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Our reference:
Your reference:
Date: 31 August 2012

To all Members of the Council

Dear Councillor

A meeting of the CABINET will be held on Tuesday 11 September 2012 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Pavilion Road, West Bridgford to consider the following items of business.

Yours sincerely

Head of Corporate Services

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Declarations of Interest.
3. Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 10 July 2012 (previously circulated).

Key Decisions

There were none.

Non Key Decisions

4. Local Government Finance Bill 2012 - Council Tax Support Scheme
The report of the Deputy Chief Executive (CB) is attached (pages 1 - 10).
5. Local Government Finance Bill 2012 - Council Tax Discounts
The report of the Deputy Chief Executive (CB) is attached (pages 11 - 12).
6. Streetwise Developing a Social Franchise - Interim Report
The report of the Chief Executive is attached (pages 13 - 18).

7. Police and Crime Panel Arrangements

The report of the Head of Corporate Services is attached (pages 19 - 24).

8. Play Space at Sycamore Close/Maple Close Bingham

The report of the Head of Transformation is attached (pages 25 - 28).

9. Outcome of the Portfolio Holder Review of Grass Cutting On New Wildflower Meadows

The report of the Head of Environment and Waste Management is attached (pages 29 - 31).

Budget and Policy Framework Items

There were none.

Matters referred from Scrutiny

There were none.

Membership

Chairman: Councillor J N Clarke

Vice-Chairman: Councillor J A Cranswick

Councillors D G Bell, J E Fearon, D J Mason and Mrs J A Smith

Meeting Room Guidance

Fire Alarm Evacuation: in the event of an alarm sounding please evacuate the building using the nearest fire exit, normally through the Council Chamber. You should assemble in the Nottingham Forest car park adjacent to the main gates.

Toilets are located opposite Committee Room 2.

Mobile Phones: For the benefit of others please ensure that your mobile phone is switched off whilst you are in the meeting.

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**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET
TUESDAY 10 JULY 2012**

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

PRESENT:

Councillors J N Clarke (Chairman), D G Bell, J A Cranswick, J E Fearon, D J Mason, Mrs J A Smith

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

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

OFFICERS PRESENT:

D Banks	Head of Environment and Waste Management
C Bullett	Deputy Chief Executive (CB)
A Graham	Chief Executive
C McGraw	Head of Community Shaping
D Mitchell	Head of Partnerships and Performance
V Nightingale	Senior Member Support Officer
P Randle	Deputy Chief Executive (PR)
P Steed	Director of Finance
D Swaine	Head of Corporate Services

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

There were no apologies for absence

7. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

8. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 12 June 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

9. Four Year Plan Update

Councillor Clarke presented a report outlining the progress made against the Council's Four Year Plan to achieve £2.8m by reviewing all services. He was pleased to say that during the first year savings of £1.81m had been achieved against an original target of £1.07m. This had been accomplished as part of an excellent combined effort through a range of officer led initiatives and two major service area reviews supported by Members. Furthermore many of the savings also involved the Council working in partnership with the community helping to deliver the aims and principles within the Localism Act.

Commenting further Councillor Clarke stated he was pleased to note that the Council had been recognised nationally by being chosen as one of only two

councils to take part in the Local Government Association's Future Challenges Transformation Programme, with the other authority being a large city council. He believed this evidenced the Council's innovative approach to reviewing and transforming its services.

Councillor Clarke stated that in view of the economic climate and further indications from Central Government regarding public sector funding it was imperative that the Council continued to focus on the delivery of efficient and cost effective services

By referring to the report Councillor Clarke highlighted the key initiatives that had been introduced as part of the Environment & Waste Management and Community Facilities reviews. He also highlighted that the reviews of garage services and insurance services, which were planned for year two, had been brought forward into year one. Additionally he also made reference to the various reviews undertaken by officers which had also contributed to the delivery of the plan. .

Councillor Clarke stated that he was aware of concerns and complaints from residents regarding changes implemented in relation to grass cutting and proposed wild flower meadows. In view of this Councillor Clarke requested that the Head of Environment and Waste Management provide a report for the portfolio holder for Environment detailing the key issues and options. This process would enable the portfolio holder to consider the report and take any action necessary to resolve the issue. Details of this would then be reported to a future meeting of the Cabinet. Councillor Bell indicated that he agreed with this approach because he was aware of the complaints and concerns of residents, however there had also been some positive feedback which should be considered when looking at the issue.

Concluding Councillor Cranswick highlighted all the actual savings that had been achieved and how these compared favourably to the estimated budgets. He added that the decision regarding green waste had proven to be a success and had greatly assisted with delivery of the plan. He added that Cabinet should recognise that, potentially, the savings could increase by 2014/15. Councillor Cranswick thanked officers for their hard work in the delivery of the plan however it was important to remain vigilant and focused as the future presented a continued challenge.

In response to a comment from Councillor Mrs J A Smith Cabinet recognised the significant savings achieved through the joint tendering of the Council's insurance contract particularly as this had been achieved in a very limited market.

It was RESOLVED that

- a) the delivery of the four year plan continue to be supported,
- b) in light of recent feedback from residents Cabinet requested that:
 - (i) the Head of Environment and Waste Management provide the portfolio holder for Environment with a written report detailing the

key issues and options regarding the approach to grass areas and wildflower meadows in specific locations within the Borough and

- (ii) the portfolio holder for Environment considers this report and determines any necessary action to be taken and reports details of this to a future meeting of Cabinet.

10. **Four Year Service Review Programme – Terms of Reference**

Councillor Clarke presented a report setting out the proposals to establish a cross party Member Group to oversee and scrutinise the service review of Community Shaping's Environment & Energy, Health, Arts & Events, Temporary Accommodation & Homelessness Prevention services as part of the Council's Four Year Plan. It was anticipated that the Group would have regard for the achievement of the overall four year service review savings target and the different models of service provision to respond to the national agendas of localism, personalisation of services and efficiency.

The proposed terms of reference for the Group as set out in the report were:

To oversee and ensure scrutiny of the Energy and the Environment, Health, Arts and Events and Temporary Accommodation and Homelessness Prevention review project as it progresses, taking into account Cabinet's direction to:

- *Aim for completion by March 2013 the efficiency and savings review of the services*
- *identify areas where efficiencies and the required savings of £55,000 per annum for Energy and the Environment, Health, Arts and Events and £20,000 from Temporary Accommodation and Homelessness Prevention from April 2013 can be achieved, while still meeting customer needs*
- *identify and consider in-house and alternative service delivery options, including, where appropriate, partnerships and community based initiatives*
- *oversee any consultation with the public, partners and other key stakeholders*
- *advising and reporting any recommendations for the future delivery of the services to Cabinet prior to any formal decision being made.*

With regard to the membership of the Group it was considered that it should comprise of nine Members based on the political representation of the Council and that the Chairman would be Councillor Fearon. It was proposed that in order to ensure consistency of debate and composition substitutes would not be permitted at the Member Group's meetings.

It was RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) the Cabinet Member Group be appointed with the terms of reference, composition and membership as set out in the report and;
- b) the Head of Corporate Services be requested to seek nominations to the Group and arrange its first meeting.

