

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Policy & Finance Committee** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, Notts NG24 1BY on Thursday, 25 November 2021 at 6.00 pm.

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

Councillor Mrs R Holloway, Councillor P Peacock, Councillor T Wendels
and Councillor M Skinner (substituting for Councillor R Jackson)

APOLOGIES FOR Councillor R Jackson and Councillor R White
ABSENCE:

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

There were no declarations of interest.

273 DECLARATIONS OF INTENTION TO RECORD THE MEETING

The Chairman advised that the proceedings were being audio recorded and live streamed by the Council.

274 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2021

The minutes from the meeting held on 23 September 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

275 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

There was no Chairman's report, but the Chairman did advise that Agenda Item No. 16 – Magnus Hockey Pitch Refurbishment – which had been marked as 'to follow' on the agenda, had been deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

276 FORWARD PLAN OF POLICY & FINANCE ITEMS

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

277 NEWARK TOWNS FUND UPDATE

The Director - Planning & Growth presented a report updating the Committee on the Newark Town Deal and identified Town Fund Projects. Updates were given on the business case development for the YMCA Community and Activity Village, 32 Stodman Street, and the IASTI. The report included a summary position of all the projects and budget information, and noted that the proposed move of the Newark Police Station to Castle House would not proceed, following a review by the Police & Crime Commissioner. Given that, the £1m Towns Fund grant was to be recycled into the remaining projects identified within the Newark Towns Deal.

The Director-Planning & Growth highlighted a change to the Assurance Framework to enable the drawdown of funds between outline and full business case. The Leader of the Council also proposed an additional recommendation to clarify the position on funding from Nottinghamshire County Council for the Southern Relief Link Road.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) Members welcome and note the update provided;
- (b) Members approve, subject to the recommendation(s) of the Council's sS151 Officer and Quod Consulting, the Full Business Case for 32 Stodman Street which seeks £2 million of Towns Fund Grant;
- (c) Members approve, subject to the recommendation(s) of the Council's sS151 Officer and Quod Consulting, the Outline Business Case for the International Air & Space Technology Institute (IASTI);
- (d) subject to (b) and (c) above to confirm to the Newark Towns Fund Board that the Full Business Case for 32 Stodman Street and Outline Business Case for the IASTI meets the requirements of the Newark Towns Fund Assurance Framework (June 2021);
- (e) subject to (b-d) delegated authority be given to the Director – Planning & Growth, in consultation with the Business Manager – Law & Information Governance, to enter into a Grant Funding Contract with the Lincoln College Group to provide Towns Fund Grant in accordance with the approved Outline Business Case for the International Air and Space Training Institute (IASTI) Newark;
- (f) delegated authority be given to the Council's s151 Officer to approve a final Full Business Case for the IASTI (Newark), subject to approval from the Newark Towns Board;
- (g) subject to (a-f) above, to approve £0.284m being added to the Council's Capital Programme for 32 Stodman Street (£0.284m Brownfield Land Release Fund) and up to £10.6m, in accordance with assured Outline and Full Business Cases, for delivery of the IASTI Newark;
- (h) to adopt, subject to Newark Towns Board approval, a revised Towns Fund Assurance Framework (Nov 2021), as detailed in Appendix A to the report; and
- (i) to urgently seek clarification from Nottinghamshire County Council, as the Highways Authority, that their capital contribution of £2.5m will be allocated in their Capital Programme henceforth.

Reason for Decisions

To continue the development the Newark Towns Strategy and Investment Plan.

278 INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING STATEMENT

The Director - Planning & Growth presented a report on matters set out in the 2020-21 Infrastructure Funding Statement as part of the annual reporting requirements for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). It was noted that the final report would be published by 31 December 2021, but the report set out some headline figures. With regard to planned expenditure over 2021/22 and beyond, the A1 Overbridge at Fernwood remained the priority project for the CIL.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Infrastructure Funding Statement be produced in accordance with the legislative requirements and be published before the end of the calendar year.

(The published version will be made available for Members viewing in advance of publication).

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the District Council is operating in accordance with the requirements of the Community Infrastructure Regulations.

279 VICARDALE WOODLAND CREATION SCHEME

The Development Manager – Environmental Services presented a report which sought approval for the planned tree planting scheme at Vicar Water Country Park. The proposed tree planting would help join two existing woodlands to create a wildlife corridor. The work to plant 4,000 new trees would commence in January 2022. It was noted that this was a no funding commitment partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council and the Sherwood Forest Trust.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Vicardale Woodland Creation Scheme be approved.

Reasons for Decision

To help achieve the councils commitment to plant 10,000 trees, to support the community plan and to support biodiversity and wildlife in the area.

