

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET
TUESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2013**

Held at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Pavilion Road, West Bridgford

PRESENT:

Councillors J A Cranswick (Vice Chairman in the Chair), D G Bell, J E Fearon, D J Mason, Mrs J A Smith

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors Mrs D M Boote, S J Boote, A MacInnes and G R Mallender

OFFICERS PRESENT:

D Banks	Executive Manager - Neighbourhoods
D Dwyer	Strategic Housing Manager
A Graham	Chief Executive
V Nightingale	Senior Member Support Officer
P Steed	Executive Manager – Finance and Commercial

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE:

Councillor J N Clarke

53. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

54. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 15 January 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

55. Draft Housing Allocations Policy

Councillor Bell presented a report on the draft Housing Allocations Policy. He stated that the Policy had been considered by the Community Development Group on 6 December 2012 and they had recommended that it should be forwarded to Cabinet for approval. He stated that the changes to the Policy would make it easier for people to understand

Councillor Bell said that the report set out the development of the Rushcliffe Allocations Policy as part of a wider sub-regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme to ensure full compliance with the latest legislation and guidance governing social housing allocations. It had been developed in consultation with key stakeholders and the Council's partners, Broxtowe and Gedling Borough Councils. The partner councils have developed their own draft allocation policies to reflect local priorities. However, the policies were comparable and would enable Broxtowe, Gedling and Ruscliffe Borough Councils to continue to share the Homesearch website and software to maximise efficiencies. The Rushcliffe draft allocations policy proposed changes

to the housing register to clarify who qualified for housing and to restrict access to the register to those who were not deemed to be in housing need and had a local connection, except for people wishing to downsize and people over 50. Additional levels of priority for working households, foster carers and HM Forces personnel were also proposed. It was felt that this would remove people from the waiting list who did not have a housing need but applied as an insurance policy and would therefore give households more realistic expectations about their housing options.

Councillor Mason agreed that this was something that would make it clearer to people what their eligibility was.

Following a question from Councillor Fearon the Strategic Housing Manager explained that the Policy would make it easier for residents, as it made it clear that to apply to be on the waiting list, you needed to be in housing need and have a local connection. It would also make the process better as it would reduce administrative burdens and enable officers to target housing advice to those in most need. The Strategic Housing Manager also confirmed housing advice would still continue to be provided to those people who did not qualify in order that they could make informed choices of all the housing options available and not just rely on social renting, which was in high demand.

In summary, Councillor Cranswick said that the review of the Policy had been very comprehensive and had produced a better system with those on the waiting list having a more realistic chance of being offered a property.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve:

- a) the draft Housing Allocations Policy, and
- b) give delegated authority to the Executive Manager - Neighbourhoods to approve minor amendments.

56. **2013/14 Budget and Financial Strategy**

Councillor Cranswick presented the report of the Executive Manger - Finance and Commercial which outlined the Council's budget for 2013/14 and Financial Strategy. He noted that this had been presented in a different format to previous years but he felt that this offered more clarity. He stated that the report explained the difficult circumstances that the Council was facing as it was anticipated that local government funding would continue to contract until at least 2017/18. Significant changes, such as the localisation of non-domestic rates and the replacement of council tax benefit with a locally determined council tax reduction scheme, were being introduced that would have an impact on the Council.

Councillor Cranswick stated that the revenue budget had been developed in accordance with the Council's 4 year plan. The reviews that were to be undertaken in the next year were listed in the report and the savings had been incorporated into the budget.

In respect of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as adopted by the Cabinet on 6 November 2012, he stated that the 2012/13 budget had allocated funds

from the Organisational Development Reserve to cover one off costs associated with the senior management restructure. However it was now clear that the majority of these costs would fall into 2013/14 and therefore £450,000 would be allocated for this purpose. This would give the Council flexibility with its funds.

Councillor Cranswick pointed out the references in the report to the Earmarked Reserves, the Special Expenses and the Capital Programme. With regard to the Council Tax setting Councillor Cranswick explained that local authorities had been encouraged not to increase the Council Tax for the last two years, or they would have been subject to capping or a referendum. However the Government had recognised that those authorities such as Rushcliffe with low levels of Council Tax were finding it increasingly difficult to maintain current service levels and as a result had introduced a one off option for local authorities to increase the Council Tax by up to £5 on a Band D property. Following the publication of the principles by the Department of Communities and Local Government Rushcliffe could increase its Council Tax by £4.77 without instigating a referendum. This was equivalent to 9.17p per week for a Band D property. Councillor Cranswick stated that the majority of properties in Rushcliffe were in the Band C category and that the increase would be equivalent to 8.15p per week. If the Borough Council continued with a tax freeze it would receive £110,000 over the next two years and £0 for the next three years, whereas if it did implement the increase it would receive £977,000 over the next five years. He pointed out that the increase would be included in the Council Tax base for future years. He noted that this had been discussed at the Members' Budget Workshops and although it had not been agreed by all Members it had been the view of the majority of attendees that such an increase was appropriate at this time.