11. Proposed Lease of Abbey Road Depot (Part) to Nottinghamshire County Council Transport and Travel Services

Councillor Cranswick informed Members that Nottinghamshire County Council had approached the Council with a view to leasing some of the Abbey Road Depot site to create a new operational base for a small number of staff and 25 passenger vehicles which would serve the south of the County. It was felt that there was adequate space at the Depot to accommodate this and that it would be a good opportunity to maximise the Council's assets. Financially the Council would receive an income of £58,000 per annum. The lease would be for five years, with a minimum of two years, in order that it could be flexible for both parties. He stated that it was imperative that the Council could maximise any opportunity to review its operations at the Depot.

With regards to the terms of the lease it was stated that a rolling break clause had been included which meant that either party had to give nine months' notice to terminate the agreement. The minimum length of the agreement was two years therefore either party could give notice after the first fifteen months.

Cabinet were informed that any capital works needed to accommodate the service would be financed by the County Council. It was also noted that the County Council might wish to take over part of the garage area, which if necessary would be subject to a further report to Cabinet. As part of the development of the proposed arrangements the County Council had undertaken a public survey to gauge the views of local people. The County Council had indicated that they had not received any complaints about the proposal within responses to the survey. With regard to the potential installation of a vehicle wash facility it was important to ensure this was managed appropriately to ensure there was no associated noise issues.

In conclusion Cabinet recognised that the proposals within the report presented an excellent opportunity to work in partnership with the County Council which would reduce the costs to the public purse and create savings for both parties.

It was RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) agreed in principle to the granting of a lease to Nottinghamshire County Council for the shared use of Abbey Road Depot subject to negotiation in accordance with the terms set out in this report, and
- b) if necessary agree minor changes to those terms in consultation with the portfolio holder

12. Response To The Publication Version Of The Aligned Core Strategies Of Broxtowe Borough, Gedling Borough And Nottingham City And The Submission Version Of The Erewash Core Strategy

Councillor Bell presented a report outlining the Council's response to the publicised version of the aligned core strategies of Broxtowe Borough, Gedling Borough and Nottingham City and the submitted version of the Erewash core strategy. These areas were part of the Nottingham Housing Market Area. It was noted that all these authorities had objected to Rushcliffe's Core Strategy.

He pointed out that they wished to extend the time scale to 2028 whereas the Regional Spatial Strategy, which Rushcliffe had complied with, had looked at housing provision up to 2026. In the Aligned Core Strategies it was felt that any additional land required should be found within the Rushcliffe area. In response to this the Council felt that there were a significant number of Sustainable Urban Extensions within the Nottingham Housing Market area that had not been considered in the submission, whereas they had all been considered in Rushcliffe's Core Strategy, which also gave good reasons why some had been declined.

Councillor Fearon felt that, during the present economic climate, the number of homes required would be less than that previously predicted. This was evidenced by the fact that many young people were living with their parents for longer as they could not afford to buy a house. He stated that when the situation was reviewed in five years' time the evidence would have substantially changed if the economic climate did not improve.

In conclusion Councillor Cranswick felt that it was unfortunate that a combined submission from the whole of the Nottingham Housing Market Area could not have been achieved.

It was RESOLVED that Cabinet approve the comments set out in this report as the basis for the Borough Council's response to the Publication Version of the Aligned Core Strategies of Broxtowe Borough, Gedling Borough and Nottingham City and the Submission Version of the Erewash Core Strategy.

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm.

CHAIRMAN



CABINET

11 SEPTEMBER 2012

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE BILL 2012 -
COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME**

4

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE (CB)

CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER – COUNCILLOR J A CRANSWICK

Summary

Under the Government's welfare reforms, the Council must design and approve a local scheme to replace Council Tax benefit from next April. Working with other Councils in Nottinghamshire, a framework has been drawn up and this report proposes a scheme for Rushcliffe in accordance with the framework. The proposed scheme reflects the reduced level of funding made available by the Government and is designed to contribute towards the Government's welfare reform aims. Consultation has already commenced on the draft scheme and Cabinet is invited to support the proposals and select a preferred option from the small number of variants. Following consultation, the results will be reported to Cabinet in December and a recommended scheme proposed to full Council.

Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that

- a) Cabinet supports the proposed Council tax support scheme; and
- b) Cabinet indicates their preferred options for the restriction of Council Tax level in the calculation and the savings limit.

Background

1. As part of its welfare reforms, the Coalition Government intends to abolish the national Council Tax benefit scheme from 1 April 2013 and instead requires Billing Authorities to design and implement their own local schemes to support those deemed to be in need of help with their Council tax bills. Pensioners are to be protected as part of any local scheme. By its reforms, the Government aims to make paid employment more attractive and hence encourage people into work and reduce the overall cost of benefits as part of its deficit reduction programme.
2. Rushcliffe has been represented on the national working group advising the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on some of the practicalities of implementing the Government's proposals. This work is ongoing. All authorities in Nottinghamshire have been working together on their draft schemes.

Government's underlying principles for scheme design

3. In designing local schemes, the Government has issued some requirements and constraints to Local Authorities
 - Government grant will be reduced by 10%;
 - Support will be applied to Council Tax bills as a discount, thus reducing the Council Tax base for all authorities in an area;
 - The reduced grant will be shared and paid to all billing and precepting authorities to mitigate the loss of Council Tax income;
 - Pensioners currently eligible for Council Tax Benefit will be protected;
 - Authorities are reminded of their statutory duties in relation to other vulnerable groups including disabled people and those affected by child poverty;
 - Schemes should assist with lifting the poorest off benefits and supporting them into work and fit with the new Universal Credit scheme.

Funding

4. The cost of Council tax benefits granted in 2012/13 in Rushcliffe is £5.4m which is broadly fully recovered through Government Subsidy and recovery of overpayments. Government funding for 2013/14 will be provided through the retention of business rates and is estimated to be around £4.68m. This represents a 13.4% reduction, and a funding "gap" against the current scheme of £0.72m. However the final figure will not be known until later this year.

Vulnerable groups

5. The Government is not specifying a set of groups that should be treated vulnerable. Instead it reminds Councils of their existing responsibilities in this regard. It explains that consideration should be given to prescribed vulnerable groups under the Child Poverty Act 2010, Disabled Persons Act 1986. Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and the Housing Act 1996 when devising a scheme. It is open to Councils to decide and justify any particular level of added support in relation to vulnerable groups.

Work Incentives

6. The Government expects local authorities to have discretion in addressing in addressing three underlying principles in order to get people back into work:
 - People should get more income overall in work than out of work
 - People should get more overall income from working more and earning more
 - People should be confident that support will be provided whether they are in work or out of work and it will be timely and correct.

Designing a scheme for April 2013

7. During the year, much work has taken place in partnership with all other District Councils in Nottinghamshire, the County Council, the City Council, Police and Fire Authorities to explore whether a county-wide scheme can be drafted. While a detailed county-wide scheme has not proved achievable,

because of the differing needs and demographics of the authorities, an overall framework has been devised which has gained support from all. The framework (**Appendix 1**) provides a degree of flexibility for authorities to select options from a common set and determine relevant values. The framework recognises that, for the first year of local schemes, the timetable is so tight that any scheme needs to be strongly based on the current Council tax Benefits system, with appropriate adjustments to the calculations.

8. For Rushcliffe, the county framework has been discussed with the Portfolio holder for Finance who then selected the relevant factors to be taken into account and determined appropriate values. These factors and values are indicated as the proposed scheme below. It therefore fits with the framework and is designed to meet the Government's aims and guidance as described in paragraphs 4 – 7.
9. If a Council does not approve a local scheme by the end of January 2013, the Bill includes provision for a default scheme set by the Government. This broadly reflects the current Council Tax benefit scheme and would leave authorities to resolve the additional costs associated with this.

