

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 8.49pm.

Councillors present:

Sara Bedford (Chairman)

Phil Brading (Vice-Chairman) (Public Services)

Stephen Cox

Paula Hiscocks

Ty Harris

Rupert Barnes

Matthew Bedford (Resources and Shared Services)

Chris Lloyd (Leisure, Community and Wellbeing)

Ralph Sangster

David Sansom

Alison Scarth

Ann Shaw OBE

Roger Seabourne (Community Safety)

Martin Trevett (Planning, Transport and Strategic Schemes)

Officers Present:

Steven Halls, Chief Executive

Geof Muggeridge, Director of Community and Environmental Services

Bob Watson, Head of Finance

Alan Head, Head of Major Projects

Andy Stovold, Head of Community Partnerships

Jude Green, Head of Revenues and Benefits

Phil King, Emergency Planning and Risk Manager

Tim Revell, Interim Elections Manager

Anne Morgan, Solicitor to the Council

Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager

PR72/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kemal Butt, Alex Hayward and Stephen Giles-Medhurst. The substitute Member for Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst was Councillor Ann Shaw OBE.

PR73/16 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2016 were agreed by the Committee and were signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

Minute PR65/16 the following paragraph to be added:

A Member advised the Committee that there had been concern locally in Rickmansworth about the RVS development and about

the communication of information to residents. The Member requested that a letter be sent to local residents advising them of the facts with regard to the site and the planning application process. This was agreed by the Committee.

PR74/16 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

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

Item 8 – Budget Monitoring – Month 6 (September 2016) – to enable the Council to continue its ongoing budgetary control.

Item 9 – Appropriation of Land in South Oxhey – to enable the Council to appropriate the land as part of the South Oxhey Initiative.

PR75/16 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

PR76/16 SERVICE PRESENTATIONS – ELECTIONS, MAJOR PROJECTS AND REVENUES AND BENEFITS

Members received service presentations on Elections, Major Projects and Revenues and Benefits. The Interim Elections Manager was asked if the Household Notification letter (HNL) identified many errors in the register. If the letter was withdrawn, how much saving this would achieve? It was noted that the HNL was an effective way to get an accurate register. Members thanked all the officers for their informative and interesting presentations.

Members thanked the Elections team for all their hard work in achieving a high canvass return and were encouraged that more people in the District were now registered on the electoral register.

RESOLVED:

That the presentations be noted.

PR77/16 MEMBER TRAINING

The Committee received a report on Member Training following the previous report in March 2016. The following comments were made by Members

- Concern there was an underspend of around £1,000 on the budget;
- Some requests for training were not always allowed;
- Was the training achieving best value for money?
- Was the Council taking the opportunity to use the free training provided through the LGIU and the LGA?
- Had Members considered using the online LGA workbooks?
- Higher level training courses for Members.

Officers noted the comments made by Members.

The Chairman, Councillor Sara Bedford proposed a further recommendation, duly seconded, that she be appointed the Member Champion for Training until the end of this financial year.

On being put to the Committee the recommendations at Section 10 of the report with the addition recommendation of receiving an annual report were declared CARRIED the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the suggestions on Member training be considered by Officers in consultation with the Member Champion;
- (2) That the Individual Member Training Template be implemented;
- (3) That Group Leaders be asked to put forward training requirements for their Group at the beginning of the financial year and in November;
- (4) That Councillor Sara Bedford be appointed the Member Champion to lead on Member training and to be a central point of contact for both Members and Officers; and
- (5) That a report on Member training be presented to the Committee on an annual basis.

PR78/16 STRATEGIC SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING 2017-2020

This report enabled the Committee to comment to Council on the Strategic Plan, the Committee's service plans and the growth bids to support them for the three years commencing on 1 April 2017.

Officers had produced a 'Trend and Performance' report that looked at the performance of our performance indicators over a 5 year period. This report was appended (appendix 5) for information and provides broader context to service plans.

A Member requested that Objective 1.2.1 of the Strategic Plan be amended to: "..... support to small enterprises, e.g. through Rivertech." This request had also been made at the November Sustainable Development, Planning and Transport Committee.

A Member asked Officers to check if the reference made to the 1960s in the PID for improvements to the Batchworth Lake Access (page 43 of the agenda papers) was correct.

In response to Members' questions that there was no financial information in the service plans, the Head of Finance advised that the budgets had not been finalised. Officers were currently building the base budget before information could be included in the service plans.

The Conservative Group advised that there were elements of the service plans which the Group were not comfortable with and they would be abstaining from supporting the plans at this time.

On the tax revenue implications going forward and the retention of the business rates, should the employment growth ambition be increased from 0% for the next 4 years as this would be raising funds for the Council? The Chairman advised

that at a recent LEP meeting the focus was on generating the right type of employment and the right accommodation for that employment. The District Plan had a significant area of land allocated for new business.

