



CABINET

5.30pm to 7.05pm

15 February 2012

Present: Councillors Waters (vice chair in the chair), Bremner, Brociek-Coulton, Gihawi and MacDonald

Also present: Councillors Stephenson and Lubbock

Apologies Councillors Arthur and Westmacott

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2012 and the minutes of the extraordinary cabinet meetings on 11 January 2012 and 25 January 2012.

2. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING

Councillor Waters, deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for resources, introduced the report.

RESOLVED to note the financial position on the revenue account for the period April 2011 to November 2011.

3. CORPORATE PLAN 2012 - 2015

Councillor Waters, deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for resources, introduced the report and explained that scrutiny committee had discussed the corporate plan extensively at its meeting on 9 February 2012.

Councillor Stephenson, chair of scrutiny committee, said that the committee had discussed a number of issues which had not gained a majority vote and were not included in the recommendations to cabinet and pointed out that some members considered that there had not been sufficient consultation on the preparation of the plan. The head of strategy and programme management said that members of the cabinet and scrutiny committee had considered elements of the corporate plan at meetings at various meetings over the last year. Councillor Waters said that the plan was a description of what the council does and that the contents of the plan had

been delivered to councillors at presentations which had been well attended but not all councillors had been there.

The chief executive officer and the head of strategy and programme management recognised the good work done by teams to deliver services but said that target setting needed to include base line information and take other factors into account and that it would be very unwise to set unrealistic targets but that targets could be reviewed and raised if appropriate.

The cabinet considered the recommendations from the scrutiny committee meeting held on 9 February 2012 and considered that the point at the item at (1) i (b) below was already partially included within the corporate plan and as long as there was not a requirement to reference every minor item back to source this would be included in the plan.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) Accept the following recommendations from scrutiny committee
 - (a) amend the corporate plan to:
 - (i) include abbreviations and electronic footnotes to improve accessibility
 - (ii) include electronic links to the outcomes of the previous corporate plan
 - (iii) include the less than '<' symbol in front of relevant aspirational targets
 - (b) note concerns that the proposed reduction of overall customer contact opening hours, as part of the future savings work, could potentially increase the backlog of the housing benefit claims and that customers considered deprived or with complex needs could be adversely affected
- (2) recommend the new corporate plan 2012-2015 as amended to council for approval as the council's overarching policy framework.

4. FURTHER WORK SAVINGS FOR 2012-13

Councillor Waters, deputy leader and cabinet member for resources, introduced the report and referred to the annexes which were exempt from publication.

RESOLVED to agree the specific savings for 2012-13 at annex A following the further work that has been carried out.

5. GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET

The finance control manager reported that a claim for a VAT rebate from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) had recently been awarded and that the council was due to receive a net £1.1m. HMRC might still challenge the decision and have two years to appeal. The chief finance officer has therefore advised that the amount be held in reserves for two years and then be released to the general fund to reduce further savings requirements over the following two years.

Councillor Waters explained that the amount of reserves for the 2012-13 financial year would rise from £4.42m stated in the report to £5.52m.

Councillor Waters said that two proposals had been considered for the level of council tax required for the coming year. Originally a zero percent increase had been one option and an increase of three and a half percent had been subsequently reduced to 3 and one third percent. This change had been made to take account of the reduced precept set by the Mousehold Heath Conservators which could take the aggregate level of increase above the threshold requiring a referendum.

Councillor Waters suggested that cabinet's recommendation to council was for a 0% council tax increase even though these were difficult times. The government would provide a grant of 2.5% to councils that had frozen council tax this year. The £1.1m rebate from HMRC this year, would contribute to council tax levels being frozen.

Councillor Stephenson asked cabinet to carefully consider not increasing council tax as at the end of the four year grant awarded by the government last year there would be no change to the base which would result in a loss in future years. She also questioned that rents were to increase whilst council tax would not and she did not believe this was the right message.

RESOLVED to recommend to council for the 2012-13 financial year:

- (1) that the prudent level of reserves for the council be set at £5.52 million in accordance with the recommendation of the Head of Finance;
- (2) that the council's Council Tax Requirement to be set at £9,282,105;
- (3) that Council Tax should be set at £225.87 for Band D, which is an increase of 0%;
- (4) that the precept on the collection fund for 2012-13 be calculated in accordance with Sections 32-36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Localism Act 2011 as per the statutory determination at Annex 3.

6. NON-HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Councillor Waters, deputy leader and cabinet member for resources, introduced the report.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) recommend to council to:
 - (a) approve the Non-housing capital programme 2012/13, as set out in table 1 of the report;
 - (b) delegate to the capital programme board the authority to agree the asset maintenance programme and the final scheme details, including any adjustment to the financial allocations, of the section 106 works provided that this investment is contained within the total budgetary provision shown in Table 1
- (2) to approve the use of £0.181m section 106 income for investment in transport and play and open space schemes as detailed in appendix A.

7. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT SELF-FINANCING

Councillor Macdonald, cabinet member for housing, introduced the report and thanked officers for the work they had done and tenants for their contribution in preparation for housing revenue account (HRA) self financing.

