

FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

20 MARCH 2017

Present: Councillor P D Simpson, Chair

Councillors: S A Bagshaw
T P Brindley
S J Carr
E Cubley
S Easom
R I Jackson
P Lally
G Marshall
P J Owen
A W G A Stockwell

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D A Elliott and M Radulovic MBE.

76. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor T P Brindley declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4, as he is the Honorary Secretary of the Chilwell Community Centre, minute no. 78 refers. Councillor R I Jackson declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4, having given grant aid to the Chilwell Community Association, minute no. 78 refers.

77. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2017 were confirmed and signed.

78. **GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS, CHARITABLE BODIES AND INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN SPORTS, THE ARTS AND DISABILITY MATTERS 2016/17**

The Committee considered requests for grant aid in accordance with the provisions of the Council's Grant Aid Policy and noted the grants awarded under delegated authority.

In respect of Eastwood Tennis Club, members noted that a grant awarded by the Council in 2015/16 in the sum of £960 had not been used for its prescribed purpose and had been diverted, without Council approval, to an alternative use. Members therefore requested that any further grant awarded

would only be paid after the receipt of documentation confirming that the objective of the grant had been met. The Deputy Chief Executive stated that he would ensure that an appropriate mechanism would be put in place.

RESOLVED that the applications be dealt with as follows:

| <u>Applicant</u> | <u>App'n Ref</u> | <u>Grant Award 2015/16 £</u> | <u>Grant Request 2016/17 £</u> |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Age Concern Eastwood | 1 | 9,000 | 9,000* |
| Chilwell Community Association | 2 | 3,150 | 3,150* |
| Stapleford Community Association | 3 | 3,000 | 3,000* |
| Eastwood People's Initiative | 4 | No application | 2,500* |
| Beeston Shopmobility | 5 | 9,650 | 9,650* |
| Eastwood Lawn Tennis Club | 6 | 960 | 728 |
| Broxtowe Play Forum | 7 | 5,500 | 5,500* |
| DIG-IN Community Allotment | 8 | 337 | 515 |
| Greasley Gathering | 9 | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| Peter Hodgkinson | 10 | 200 | 200 |
| Laura Kennedy | 11 | No application | 100 |
| George Spencer | 12 | No application | 200 |
| | | Total | 35,543* |

79. **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF BUSINESS PLAN
PROGRESS – SUPPORT SERVICE AREAS**

The Committee considered information on progress against outcome targets identified in the Business Plans for support services areas.

Members expressed concern at current sickness absence levels and queried the mechanisms in place for attendance management purposes. The Chief Executive responded that the latest absence figures available pursuant to publication of the agenda indicated that the figure to the end of February 2017 was 9.5 days; a reduction from the 10.1 days indicated in the report. The Council's attendance management policies required managers to take action in relation to long term sickness absence with assistance from the HR team. Attendance management policies and procedures are compared with those of other authorities and more detailed analysis of trends would be brought back to Committee for further consideration.

Members were concerned at the apparent lack of progress with the tram compensation claim and the likelihood that the target may slip further back. The Committee requested receipt of more detailed information on a regular basis.

The restructure of the Council Offices reception arrangements and possible residual costs associated in light of the DWP's withdrawal of its intention to occupy the building was queried. Officers stated that costs had been incurred in relocating staff to create space intended for the DWP to occupy. The office space could now be let out to alternative users. It was noted that the decision regarding DWP had been taken at a national rather than a local level and was disappointing in terms of the lost opportunity to provide an integrated local hub, particularly with the pending introduction of Universal Credit.

The target of June 2018 for transfer of the Land Charges function to the Land Registry was queried. Officers responded that there had been a delay in notification of which authorities would be in the first tranche and therefore the only information available was that the transfer would take place between now and 2023.

A member suggested that the merits of pursuing the exploration of commercial opportunities for the provision of health and safety support to parish councils should be reconsidered since some parish councils had their own external providers for that purpose.

