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# **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

## **DRAFT MINUTES**

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Tuesday 8 November 2016 between 7.30pm and 9.14pm.

Councillors present:

Sara Bedford (Chairman)

Phil Brading (Vice-Chairman) (Public Services)

Stephen Cox

Paula Hiscocks

Alex Hayward

Stephen Giles-Medhurst (Economic Development, Sustainability and Transport)

Rupert Barnes

Kemal Butt

Matthew Bedford (Resources and Shared Services)

Chris Lloyd (Leisure, Community and Wellbeing)

Ralph Sangster

David Sansom

Chris Whately-Smith

Roger Seabourne (Community Safety)

Martin Trevett (Planning, Transport and Strategic Schemes)

Officers Present:

Steven Halls, Chief Executive

Geof Muggerridge, Director of Community and Environmental Services

Joanne Wagstaffe, Director of Finance

Lyn Ware, Interim Head of Property Services

Kimberley Grout, Housing Services Manager

Anne Morgan, Solicitor to the Council

Billy Hall, CSC Manager

Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager

### **PR60/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ty Harris and Alison Scarth. The substitute Member for Councillor Alison Scarth was Councillor Chris Whately-Smith.

### **PR61/16 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2016 were agreed by the Committee and were signed by the Chairman.

### **PR62/16 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**PR63/16      DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Roger Seabourne declared an interest in agenda item 10 (Discretionary Rates Relief Appeal – Rickmansworth Sports Club) as he played cricket for the club and left the meeting during the consideration of this item.

**PR64/16      SERVICE PRESENTATIONS – LEGAL, COMMITTEE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES**

Members received service presentations on Committee, Legal and Customer Services. The Committee noted that the presentation on Revenues and Benefits would be provided at the next meeting. Members thanked the officers for their informative and interesting presentations.

Members thanked the Committee and Legal Team for all their hard work and acknowledged the excellent work the Customer Services team undertook during an 8 week period following the introduction of the charging for green waste.

RESOLVED:

That the presentations be noted.

**PR65/16      INVESTMENT IN PROPERTY – WRVS BUSINESS CASE**

Members recalled during the September meeting the investment in property opportunity specifically aimed at the WRVS site. This report outlined the business case that was required. An update was circulated at the meeting.

The Interim Head of Property Services advised that following a visit to a manufacturer of the housing units, better value for money and better quality units had been identified which warranted the figures being updated in the report.

The Director of Finance said that following the visit the numbers detailed in Appendix B had been updated. The number of households which could be taken into the units had reduced from 24 to 17. This had impacted on the annual income from the LHA which would reduce from £186,000 to £125,000. There would also be a similar reduction in Bed and Breakfast costs from £206,000 to £180,000 but still provided a saving to the Council for these charges.

The Committee noted the two bed units could accommodate up to six people in each unit but the current figures had been based on a minimum occupancy of two people per unit.

Concern was raised that families were currently being accommodated outside the District. Temporary accommodation was urgently required in the District for families and this must be a priority for the Council. The 17 units would make excellent use of the site, save money for the Council and give families a temporary home near to their families, jobs and local support networks.

Concern was raised about considering the amended figures presented at the meeting which bore no relationship to the previous figures.

The Chairman of the Committee advised that very few changes had been made, that the updated figures were welcomed, and that the principle of the scheme remained the same.

The Director of Finance said the payback from the Local Housing Allowance and the savings in Bed and Breakfast costs would still be around 3 years, and the revised financial figures still provided for this.

The Chairman stated that maintaining local communities was vital to the District, and in many cases families were living in overcrowded accommodation, up to an hour's drive from their jobs, schools and family support. The Council needed to urgently provide temporary housing so that these families could be housed within the District.

There was concern locally regarding the provision of the temporary housing on this site and it was requested that the local residents in Rickmansworth be informed of the decisions being made and be provided with details on the planning application process. It was stated that any planning application for the site would need to go through the Council's usual planning application process, and would take into consideration the character of the area and the impact on the area.

Councillor Martin Trevett moved, seconded by Councillor Phil Brading, the recommendation at Option 4 of the report.

Concern was raised that this was not an appropriate location for this type of development. There was concern locally on how the development would impact on the local community and local area. What benefits would the development bring to the area and what problems could be associated with this type of development? Had an impact assessment been undertaken with the local residents?

The Interim Head of Property Services said the effect would be positive, bringing increased vitality to the area and to local shops, and would enable local families to live in a dignified way within the District near to their families and friends. Consultation had taken place internally with the Community Partnerships Team.

