

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE (SPECIAL)

6th January 2011

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Lemmon (Chairman), Councillor Hewlett (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Grant, Harrison, Mrs. Hood, Murray, Roberts and Wheeler (substitute for Councillor Mrs. Brown).

Labour Group

Councillors Mrs. Gillespie, Mrs. Lane, Rhind, Richards and Shepherd.

In attendance

Councillor Atkin (Conservative Group).

APOLOGY

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Mrs. Brown (Conservative Group).

HCS/45. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Hewlett, Mrs. Lane, Richards and Shepherd declared a prejudicial interest in Minute No. HCS/47, Service Base Budgets 2011/2012, due to their involvement with voluntary bodies. Councillors Lemmon and Roberts declared a personal interest in Minute No. HCS/47, Service Base Budgets 2011/2012, as Members of Etwall Joint Management Committee. Councillor Hewlett declared a prejudicial interest in Minute No. HCS/49, Land at Melbourne, as he was an acquaintance of persons named in the report.

HCS/46. **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 11**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 11, Councillor Richards asked the following question:-

“Given the report published in today’s Burton Mail, that Bretby Conference Centre will close at the weekend and that approximately 50 people will lose their jobs, I hope that the Chairman and Committee agree with me that this decision is not only a tragedy for the present employees and their families, but also a devastating blow to the district’s community service and economic development, given its importance in relation to tourism, conferences and much needed hotel facilities.

This is a venue that has hosted many successful and enjoyable events, be it private or commercial functions, as well of course, our very own successful annual “Liberation Day”.

Can I ask if those responsible for making this decision made any contact with the Council, for any advice and support that could have averted the demise of an excellent facility within the District?"

The Chief Executive responded that this was very sad news, particularly as unemployment in the District was currently falling. He was, however, aware of potential interest in the business premises from a third party.

Councillor Richards asked a supplementary question, asking if the Chief Executive was aware of a planning application at this site relating to offices, being submitted to the District Council.

The Chief Executive responded that the owners were attempting to maximise their opportunities, and understood there might be a future planning application to convert the site into offices.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

HCS/47. SERVICE BASE BUDGETS 2011/2012

A report was submitted informing Members of the proposed base budget for 2011/12. This included an overview of the Committee's main spending areas and some of the main cost pressures facing its services. It was proposed that the estimated income and expenditure was included in the consolidated budget of the Council for 2011/12, subject to the Council's overall medium-term financial position. The report also set out proposals for the level of fees and charges under the responsibility of this Committee for the next financial year. A summary was included of the Committee's existing capital investment programme.

A large part of the Committee's annual spending, on community development, together with sport and health, was delivered in partnership with other agencies. This funding was not always secured from year to year. As part of the 2010/11 budget round, a longer term funding strategy was approved, which secured resources until 2016/17, and mainstreamed two key posts in supporting local community partnerships and environmental action. However, from 2012/13, some services would again come under pressure as funding for delivering play scheme, cultural and "get active" projects faced a potential shortfall. In addition, as part of the financial settlement for local government recently announced, many specific grants had been moved into mainstream Formula Grant. The Committee had benefited from specific funding in the past through resources transferred across from other authorities and public agencies as part of partnership working, for example in crime prevention. No specific funding was now available from grants such as the Basic Command Unit and it remained to be seen what knock-on effect this might have on the Council.

Furthermore, expenditure of approximately £120,000 per year on parks, and maintenance of open spaces was supplemented by drawing down commuted sums received as part of residential developments. Although not a short-term issue, funding would only last for a maximum of 7 years based on current spending. Further details were also provided on Swadlincote Woodlands.

It was expected that sustaining the Council's overall financial position over the medium-term would be challenging given the proposed cut in grant funding recently announced. In addition, during this budget round, all service areas had been asked to look closely at current spending in order to reduce budgets where ever possible, but at the same time maintain service provision. The spending proposals for 2011/12 included some budget reductions in Grounds Maintenance, following a review of budgets and spending. This exercise was undertaken to provide a benchmark against which to judge external bids arising out of the forthcoming tendering exercise. Full details were provided within the report.

A summary of the Committee's net revenue expenditure was provided in a table within the report and it was estimated to decrease overall between 2010/11 and 2011/12 by £71,628. Further details were provided on the main reasons for this.

All the Committees cost centres were detailed in a further appendix to the report, which showed a line by line analysis of the budgets, as contained in the Council's main accounting system with a breakdown of charges between 2010/11 and 2011/12 for each cost centre.

The proposed base budget for 2011/12 did not at this stage, allow for inflation. Allowances for inflation, based on various assumptions regarding price increases etc., would be calculated across the main spending heads and in total, held as a central contingency.

Details were given on the Council's approved capital investment programme.

An appendix within the report provided a schedule of the proposed fees and charges that would operate from 1st April 2011, together with a comparison to the existing charge.

Members asked further questions with regard to Swadlincote Woodlands and funding for voluntary bodies.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the proposed revenue income and expenditure for 2011/12 for the Committee's Services be referred to the Finance and Management Committee for approval.***
- (2) That the proposed fees and charges for 2011/12 be approved.***
- (3) That the amount of all grants to voluntary bodies be maintained at the current level with no inflationary increase for 2011/12.***

(Councillors Hewlett, Mrs. Lane, Richards and Shepherd declared a prejudicial interest in this item and withdrew from the Meeting during the consideration and determination thereof).

(Councillor Mrs. Hood withdrew from the Meeting during the consideration and determination of this item).

HCS/48. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

RESOLVED:-

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

LAND AT MELBOURNE (Paragraph 3)

The Committee granted access and easement terms as detailed in the report.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT REVIEW AND RESTRUCTURING OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTORATE (Paragraph 4)

The Committee was consulted on the above reviews and gave its approval.

J. LEMMON

CHAIRMAN