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# **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

## **DRAFT MINUTES**

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Thursday 6 October 2016 between 7.30pm and 9pm.

Councillors present:

Sara Bedford (Chairman)	Matthew Bedford (Resources and Shared Services)
Phil Brading (Vice-Chairman) (Public Services)	Chris Lloyd (Leisure, Community and Wellbeing)
Stephen Cox	Ralph Sangster
Paula Hiscocks	Alison Scarth (Health)
Alex Hayward	Ann Shaw OBE (substitute for Cllr Roger Seabourne)
Stephen Giles-Medhurst (Economic Development, Sustainability and Transport)	Roger Seabourne (Community Safety)
Angela Killick (substitute for Cllr Rupert Barnes)	Martin Trevett (Planning, Transport and Strategic Schemes)
Alex Hayward	
Ty Harris	

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  
Martin Wells, Senior Planning Officer, Development Plans  
Nigel Pollard, Section Head (Accountancy)  
Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager  
Kimberley Rowley, Head of Regulatory Services

### **PR46/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rupert Barnes, Kemal Butt and Roger Seabourne. The substitute Members were Councillors Angela Killick and Ann Shaw OBE.

### **PR47/16 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2016 were agreed by the Committee and were signed by the Chairman.

**PR48/16 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman ruled that the following item, which had not been available for five clear days before the meeting was of sufficient urgency to be considered by the Committee for the reason indicated:

Item 9 – Four-Year Financial Settlement Deal – to enable the Council to respond to the Government by the deadline of 14 October 2016.

**PR49/16 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

None received.

**PR50/16 INVESTMENT IN PROPERTY – SHORT TERM OPPORTUNITIES**

Members recalled that during the last Policy and Resources meeting the Investment in Property opportunity was specifically aimed at the WRVS site. This report outlined a further opportunity in some Council-owned garage sites whilst recommending a more strategic look at investment in property for financial return and in property to alleviate the present housing difficulties.

Concern was raised that providing modular homes was only a short term solution and the Council should be looking longer term. The investment the Council was making should be an appreciating asset not a depreciating asset. Was purchasing 266 modular homes financially the right decision for this Council - should the Council not be considering longer term housing. Had the financial modelling been completed and had the Council identified its strategy, aims and objectives.

The Interim Head of Property Services advised that providing modular homes would provide the Council with a short term housing solution and was a better financial option than selling the Council land and would provide revenue savings. The modular homes were just part of an overall housing and property strategy.

With regard to the management of the accommodation, an outside organisation would be used to ensure the correct skills and resources were available.

With regard to the funding for the project, the Director of Finance advised that the Council had the funds available either from capital or from treasury funds.

Members noted that further information would be provided for the next meeting to include a Property Investment Strategy.

The Interim Head of Property Services advised that the life of the modular units was up to 60 years and the Council would have paid for the units within 6 to 8 years.

Councillor Matthew Bedford moved, seconded by Councillor Chris Lloyd the recommendations as set out in the report. On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

1. That a Property Investment Strategy be created for consideration at the next Policy & Resources Committee and Audit Committee, this to be aligned with the Treasury Management Strategy.
2. That the financial case for such a strategy be made, using funds already set aside for preparatory property development to enable any specialist advice to be obtained.
3. That the P&R Committee agree to delegate to the Director of Finance and the Director of Community & Environmental Services to seek planning and development of garage sites for Temporary Housing and the sites to be selected in consultation with the Chair of Policy and Resources, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services and two other Group Leaders.

**PR51/16**

**CONFIRMATION OF ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS TO REMOVE PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS AT CROXLEY GREEN, MAPLE CROSS AND TOLPITS LANE EMPLOYMENT AREAS**

This report sought Members' confirmation of the Article 4 Directions to remove permitted development rights in relation to the conversion of office space (Use Class B1a) to residential (Use Class C3) on the employment areas at Croxley Green, Maple Cross and Tolpits Lane and light industrial (Use Class B1c) to residential at Tolpits Lane.

Members noted that no response had yet been received from the Secretary of State to the Council's letter of 7 September 2016.

Councillor Martin Trevett moved, seconded by Councillor Paula Hiscocks, the recommendations as set out in the report.

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

RESOLVED:

- 1) Confirmed the Article 4 Directions to withdraw permitted development rights for office (Use Class B1a) to residential (Use Class C3), which will come into force on 5 August 2017 on each of the three Employment Site Allocations at:
  - Croxley Business Park-site ref: E(a),
  - Tolpits Lane-site ref: E(b),
  - Maple Cross/Maple Lodge-site ref: E(d).
- 2) Confirmed the Article 4 Direction to withdraw permitted development rights for light industrial (Use Class B1c) to residential (Use Class C3) at Tolpits Lane-site ref: E(b), which will come into force on 30 September 2017.
- 3) Noted the possibility that the Secretary of State had the power to modify or cancel these Article 4 Directions after they had been made, if there are clear reasons why this is necessary.

**PR52/16**

**EXEMPTION FROM PROCUREMENT PROCEDURE RULES**

To advise Members that a partial exemption to the Procurement process was approved by the Director of Community and Environmental Services and the

Head of Regulatory Services under the Limited Market exemption as permitted by the Council's Constitution.

A Member asked for details on the cost of the Consultant. The Interim Head of Regulatory Services advised it was just under £10k.

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:

Noted the action taken and the revenue in budget will be dealt with through the budget monitoring process.

#### **PR53/16 BUDGET MONITORING – MONTH 4 (JULY 2016)**

The Budget Monitoring report was a key tool in scrutinising the Council's financial performance. It is designed to provide an overview to all relevant stakeholders. It was essential that the Council monitors its budgets throughout the year to ensure that it is meeting its strategic objectives and that corrective action is taken where necessary.

