

Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held at the Town Hall, Lowestoft on **Wednesday 15 July 2015 at 5.30pm**

Members present

Councillors C Law (Chairman), S Allen, S Ardley, M Barnard, M Ladd, F Mortimer, D Ritchie and M Rudd

Also in attendance

Councillors S Barker, J Craig, T Gandy, L Gooch, I Graham, J Murray and S Woods

Officers present

A Charvonia (Strategic Director), D Gallagher (Head of Commercial & Leisure Partnerships), A Jarvis (Strategic Director), H Javadi (Chief Finance Officer), S Jones (Project Manager – Area Action Plan), P Wood (Head of Economic Development & Regeneration) and N Wotton (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

Others in attendance

M Emms (Managing Director, Waveney Norse)

1 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor L Smith.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 24 June 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 ISSUES ARISING FROM THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE OR THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

(a) Overview and Scrutiny Committee

There were no matters to report.

(b) Audit and Governance Committee

There were no matters to report.

5 FINANCIAL YEAR OUTTURN REPORT FOR 2014/15

The Cabinet Member for Resources & Welfare Reforms presented a report which gave an overview of the Council's Draft Financial Year Outturn for 2014/15. It was noted that the Council's accounts for the year ending 31 March 2015 had been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2014/15 (The Code) issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

Members were advised that the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011 no longer required the Council to approve the Statement of Accounts before they were submitted for audit. However, the Council's Chief Financial Officer must sign the Accounts by no later than 30 June following the end of the financial year, certifying that they 'present a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2015 and of its income and expenditure for the year ending on that date.'

The following key points were raised:

- The Council's underlying financial position was sound and better than forecast in the revised budget. The Council, through careful and effective cost control, delivered most of the savings and additional income in 2014/15 to meet spending pressures and reductions in grant funding, and improve its balances.
- The Council maintained overall spend within the revenue budget and had been able to make a substantial transfer to the Business Rates Retention Reserve.
- After allowing for in year transactions, the General Fund non-earmarked reserve would remain at a prudent level of 2.5% - 3% of the gross turnover.
- Capital investment during the year was £13.187 million, including £8.710 million for the General Fund and £4.477 million for the Housing Revenue Account.
- The Housing Revenue Account had ended the year with a surplus of £1.623 million which was £1.574 million more than the revised estimate of £49,000.

Those present were reminded that the Audited Statement of Accounts would be submitted to Full Council on 23 September 2015 if the accounts were qualified. If the accounts were unqualified, they would only be considered by the Audit & Governance Committee on 17 September 2015.

Members commended the Chief Finance Officer and her Finance Team for their ongoing work to support the finances of the Council. It was noted that there were still many unknown factors which made it difficult to plan a future balanced budget, including matters such as Council Tax and the New Homes Bonus. Therefore the budget setting process would commence earlier than usual, to ensure that the Council was in the best possible financial position for the future.

A Member commented that Waveney had been particularly affected by the reduction in the Local Government Finance Settlement, that had seen the Council's Spending Power reduced by over 6.3% between 2014/15 and 2015/16, which was only 0.1% less than the maximum level of reduction permitted. It was reported that Waveney had been in a very difficult position several years ago and as a result had been in receipt of additional funding and support, in order to improve. That level of additional support could not continue indefinitely and had to be reduced, which gave the appearance of a severe reduction in the Local Government Finance Settlement.

Members were reassured that the Finance Team were constantly monitoring the financial and economic climate. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy had been developed to ensure that the Council was prepared for any future developments, such as an increase in interest rates. The Council was moving towards becoming more self reliant, working with different partners such as the NHS and other Councils and becoming less dependent on the Revenue Support Grant. This would enable the Council to protect key services and meet its key priorities for the future.

RESOLVED

1. That the details of the draft outturn position, together with Reserves and Balances as at 31 March 2015 be noted.

2. That the audited Statement of Accounts be submitted to the Audit & Governance Committee for approval on 17 September 2015.

6 EAST OF ENGLAND PARK

The Cabinet Member for Tourism, Economic Development & Rural Affairs presented the report, which considered the progress and next steps for the East of England Park, known locally as North Denes. It was reported that the area was of strategic importance to the town and was included as a regeneration priority in the Lowestoft Lake Lothing and Outer Harbour Area Action Plan (AAP).

