

FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

29th April 2010

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Harrison (Chairman), Councillor Wheeler (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Bladen, Mrs. Brown, Grant, Mrs. Hood (substitute for Councillor Mrs. Coyle), Lemmon (substitute for Councillor Mrs. Wheeler) and Murray (substitute for Councillor Roberts).

Labour Group

Councillors Rhind (substitute for Councillor Southerd) Richards, Taylor and Wilkins.

Independent/Non-Grouped Member

Councillor Pabla.

In attendance

Councillors Atkin, Mrs. Farrington, Ford, Hewlett, Mrs. Patten and Mrs. Wheeler (Conservative Group) and Councillors Dunn, Mrs. Gillespie and Mrs. Mead (Labour Group).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Mrs. Coyle, Roberts and Mrs. Wheeler (Conservative Group) and Councillor Southerd (Labour Group).

FM/112. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th March 2010 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

FM/113. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Richards and Councillor Dunn (who was in attendance at the Meeting) declared a prejudicial interest as Members of the Development Control Committee in the Agenda Item headed 'Land at Swadlincote' and would withdraw during the consideration of this matter.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

FM/114. **MORTGAGE INTEREST RATE**

It was reported that the Council was required to declare the Local Average Rate of Interest for the six months from April to September 2010. This rate had been calculated to be 5.13%. Borrowers were actually charged the higher of the Standard National Rate declared by the Secretary of State and the Local Average Rate. The Standard National Rate was currently lower and therefore borrowers would be charged at 5.13%.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee declares the local average rate of interest for the period April to September 2010 at 5.13%.

FM/115. **AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED:-

That the Minutes of the Audit Sub-Committee Meeting held on 6th April 2010 are received.

FM/116. **CORPORATE EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS SCHEME 2009/10 – ANNUAL REPORT**

A report was submitted on the progress made on the Corporate Equality and Fairness Scheme during 2009/10 and to submit a refreshed Action Plan for 2010/11. Members were also advised of an external assessment completed by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the award of “Achieving” status under the Revised National Equality Framework.

Background was provided on the Corporate Equality and Fairness Scheme that had been published in April 2008. This included detail of previous schemes, the extensive consultation undertaken and the Council’s rating against the five levels of that standard. In March 2009, a revised National Equality Framework was introduced, with three levels and further details were provided on this scheme.

The report detailed the progress made during 2009/10 and included a table of priority actions and achievements made. A Corporate Plan objective was to reach “Achieving” status under the National Equality Framework by March 2010. Members were reminded of the actions that were required to achieve this target, including completion of a self-assessment, followed by a diversity peer challenge by trained independent assessors selected by the IDeA. Further sections of the report looked at the self-assessment and the robust diversity peer challenge completed. The decision had been made that the Council had reached the

“Achieving” status and within the report, a number of strengths were recognised against the five themes:-

- Knowing your communities and equalities mapping
- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and customer care
- Modern and diverse workforce

The representatives from the IDeA also made reference to the work completed on the Council’s self-assessment and the document submitted was recognised as an exemplar. The final section of the report looked at maintaining progress against the Equality Framework.

In response to a Member’s question, clarification was provided on the three levels, which could be achieved against the new National Equality Framework. The Chairman asked that Members’ thanks be conveyed to staff on this achievement.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Committee receives the report on key achievements and outcomes of the Council’s Corporate Equality and Fairness Scheme for the year ending March 2010 and approves the actions listed at Annexe SMB1 to the Signed Minute Book, to continue to progress under the revised National Equality Framework.***
- (2) That the Committee acknowledges the award of the “Achieving” status under the New Equality Framework for Local Government, following the recent external peer assessment.***

FM/117. **ANNUAL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AND PROCUREMENT REVIEW**

A report was submitted to inform Members of progress made to date by the Business Improvement and Procurement Team, which included work in progress and planned projects. Background was provided on the Team, which worked across the Council to identify cashable and efficiency savings. Members were reminded of the final budget proposals approved and the need to identify ongoing cashable efficiency savings of £375,000 by October 2010. Details were then provided of the achievements of the Team in 2008/09, 2009/10 and the work undertaken on a variety of projects. The Team also advised service areas on procurement exercises and further details were provided. Additionally, the report included sections on partnership working, planned future work and on the Use of Resources.

The Chief Executive emphasised that reviews were taking place across the Council to identify efficiency savings, to improve and to keep up to date with how the Council did business.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee notes the progress to date and the plans for moving forward Business Improvement and Procurement in the Council.