Proposed scheme

10. The proposed draft scheme for Rushcliffe is as follows:
 - The new scheme will principally be based on the way Council Tax Benefit is currently calculated;
 - Pensioners are protected as required by Government – they will see no change in the amount of support they get from the Council;
 - Currently, Council Tax Benefit is calculated using the actual Council Tax Bill. The draft scheme will only calculate on 90%, or optionally 85%, of the total bill. However, it is proposed to protect families with children from this change, who will still receive an amount based upon the total cost of their Council Tax bill.
 - Residents with £10,000, or optionally £12,000, in savings will not receive any Council Tax Support. The current level is £16,000;
 - Residents will be able to backdate claims for Council Tax Support for 3 months, currently backdating may be up to 6 months;
 - The second adult rebate will be removed for all claimants: At present, a second adult reduction in the Council tax bill is available to compensate for the loss of the 25% discount for single occupancy if the other people living in the home are on a low income – this does not apply to a partner or somebody who is paying to stay in the house;
 - The non-dependent deduction will be increased by 20%: If someone, who is not the householder's partner, a dependent child or someone there on a commercial basis (e.g. a lodger), lives in the property, they are expected to make a contribution towards the household bills. Council Tax Benefit is reduced to take this into account. This is the non-dependent deduction and the 20% increase results in reduced support of between £0.66 and £1.98 per week.
11. At this stage, the proposals include options in relation to the restriction of Council Tax to be taken into account at either 90% or 85%, and the level of

savings above which there will be no support at either £12,000 or £10,000. Cabinet is asked to determine which options are preferred.

Impact of the proposed scheme

12. The proposed scheme will result in a reduction in support for some 1400 households out of the current 6000 caseload; some 75% will be protected. The element with the most wide ranging impact is the proposal to limit the level of Council Tax used in calculating support to 90 or 85% of the bill. This affects some 1250 households where the residents are of working age but do not have children. The vast majority of the reductions are below £3 - £4 per week (depending on the options chosen). Although not protected from this change, disabled people will continue to receive more support than others in the same circumstances as their disability incomes will not be included in the calculation and they will continue to receive a higher "needs premium". However all those affected will have to pay at least 10% (or 15%) of the Council Tax bill.
13. The proposal to reduce the savings limit will affect very small numbers of households but the amount by which they are affected can be significant. These changes together with those for the second adult rebate and non-dependent deductions will affect all claimants of working age including those with children.
14. The overall saving made by the proposed scheme depends on the options selected and the effectiveness of collecting the resultant charge. This will be more difficult than is generally the case now as some 1000 or so claimants will now have to pay something where they were paying nothing previously. It is estimated that the overall saving will be between £143,000 and £203,000 depending on the options selected and assuming a 90% collection rate. Appendices 2 and 3 provide a breakdown of the scheme impact on households.

Consultation

15. Statutory guidance suggests that consultation on such a proposed scheme should run for 12 weeks. In order to provide this the process was started in August and will end at the beginning of November. The consultation documentation and invitation to comment has been sent to a variety of representative bodies and groups, those providing advice, Major Precepting Authorities, Parishes and all claimants. It is open for other residents to comment via the Council's website. A list of consultees (excluding claimants and other Councils) is attached at Appendix 4 The proposed scheme will be the topic of the first budget workshop this year and Members will the also be given the opportunity to understand the issues and to comment appropriately prior to a final decision being made.

Parish Councils

16. The position with regard to Parish Councils has not been finalised, but it appears that Minister's views have changed from the original proposal to treat parishes in the same way as Billing and Major Precepting authorities to a position whereby there would, in effect, be no change for parishes. This follows representations from Parishes themselves and the Borough Council.

Risks

17. There remain a number of significant risks that the new arrangements create for authorities. Some of these relate to the implementation and others to the financial risk of the scheme that is now passed from Government to Local Authorities:

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation
Scheme costs more than estimated due to increased claimants (e.g. growth in numbers of pensioners)	High	High	Shared with Major precepting bodies Potential to raise further income through new discretions
Increased cost of collection	High	High	
Greater losses on collection than allowed for	High	High	
Software suppliers not able to deliver changes on time	Medium	High	
Scheme challenged	Low	High	Proper provision for consultation and consideration of impact
High costs of implementation	Low	Low	£80,000 grant provided for implementation
Administration costs – it is not currently known how the Government intends to treat the current administration subsidy	Medium	Medium	Possibility of funds being provided as a “new burden”

Next Steps – the future

18. Consultation will continue until the beginning of November. After the responses have been analysed, a further report will be presented to Cabinet in December inviting Cabinet to recommend a scheme to full Council. This will relate to the year 2013/14 only as the sustainability of the scheme is not clear at present: Councils are expected to review their scheme each year and much will depend upon the level of demand for support. At this stage, the funding being made available through retained business rates will only be known for the first year of the scheme and how this might vary in future years, if at all, is not known.

Financial Comments

This report outlines the proposed structure of the Council Tax Support Scheme which is currently being consulted. The report deals in detail with the potential impact of the proposed changes on the Council's overall financial position and the contribution each aspect will make to the overall reduction in central funding. If no scheme is adopted and the default national scheme is operated then Rushcliffe and other precepting Authorities will share the costs associated with the final shortfall in funding.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act

The current powers for investigating and taking action over benefit fraud will broadly be replicated for Council Tax support.

Diversity

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken based on the options contained in this report. Following determination of the final scheme equality monitoring will be undertaken.

Background Papers Available for Inspection: Nil

County Framework for Council tax support schemes

County Framework	Rushcliffe Proposal
Options that involve restricting the eligible level of Council Tax for all working age people:	
Restrict support to a specified Council Tax Band	Not used
Restrict support to a percentage of the Council Tax bill	Restricted to either 90% or 85%
Options that involve amending various factors used in the current benefit calculation:	
Reduce the capital limit from £16,000 to a lower figure	Reduce savings figure to either £12,000 or £10,000
Remove or reduce backdating	Backdating reduced to 3 months
Remove second adult rebate	Remove Second adult rebate
Increase the “run on” of benefit for more than 4 weeks after work has started as an incentive	No change proposed – run on still for 4 weeks

The above framework excludes the option to count child benefit as income on the grounds that this runs counter to efforts to alleviate child poverty. Making the taper steeper (i.e. less generous) has been excluded as it could act as a disincentive to seek work. Within the framework, authorities would select relevant options and set appropriate values for factors.