The AAP had identified the potential to create a new contemporary park and open space on the site, which was currently a neglected and underutilised piece of land next to a visually unappealing concrete sea wall. The site also included the seafront walkway (promenade) and the most easterly point in Britain, Lowestoft Ness, which adjoins the 'Power Park' regeneration area, also identified in the AAP.

It was noted that during 2014, a number of consultation events took place to collate the priorities of both local and business communities, Ward Councillors and young people for the area, to help shape the preferred option for the site. The vision for a fully developed park was:

- To create a vibrant, creative, contemporary park and interactive community space that expresses the exciting heritage and maritime history of the area.
- To create a location where people can celebrate the past, experience the history and protect it for future generations to enjoy.
- For Lowestoft to have a 'jewel in its crown' at Lowestoft Ness, which its community, tourists and visitors can be proud of.
- An innovative landmark sculpture, which recognised the special location at the most easterly point in Britain.
- To deliver a historic, cultural and diverse open space for people to experience and enjoy.

Having scoped the project, the Area Action Plan and Funding Teams had begun to identify potential funding sources and had submitted a 'Project Enquiry Form' which had enabled a dialogue with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Subject to a successful funding bid, the project would enter a twelve month Development (First) Phase. This would see all studies and plans for the site commissioned including biodiversity, services and utilities, access, a detailed activity plan, an education plan, conservation management plan and design plan (masterplan). At the end of the First Phase, there would be detailed plans for the capital works, the interpretation, detailed costs and cash flow for deliver, including the resources required, and updated risk assessments.

It was reported that in order for the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) application to proceed, a 'lead partner' was required. Waveney District Council had been the lead partner to date, as well as the land owner of the site, and had the capacity, commitment and knowledge to take the project forward.

Members were advised that applying for HLF Grant comprised a two stage application process:

- If successful in achieving a First Round pass, the HLF provide a development grant to work up the project to RIBA Works Stage 3 and to complete a Second Round application. The HLF will require a match funding contribution from other sources (described as 'partnership funding') of at least 5% of the development costs. In the event that a second round application is not successful the development grant is non returnable.
- If successful in the Second Round the HLF would provide a development and delivery grant. This required a minimum of 5% match funding towards the project delivery

costs, however a higher contribution would be looked at more favourably and the Funding Team had recommended a 10 - 20% contribution. Partnership funding did not need to be secured for the second round application, but needed to be secured before the start date of the project. However, in order to minimise risk, it would be the work of the Funding Team to have all secured partnership funding in place before a second round application is ready to be submitted to HLF.

Members commended the work undertaken so far and were pleased that plans were being developed for a neglected area to be brought back in to use in the future. Reassurance was provided that the plans for the East of England Park were not made in isolation and would link in with ongoing plans to develop other nearby areas such as the Scores and the Power Park.

In response to a query about accommodating a major Arts Centre on the site, it was confirmed that this would not fit in with the sympathetic regeneration of the area, as the main focus would be upon fishing and maritime history.

A Member queried whether the Mayor of Lowestoft had been consulted with regards to Arnolds Bequest and it was confirmed that there had been no consultation at this time.

RESOLVED

That Waveney District Council, acting as the Lead Partner, supports the East of England Park project development and submission of a First Round HLF Bid.

7 EXEMPT / CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

RESOLVED

That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

8 SUFFOLK WASTE PARTNERSHIP PROGRESS REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships & Lowestoft Rising presented the report which advised Members of the proposed collaborative procurement to secure the arrangements for the processing of municipal garden waste, the anticipated reductions in the level of Recycling Performance Payments from Suffolk County Council and the future of garden waste collections.

RESOLVED

1. That the Council participates in a collaborative procurement to secure arrangements for the processing of municipal garden waste in Suffolk or directly to Waveney District Council after March 2016.
2. That the cessation of the collection of food waste co-mingled with garden waste be approved.
3. That the introduction of a chargeable service for garden waste collections be approved and that a starting charge of £42.00 per year be agreed.
4. That authority to conclude agreement with Suffolk County Council on issues such as transition costs and the sharing of whole system savings, be delegated to the Strategic Director and Head of Commercial & Leisure Partnerships, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships & Lowestoft Rising.

9 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The meeting concluded at 6.30 pm.

Chairman