

FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

18th March 2004

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Wilkins (Chair), Councillor Pabla (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Carroll, Lane, Shepherd (substitute for Councillor Richards) Southern, Taylor (substitute for Councillor Southerd) and Whyman, M.B.E.

Conservative Group

Councillors Harrison, Mrs. Renwick And Mrs. Wheeler.

In Attendance

Councillors Isham (Labour Group) and Atkin (Conservative Group).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Richards and Southerd (Labour Group).

FM/106. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Special Meetings held on 15th January and 26th January 2004 and of the Ordinary Meeting held on 17th February 2004 were taken as read, approved as true records and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

FM/107. **MORTGAGE INTEREST RATE**

The Committee was advised that it was required to declare the Local Average Rate for the six month period from April 2003 to September 2004. The rate had been calculated to be 5.13%. Borrowers were actually charged the higher of the Standard National Rate declared by the Secretary of State and the Local Average Rate. The Standard National Rate was based on the rates charged by banks and building societies and was currently 5.19%. Borrowers would therefore be charged 5.19%. The rate currently charged was 7.76%.

RESOLVED:-

That the Local Average Rate of Interest for the period April 2004 to September 2004 be declared at 5.19%.

FM/108. **THE EQUALITY STANDARD FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

The Committee was advised that the Equality Standard had been produced jointly by the Commission for Racial Equality, Equal Opportunities Commission, Disability Rights Commission, Employers' Organisation for Local Government, Dialog and the Local Government Association. It

recognised the importance of fair and equal treatment in local government services and employment and had been developed as a tool to enable local authorities to mainstream gender, race and disability into Council policy and practice at all levels. The framework was not restricted to these three areas of potentially unfair discrimination and could be used to address all disadvantaged groups.

The Committee was advised that the Standard for Local Government was a new Best Value Performance Indicator. The Council had set a target to achieve Level 1 of the equality standard by 31st March 2004.

Under Minute No. FM/53 of 16th October 2003, the Equality and Diversity Policy Statement had been approved and adopted. This Policy Statement confirmed the Council's commitment to equality and diversity issues, as an integral part of everything the Council undertook, based on the principles of equality, leadership and community involvement. The Council had also started to demonstrate its ongoing commitment to equality and diversity issues. Following consultation, under Minute No. FM/66 of 11th December 2003 a Race Equality Scheme had been adopted. It was noted that Councillor Isham had recently been appointed as the Members' Equality and Diversity Champion. An inter-departmental Equal Opportunities and Diversity Action Group (EODAG) had been established recently. The aim of the Group was to take account of the framework provided by the Equality Standard for Local Government, by assisting departments to mainstream equalities into service delivery and employment in all aspects of the Council's work.

The Committee was advised that various actions were now required under the following criteria to achieve Level 1 of the Equality Standard:-

- (1) Leadership and corporate commitment
- (2) Consultation and community development and scrutiny
- (3) Service delivery and customer care
- (4) Employment and training

The above actions were outlined in detail to the Committee. It was noted that it was proposed to establish a Values and Attitudes Advisory Group, comprising of representatives from various equality and diversity interests bodies. The role of this Group would be to assist the Authority, both in an advisory capacity and to help drive forward the equalities and diversity agenda of the Authority. It was anticipated that when this group was formed, it would be Chaired by Councillor Isham, who was in attendance at the Meeting and spoke in support of the item.

RESOLVED:-

That the "Equality Standard for Local Government" document, as submitted, be approved and a commitment to it be made.

FM/109. **STATEMENT OF INTENT WITH REGARD TO ASBESTOS WITHIN COUNCIL OWNED BUILDINGS**

The Committee was advised that the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002, parts of which came into effect on 21st May 2004 placed a duty on employers, landlords, tenants, managing agents and others who had maintenance responsibilities for properties. The Council needed to ensure

effective arrangements were established and used to control the risks to persons from asbestos containing materials within all of its premises. An Asbestos Statement of Intent was circulated outlining the Authority's commitment to the methods adopted by the Authority to secure the safe management of asbestos within all Council premises. The Statement of Intent was the first stage and would be supplemented by suitable procedures and policies. The procedures would describe how the authority intended to determine in detail, the places within buildings where asbestos was situated and how essential information as to the location of asbestos, type, condition and action required was brought to the attention of employees, contractors, leaseholders of buildings owned by the Authority. Such policies and procedures would also include the methods of how the authority would deal with situations when works were undertaken within its premises by DLO and external contractors on asbestos materials which were low risk. High risk materials would be dealt with by licensed asbestos contractors.

The Committee was advised that suitable training would be undertaken by all relevant staff on general asbestos awareness and the tradesmen would be given additional training so that they were competent in the safe handling and disposal of low risk asbestos materials.

RESOLVED:-

That the Statement of Intent with Regard to Managing Asbestos within Council Owned Premises, as submitted, be approved.

FM/110. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [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.

MINUTES

The Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th February 2004 were received.

COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT – PROVISIONAL RATING

The Leader referred to the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment undertaken in January and it was noted that a report would be submitted to the appropriate working panel shortly.

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS D2.4(b) – WRITE-OFFS (Paragraph 7)

The Committee agreed to write off the amount outlined in the report under the provisions of Financial Regulation D2.4(b).

SWADLINCOTE MARKET - FINANCIAL REGULATIONS D2.4(b) - WRITE-OFFS (Paragraph 8)

The Committee agreed to write off the amount detailed in the report under the provisions of Financial Regulation D2.4(b).

P.J. WILKINS

CHAIR