The reduction of the sundry debtors backlog was queried and concern was expressed at the focus on write-offs at the expense of continuing to chase the debts. Officers outlined the process for recovering outstanding debts and stated that more detailed figures would be made available to members. A significant backlog of sundry debt had accrued over a number of years with little likelihood of being paid which had had to be addressed. Resources would be focused on ensuring the pursuing of debts which were more likely to yield positive recovery. The Leader reiterated that debts written off would be reinstated if the Council became aware of significant changes associated with the debtors.

Members requested an updated figure on the effect on employee turnover following the transfer of employees to Liberty Leisure. The Chief Executive would circulate the information to members.

Members queried the reasons for one in ten complaints not being responded to within three working days. It was stated that this was due to the dedicated complaints officer having left the authority in the summer of 2016 and not having been replaced. The Democratic Services section had been restructured and the performance level should now improve .

A query was raised regarding the statistics for Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments recovered as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment and how these related to the accompanying note . Officers would circulate an update to members.

80. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2016/17 UPDATE

Members received an update on capital expenditure incurred in 2016/17 up to 28 February 2017 along with the planned financing of the 2016/17 capital programme. Approval was sought for a number of capital budget variations in the current financial year.

Officers stated that the Council was on target to spend a minimum of 90% of the 2016/17 programme by 31 March 2017. Requests for any carry forward of unspent 2016/17 budget would be brought before the Committee on 13 July 2017

RESOLVED that the capital budget variations for 2016/17 set out in appendix 3 to the report be approved.

81. BUSINESS RATES REVALUATION 2017

The Committee considered the proposed changes in respect of Business Rates with effect from April 2017 and the impact that this would have on rate payers and the Council.

Members noted that the proposals were unlikely to have a significant impact for Broxtowe. The purchase of the forecasting toolkit had proved an invaluable asset in conducting an analysis of the data contained within the report.

82. APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM HOUSING INCOME MANAGER AND INTERIM HOUSING MANAGER

Members were advised of additional estimates required for an interim Housing Income Manager to manage the delivery and transition of rent recovery procedures and an interim Housing Manager to progress actions in the Housing Strategy. It was noted that, if approved, a significant element of the costs would be charged to the Housing Revenue Account.

Councillor G Marshall proposed a recorded vote which was seconded by Councillor S A Bagshaw. The voting was as follows:

| <u>For</u> | <u>Against</u> | <u>Abstention</u> |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| T P Brindley | S A Bagshaw | S J Carr |
| E Cubley | G Marshall | P Lally |
| S Easom | | |
| R I Jackson | | |
| P J Owen | | |
| P D Simpson | | |
| A W G A Stockwell | | |

RESOLVED that:

- 1. The extension of the contract for the interim Housing Income Manager be approved.**
- 2. The appointment of an interim Housing Manager for a period of three months be approved.**

83. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered items for inclusion in its future Work Programme and proposed that sickness absence levels be included within the Work Programme in light of its discussions on working days lost due to sickness at minute no. 79.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme be approved, subject to the inclusion of sickness absence levels.

84. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public and press 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 paragraphs 3, 5, 7 and 12 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

85. CONTRACT FOR THE SUPPLY OF PRINTED ELECTION STATIONERY

In accordance with S100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed that the above-named item could be considered as a matter of urgency in order that it could be resolved within the necessary timescale.

RESOLVED that the contract awards in respect of Lot 1 and Lot 2 for the Supply of Printed Election Stationery be awarded to Print Image Network Limited.

86. IRRECOVERABLE ARREARS

Members queried the circumstances behind a number of the proposed write offs, particularly where there was an error by the Council. Officers stated that the financial impact of any write off of Council bad debt would be shared with other precepting bodies.

RESOLVED that the arrears in excess of £1,200 on national non-domestic rates, council tax, rents, housing/council tax benefit overpayment and sundry debtors as set out in the report be written off

and the exercise of the Deputy Chief Executive's delegated authority under financial regulation 5.9 be noted.

**87. BRAMCOTE LEISURE CENTRE HEALTH SUITE –
BUDGET AND AWARD OF CONTRACTS**

RESOLVED that a revised budget of £210,000 be approved and that Ackroyd be appointed as main works contractor, and to note that tenders are being invited for the supply and installation of the equipment