A Councillor stated that he was concerned that a local social impact assessment had not been undertaken. Putting 17 households in the same location, into what could only be described as "boxes" would create problems. The Chairman stated that this was not required as part of the planning process for new accommodation, and that the planned accommodation would be a huge improvement on what the Council was currently able to provide.

As a result of the changes to the 'benefits cap' introduced this week, a further 120 families were at risk of being made homeless. It was vitally important the Council provided clean and decent temporary accommodation for families within the District.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED the voting being 9 For, 5 Against and 1 Abstention.

RESOLVED:

That Option 4 in the WRVS business case be approved.

**TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PLACEMENT POLICY**

It had become increasingly necessary to acquire property out of the District to fulfil the Council's duty to homeless households. The objective of this report was to present a policy for the placement of homeless households in temporary accommodation. The policy set out to ensure the Council met its statutory obligations and in particular the criteria used when considering out of district placements.

In response to a question on providing temporary accommodation for 16-17 year olds, parents could evict a child at the age of 16. Case law stated that the main responsibility was with children's services for formal assessment which the Council could challenge as detailed in paragraph 5.2 of the policy.

The Committee requested that information be provided on the composition of the households requiring temporary accommodation.

Councillor Martin Trevett moved, duly seconded, the recommendation in the report.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

Agreed the implementation of the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy as set out at Appendix A to the report.

That the Committee also delegate amendments and monitoring of the policy to Sustainable Development, Planning and Transport Committee.

**DRAFT CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2017/18**

The Committee considered the draft Calendar of meetings for 2017/18 and noted the suggested amendments circulated at the meeting. It was requested that the Planning Committee meeting in May 2017 be amended to 2 days after Council, as the planned meeting was due to be held in half term.

Members were requested to send any comments/amendments to Sarah Haythorpe and for Officers to circulate the revised calendar to Members in advance of the December Council meeting.

RECOMMEND:

To Council:

That the calendar of meetings for 2016/17 be recommended to Council subject to final amendments.

**PR68/16 DISCRETIONARY RATES RELIEF APPEAL - ASCEND**

The Committee considered an appeal against the award of discretionary rate relief from Ascend. The Chairman thanked Councillor Brading for noticing a discrepancy in the figures. The Director of Finance agreed the discrepancy, and that Ascend should therefore receive discretionary rate relief.

Councillor Sara Bedford moved, duly seconded, that discretionary rate relief be given to Ascend due to their charity status and the work they provided in the District.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

To uphold the appeal and to award the full 20% of discretionary rate relief for one year.

**PR69/16 DISCRETIONARY RATES RELIEF APPEAL – RICKMANSWORTH SPORTS CLUB**

Councillor Roger Seabourne left the meeting during the consideration of this item.

The Committee considered an appeal against the award of discretionary rate relief from Rickmansworth Sports Club.

In response to questions on the status of the club, it was advised that they were a Private Members' Club.

Councillor Chris Lloyd proposed, seconded by Councillor Chris Whately-Smith, that the appeal be deferred to allow time for Officers to establish what problems the club were experiencing, why they had not taken forward the options made available to them by officers in March 2015 and August 2016 with regard to Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) status, and whether they understood what options were open to them. He would not want to see any Sports Club lost in the District.

It was requested that correspondence to the club be sent from the Director of Finance.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the appeal be deferred to allow time for Officers to establish what problems the club were experiencing, why they had not taken forward the options made available to them by officers in March 2015 and August 2016 with regard to Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) status and whether they understood what options were open to them; and
- (2) That all correspondence to the club be sent from the Director of Finance.

**PR70/16 DISCRETIONARY RATES RELIEF APPEAL – RICKMANSWORTH SAILING CLUB**

It was noted that the Club had the means to be able to pay their rates. They could apply for small business rates relief which would entitle them to 50% relief.

The Club could also apply for CASC status but it was understood that they did not wish to do so.

The Chairman of the Committee moved, duly seconded, that the discretionary rates relief appeal for Rickmansworth Sailing Club to uphold the appeal.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED the voting being 10 For, 2 Against and 1 Abstention.

RESOLVED:

Not to uphold the appeal.

**PR71/16 WORK PROGRAMME**

To agree the Committee's work programme.

Members noted the work programme and agreed that the report on the Gypsy, Traveller LDD be presented at the March 2017 to allow time for the Local Plan Member Working Group to meet.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the amendment above that the work programme be agreed.

CHAIRMAN