to support the neutral target – subject to feasibility);
- (c) a commitment is added to the Capital Project Feasibility Reserve of £40,000;
- (d) governance of the strategy and action plan, as coordinated by the Environmental Policy and Projects Officer, is overseen by an annual report to Policy & Finance Committee that conveys progress against the annual carbon footprint (additional projects and initiatives will be considered by the relevant officers and committees as required); and
- (e) all Members have the opportunity to view the strategy and action plan at a virtual meeting on a date to be confirmed, prior to presentation to the Full Council.

Reason for Decision

To reduce the Council's carbon emissions and to formalise its environmental ambitions by agreeing a measured and considered action plan.

137 THE DIGITAL DECLARATION

The Business Manager - ICT & Digital Services presented a report which sought endorsement for the Council signing the 'Local Digital Declaration' committing the Council to work towards being a Digital Council. The Local Digital Declaration was a joint initiative by MHCLG and the Government Digital Service (GDS), first published in July 2018. The Local Digital Declaration was a shared ambition for better local public services through digital means and sought to commit to design services that:

- Best meet the needs of the resident;
- Challenge the technology market to offer flexible tools and services that public sector bodies require;
- protect the privacy and security of residents; and
- Deliver better value for money.

A checklist of actions to be undertaken in signing up to the Digital Declaration was set out in the report to Members.

It was proposed to launch the Declaration commitment with a community focused project that worked towards digital inclusivity. Potential funding for this project was available through the Local Digital Fund, from the MHCLG.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- a) the signing of the Local Digital Declaration be approved; and
- b) the introduction of a digital implications Committee report header be approved.

Reason for Decision

Signing the declaration will provide a digital vision committing the Council to meeting the needs of the resident, providing better value for money, challenging the technology market and protecting residents privacy and security.

138 CALL RECORDING POLICY

The Business Manager - Customer Services, presented a report which proposed the introduction of call recording, and which sought approval for a Call Recording Policy, including the proposed duration of storage of a recording. The Council did not currently record calls, but a new call centre solution due to be installed in October had such a facility.

It was considered that call recording would improve quality management and aid the investigation of complaints or abusive telephone calls. Callers would be informed that their call was being recorded. All call recordings would be stored by the Council for up to 100 days unless they were part of an enquiry or investigation and would be kept until completion thereof.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Call Recording Policy as set out in the Appendix to the report be approved.

Reason for Decision

Call recording to be introduced for service management, and therefore assurance over the quality of the Council's customer service, as well as the safety and security of staff in the investigation of complaints, concerns and violent, dangerous, abusive or illegal behaviour.

139 GENERAL FUND, HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) AND CAPITAL FORECAST OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2021 AS AT 31 JULY 2020

The Business Manager - Financial Services presented a report which compared the Revised Budgets with the Projected Outturn forecast for the period ending 31 March 2021. The forecast was based on four months performance information on the Council's revenue and capital budgets including the General Fund Revenue, HRA and Capital Programme. The accounts showed a projected unfavourable variance against the revised budget of £1.310m on service budgets, with an overall unfavourable variance of £1.174m. Appendix A to the report detailed the variances in service areas and other budgets.

It was reported that the Council had received £1.483m funding from the Government for additional costs as a result of Covid-19. Appendix B to the report detailed the current allocation of that budget to specific expenditure. The report also summarised the position for the Capital Programme up to the end of July 2020. Additions and amendments to the Programme were detailed in Appendix C to the report. The Business Manager - Financial Services advised that an additional £94,000 was to be added to the Capital Programme which was fully funded by the Safer Streets fund for works around bike storage and anti-social behaviour measures around Chatham Court

in Newark.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the General Fund projected unfavourable outturn variance of between £0.574m and £0.774m be noted;
- (b) the Housing Revenue Account projected favourable outturn variance of £1.564m be noted;
- (c) the variations to the Capital Programme at Appendix D be approved; and
- (d) the Capital Programme projected outturn and financing of £56.663m be noted.

Reason for Decision

To update Members with the forecast outturn position for the 2020/21 financial year.

