

Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Board held in The Hub, Mareham Road, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6PH on Wednesday, 29th November, 2023 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Craig Leyland (Chairman)

Councillors Tom Ashton, Sarah Devereux, Martin Foster, Richard Fry and William Gray.

Councillor Thomas Kemp and Councillor Fiona M. Martin, M.B.E.. attended the meeting as Observers.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Robert Barlow	- Joint Chief Executive
Adrian Sibley	- Deputy Chief Executive, Programme Delivery and SIRO
Lydia Rusling	- Assistant Director - Economic Growth
Samantha Knowles	- Chief Finance Officer, PSPS Limited
Andy Fisher	- Assistant Director - General Fund Assets
Stuart Horton	- Strategic Housing Manager
Adam Newman-Pring	- Healthy and Accessible Homes (Housing) Lead   Lincolnshire
Ann Good	- Democratic Services Manager
Elaine Speed	- Senior Democratic Services Officer and Civic Officer

**38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Grist, Kirk and Marsh.

**39. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY):**

At this point in the meeting Members were invited to declare any interests, no such declarations were received.

**40. MINUTES:**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**41. ACTION SHEETS:**

The actions were confirmed as complete.

**42. LINCOLNSHIRE DISCRETIONARY HOUSING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY:**

A report was presented to recommend the adoption of the Lincolnshire Discretionary Housing Financial Assistance Policy. The Discretionary Housing Financial Assistance (DHFA) policy (the Policy) (Appendix A) had been developed by all seven Lincolnshire district councils working collaboratively with Lincolnshire County Council, to:

- create a level of consistency across the county and maximise the contribution that DFG / BCF can make;
- enable vulnerable people to live independently in a home of their own; and
- reduce the need for more expensive health and social care service interventions.

District councils had in many cases already adopted discretionary policies under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (the "RRO") using Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) / Better Care Funding (BCF) from the Government to support works above the mandatory DFG limit of £30,000. These policies allowed home repairs, improvements and other forms of assistance to be funded to assist eligible vulnerable clients where necessary and appropriate. However, this had led to a postcode lottery for Lincolnshire residents with financial support available for different things, with different eligibility criteria in different areas.

The Policy and accompanying Explanatory Notes (Appendix B) had been recommended by the Lincolnshire Housing, Health and Care Delivery Group to all district councils for adoption as part of the overall vision of the Lincolnshire Homes for Independence blueprint for people to live independently, stay connected and have greater choice in where and how they lived.

During discussion Members supported the detailed recommendations contained within the report as highlighted by the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Better Ageing. The preparation work undertaken by Officers was also acknowledged.

#### RESOLVED

- 1) That the Policy and Explanatory Notes attached at Appendices A and B be approved for adoption with effect from 01/04/2024;
- 2) That authority be delegated to:
  - a. the relevant Assistant Director to make minor and inconsequential variations to the Policy in consultation Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Housing, if agreed on a countywide basis. This delegation will not be used to make changes to the Policy that substantively change the purpose of the Policy;
  - b. the relevant Assistant Director to:
    - i. make amendments to the local variations detailed within the Explanatory Notes in consultation with the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Housing. This delegation will not be used to make

- amendments to the Explanatory Notes that impact other districts, unless agreed on a countywide basis and
- ii. remove and update any superseded policy provisions relating to discretionary housing assistance contained within the relevant existing council policy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Housing;
  - c. the Chief Executive Officer to suspend the awarding of new discretionary assistance under this policy in consultation with the relevant Assistant Director and Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Housing;
- 3) That, in addition to the minor and inconsequential variations permitted within the Policy, authority be delegated to:
    - a. the relevant Assistant Director to make initial amendments to the Policy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Housing; to enable any appropriate recommendations from other Lincolnshire district councils' scrutiny of the Policy to be considered and incorporated, if agreed on a countywide basis;
  - 4) That approval be given for the ELDC delegations to officers as set in the Explanatory Notes.

Reasons:

To allow a more consistent approach across Lincolnshire to be taken in relation to discretionary housing financial assistance in order to assist vulnerable households in need to live in a safe home. This will significantly help organisations that work on a countywide basis (e.g. Health and Lincolnshire County Council occupational therapy services) to have a clearer picture of the assistance districts are able to offer.

To allow for the relevant provisions relating to discretionary housing assistance contained within the council's existing policy to be updated as superseded on adoption of the Policy, and to avoid duplicate policy provisions being in operation (Appendix C).

To allow for appropriate amendment of the Policy, if necessary, as Lincolnshire district councils have differing approaches to policy adoption and differing timelines.

Other options:

To continue to operate three independent discretionary housing assistance policies across the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership and up to seven different policies across the county, with significant variation in the assistance available and processes for awarding discretionary housing financial assistance.

**43. 2023/24 QUARTER TWO FINANCE UPDATE:**

A report was presented to summarise the current financial position for the Council at the end of the second quarter of 2023/24 forecasting to the year end.