			Appendix 2
Impact of proposed changes - options with most effect			
15% restriction of eligible Council Tax (excluding households with dependent children)			
Capital limit of £10k			
Increase non-dependant deduction by 20%			
No dependant children in the household			
Backdate restricted to 3 months			
	Number affected	Total extra billed	Average
Single	1211	£189,650	£156.61
Couple	175	£36,100	£206.28
	1386	£225,750	
Amount Collected assuming 90% collection rate		£203,175	
	Number of households affected		
Reduction in Support per annum	Single	Couple	
0 - £50	27	16	
£50 - £75	14	4	
£75 - £100	37	0	
£100 - £125	557	3	
£125 - £150	239	1	
£150 - £200	181	96	
£200 - £250	64	35	
£250 - £300	32	7	
£300 - £400	32	6	
£400 - £500	10	0	
£500 - £600	6	4	
£600 - £700	3	0	
£700 - £800	1	1	
£800 - £900	1	0	
£900 - £1,000	2	0	
£1,000 - £1,100	2	1	
£1,100 - £1,200	1	0	
£1,200 - £1,300	1	0	
£1,300 - £1,400	1	0	
£2,300 - £2,400	0	1	
	1211	175	

Impact of proposed changes - options with least effect

10% restriction of eligible Council Tax (excluding households with dependent children)

Capital limit of £12k

Increase non-dependant deduction by 20%

No dependant children in the household

Backdate restricted to 3 months

	Number affected	Total extra billed	Average
Single	1208	£132,730	£109.88
Couple	174	£26,130	£150.17
	1382	£158,860	
Amount Collected assuming 90% collection rate		£142,974	
Reduction in Support per annum	Number of households affected		
	Single	Couple	
0 - £50	34	16	
£50 - £75	48	4	
£75 - £100	789	3	
£100 - £125	155	68	
£125 - £150	46	54	
£150 - £200	56	13	
£200 - £250	23	4	
£250 - £300	12	5	
£300 - £400	28	1	
£400 - £500	8	1	
£500 - £600	4	3	
£600 - £700	2	0	
£700 - £800	0	0	
£800 - £900	0	0	
£900 - £1,000	1	0	
£1,000 - £1,100	2	1	
£2,300 - £2,400	0	1	
	1208	174	

Bodies invited to comment (other than Councils and Claimants)

Rushcliffe 50 Plus Forum

Rushcliffe Early Intervention and Prevention Team (formerly Sure Start)

Rushcliffe Together (formerly Community Cohesion Network)

Rushcliffe Advice Network Co-ordinator

Nottingham and District Citizens' Advice Bureau

Education Welfare Officer for Rushcliffe

Family Intervention Project

Representative for the Health Link for Rushcliffe carers groups / clinical commissioning group

Metropolitan Housing Trust

De Montfort Housing Society

Framework

Disability Nottinghamshire



CABINET

11 SEPTEMBER 2012

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE BILL 2012 -
COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS**

5

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE (CB)

CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER – COUNCILLOR J A CRANSWICK

Summary

The report proposes that the Council should exercise new discretionary powers to charge Council Tax on certain empty properties. This would be consistent with previous decisions to encourage empty properties into use and raise income for the Council and precepting authorities.

Recommendation

It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Cabinet supports the exercise of new discretionary powers in relation to charging for empty properties from 1 April 2013 as laid out in the report

Details

1. The Local Government Finance Bill 2012 abolishes the Council Tax exemptions for certain classes of empty property and grants Billing Authorities the power to charge Council Tax on them with the discretion to set a level of discount which may be anything between 0 and 100%. The current discretion to set a discount of 10% – 50% on second homes is extended to a range of 0% - 50% and the Act also empowers Billing Authorities to charge a premium of up to 50% on long term empty properties (empty for more than 2 years).

Charging for empty properties

2. These new discretions are being made available to councils as a source of additional revenue income and as a means to encourage empty properties back into use. The Council has previously exercised similar discretions in the past for precisely these purposes and it would therefore be consistent to consider exercising these new powers. Following discussion with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, it is therefore proposed that from 1 April 2013, subject to the necessary legislation being passed:
 - Current class A exemptions (uninhabitable and exempt up to 12 months) will in future be charged with a 50% discount;
 - Current class C exemptions (empty and unfurnished and exempt up to 6 months) will in future be charged with a 50% discount
 - Second Homes (currently charged at 90%) will in future be charged at the full rate;

3. Homes empty for more than 2 years will continue to be charged at the full rate rather than exercising the discretion to apply a 50% premium on top of the full charge (thereby charging 150% of the normal total bill).
4. These properties would therefore be chargeable as soon as they become empty, with no exempt period at all. By setting these levels of charges and discounts an estimated £520,000 of additional income would be raised and shared between the Borough Council and precepting bodies in the usual way. However, collecting the income in respect of these charges from “absent” owners will be more difficult than collecting from resident householders resulting in the risk of losses on collection and/or attempts by owners to avoid the charge. There would be scope for increasing income further in future as a means of offsetting the risk of cost overruns and other future financial pressures and budgetary challenges.

Who would be affected

5. Persons affected by the proposals for “uninhabitable” properties would be builders and homeowners who will be undertaking major repairs to make their properties habitable. Under this proposal they would still benefit from a 50% discount for up to 12 months. Homeowners who move to another property and may experience some difficulty in selling their existing empty property and landlords who are between lettings would also be affected, however, under this proposal they would still benefit from a 50% discount for up to 6 months.

Next Steps – the future

6. The income generation potential is significant, even though any income raised would be shared with the major precepting bodies. In view of this and the high degree of uncertainty over future funding, it is considered appropriate for the proposal to be taken into account during the coming budget workshops before a final recommendation is made to full Council in December.

Financial Comments

The financial implications are contained with the report
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Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act
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There are no Section 17 implications to report
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Diversity

There are no implications to report

Background Papers Available for Inspection: Nil

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER – COUNCILLOR D J MASON

Summary

1. The Environment and Waste Management Member Group has been reviewing the recycling2go, streetwise and garage services and presented the interim report in January 2012 which set out proposals for a number of initiatives which would move the Environment and Waste Management (EWM) Service towards achieving potential budgetary savings of £350,000 per annum. Cabinet supported the proposed initiatives, which included the exploration of an alternative delivery model for the Streetwise service.
2. This is a further interim report which focuses on the work of the EWM group in connection with Streetwise and seeks approval to embark on a proposed route to take the review forward with the vision of working with staff and key stakeholders to potentially transform Streetwise into an innovative, viable and thriving social franchise.
3. The report proposes a route to provide a transparent and rigorous decision making process which will also provide a stepped approach to implementation. This stepped approach will minimise the risks to the Council and Streetwise staff allowing at each stage the business case viability (costs, benefits, risks) to be considered before proceeding further.
4. Cabinet is requested to consider and approve this approach and indicative timescale along with a number of guiding principles.

Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that:

- a) the proposed route, timescales and principles, as set out in the report, for exploring the transformation of the Streetwise service are approved
- b) Cabinet support the continued work of the EWM Member Group to oversee the review process and development of the business case in accordance with revised terms of reference, as set out in Appendix 1.