In response to a question on the target set for Anti-Social Behaviour Incidents (CP14) it was noted that the target had been based on the previous year although each year the targets were more challenging and were never the same year on year.

With regard to the external referral scheme there had been inconsistent reporting of the performance data due to changes in the staff supplying the data. In future more specialised KPI questions would be provided to allow more significant responses.

POST MEETING NOTE: LL25-a and LL25-b have changed from being reported as a percentage to a total figure. This change took place last year so this is why the figures now look different. We have also changed the reporting mechanism for the scheme, which is being implemented in 16/17, this change should assist in mitigating any future inconsistencies.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the draft Strategic Plan attached as Appendix 1 be conveyed to the Council subject to Objective 1.2.1 of the Strategic Plan being amended to “..... support to small enterprises, e.g. through Rivertech.”;
- (2) That the Committee service plans at Appendix 2 be noted, but that the financial information needed to be provided within the service plans;
- (3) That the growth bids attached at Appendices 3 and 4 be considered at the January meeting.

PR79/16 BUDGET MONITORING – MONTH 6 (SEPTEMBER 2016)

The Budget monitoring report is a key tool in scrutinising the Council’s financial performance. It is designed to provide an overview to all relevant stakeholders. It is 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 sought 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 Head of Finance reported on the capital and revenue variances and advised the Committee there had been an increase in the temporary accommodation budget, a reduction in garage rent income and a reduction in investment interest income.

It was understood that there was no indication that the interest rate was likely to increase. There had been additional income received from the garden waste charging.

The Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services advised that half of the overspend was one-off costs from last year which had no net impact on the Council’s balances. Homelessness was a demand led issue which the Council had legal obligations to comply with.

A Member stated that the RVS site had not been through the planning process and the Council should not have any preconceived ideas. The Chairman of the Committee said the intention was to proceed based on expert advice received and the Council were moving forward on that basis.

With regard to virements made by the Service Committees in particularly £30k from Leisure, Wellbeing and Health this would be coming to the Committee in the next budget monitoring round.

A Member raised concern that the overspend on the temporary accommodation had not been identified earlier. It was noted that the information reported to the Committee was always compiled at an earlier date. Officers were aware of the financial situation and were monitoring it on a regular basis. It was noted that recent Government changes had resulted in 180 households in the District facing homelessness. The Lead Member for Housing, Planning and Strategic Schemes advised that information from the Housing Manager had been circulated which made predictions on temporary housing. He agreed to circulate this information to the Committee.

The overspend for asset management was due to the lack of success in seeking permanent staff for the section and the subsequent need to pay agency fees e.g. for the Interim Head of Property and Assets, and covered the whole year. The situation would be reviewed in the New Year.

On being put to the Committee the recommendations to Council in Section 8 of the report were declared CARRIED by the Chairman the voting being 9 For, 0 Against and 5 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	575,440	259,930	82,780
Capital - Increase / (Decrease)	(346,913)	1,519,913	0

PR80/16 APPROPRIATION OF LAND IN SOUTH OXHEY

This report requested authority to the appropriation of the land at the former Tennis Courts land, west of the Oxhey Pavilion. It was noted a planning application had been submitted to build a new Scout hut which was not a consideration of this committee and any members of the committee who are members of the planning committee should just be considering the appropriation of the land, and nothing relating to any planning application.

In response to a question on whether the land would remain in the Green Belt it was confirmed it would.

A Member asked if details on the surrender of the existing lease for the Scout hut and details for the lease on the new site could be considered by the Committee.

The Chief Executive agreed to circulate details after the meeting on the scheme of delegation and on leases and whether it required a decision by the Committee.

With the windfall in money a Member asked that the Administration be reminded about providing 96 socially rented properties for perpetuity.

RECOMMEND:

- (1) to authorise the appropriation of the land at Former Tennis Courts, land west of the Oxhey Pavilion (the Site) within Oxhey Playing Fields for planning purposes (as shown on the plan at Appendix A which is owned freehold by the Council) having first considered any objections received to the same under the provisions of Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972 to enable the Council to override third party rights and easements pursuant to Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016;
- (2) authorises the disposal of the Site as public open space pursuant to s.233 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 by virtue of a lease for 20 years to the 14th Watford Scout group having first considered any objections received to the same;
- (3) That the consideration of any objections be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of Policy & Resources Committee (P&RC); and
- (4) That in doing so the Council has considered the provisions of the Equalities Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998 contained in paragraph 4 of this report so far as they might be applicable in deciding whether or not to authorise the appropriation and resolves the following with regard to Article 1 of Protocol 1 it is considered that in balancing the rights of the individuals who are affected by the appropriation against the benefit to the community of proceeding with the appropriation, the appropriation resulting in the interference with the individuals' rights is justified in the interests of providing the relocation of an essential community use for a scouting facility.

PR81/16 WORK PROGRAMME

To agree the Committee's work programme.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be agreed.

CHAIRMAN