FM/118. **CORPORATE PLAN 2009-2014 REFRESH AND UPDATED ACTION PLAN 2010-2014**

It was reported that the Council had an approved five-year Corporate Plan for the period 2009-14, which included a list of priority actions. Quarterly performance reports were taken to policy committees to monitor progress against stated objectives. It was important to review and update these plans, to take into account the progress made to date and any revisions to the targets agreed.

Background was provided and the Corporate Plan was the core of the Council's Performance Management Framework. It was refreshed annually and the development of the Corporate Plan led to the development of the medium-term financial strategy. The Council had a duty to have regard to targets within the Derbyshire Local Area Agreement and its contribution to the LAA was a key factor in the way the Council was assessed, especially in the Comprehensive Area Assessment. The Council also had a duty to work with partner organisations in producing a Sustainable Community Strategy and it must demonstrate a clear link between this Strategy and the Corporate Plan. The refreshed Corporate Plan continued to identify the key strategic priorities for the Council.

The Corporate Plan had been approved by Council in February 2009 and contained the Council's vision, values and priorities over the four Council themes of:-

- Sustainable growth and opportunity
- Safe and secure
- Lifestyle choices, and
- Value for Money

The Corporate Plan provided clear strategic direction and it was refreshed annually to maintain its relevance. The refreshed Corporate Plan had been produced following a series of consultations and engagement during 2009/10. It reflected the priorities within the South Derbyshire Sustainable Community Strategy, the Derbyshire Local Area Agreement and the results of the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

Revisions to the Corporate Plan were reported for each of the four themes. Next, the report focused on the Action Plan for 2010-14, and an emphasis had been given to streamlining the number of high priority actions. These would be monitored and reported to policy committees. In addition, some of the key

performance indicators had been amended. The revised Action Plan was appended to the report for Members' consideration. Other sections of the report looked at corporate campaigns and risk management.

Members submitted questions on the Action Plan sections on reducing the number of vulnerable households experiencing fuel poverty and improving current housing conditions across the public/private sector. Officer responses were duly provided. Thanks were recorded to Officers for the work undertaken.

RESOLVED:-

That the updated Corporate Plan Action Plan for the period 2010-14, a copy of which is incorporated in the Signed Minute Book at Annexe 'SMB2' be recommended to the Council for approval.

FM/119. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN**

A report was submitted seeking Members' approval for the preparation of an up-to-date Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan, and the process for producing the Plan.

A HRA Business Plan was required to outline fully the opportunities and pressures on the service, to give strategic direction, and to project the business into the future. It was also a Government requirement that the HRA had its own business plan.

The last HRA Business Plan was approved by the Government Office in 2006. In terms of the age of the current plan alone, it required updating, but that need was further accentuated by the funding shortfall currently projected on the HRA.

The two previous HRA Business Plans had been written utilising external financial expertise, and it was envisaged that up to 20 days of external support would be needed for preparation of the current plan, which was likely to cost in the region of £15,000. It was proposed that a budget of £15,000 be approved and taken from current HRA balances.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Committee approves the preparation of an up to date Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.***
- (2) That a joint stakeholder group be appointed to oversee the preparation of the HRA Business Plan, to comprise three Councillors, three tenants and three staff, with the following Councillor nominations:-***

***Conservative Group: Councillors Lemmon and Hewlett
Labour Group: Councillor Rhind***

- (3) *That the Committee approves the recommendation of the Housing and Community Services Committee, that an external consultant be appointed to assist in the preparation of the plan, to provide specialist best practise advice and that a budget of £15,000 be agreed for this purpose.*

FM/120. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee was asked to review its Work Programme.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee receives the updated Work Programme.

FM/121. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [ACCESS TO INFORMATION] ACT 1985**

RESOLVED:-

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

MINUTES

The Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th March 2010 were received.

CORPORATE SERVICES PARTNERSHIP – PARTNER SELECTION
(Paragraph 1)

The Committee selected a preferred partner for the provision of Corporate Services.

CLIENT MANAGEMENT – CORPORATE SERVICES PARTNERSHIP
(Paragraph 1)

The Committee approved a proposed structure for the Client Services Team.

LAND AND BUILDINGS AT NEWHALL (Paragraph 3)

The Committee granted removal of a legal clause, subject to the payment of a fee.

LAND AT SWADLINCOTE (Paragraph 3)

An area of Council-owned land was deemed surplus to requirements and approval given for its disposal, together with the acquisition of a new site.

PROPERTY AT MIDWAY (Paragraph 3)

This item was withdrawn.

PROPOSED PROPERTY SALE - SWADLINCOTE (Paragraph 3)

The Committee approved the sale of a property and associated land, together with the use for the proceeds from this sale.

J. HARRISON

CHAIRMAN