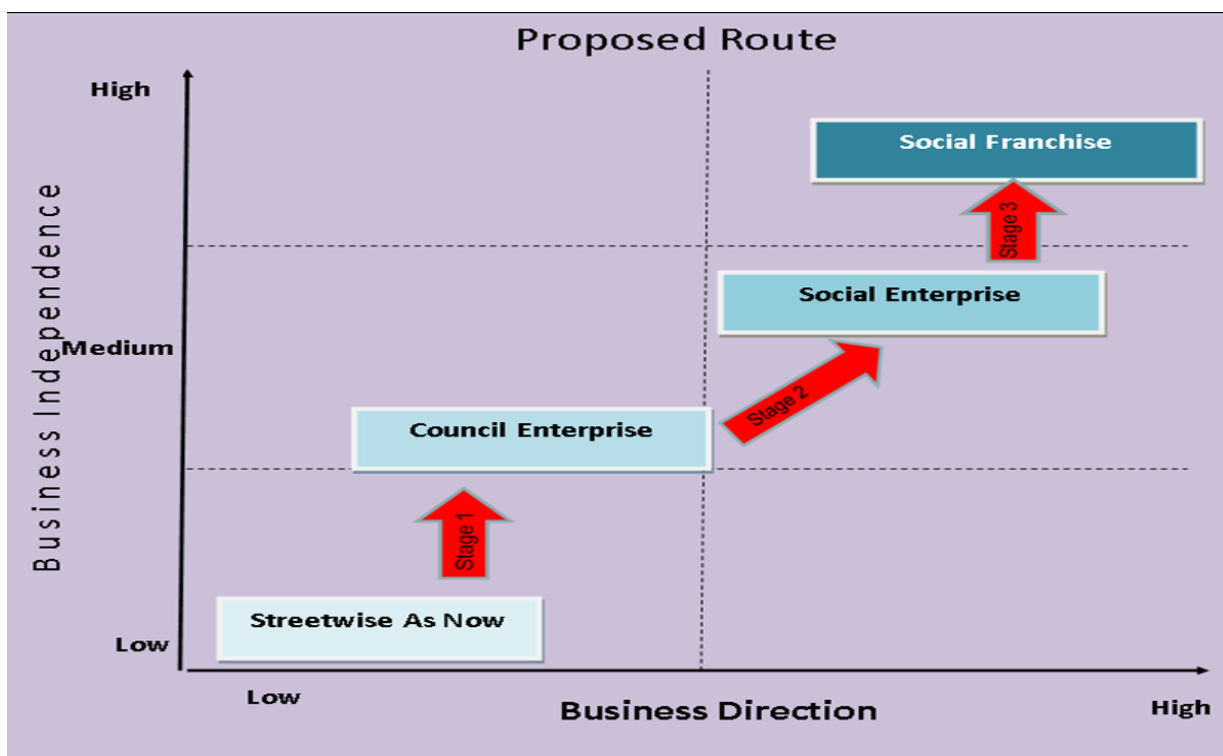
Background

5. The Environment and Waste Management Member Group (EWM Member Group) has been reviewing the recycling2go, streetwise and garage services in accordance with the Cabinet's terms of reference, which include:
 - identifying areas where efficiencies and the required savings of £375,000 per annum from October 2012 can be achieved, while still meeting customer needs;
 - identifying and considering in-house and alternative service delivery options, including, where appropriate, partnerships and community based initiatives.
6. The EWM Member Group has met on a number of occasions to focus specifically on the potential for alternative service delivery options for Streetwise.
7. The Group has formed an initial view regarding the potential opportunity to expand the remit and capability of the Streetwise brand and service, through the exploration and promotion of a social franchise. In reaching this view the Group has considered the dilemma of how to maintain quality, create a thriving and sustainable service, whilst regulating cost.
8. Having reached this initial view the Group felt that it was important at this stage to report to Cabinet and seek approval on the proposals and in particular seek approval for the continuation of the EWM Member Group to oversee the review process, in accordance with proposed revised terms of reference as detailed in appendix 1.

Transforming Streetwise – the proposed journey

9. The vision for Streetwise is to maintain and care for open spaces. The core business of Streetwise has traditionally been to keep the area clean, neat and tidy. However a future vision could be expanded further to:
 - Grow Streetwise so it is sustainable and enhanced, creating growth and opportunity for our workforce, community and economy. In the current economic climate, this growth will help to protect jobs, whilst the opportunities that could be offered to the local economy in developing franchises with the Council under the Streetwise brand may support the business sector. In addition, it is recognised that in many areas, communities wish to contribute to the protection and care of their open spaces.
 - Continue to harness the passion of the workforce and operate in both a commercial and caring way.
 - Promote what we do so that people want to buy into it and replicate it.
 - Have strong standards, high responsiveness and social values – this is the essence of our brand. This brand will be developed further towards a franchise model.
10. This innovative proposal will enable the combining of Streetwise know how and Rushcliffe values with greater freedoms to trade, innovate and grow. This has the potential to save money, provide economic growth for the Borough, and sustain the service.

11. The graphic below identifies three key steps as a proposed route forward to explore the transformation of the Streetwise service into a social franchise. This proposed three phased route will minimise the risks to the Council and the Streetwise staff by reviewing the viability of the proposal at each stage before potentially moving on to the next. This approach enables each stage to be evaluated and gives the opportunity to consider the options, re-work the proposals or even stop the process, if necessary.



12. The three key steps are as follows: Step 1 of the transformation establishes a Council Enterprise with the proposed name of "Streetwise Extra". This name has been put forward by the Streetwise staff, which has and will continue to be closely involved in the process. Streetwise Extra would be allowed greater freedoms to trade and operate on a more commercial basis. It will be able to discover new markets, utilising a trusted brand.
13. It is envisaged, subject to Cabinet approval, that Streetwise Extra would be established from September 2012. The service would remain within the Council, but would be treated as a discrete trading organisation with separated financial accounts. At this stage Streetwise Extra would still operate within the Council's overall policy and governance framework. It is important to note that this process is deliberately designed to facilitate learning and the opportunity to evolve thinking throughout the journey.
14. The experience gained from step 1, will help to inform the development of the business case for moving to a Streetwise Extra social enterprise. This work will be reviewed in April and May next year. It is anticipated that the business case will be developed and overseen by the EWM Member Review Group being presented to Cabinet for consideration. If the business case becomes viable it would lead to the creation of a Streetwise Extra social enterprise (step 2) and associated governance arrangements. A social enterprise could potentially take a number of forms, including a staff mutual, limited company or Community Interest Company. Part of the development of this step will

propose the best fit for the Council and staff. All of the models would have links back to the Council via a board structure which will enable influence over future direction, standards and protection of the brand.

15. The final phase (step 3) will review how Streetwise Extra has worked as a social enterprise and will consider the viability of establishing a social franchise. This potentially could see Streetwise Extra being franchised into different areas of the country and delivering an additional income stream.

The first stage – setting up the Streetwise Extra Council Enterprise

16. Cabinet is requested to approve the following principles to guide the exploration of the viability and promotion of Streetwise Extra.
 - Key decisions will continued to be considered by Cabinet, i.e. the business case to move to stage 2
 - The EWM Member Review Group will continue to develop and oversee the review process and the business case
 - The Chief Executive is requested to ensure the necessary arrangements are put in place to establish and run a Streetwise Extra council enterprise within the required accounting and governance framework in line with the Council's constitution
 - Continued delivery of the Council's street cleansing and grounds maintenance service to agreed standards will remain Streetwise Extra's priority
 - Where appropriate separate trading accounts will be established to capture the full costs and income associated with the activities of Streetwise Extra
 - Within an agreed governance framework Streetwise Extra will be allowed to use council resources to trade, market, compete and innovate
 - Acceptance that this is an evolving process and not all of the answers are known at this time.
17. The majority of resource required to take this project forward at this stage will be met from existing staff resources. It is, however, recognised that the Council will need to some external expertise and advice. Officers are currently looking to access existing free support programmes, such as the Mutual Support programme offered by the Cabinet Office. In addition, officers have been successful in obtaining a grant (in the order of £20,000) from the Local Government Association.
18. It is anticipated that the business case presented to Cabinet in spring 2013 will fully identify and evaluate the costs, benefits and risks associated with establishing the Streetwise Social Enterprise/Franchise.

Stakeholder consultation and engagement

19. Stakeholder consultation and engagement is a fundamental part of this process. It is important to provide the appropriate environment and information for employees to inspire the confidence to fully contribute to the realisation of

the vision. Staff representative forums will be appropriately involved and represented as required.

20. It is also recognised that local businesses could have a significant part to play in assisting the Council to become more commercially astute and therefore it is proposed to offer opportunities for local business leaders to get involved and share their expertise to assist, especially in respect of marketing, market development and selling.