Councillor Stephenson asked when homes were upgraded if they would be left in a position where renewable options could be easily added in future. The director of regeneration and development explained that renewable energy solutions would be included where possible but otherwise homes would be finished so that they could be upgraded as and when it became possible.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) base the HRA Capital Programme on the "Whole Home Upgrade (Norwich Offer)" standard;
- (2) note the impact of HRA Self-Financing on the HRA Business Plan;
- (3) note that a report on future governance arrangements will be presented to the 12 March Cabinet.
- (4) recommend to council:
 - (a) that the head of finance be authorised to make the arrangements necessary for the additional borrowing;
 - (b) that the operational boundary and authorised limit for external debt in the Treasury Management Strategy 2011-12 be amended as shown in Appendix 2 of the report.

8. COUNCIL RENTS AND SERVICE CHARGES FOR 2012/13

Councillor Madconald, cabinet member, for housing introduced the report and explained that tenants had been consulted on the three options for rent increases. The options had been presented to members of the Norwich Tenants' CityWide Board and the housing improvement board and thoroughly considered. The preferred option from tenants was the increase of 6.85%.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) maintain garage rent at current levels;
- (2) maintain service charges for district heating, premises management, communal window cleaning and sheltered housing bulk metered water at current levels pending further consultation and review in 2012;
- (3) increase service charges for the gardening service to £4.30 per week and 'one-off' garden clearances to £20;
- (4) increase service charges for communal television aerials by 3.00% to £0.67 per week in line with the uplift in cost;
- (5) set sheltered housing support charges at £6.24 per week and sheltered housing service and laundry facility charges at the levels detailed in appendix 1, pending further consultation and review during 2012;
- (6) to recommend to council the implementation of an average rent increase of 6.85%, being an average of £4.60 per week

9. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2012-13

Councillor Macdonald, cabinet member for housing, introduced the report.

RESOLVED to recommend to council:

- (1) the Housing Revenue Account budgets for 2012-13, as shown in Table 1 as amended by the impact of the proposed rent increase as set out in paragraph 23 of the report;
- (2) the minimum level of HRA Balances as £2.9m as advised by the chief financial officer and shown in Appendix 2.

10. HOUSING CAPITAL PLAN AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2012-13

Councillor Macdonald cabinet member for housing introduced the report.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) to recommend to council:
 - (a) recommend to council the Housing Capital Plan 2012-2017
 - (b) recommend to council the Housing Capital Programme 2012/13;
- (2) to approve the Capital Allowance set out for 2012/13 and the extinguishing of previous years' Capital Allowances as set out in Appendix 1.

11. HOMES AND COMMUNITIES AGENCY (HCA) – ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Councillor Waters, deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for resources, introduced the revised report that was distributed at the meeting.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) approve the use of up to £525,000 additional funding to be made available from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) for a range of projects to meet the objectives of the Norwich and HCA Strategic Partnership;
- (2) delegate the detailed expenditure and management of this funding to the Council's Capital Programme Board.

12. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ORDER ON REPLACEMENT WINDOWS AND DOORS IN FLATS

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for planning and transport, introduced the report.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) endorse the principle of preparing a Local Development Order to allow windows and doors in flat to be replaced in flats without the need for planning permission (subject to conditions and exclusions); and
- (2) approve the publication of the draft Local Development Order and the Statement of Reasons for public consultation (attached as appendices 2 and 3).

13. BOWTHORPE THREEScore – APPROPRIATION OF LAND

Councillor Waters, deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for resources, introduced the report.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) advertise the proposed appropriation of the Threescore site under Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972, for purposes within Part 1X of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- (2) delegate to the director of regeneration and development the final decision about the appropriation of land following consideration of any representations made in response to the advertisement.

14.AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR HOUSING ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

Councillor Macdonald, cabinet member for housing, introduced the report.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) approve the commitment to spend £5.7 million from the Housing Revenue Account over the 6 year term of the contract for the Housing Electrical & Mechanical Maintenance & Repair contract;
- (2) delegate to the Director of regeneration and development, in consultation with portfolio holders, authority to award the contracts subject to a satisfactory evaluation process and the successful tender prices being within the investment plan forecasts.

15.AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR NORWICH ROUGH SLEEPER OUTREACH SERVICE

Councillor Macdonald, cabinet member for housing, introduced the report.

RESOLVED to award the contract for the Norwich rough sleeper outreach service to St Martins Housing Trust (SMHT) for a three year period commencing April 2012 at a cost of £292,125

16.EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of items 17-19 below on the grounds contained in the relevant paragraphs of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

***17FURTHER WORK SAVINGS (PARA 3)**

There was further discussion on aspects of the proposals contained in annexes A and B to the report at item 4 and the resolution was confirmed.

***18. GOLDSMITH STREET REDEVELOPMENT (PARA 3)**

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for planning and transport, introduced the report.

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) approve the disposal of the site at Goldsmith Street to Orbit Housing Association for redevelopment for a mixed tenure scheme based on the terms and conditions outlined in the report; and
- (2) delegate to the director of regeneration and development, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder, authority to deal with all matters incidental to these transactions to enable the development to proceed.

***19 REDUNDANCY COSTS (PARAS 1 AND 3)**

(The report was circulated at the meeting and it was agreed that it should be considered as an urgent item.)

Councillor Waters, deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for resources, introduced the report

RESOLVED to approve the payments relating to the redundancy of the named employees

CHAIR