This report seeks approval to a change in the Committee's 2016-2019 medium-term revenue financial plan. The report shows the Council's overall consolidated medium term financial plan for both revenue and capital.

The Section Head (Accountancy) advised Members the success of the Garden Waste scheme had contributed to the positive variance. Details on the revenue variances were provided in Appendix 2 and 3 of the report.

On the capital budget £1.4 million had been rephased the significant variances being: BLYM and the Waste Services Depot. Full details could be found in Appendix 7 of the report.

It was noted that Abbots Langley Parish Council had not agreed the decision regarding the funding for the Manor House play area.

Concern was raised regarding the £400,000 rephased revenue carried forward. The Section Head (Accountancy) advised that the majority of the total related to the Council's asbestos liability which had not been resolved until June this year. Members noted that variances were reported throughout the year and the Committee had agreed in June the variances to be carried forward.

With regard to question regarding the funding for BLYM the Section Head (Accountancy) advised that £250,000 was a loan repayable over 10 years and this amount was the only funding BLYM would be receiving and that was why the £750,000 was being rephased in 2015/16 due to the delay in the project.

Officers had confidence in the project and officers were meeting regularly with BLYM.

On the charges for the green waste collection, officers agreed to circulate details on the number of bins being charged at the standard charge, the number of bins being charged at the concessionary rate and the number of bins being charged at the double charge.

Members noted that the take up for the green waste collection was 21,238 with additional residents joining the scheme every day. The charge this year was £25 and next year would be £35.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation was declared CARRIED the voting being 8 For, 0 Against and 6 Abstentions.

RECOMMEND:

To Council:

That the following revenue and capital budget variations be approved and incorporated into the three-year medium-term financial plan:-

Variance	2016/17 £	2017/18 £	2018/19 £
Revenue - (Favourable )/ Unfavourable	(45,130)	(38,870)	65,310
Capital - Increase / (Decrease)	(1,411,120)	1,257,800	317,320

**PR54/16 FOUR YEAR FINANCIAL SETTLEMENT DEAL**

This report covered the decision on whether to accept the Government’s offer of a four-year financial settlement and the requirement to publish an Efficiency Plan. Members will recall that Council considered this decision on 12 September 2016 and delegated the final sign off of the decision to accept (or not) the four-year settlement from central government. Council also delegated to this Committee to agree the efficiency plan.

Councillor Matthew Bedford moved, seconded by Councillor Chris Lloyd, to accept the Government’s offer of a combined four year settlement of funding to be advised to the Government before the deadline of 14 October 2016.

RESOLVED:

To accept the Government’s offer of a combined four year settlement of funding to be advised to the Government before the deadline of 14 October 2016.

**PR55/16 STRATEGIC, SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING 2017-2020**

The purpose of this report is to seek agreement to the process whereby the Council will determine its three-year medium-term strategic plan for 2017-2020, the related service plans, and the allocation of financial resources to achieve them.

On the budget consultation the Chairman of the Committee moved, seconded by Councillor Chris Lloyd, that the consultation take the form of a survey for all residents. The survey would provide a list of all the services the Council provided both statutory and discretionary and the costs. Details would also be given on the revenue gap that existed in the budget. Also included would be a question on what services the Council should provide, suggestions for increasing income and decreasing costs and to seek residents’ views on a possible Council Tax increase. The survey would start at the beginning of November and would run until early December with the results available in early January. The cost of the

survey would be approximately £7.5k which was £2.5k more than the previous year. Funding for the survey could be made within existing budgets.

The wording of the survey needed to be easy to understand and allow time for residents to respond. Paper copies also needed to be provided. It was requested that a press release be issued advising residents about the survey and the timescales to respond.

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

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the assumptions to use in preparing the detailed budgets for the period shown in Appendix 1 be agreed.
- (2) That the scheme used to prioritise revenue & capital growth shown in Appendix 2 be agreed.
- (3) That the draft timetable at Appendix 3 be agreed.
- (4) That the format of any budget consultation be through a survey of all residents to be approved by the Director of Finance in consultation with the Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services.
- (5) That a press release be issued advising residents about the survey and providing details on the timescales.

**PR56/16 WORK PROGRAMME**

To agree the Committee's work programme. Members noted the work programme.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

**PR57/16 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

"that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined under paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act. It has been decided by the Council that in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information."

**PR58/16 DISCRETIONARY RATES RELIEF APPEAL – SARRATT VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE**

To consider an appeal against the award of discretionary rate relief.

Members noted that all Appeals were judged against the Council's policy and procedures and were reviewed against the current grants process.

Councillor Chris Lloyd, seconded by Councillor Stephen Cox, moved that the appeal be declined. On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED the voting being 14 For, 0 Against and 1 Abstention.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the appeal against the award of Discretionary rate relief be declined.
- 2) That public access to the decision be immediate
- 3) That public access to the report be denied.

**PR59/16 DISCRETIONARY RATES RELIEF APPEAL – 6<sup>TH</sup> RICKMANSWORTH SEA SCOUTS GROUP**

To consider an appeal against the award of discretionary rate relief.

Members sought clarification that the award of the discretionary rate relief by the Head of Revenue and Benefits had been undertaken in accordance with Council procedures. A written reply would be provided by the Chief Executive.

Councillor Chris Lloyd, seconded by Councillor Matthew Bedford, moved that the application for a further 10% rate relief be declined but that the 10% rate relief already granted for this financial year be continued until the end of the financial year and that a footnote be added with regard to the application for Leisure grants.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED the voting being 14 For, 0 Against and 1 Abstention.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the appeal against the award of Discretionary rate relief be declined but that the 10% rate relief granted for this financial be continued until the end of the financial year.
- 2) That public access to the decision be immediate
- 3) That public access to the report be denied.

**CHAIRMAN**