Indicative timescale

21. The table below shows an indicative timescale for the proposed approach. It is recognised that this is an ambitious and challenging, but achievable timescale.

Dates	Action
September 2012	Subject to Cabinet approval, establish Streetwise Extra council enterprise
October 2012 – May 2013	Regular meetings of the EWM Member Review Group to oversee the development of the business case
May/June 2013	Cabinet considers business case to spin-out Streetwise Extra as a social enterprise
July 2014	Consider business case to launch Streetwise Extra social franchise

Financial Comments

This is a radical and innovative project that has potential to deliver significant service benefits to residents and financial savings in the future, if successful. There will be risks associated with such a project, but the proposed evolutionary approach to change will minimise these risks and provide the opportunity for review and close monitoring. Precise costs and benefits are not yet known, however at each step or “gate” Cabinet will receive the relevant information relating to the financial structure of the proposed new legal entities and the business case to assist in the decision as to whether to proceed to the next step. The transition to a Council Enterprise (Step 1) is not currently anticipated to significantly change the on-going costs of Streetwise and may result in further income generated in due course.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act

Full consideration has been given to any impact on crime and disorder issues as a result of the recommendations contained within the report. The outcome is that there are no negative impacts. Streetwise will continue to respond to enviro-crime issues in a timely manner and this will be maintained as a priority.

Diversity

Full consideration has been given to any impact on diversity issues as a result of the recommendations contained within the report. The outcome is that there are no negative impacts. A full equality impact assessment will be undertaken and incorporated in the business case.

Background Papers Available for Inspection: Nil

The proposed revised terms of reference for the Group are

To oversee and ensure scrutiny of the Environment and Waste Management Streetwise project as it progresses, taking into account Cabinet's direction to:

- Scrutinise and offer insights, support and direction regarding the proposed route to take the review forward with the vision of working with staff to explore options to transform Streetwise
- scrutinise any consultation with the public, partners and other key stakeholders
- advise and report any recommendations for the future delivery of the Streetwise service to Cabinet prior to a formal decision being made
- continue to develop members' commercial awareness to support the Council's delivery of the 4 year plan with its three stands of: increasing income, reducing costs and developing alternative service delivery models
- oversee the implementation of any remaining EWM Review actions where necessary.

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES

CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER – COUNCILLOR J N CLARKE

Summary

This report outlines the arrangements for the establishment of a Police and Crime Panel for the Nottinghamshire Force Area and the proposed Borough Council representative on the Panel.

Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:

- a) considers the information within the report setting out the proposed Panel arrangements and recommends these to Council for approval; and
- b) requests that Council determines that the portfolio holder for Community Protection be the Borough Council's representative on the Panel

Background

1. The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act (the Act) makes provision for Police Authorities to be replaced by Police and Crime Commissioners and elections are scheduled on 15 November 2012. Commissioners will be responsible for appointing chief constables and holding them to account, setting police and crime plans and budgets and determining local policing priorities.
2. The Act requires Police and Crime Panels to be established to oversee and scrutinise the work of Commissioners. In the Nottinghamshire Force area this requires the establishment of a panel incorporating representatives of the County, City, Borough and District Councils. The Panel must be established by the time commissioners take office, but it is recommended that shadow arrangements are put in place as soon as is practical in order to enable the Panel to make necessary arrangements.
3. The Panel will be responsible for scrutinising the Commissioner, promoting openness in police business and supporting the Commissioner in the exercise of their functions. As such it is not a replacement for the Police Authority, the role of which will be undertaken by the Commissioner.
4. The Act requires the functions and procedure rules for the operation of panels to be set out in 'panel arrangements' and 'rules of procedure'. The panel

arrangements must be determined by local authorities collectively however the rules of procedure are for the Panel to approve once it has been established.

5. The Nottinghamshire Leaders' Group has developed panel arrangements which are attached to this report at **Appendix A**. These panel arrangements appoint the County Council as Host Authority; which means it has responsibility for maintaining the Panel and arranging administrative, secretarial and professional support as necessary. Cabinet is asked to consider the panel arrangements and recommend them to Council for approval.
6. The Act stipulates that Police and Crime Panels must represent all parts of the relevant area, be politically balanced, and have a membership that has the necessary skills, knowledge and experience. The Act requires that panels for multi-authority areas with 10 local authorities or less must have 10 elected Councillor members; 1 for each local authority represented and the necessary additional number to reach the figure of 10. Therefore the Nottinghamshire Force area must have 10 elected members on its Panel; 1 for each authority plus 1 additional appointment.
7. As set out at recommendation b) of the report it is proposed that the portfolio holder for Community Protection be the Borough Council's representative on the Panel. Cabinet are asked to recommend this proposal to Council.

Financial Comments

None directly arising from this report

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act

As set out in the report the Panel will be responsible for scrutinising the Police Commissioner and supporting them in the exercise of their functions. As the Commissioners will be responsible for setting police and crime plans and determining local policing priorities it is essential that the necessary Panel arrangements are in place and that the Borough Council appoints its representative to the Panel by the time the Commissioner takes office.

Diversity

None directly arising from this report

Background Papers Available for Inspection:

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011
(<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/13/section/3/enacted>)

The Local Government Association has published guidance on Police and Crime Commissioners and Panels (<http://www.local.gov.uk/pcc>)

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL ARRANGEMENTS

Background

1. Each local authority and each member of the Police and Crime Panel (the Panel) must comply with the Panel Arrangements.
2. The functions of the Panel must be exercised with a view to supporting the effective exercise of the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner (the Commissioner) for Nottinghamshire.

Functions of the Police and Crime Panel

The terms of reference of the Panel are as follows: -

3. To review and submit a report or recommendation on the draft police and crime plan, or draft variation, given to the Panel by the Police and Crime Commissioner.
4. To review the annual report and put questions regarding the report to the Police and Crime Commissioner at a public meeting, and submit a report or recommendation as necessary.
5. To hold a confirmation hearing and review, submit a report, and recommendation as necessary in respect of proposed senior appointments made by the Police and Crime Commissioner (Chief Constable, Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner).
6. To review and submit a report and recommendation as necessary on the proposed precept.
7. To review or scrutinise decisions made or other action taken by the Police and Crime Commissioner in connection with the discharge of the Commissioner's functions.
8. To submit reports or recommendations to the Police and Crime Commissioner with respect to the discharge of the Commissioner's functions.
9. To support the effective exercise of the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
10. To fulfil functions in relation to complaints in accordance with the Panel's responsibilities under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (the Act).
11. To appoint an Acting Police and Crime Commissioner if necessary.
12. To suspend the Police and Crime Commissioner if it appears to the Panel that the Commissioner has been charged with a relevant offence.
13. To exercise any other functions delegated to police and crime panels under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 as required.

Operating Arrangements

14. The Panel is a joint committee of the county, city, borough and district councils in Nottinghamshire.
15. Nottinghamshire County Council will be the Host Authority in establishing and maintaining the Panel and will arrange the administrative, secretarial and professional support necessary to enable the Panel to fulfil its functions.
16. The Panel will be comprised of 10 councillors and a minimum of two co-opted independent members. Councillor membership can be increased by co-opting additional members with the unanimous agreement of the Panel, and any proposal for an increase in membership would be subject to the approval of the Secretary of State.
17. All Members of the Panel may vote in proceedings.
18. The local authorities will co-operate to provide the Panel with additional officer support for research, training and development, or where particular expertise would be of assistance.
19. The local authorities will co-operate to ensure that the role of the Panel is promoted internally and externally and that members and officers involved in the work of the Panel are given support and guidance in relation to the Panel's functions.
20. The Panel must have regard to the Policing Protocol issued by the Home Secretary in carrying out its functions.