140 NEWARK TOWNS FUND - ACCELERATED CAPITAL INVESTMENT

The Director - Planning & Growth, presented a report which sought approval to set up a budget to hold £750,000 of grant funding, alongside an agreement to underwrite £64,500 in anticipation of the grant approval. In September 2019, it was announced that Newark had been chosen as one of 100 towns in the UK to apply for a share of up to £25m worth of investment as part of the Governments 'Town Deal' process. The process for accessing Towns Funding had involved the submission of a Newark Town Investment Plan (TIP). As yet, the TIP was yet to be agreed by the Government. However, on 1 July 2020, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) wrote to the Council offering an opportunity to bring forward Capital Investment Projects identified in the TIP to support jobs and economic recovery by way of a £750,000 Capital Grant.

It was proposed that a budget of up to £750k be created to cover works associated with the 3 projects identified in the Newark TIP, which were: delivery and readiness of the former Marks and Spencer site on Stodman Street; deliver and site readiness of a Construction College led by Lincoln College Group; and delivery of new cycle infrastructure in the Town.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) spend of up to £64,500 is set up in the Capital Programme for work to be undertaken in advance of grant approval as detailed at paragraph 3.2 of the report with a view to financing from the capital provision if required; and
- (b) upon receipt of written approval from the MHCLG that the proposed schemes are acceptable, a budget for Newark Towns Fund of £750,000 (inclusive of £64,500) be added to the Council's Capital Programme fully financed by the Accelerated Capital grant.

Reason for Decision

To make Members aware of the Accelerated Capital Grant and seek approval to underwrite expenditure necessary to meet the spend deadline.

141 ACTIVE4TODAY - COVID UPDATE

The Health Improvement and Community Relations Manager presented a report which provided an update in relation to the current position of Active4Today given the impact of Covid-19. The impacts of the pandemic on the Company were detailed in the appendix to the report. Based on the impacts, it was proposed that the Company use £0.200m of its reserves to support the estimated shortfall, which was currently being forecasted at £0.690m. In addition the Council would make provision to support the remaining deficit which was currently estimated at £0.490m.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the content of the Active4Today Covid-19 Impact report (Appendix A) be noted; and
- (b) the allocation of £0.490m from the MHCLG Covid-19 funding grant to support Active4Today's additional management costs as a direct result of the impact of Covid-19 on its trading activity be approved.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the funding that Active4Today requires to maintain its sustainability is set aside.

142 LETTER OF COMFORT FOR SOUTHWELL LEISURE CENTRE TRUST

The Business Manager - Financial Services presented a report which detailed a request from Southwell Leisure Centre Trust (SLCT) to enter into an agreement for financial assistance to ensure the sustainability of leisure provision within the Southwell locale as the result of the lack of trading due to the lockdown from Covid-19. Their request was for the Council to enter into a letter of comfort with the Trust in order that the Council underwrite any liabilities the Trust accumulated up to a total amount of £220,000. This was subject to the Trust utilising all of its reserves in the first instance.

The main provisions within the proposed agreement were set out in full in the report. The terms of this Letter of Comfort were to be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

AGREED (unanimously) that the request by SLCT for the Council to enter into a letter of comfort with them in order to safeguard its sustainability be approved.

Reason for Decision

To ensure the sustainability of Southwell Leisure Centre Trust in order for the continuation of leisure provision within the Southwell locale.

143 CLIPSTONE WELFARE REFURBISHMENT PROPOSALS - SECTION 106 FUNDING REQUEST

The Health Improvement and Community Relations Manager presented a report which sought approval to allocate a financial contribution to the refurbishment of the Clipstone Welfare from Section 106 (S106) monies held for the purposes of community facilities provision in Clipstone.

The Clipstone Welfare Trust, which owned and operated the building, had been working with Clipstone Parish Council on proposals to develop the Welfare building as a community hub. This would help deliver a wider offer to the local community.

AGREED (unanimously) that the creation of a £66,385 capital budget within the 2020/21 Capital Programme, all to be financed from Section 106 Agreements held for the purpose of community facility infrastructure improvements in Clipstone, be approved.

Reason for Decision

To enable the proposed project to proceed in a timely manner in order to enhance the community facilities offer in the Clipstone locality.

144 CARELINE - ANALOGUE TO DIGITAL UPGRADE

The Director - Housing, Health & Wellbeing, presented a report regarding the Council's Careline service and the required improvements to ensure service continuity when the national analogue telephone infrastructure switched over to a digital network by 2025. The report requested a capital programme budget to the value of £80,540 to upgrade accordingly.

