

FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

18th April 2002

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Wilkins (Chair), Councillor Pabla (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Brooks, Carroll, Evens, Knight, Lauro and Whyman.

Conservative Group

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

APOLOGY

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

FM/111. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th February 2002 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

FM/112. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND REPORTS**

CVS Executive Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 13th March 2002

The above report was noted.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

FM/113. **INDUSTRIAL FACELIFT GRANT SCHEME REPLACEMENT**

Members were advised that the SRB2 Swadlincote Woodlands Programme included a small project geared towards the improvement of the older industrial areas. The project was managed by Groundwork Erewash Valley and approximately £45,000 of SRB2 money had facilitated small scale improvements at several industrial estates. This programme ended in March 2002.

Members were advised that emda had now re-branded the former derelict land grant and land reclamation programme in the form of the environmental improvement programme. The programme was intended to provide funding to local authorities and voluntary organisations to enable them to reclaim derelict land for environmental improvements. The fund was also available for some types of land which were not derelict, at emda's discretion, including land stabilisation, clearance of unsightly land and the improvement of land in the public realm which created wider benefits.

Groundwork Erewash Valley had indicated that they were willing to continue in partnership with the Council to implement a similar scheme but, as a formally constituted charity limited by guarantee on the advice from the Charity Commissioners, they were restricted to the carrying out of only a

small fraction of the work outside their dedicated boroughs. This would prevent them from being fully responsible for such a scheme and limit involvement to the preparation and implementation of specifically identified improvements.

For the formal working relationship to continue the Council would therefore have to be responsible for the management, co-ordination and administration of any scheme. The Council would be required to be the accountable body in order to draw-down the grant monies from emda once individual schemes had been completed. It might be possible to use the continuing Made in Swadlincote Board and SRB procedures as an intermediary solution as these were to continue for a further year as part of the SRB monitoring process. In the longer term, more formal procedures might be necessary.

It was reported that the scheme could be extended to include unused and unsightly land in the Council's ownership for which there was no commercial value although this might be a matter for consideration as part of the asset management review. However, there was the prospect of applying for grant aid through this procedure to extend National Forest tree planting.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the establishment of an Environmental Improvement Grant scheme in partnership with Groundwork Erewash Valley be approved in principle.***
- (2) That an application for funding be made through the East Midland Development Agency's (emda) Environmental Improvement Programme.***

FM/114. **REVISION OF TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY STATEMENT 2001/2002**

Members were advised that the addition of the UK Debt Management Office to the list of approved institutions would enable the Council to participate in the Debt Management Account Deposit Facility Pilot Scheme and thus influence its development. The inclusion of a government agency would also carry with it the highest level of guarantee whilst at the same time maximising the rate of return on invested funds.

Members were asked to revise item 5.3 of the Council's Treasury Management Policy Statement by adding the UK Debt Management Office to the list of approved institutions in order that the above could be achieved.

RESOLVED:-

That the UK Debt Management Office be added to the list of approved institutions used for the investment of Council funds (with a maximum investment limit of £5m) and that item 5.3 of the Council's Treasury Management Statement be amended accordingly.

FM/115. **ASIAN OVER 60'S CLUB**

Members were reminded that a proposal for funding towards the Asian Over 60's Club was submitted by Ward Members as part of the 2002/03 budget

process. This proposal was considered together with other budget proposals and was not built into the base budget for 2002/03 at that time. Members were now requested to consider this matter so that the future viability of the Club and its services were supported by the Council. The Community Services Committee had considered this matter at a recent meeting and agreed to recommend that this Committee approve funding of £5,000 per annum for this particular project.

It was reported that a contribution of £5,000 per annum for the Club would need to be drawn from reserves and would have the effect of reducing balances by £15,000 over the three-year planning term. This would result in projected balances at the end of 2004/05 of £760,000. The predicted level of balances would be affected by the out-turn for the recent financial year 2001/02. The Council was beginning to close down the process and the final out-turn would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee. Depending on the reported out-turn it was suggested that the Committee might then wish to convene a Service and Financial Planning Working Group to consider whether it wished to allocate any surplus resources that arose at the out-turn stage. It was noted that any contribution to the Asian Over 60's Club would be made as a grant and would be subject to ongoing support and monitoring of the grant in the same way that the Council supported other voluntary/community projects.