During his introduction of the report the Portfolio Holder for Finance referred to:

- General Fund Provisional Outturn - Quarter 2 data provided a 6-month view on which to base the full year forecast in what was a volatile and inflationary environment; these figures were therefore susceptible to further change. The full year outturn based on current projections and assumptions was a forecast net service surplus of £861,000.

The major variances related to a reduction in car parking income, housing benefit and council tax related budget changes, increases in agency costs which had been off-set by increased investment income and additional garden waste income. The forecast position by Assistant Director and Corporate Areas was detailed at Table 1 together with an analysis of variations.

- Savings Target - When setting the budget certain assumptions had to be made around inflation pressures particularly pay, fuel, power and support for IDB costs. As a result of this approach when the budgets were not required e.g. as budgets became more accurate, these were being offset again the savings target and this information was detailed in Appendix A – Table 2 of the report. The current position was £1,305,000 of potential savings had been identified at quarter 2 against a target of £1,608,000 and further areas had been identified for detailed consideration.
- IDB's - The financial pressure generated by the Internal Drainage Boards had been supported by government for 2023/24 in the sum off £927,000 in respect of which the council was very grateful. However, the issue and challenge of a longer-term solution to this problem had been raised again with government officials at DLUC and BEIS in order to seek a resolution that enabled the Council to make use of the Council Tax it raised for the purpose set. A Special Interest Group had now been established and more activity was underway to support this lobbying effort.
- Reserves - General Fund Specific Reserves had seen a reduction in balances of £1,439K. Further specific details were set out in Appendix A – Table 3 with associated narrative and members are requested to note the use of reserves detailed in that section.

The General Fund Reserve Balance remained at £1.822m.

- Capital – General Fund - The total revised General Fund Capital programme for 2023/24 was £69.812m as detailed in Table 4 of Appendix A. It included an updated budget carry forward due to slippage on the GF Capital Programme of £0.087m, in addition to an adjustment to the UKSPF budget which was required and which was recommended for onward approval by Full Council.

- Treasury Management - Section 2.4 provided details of the Council's Investments held on 30 September 2023.

The original profiled net budget for investment income as at Q2 was £1.536m and actual investment income was estimated to be £2.399m. This was an increase in income above budget of £863k.

The original profiled net budget for investment income for 2023/24 was £3.071m and the forecast outturn was estimated to be £4.863m. This estimated outturn was an increase in income above budget of £1.792m.

The higher levels of investment income compared to the original budget were due to increased balances available for investment resulting from additional grant money being received and recent rises in interest rates on new investments.

The Council had external loans held with Public Works Loans Board totalling £20m at an average fixed rate of 2.465%. Borrowing costs on this external borrowing were budgeted to be £493K for 2023/24.

On 9 October 2023 the Council prematurely repaid the £20m of external borrowing to the Public Works Loan Board (see Appendix B for further information). As this transaction falls into Quarter 3, the financial implications of this decision will be reflected in the Quarter 3 Finance Report.

During discussion the Chairman of Executive Board paid credit to the Officers and Portfolio Holder for Finance.

#### RESOLVED

1. That the current forecast unbudgeted surplus of £861,000 and the detail set out in Appendix A be noted;
2. That Full Council be recommended to amend the Capital Programme to take into account the changes set out in Table 4;
3. That the delegated decision of the S151 Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance on 5 October 2023 to prematurely repay the £20m of PWLB borrowing as per the Audit and Governance report attached at Appendix B be noted.

#### Reasons:

To ensure the Council's forecast financial position for 2023/24 is considered and related decisions approved. It is important that the Executive are aware of the financial position of the General Fund to ensure that they can make informed decisions that are affordable and financially sustainable for the Council.

Other options:

To not approve the financial movements outlined.

**44. PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK - QUARTER 2 MONITORING REPORT 2023/24:**

A report was presented that brought together information relating to the Council's Performance and Governance Framework at the end of Quarter 2 2023/24 (as at September 2023).

During discussion the Portfolio Holder for Planning referred to the positive trend in planning indicators referenced on pages 205-6 of the Agenda.

RESOLVED

1. That the Performance and Governance Framework Quarter 2 Monitoring Report be noted;
2. That the Risk Management Framework at Appendix C be recommended to Council for approval, with delegation to the Assistant Director – Governance to make any small amendments to the Framework in future in consultation with the portfolio holder.

Reasons:

To monitor delivery of performance and governance objectives and to support future planning and decision making within the Council.

Other options:

Alternative reporting arrangements.

**45. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION REGULATIONS POLICY:**

A report was presented that enabled consideration of a draft updated FOI /EIR policy for the Council.

RESOLVED

That the draft Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations Policy be approved.

Reasons:

To ensure the Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to FOI and EIR.

Other options:

None.

**46. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

The programmed date for the next meeting was noted as 10th January 2024.

**47. EXEMPT INFORMATION:**

RESOLVED

That under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that, if they were present, there could be disclosed to them exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended).

**48. HORNCastle INDUSTRIAL ESTATE:**

An Exempt Report was presented for consideration.

RESOLVED

That the recommendation contained within the confidential report be approved.

Reason:

As contained within the Exempt Report.

Other options:

As contained within the Exempt Report.

The meeting closed at 6.25 pm.