Careline provided social alarm response services, 24 hours a day, to the Council's supported housing properties, along with 76 customers living in our general needs housing and over 1,000 private sector customers. In addition it provided an out of hours service for Council Tenants. The upgrade would provide future expansion opportunities to meet future needs and particularly in meeting challenges to general health and wellbeing through the outbreak and recovery from Covid-19.

AGREED (unanimously) that a Capital Programme budget to the value of £80,540 to upgrade the infrastructure to ensure readiness and service continuity at digital switchover be approved.

Reason for Decision

To upgrade the infrastructure and ensure no disruption of service for those vulnerable residents who currently receive this support service in supported housing, general needs tenancies and in the private sector.

145 NEWARK & SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL - COVID-19 UPDATE

The Assistant Director- Transformation & Communication presented a comprehensive

report which provided an update on the impact of Covid-19 on the District of Newark & Sherwood since June 2020. The report provided full details regarding the impact and adaptations of Council services and the workforce, support provided to business within the District, and the action taken in respect of the local outbreak within Newark, at the beginning of August. The report also outlined some of the issues the District was likely to face, and the tools and support in place to help communities going forward.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report be noted as a summary of the pandemic response and recovery activities since June and the context be considered for future working arrangements.

Reason for Decision

To provide context for future working and decision making in relation to the pandemic.

146 COMMUNITY PLAN - QUARTER 1 2020/21 - PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Transformation Manager presented a report which informed Members of the current position against actions and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the Council's Community Plan 2019/23. The Community Plan 2019/23 was adopted on 7 March 2019 and set out the Council's purpose, values and objectives along with improvement/development actions above and beyond normal day to day service related activities.

There were a total of 138 actions within the plan, as well as 85 KPIs used to measure progress against the plan. The report for quarter 1 focused on the 35 quarterly KPIs and 54 Actions.

AGREED (unanimously) that the summary of position against actions and Key Performance Indicators in the Community Plan as at the end of quarter one be noted.

Reason for Decision

To enable the Committee to proactively monitor and manage achievement of the Council's objectives as set out in the Community Plan.

147 INFORMATION REQUESTS, COMPLAINTS AND RIPA UPDATE

The Director – Governance & Organisational Development presented a report which detailed the activity in relation to requests made to the Council during 2019/20 under the General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act 2018, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004. The report also advised of the complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman and the use by the Council of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) during 2019/20.

AGREED (unanimously) that the report be noted.

Reason for Decision

To inform Members of activities in relation to information requests, complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman and the use of RIPA in 2019/20.

148 ANNUAL STANDARDS REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2019 - 31 MARCH 2020

The Committee considered the report of the Director – Governance & Organisational Development and Monitoring Officer, which presented the Annual Standards Report for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. The Monitoring Officer had received ten Code of Conduct complaints during the period, seven complaints resulted in no further action being taken and three were currently being investigated by the Monitoring Officer. All complaints related to Parish Councillors.

Register of Interest forms for Newark & Sherwood District Councillors had been issued to all Members following the elections held on 2 May 2019, which had been returned and were published on the Council's website. Newly elected Town and Parish Councillors were also required to complete a Register of Interest form to be published on the Council's website.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Annual Standards Report be noted.

Reason for Decision

To provide Members with details of standards issues in 2019/20.

149 URGENCY ITEMS TAKEN DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Committee noted the urgency item decisions which had been taken since the last meeting held on 25 June 2020 under the widened urgency provisions. The urgency decision provision under paragraph 7.2.1 of the Council's Constitution had been widened to extend the consultation to include the Leaders of all the political groups of the Council.

The urgency items reported were as follows:

- i. Newark Towns Fund - Submission of Town Investment Plan / Heritage Action Zone – Entering into Contract with Historic England
- ii. Parish & Town Council Initiative Fund and Community, Sports & Arts Grants Scheme
- iii. Lorry Park Shower Upgrade

AGREED (unanimously) that the urgency items be noted.

150 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

AGREED (unanimously) that, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on

the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

151 TELEPHONY AND CALL CENTRE SOLUTION

The Committee considered the exempt report regarding a telephony and call centre solution.

(Summary provided in accordance with Section 100C(2) of the Local Government Act 1972).

152 LITIGATION MATTER

The Committee considered the exempt report regarding a litigation matter.

(Summary provided in accordance with Section 100C(2) of the Local Government Act 1972).

Meeting closed at 8.15 pm.

Chairman