280 AMENDED STRUCTURE FOR PLANNING DEVELOPMENT

The Director - Planning & Growth presented a report which sought approval for amendments to the current Planning Development Business Unit to enable the creation of a new Tree Officer post (NS12), replacing the current consultancy support, and to delete an existing full-time vacant Planning Technical Support Officer Post (NS6).

The Committee welcomed the proposed new in-house Tree / Landscape Officer post and how this would help facilitate a number of important areas of work within the Council including development of a tree strategy, the supplementary tree and hedges planning policy, work around the Queen's Platinum Jubilee tree planting scheme, working with the County Council on restorative and replacement street trees and undertaking assessments of sustainable tree renewal.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the amended structure and associated budget required for the Landscape/Tree Officer post be approved; and
- (b) subject to (a) above, the Planning Development Business Manager liaise with HR and Trades Unions as required to recruit a Landscape/Tree Officer on a full-time basis.

Reason for Decision

To have a dedicated post to consider tree applications, responses to consultations on landscape impacts/proposals, and to review the Council's Tree Preservation Orders.

281 SOLAR PV FEASIBILITY OUTCOME

The Environmental Policy & Projects Officer presented a report detailing the outcome of the Solar PV feasibility consultancy with regard to the Council's corporate and leisure buildings. The report detailed those buildings where it was recommended to install Solar PV, those to be kept under review and those where installation was not appropriate. A timeline, indicative costs, savings and carbon reductions were included in the report.

The recommended sites for Solar PV installations were Newark Sports & Fitness Centre, Southwell Leisure Centre, Dukeries Leisure Centre, The Beacon and Vicar Water. The total capital investment required to install Solar PV on those sites was £685,250.

In discussion, the Committee suggested the potential for rented roof space, to provide an income for business and for the Council to install Solar PV. Officers confirmed this would be considered, as would alternative technologies for those Council assets that were considered as not currently suitable for Solar PV. Officers would also keep abreast of any newly developed technologies which may be considered appropriate for Council properties in the future. A repairs and renewals fund would be generated from the savings over the 25 year life cycle of the Solar PV to enable replacement.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the Council progress with Solar PV installation at the recommended sites as set out in paragraph 3.7 of the report;
- (b) the Council make provision for capital funding to cover these costs totalling £685,250; and
- (c) a further report be presented to the Committee to report on progress and carbon reduction as part of the Climate Emergency update.

Reason for Decision

The Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019, to demonstrate our commitment to this the Council commissioned and approved our Climate Emergency Strategy and Greening Newark and Sherwood Action Plan in December 2020. Within the Greening Newark and Sherwood Action Plan Newark and Sherwood District Council has already agreed to consider the installation of Solar PV on our corporate and leisure buildings.

282 PROPOSED ACQUISITIONS AND DISPOSALS POLICY

The Business Manager – Corporate Property presented a report which sought approval of the Acquisitions and Disposals Policy. An acquisition and disposal policy was necessary to ensure that acquisitions and disposals were made with proper consideration of the legislation and industry best practice. The principles of the policy were outlined in the report and the draft policy was attached as an appendix.

The Committee considered that the approval levels for officers in respect of acquisitions and disposals, should be in line with those considered appropriate and agreed as part of the current governance review.

AGREED (unanimously) the proposed Acquisitions and Disposal Policy be approved, subject to the delegation and approval levels to officers being reviewed as part of the review of governance, with the final delegation figures being consistent with the provisions of the new Constitution.

Reason for Decision

To ensure the Council makes use of public funds in a transparent and accountable way which adheres to legislation as well as the aims and objectives of the Community Plan.

283 GENERAL FUND, HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) AND CAPITAL PROJECTED OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2022 AS AS 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

The Business Manager - Financial Services, presented a report which compared the Revised Budgets with the Projected Outturn forecast for the period ending 31 March 2022. The forecast was based on six months performance on the Council's revenue and capital budgets including the General Fund Revenue, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Programme. The accounts showed a projected favourable variance of against the revised budget of £0.540m on service budgets, with an overall favourable variance of £0.188m to be transferred to usable reserves. Appendix A to the report detailed the variances in service areas and other budgets.

The Business Manager – Financial Services advised that the Capital Programme would be updated to reflect the decision taken by the Council at their Extraordinary Meeting held on 24 November 2021 in respect of the London Road Car Park.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the General Fund projected favourable outturn variance of £0.188m to usable reserves be noted;

- (b) the Housing Revenue Account projected favourable outturn variance of £0.771m to the Major Repairs Reserve be noted;
- (c) the variations to the Capital Programme at Appendix C be approved; and
- (d) the Capital Programme revised budget and financing of £44.337m be approved.

Reason for Decision

To update Members with the forecast outturn position for the 2021/22 financial year.