Financial Arrangements

21. The funding provided by the Home Office to support the work of the Panel will be received by the County Council as Host Authority. The Panel will seek to operate within the limit of the Home Office funding.
22. The Home Office funding includes a specified sum per member per annum to cover their expenses. Each local authority will be allocated the appropriate sum and will pay the expenses of its own representatives.
23. Each authority has discretion to pay its representatives an allowance including any special responsibility allowance if they are appointed Chairman or Vice Chairman.

Membership – Appointed Members

24. Appointment of elected members to the Panel will be made by each local authority at its annual meeting or as soon as possible afterwards, in accordance with its procedures. Appointments will be made with a view to ensuring that the “balanced appointment objective” is met so far as is reasonably practicable, i.e. to:-
 - a. represent all parts of the police area;
 - b. represent the political make-up of the relevant authorities and the Police Force area overall

- c. have the skills, knowledge and experience necessary for the Panel to discharge its functions effectively
- 25. The Panel's membership will be one councillor appointed by each authority plus one additional councillor appointed by Nottingham City Council.
- 26. It is for each council to decide whether to appoint executive or non executive members (if applicable), however where there is an executive mayor they must be nominated as an authority's representative (although they are not under a duty to accept the nomination).
- 27. The Panel will review at its annual meeting whether or not the balanced appointment objective is being met and if it concludes that it is not, the Panel will determine what action is needed to meet the objective.

Membership – Co-opted Members

- 28. The Panel will co-opt two independent members in accordance with the eligibility criteria set out in the Act.
- 29. The Panel will invite nominations and will make arrangements for appointment.
- 30. Independent members will be appointed for a term of 2 years. There will be no restriction on the overall time period that an independent member can serve on the Panel.

Conduct of Panel Members

- 31. Members appointed by authorities will be subject to their own authority's code of conduct. Independent co-optees will be subject to the Host Local Authority's code of conduct.

Vacancies

- 32. Each council will fill vacancies for elected members in accordance with the arrangements in its constitution. Vacancies for independent members will be filled in accordance with the selection process agreed by the Panel.

Resignation of Members

- 33. Members of the Panel who wish to resign should do so in writing to their appointing council (as applicable) who will in turn notify the Host Local Authority as soon as possible

Removal of Appointed Members

- 34. Each local authority will have the right to change its appointed member at any time but must give notice to the Host Local Authority and ensure that replacement does not affect the political balance requirement.

Removal of Independent Members

35. An independent member may only be removed from office if an appointed member has given notice to the Host Local Authority at least 10 working days prior to a meeting of the Panel, of their intention to propose a motion that an independent member's co-option be terminated. At the subsequent meeting, termination will only be confirmed if at least two-thirds of the persons who are members of the Panel at the time when the decision is made vote in favour of termination.

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF TRANSFORMATION

CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER – COUNCILLOR J A CRANSWICK

Summary

1. Historically, there were five plots of open space within the housing estate, referred to as the Tree Estate, Bingham. Cabinet approved the disposal of four plots to adjacent neighbours as garden land on 4 September 2007 (and resolved that the fifth plot (edged red on the attached plan) should be sold for residential development (subject to planning) once the new Wallenfells site was fully established as a play area.
2. It now appears unlikely that the fifth plot will be available for residential development and disposal on this basis is not forthcoming.

Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that:

- a) The plot be disposed of to adjacent homeowners for garden use
- b) A clawback provision be placed on the land, to ensure that the Council receives a 30% share of the uplift in value if it is subsequently developed
- c) The proposed disposal of the open space to be advertised under s123 (2a) of the Local Government Act 1972

Background

3. The four areas of open space have been sold to adjacent neighbours as garden land and the Wallenfells play area is now fully established having opened in 2011.
4. The disposal of plot five for residential development has been investigated. Whilst Development Control has indicated that residential development would be acceptable, other factors relating to the site indicate that it is not considered to be viable, as explained below:
 - Access to the site is restricted and in order to develop the site, it is necessary to purchase a strip of access land from the neighbouring homeowner. Access had been agreed with the previous homeowner, but the existing owner does not wish to sell an area of land to the

Council for access. The Council became aware there was a new owner in February 2008.

Consideration has been given to using compulsory purchase order (CPO) powers to acquire the land for access, but it has been concluded that the costs of this process are likely to be in excess of the value of the site.

- The site is subject to a restrictive covenant preventing development. An agreement had been reached with the beneficiary of the covenant to release it for a fee of £5,000. Despite several attempts, it has not been possible to confirm that this is still effective.
 - Whilst unlikely that the covenant is still enforceable, it would remain part of the Title of the land, which would present difficulties when selling any new property in the future. It may be possible to obtain indemnity insurance to cover this.
5. Given the current economic climate, the cost of gaining access to the site and satisfactorily resolving the matter of the restrictive covenant, it appears that it is unlikely to be economically viable to develop the site for residential use.
 6. However, it is also not an option to leave the site as open space, as it has been reported that there are regular incidents of anti-social behaviour, which are impacting upon the adjacent homeowners.

Proposal

7. An alternative option is to dispose of the land to the adjacent homeowners for use as garden land, as with the other four plots of land.
8. Adjacent owners have been contacted and they have shown interest in buying part of the site for garden purposes. The other plots were sold with a clawback provision should the land be developed for a use with a higher value.
9. It is proposed to offer the land for sale to the adjacent homeowners, where there is a shared boundary with the plot. Again, it is proposed that the terms include a clawback provision for development value in the future. The purchasers would be expected to apply for change of use from open space to garden land and to fence the land into their existing gardens.
10. In order to sell this land, it must be advertised for 14 days under s123 (2a) of the Local Government Act, as it is currently public open space.

Financial Comments

Given that residential development is not an option and that the sale proceeds will therefore be below the de minimis level of £10,000 any receipt will be income to the Estates Open Spaces budget. At market value for garden land, this is expected to be around £4,000 - £4,500.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act

