

FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

3rd April 2003

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Wilkins (Chair), Councillor Pabla (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Carroll, Dunn (substitute for Councillor Southerd), Evens, Knight, Richards and Southern.

Conservative Group

Councillors Harrison, Shaw (substitute for Councillor Lemmon) and Mrs. Wheeler.

In Attendance

Councillor Bell (Labour Group).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Southerd and Whyman M.B.E. (Labour Group) and Councillor Lemmon (Conservative Group).

FM/104. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Special Meetings held on 16th and 27th January 2003 and of the Meeting held on 18th February 2003 were taken as read, approved as true records and signed by the Chair.

FM/105. **MORTGAGE INTEREST RATE**

The Committee was advised of a decision taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, under the procedure for urgent decisions between Meetings. A mortgage interest rate of 7.76% had been set with effect from 1st April 2003 and this procedure was invoked due to the postponement of the Meeting on 20th March 2003.

Under Section 438 of the Housing Act 1985, the Council was required to declare the local average rate of interest on its mortgages at six-monthly intervals and the rate for the period April – September 2003 had been calculated at 7.76%. 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%.

RESOLVED:-

That the decision taken to set a mortgage interest rate of 7.76% with effect from 1st April 2003, be noted and confirmed.

FM/106. **ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY**

The Committee received a report on the revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy. Members had originally approved this in March 2001 and it had now been reviewed to confirm its relevance. The Strategy summarised the Council's approach to dealing with instances of fraud and corruption and, more importantly, the steps it intended to take to minimise them. This Strategy was an important part of the Council's corporate governance arrangements.

Although instances of fraud and corruption within the Council were extremely rare, it was still considered important to reinforce measures of protection. During the financial year, the Council's systems managed financial transactions in excess of £100 million and accordingly, just one instance of fraud could result in substantial loss. The revised Strategy confirmed the Council's firm stance on prosecuting instances of fraud or financial irregularity as a further deterrent.

In addition, the Council wanted people to feel able to raise concerns in a confidential and open manner. This was explained in the Council's Whistleblowing Strategy, due to be reviewed in 2004 and included with the report.

RESOLVED:-

That the revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy be approved.

FM/107. **REVIEW OF DESIGNATED POLLING PLACES**

The Committee received a report on the designated polling places for the District and Parish Council elections to be held on 1st May 2003.

For each election, the Council designated a list of premises to be used as polling stations and, in preparation for this, a review of polling places had been undertaken. As a result of the Boundary Review in 1999, Ward boundaries within South Derbyshire had been changed. Two premises previously used as polling stations were no longer available at Bass's Crescent, Castle Gresley and the Coton-in-the-Elms Band Room. In response to the increase in population of the District and new developments in specific areas, some additional polling stations were proposed.

The hire of premises for these elections would be funded by the Council with an element recharged to the appropriate parish councils.

Members considered that the new postal vote system was the ideal solution for those voters who were unable to travel to their respective polling stations and appropriate publicity would be given to this facility.

RESOLVED:-

That the list of designated polling places for the District and Parish Council Elections to be held on 1st May 2003 be approved.

FM/108. **NEW PLAY EQUIPMENT**
STATION STREET RECREATION GROUND, CHURCH GRESLEY

A report outlining the reasons for the establishment of a politically balanced ad-hoc Group to evaluate tenders for the provision of new play equipment and safety surfacing at Station Street Recreation Ground, Church Gresley was presented to the Committee. Finance was available to provide a play area to required standards and tenders for the work were due to be returned by 8th April 2003.

A sum of £35,000 had been allocated in this year's Capital Programme from Section 106 Agreement funds arising from new housing development in Gresley. Four companies had been invited to tender, with £2,500 of the initial £35,000 being allocated to procure external support to produce tender documentation and supervise the work on site. In seeking bids based on the level of finance available, price would not be the key factor in the evaluation of tenders. Although financial analysis would be undertaken on the individual items which made up the project, the key determinant would relate to meeting the requirements of the specification.

To assist in the delivery of the project, Members were asked to approve the establishment of a politically balanced ad-hoc Group to evaluate tenders. It was suggested that this should comprise of the Chair of Housing and Community Services Committee and the three local Gresley Ward Members. In order to provide political balance, a nomination would also be sought from the Conservative Group. The establishment of the ad-hoc Group would allow for this community facility to be available for use during the summer months. It was intended to arrange a meeting of the Group on 9th April 2003 and a report on the acceptance of a tender would then be submitted to the Council Meeting on 17th April 2003.

RESOLVED:-

That the establishment of a politically balanced ad-hoc Group to evaluate tenders for the provision of new play equipment and safety surfacing at Station Street Recreation Ground, Church Gresley be approved.

FM/109. **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 Special Meeting held on 16th January 2003 and of the Meeting held on 18th February 2003 were received.

ILL HEALTH RETIREMENT (Paragraph 1)

The Committee approved an early retirement on the grounds of ill-health.

REVIEW OF STRUCTURES TO DELIVER STRATEGIC HOUSING ROLE AND HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICES (Paragraph 11)

The Committee considered options for the restructuring of the strategic housing role and housing support services and deferred a decision to a future Meeting.

**INTERIM MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS
COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT (Paragraph 11)**

The Committee approved interim management and financial arrangements in recognition of the increased short-term workload and responsibilities of certain Officers in the Community Services Division and to provide additional management capacity in the Housing Services Division.

SCHEME OF LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS (Paragraph 11)

The Committee approved a Scheme of Leave entitlements.

**REFUSE COLLECTION SERVICE
CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR PAY ARRANGEMENTS (Paragraph 11)**

The Committee approved an increase in bonus payments to Refuse Collectors during the Christmas/New Year period with effect from Christmas 2003.

P.J. WILKINS

CHAIR