284 YORKE DRIVE AND LINCOLN ROAD PLAYING FIELDS REGENERATION - UPDATE

The Director- Planning and Growth presented a report which updated the Committee on progress with the Yorke Drive and Lincoln Road Playing Fields Regeneration project, including the successful grant funding award from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) of £1.05m. The report sought approval for the signing of the funding agreement to ensure external funding could be accessed in a timely manner.

The key updates in relation to the project were detailed in Section 3 of the report. The Committee noted that a face to face residents meeting had recently been held to provide and update and address any concerns raised. This had included information regarding piling at the site, which may be required in some localised areas. In relation to the Pavilion, it was noted that the decision to bring forward demolition as part of the grant funding agreement would require identification of appropriate alternative accommodation for the current users of the pavilion for the duration of works.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the progress on the delivery of the Yorke Drive Regeneration Project be noted;
- (b) as and when grant funding is received, it is absorbed into the capital programme budget to enable spend to be achieved within timeframes set; and
- (c) the signing of the funding agreement be delegated to the Director - Housing, Health & Wellbeing and the Assistant Director - Legal & Democratic Services to minimise any delays in receiving funding.

Reason for Decision

Although the full details of the funding agreement are not currently available they are unlikely to hold any onerous conditions, therefore delegated authority is sought for expediency and will enable the project to progress.

285 NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND - NEWARK CASTLE APPLICATION

The Business Manager - Heritage, Culture and Visitors presented a report which advised Members of a planned bid for funding to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for the Newark Castle Gatehouse Project and sought approval to submit the application at the next available opportunity, 29 November 2021. It was reported that during the pandemic, the NLHF closed their usual funding streams, and prior to re-opening significantly revised their priorities. A specialist consultant had been appointed to re-visit the Newark Castle Gatehouse Project in light of these new funding requirements, and develop a fresh approach that would align with the needs of the Towns Fund and achieve the outcomes required of the NLHF. The report outlined an indicative timetable and costs, and the unique opportunities identified within the refreshed project.

AGREED (unanimously) that Members support the proposed application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund enabling an application to be submitted on 29 November 2021.

Reason for Decision

This proposal offers the best opportunity for match funding for the Castle Gatehouse Project, having previously explored numerous alternatives in 2019. Whilst there was a 12 month window to submit the stage 1 application, the timeline of the Towns Fund dictates the timescale required in submitting the NLHF application was no later than November 2021.

(Following consideration of this item, Councillor T Wendels left the meeting).

286 COMMUNITY PLAN PERFORMANCE - YEAR TO DATE

The Business Manager - Transformation presented a report which gave Members an overview of Quarter 1 and 2 performance against the objectives and actions within the Council's Community Plan for 2019-2023. The report provided a commentary on progress against the Community Plan objectives, reported on customer contacts, customer feedback and details of staff sickness absence rates. The report also contained, for noting, the annual RIPA and Ombudsman Reports. The Committee welcomed the new style of reporting and the contents of the report.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) following review, the Community Plan Performance report attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be welcomed; and
- (b) the RIPA and Ombudsman reports (Appendices 3 and 4 to the report) be noted.

Reason for Decision

To enable Members to proactively monitor the Council's performance and assess the Council's progress against achievement of the objectives laid out in the Community Plan.

287 PARTNERSHIP FOR THE EAST MIDLANDS BUILDING CONSULTANCY

The Director - Planning & Growth presented a report which updated Members on the financial position for East Midlands Building Consultancy (EMBC) and the Council, and the ongoing building control work in partnership with Blossom Homes.

The contract with EMBC, initially ran for three years, ending in April 2019, but this was extended on a rolling basis subject to an annual review. As previously reported, the EMBC had successfully arrested the previous financial decline and the costs of the service had reduced as set out in the report. It was noted that the service continued to perform well and provided a 'surplus' to the general fund which was ring-fenced to use to run the service.

The report also detailed the partnership between EMBC and Blossom Homes, a company currently based on the former Thoresby Colliery Site, Thoresby Vale. Blossom Homes were constructing zero carbon homes which were built using sustainable Modular Methods of Construction. The partnership was considered to be a positive one for EMBC and it was hoped would have a financial benefit as such properties gained popularity.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the financial position of the East Midlands Building Consultancy be noted; and
- (b) the partnership with Blossom Homes Ltd be noted.

Reason for Decision

To provide a sustainable Building Control service in partnership with neighbouring authorities.

288 URGENCY ITEM - LGV DRIVER RETENTION SCHEME

The Committee noted the decision to make a one off Retention Payment of £5,000 to all operatives holding a LGV licence.

AGREED (unanimously) that the urgency item be noted.

Reason for Decision

To address the current shortage of drivers and to try and mitigate against a mass exodus of employees during the next 12 months.

Meeting closed at 7.10 pm.

Chairman