In support of the increase he stated that this would allow the Council greater flexibility and be able to manage services. Also, as previously stated, the Council was having to absorb the costs of the Council Tax Reduction scheme and with this additional funding it may be able to look more favourably at the scheme in the future.

In conclusion, Councillor Cranswick stated that the Leader had requested Members to consider increasing the Community Support Fund to £1,000 per Member, a total cost of £25,000. This increase would be funded through the New Homes Bonus. The Fund was used for one off minor projects.

Councillor Bell stated that raising the Council Tax by a small amount made financial sense. It would benefit the Authority and would ensure that services were not cut. In respect of the Community Support Fund he noted that not all Members used their current allowance, whereas other Councillors had requests from a variety of organisations. He felt that this was localism in its truest sense.

Councillor Mrs Smith said that it was encouraging that the Government had listened to the heavy lobbying of the District Councils. She was pleased to see that recognition was being given to low taxing, low spending local authorities. Whilst at the Budget Workshops she had noted that there had been talk of a financial abyss when the freeze grant stopped. Following her query regarding the reviews the Executive Manager – Finance and Commercial explained that

these were being undertaken as identified in year three of the 4 year plan. However, it was now recognised that the majority of the savings would be realised in the following year.

Councillor Mason supported the previous comments and was also pleased to note that the Council was being recognised as a low taxing, low spending, well run authority. She believed that Rushcliffe was about halfway down the bottom quartile of Council Tax charging authorities. She agreed that the increase would be beneficial and would be less than 40p per month. She recognised that it was a difficult time for residents but felt that the benefits were great.

In relation to the increase of the Community Support Fund she supported this additional recommendation, especially as the New Homes Bonus should be used to reach local, small communities. She felt that the Fund supported very small groups and was used in a very positive way. She pointed out that the amount could be reassessed if the New Homes Bonus ceased at some future.

Councillor Fearon supported the comments regarding the Community Support Scheme as he believed that the money gave local groups leverage. With regard to the increase in Council Tax he believed that paragraph 30 of the report spelt out the difference in the two options.

In conclusion Councillor Cranswick felt that thanks should go to the Council's staff who had not received an increase for three years. He believed that this displayed their support and how everyone was contributing to the Council's efforts to reduce expenditure. The Chief Executive clarified that this referred to staff below managerial levels and thanked Members for their comments.

RESOLVED that

a) Cabinet:

- i. approves the Medium Term Financial Forecast as set out in paragraph 37 as amended by resolution b(i);
- ii. approves changes to the earmarked reserves outlined at paragraph 18;
- iii. notes the risk analysis illustrated in **Appendix E**; and
- iv. approves the treasury management strategy 2013/14 including prudential borrowing indicators as set out in **Appendix F**;

b) *Cabinet recommends to Council:*

- i. *The Budget 2013/14 as set out in **Appendix A** as amended to increase the Community Support Fund to £1,000 per Member with additional costs to be met from the New Homes Bonus;*
- ii. *The Capital Programme 2013/14 – 2017/18 as set out in **Appendix D**;*

- i. *The special expenses for West Bridgford, Ruddington and Keyworth as set out in **Appendix B**; and*
- ii. *A preferred level of Council Tax (Band D equivalent) for 2013/14 of £117.99.*

57. Revenue and Capital Monitoring

Councillor Cranswick presented a report of the Executive Manager – Finance and Commercial which submitted the budget position for revenue and capital as at 31 December 2012. The details contained in the report had been considered by the Corporate Governance Group on 30 January 2013, which had recognised that the Council's finances were in a healthy position. By reference to the report he informed Cabinet that the underspend against profiled budget to date was £568,000. It was therefore projected that the overall expenditure for 2012/13 would remain within the agreed funding envelope as agreed by Council on 1 March 2012.

The Executive Manager – Finance and Commercial explained that the Capital Programme would not be fully spent as there had been a number of adjustments especially with regard to the Cotgrave Master Plan and Alford Road Pavilion projects, both of which were progressing but which would now need funding in the following year. Also, as mentioned in the previous item, costs associated with the senior management restructure would need to be transferred into 2013/14.

Councillor Mason supported the recommendations and was pleased to see that the underspend on the Capital Programme was lower than in previous years. She believed that this was due to the hard work of all staff.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) Note the current projections for revenue and capital outturn;
- b) Approve the proposed rephasing of £54,000 into the 2013/14 capital programme;
- c) Approve the transfer of any year end revenue underspend to the Organisational Development reserve.

58. Pay Policy Statement 2013/14

Councillor Cranswick presented the report of the Executive Manager Operations and Corporate Governance detailing the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2013/14. He explained that under Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011 a local authority was required to publish a Pay Policy Statement by 31 March each year. Furthermore the Statement must set out the Council's policies relating to the remuneration of its senior officers, remuneration of the lowest paid employees and the relationship between the remuneration of its senior officers and the remuneration of its employees who were not senior officers.

Commenting further Councillor Cranswick stated that he considered the policy to be a technical document which had to be produced on a regular basis and was indicative of the Council's open and transparent approach to pay setting.

RESOLVED that Cabinet, having considered the Pay Policy Statement, 2013/14 forward it to Council for approval.

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm.

CHAIRMAN