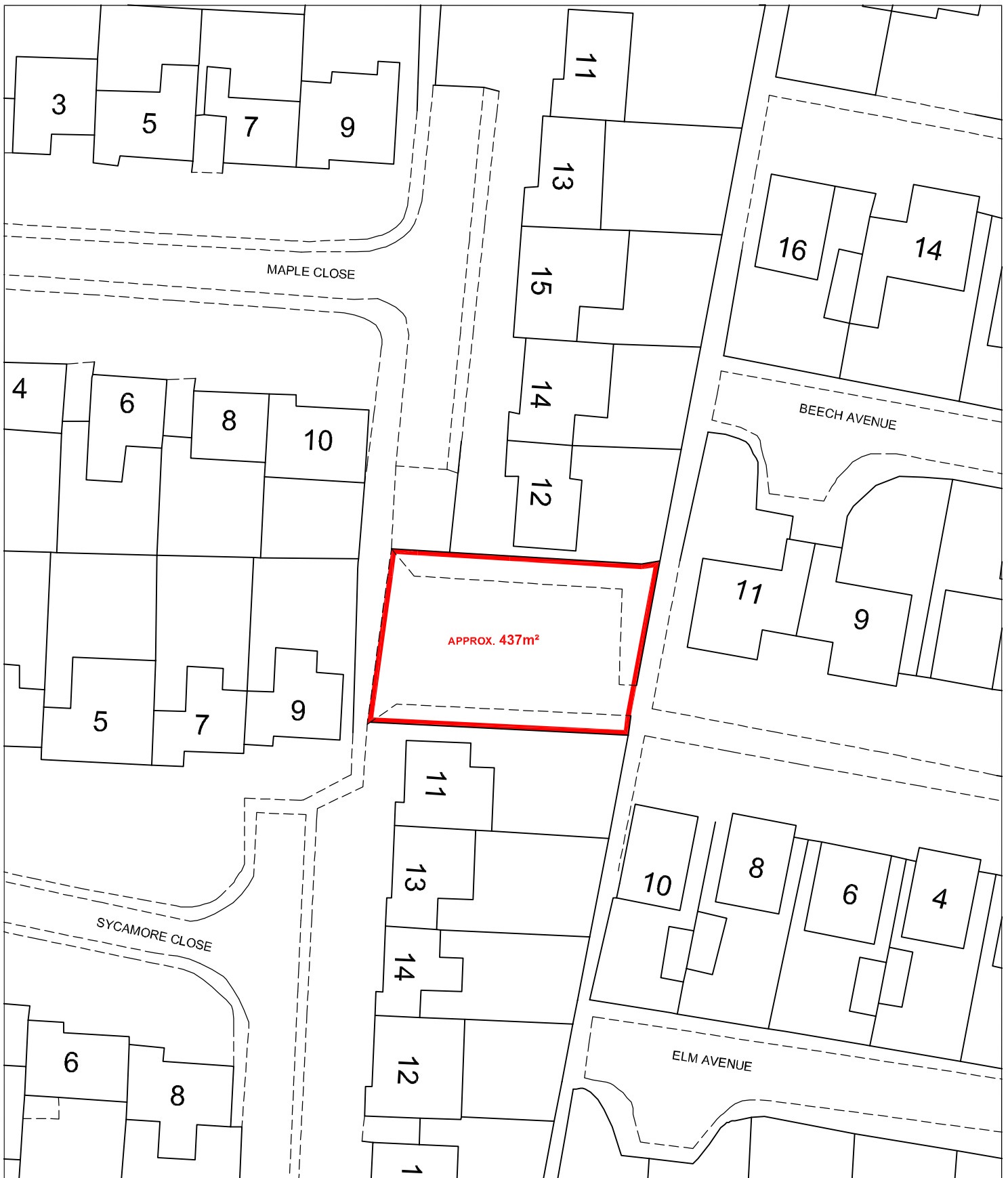
There have been several incidents of ASB at this location. The Head of Environment and Waste Management is supportive of the proposal to dispose of the land for garden use to prevent future incidents of ASB at the location.

Diversity

There are no diversity issues related to this matter.

Background Papers Available for Inspection:

Plan showing plot 5.



Proposed sale of land off Maple Close, Bingham

Date: August 2012



Rushcliffe
Borough Council

Property Services (Estates)
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CABINET

11 SEPTEMBER 2012

**OUTCOME OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER
REVIEW OF GRASS CUTTING ON NEW
WILDFLOWER MEADOWS**

9

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF ENVIRONMENT AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER – COUNCILLOR D J MASON

Summary

This report outlines the outcome of the review undertaken by the Portfolio Holder for the Environment, at the request of Cabinet, into the grass cutting arrangements on a number of prospective wildflower meadows. Following a mixed response by the public the Portfolio Holder has determined that there should be a change of approach on Killerton Park, Knights Close and Saxon Meadow in Compton Acres along with Abbey Park and Swithland Drive in West Bridgford. This mixed approach has resulted in increased and larger expanses of managed grass whilst maintaining smaller wildflower meadows on the most appropriate locations in these areas

Recommendation

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Cabinet endorse the decision taken by the Portfolio Holder for the Environment.

BACKGROUND

1. On 10 January 2012 Cabinet approved the Interim EWM Review report which included the opportunity to manage existing larger grassed areas of open space land in a different manner to improve bio diversity whilst also creating a saving on resources. This idea had been recommended by the EWM Member Group as part of the Four Year Plan process. In addition the decision had also been subsequently incorporated into the budget setting process which was approved by Cabinet on 14 February 2012 and Council on 1 March 2012.
2. By changing the areas from grass to naturalised areas with wildflowers etc it was predicted that there would be resultant saving of £7,800 in reduced staff time and resources used to maintain the sites.
3. Although the impact and risks of the idea were outlined and discussed it became clear once the change in management was implemented that the public reaction was quite mixed during the spring and early summer months. Despite some public support it was evident that some residents in Compton Acres and Abbey Park took issue with the appearance of the areas, the apparent loss of open space for children to play games and that it was more difficult for dog walkers to find and pick up dog faeces in the long grass.

4. In response to these concerns Cabinet made the following resolution on 10 July 2012;
 - i) in light of recent feedback from residents Cabinet requested that:
 - a) the Head of Environment and Waste Management provide the portfolio holder for Environment with a written report detailing the key issues and options regarding the approach to grass areas and wildflower meadows in specific locations within the Borough and
 - b) the portfolio holder for Environment considers this report and determines any necessary action to be taken and reports details of this to a future meeting of Cabinet.

OUTCOME OF THE REVIEW

5. Following receipt and consideration of a report provided by the Head of Environment and Waste Management the Portfolio Holder for the Environment determined that although the current principle of wildflower meadow creation should continue to be supported it was necessary to modify the plan to create a mixed approach on Abbey Park on Buckfast Way, Killerton Park, Knights Close, Saxon Meadow and Swithland Drive.
6. This decision took into account the spectrum of feedback generated during the process and the desire to balance the needs of both local people along with encouraging greater bio diversity particularly in urban areas.
7. The implementation of the mixed approach in July 2012 has now resulted in increased expanses of managed grass areas for the public to enjoy along with the continuing development of smaller wildflower areas in the most appropriate locations at these sites with planned support from local nature and wildlife groups.
8. Table 1 below provides a summary of the current approach now being adopted at each site identified in the original report to Cabinet in January 2012

Table 1 - Area	Approach
Killerton Park, Compton A	Mixed Approach (larger expanse of mown grass and small areas of longer grass and wildflower in appropriate locations)
Saxon Meadow, Compton A	Mixed Approach (larger expanse of mown grass and small areas of longer grass and wildflower in appropriate locations)
Collington Common	Wildflower Meadow (including mown paths and curtilage)
Buckfast Way, Abbey Park	Mixed Approach (larger expanse of mown grass and small areas of longer grass and wildflower in appropriate locations)
Knights Close, Compton A	Mixed Approach (larger expanse of mown grass and small areas of longer grass and wildflower in appropriate locations)

Swithland Drive, WB	Mixed Approach (larger expanse of mown grass and small areas of longer grass and wildflower in appropriate locations)
The Hook, Lady Bay	Wildflower Meadow (including mown paths and curtilage)
Newbold Way, Kinoulton	Wildflower Meadow (including mown paths and curtilage)
Mill Hill, Bingham	Wildflower Meadow (including mown paths and curtilage)
Coach Gap Lane, Langar	Wildflower Meadow (including mown paths and curtilage)

Financial Comments

The impact of this modified approach has resulted in a reduction in the planned annual saving from £7,800 to £1,530 and the 4 year review financial modelling has been amended to reflect this change. In the current year the cost will be contained within overall budgets.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act

Not applicable

Diversity

Not applicable

Background Papers Available for Inspection: Nil