Councillor Wheeler expressed concern that this group currently had a limited number of members (the current constitution showed a total of thirty-seven members) and all the members were male. She expressed concern that his project had been considered alongside other budget proposals and had failed under the point scoring system. Councillor Pabla referred to 1.6% of South Derbyshire's population being Asian and a need to provide for this particular community in Stenson Fields. Councillor Shaw indicated that an investment of this particular size could serve more people in the District. Councillor Lauro advised that the issue to be considered was not just about the Asian Over 60's Club but that there was no community facility for this particular section of the community. He noted that it was not an ideal solution but a start to addressing the needs of the community of Stenson Fields. Councillor Whyman felt that this particular matter was a special case and reported that the Committee were now in receipt of more detailed information than when the project was scored as part of the budget process.

RESOLVED:-

That approval be granted for the funding of £5,000 per annum to the Asian Over 60's Club as a contribution to the provision of a focal point for the elders of the Asian community in Stenson Fields.

FM/116. **INVEST TO SAVE BID: REVENUES AND BENEFITS**

Members were reminded that in July 2001 the Council submitted an initial Invest to Save bid in partnership with other local councils in Derbyshire. Over the last six months the partnership had been invited to develop the bid further prior to final submission. In February 2002, the Government announced that the bid was successful and the bid was worth a total of £1.3m between the five authorities over the next two financial years.

The bid focused on providing all five partner councils with an up to date computer system to administer revenues and benefits totalling some £250m over the five authorities. At same time the system would provide a platform for closer working between the Council's to provide a more efficient service to customers.

It was noted that the project would be managed and administered by a Joint Committee which was currently being established. Each local council would be represented by one voting Member. Members were asked to consider which Member they wished to nominate to this Joint Committee which would be established during the next two months.

RESOLVED:-

That the report be received and a nomination of a Member to sit on the Joint Committee be submitted at a later stage.

FM/117. **TRAVELLER ENCROACHMENT – GRESLEY COMMON**

Members were asked to consider a request from the Community Services Committee to allocate £12,500 to fund measures to prevent Traveller encroachment on Gresley Common. Over recent years Traveller encroachment on parts of the Common had increased fairly dramatically. One of the major problems was that the area was easily accessible. In order to maintain access whilst at the same time deterring traveller encroachment the only practical solution was the erection of bollards around the whole site.

The Committee was advised that no revenue had been allocated to fund this work and no budget savings could be identified in this particular service area. If Members were minded to support the project two options were available. These were that the work was deferred and a Service Development Proposal be submitted as part of the 2003/04 budget process or that Members consider the re-allocation of finance.

A general discussion took place with regard to the problem experienced from unauthorised encampments. Councillor Bale advised that travellers had arrived in the north-west area of the District the previous week and the private landowner had moved the travellers on in a shorter time than the Council was able to. The Head of Community Services advised that this was because legislation currently required local authorities to follow a different course of action to private landowners with regard to unauthorised encampments. The process usually took the Council about three weeks using legislation as quickly as possible. Councillor Bale expressed concern that the Derbyshire Police did not appear to move such travellers on as quickly as in other authorities. The Chief Executive reminded the Committee that the Council provided designated areas for such travellers to visit. However, the law no longer required the Council to provide long and short stay sites. Councillor Harrison suggested that this Council could apply to the landfill tax credit scheme to finance this project as it could be deemed an environmental matter and this action was noted.

RESOLVED:-

That the request from the Community Services Committee to allocate additional revenue to this project be supported in principle and the

finance be made available as soon as possible and that this be a matter for consideration at a future meeting of the Service and Financial Planning Working Panel.

FM/118. **NEW RECREATION FACILITIES – COTON PARK, LINTON**

At its Meeting held on 11th April 2002, the Community Services Committee considered a report outlining success in attracting external funding for this project. This offer of funding was time limited with work having to be completed by August 2002. However, this external funding would only part-fund the necessary development work. To maximise the benefit of the funding and to progress the scheme efficiently, approval was sought to use a maximum of £5,000 of a possible carryover of the capital that was allocated in 2001/02 to provide new play equipment and safety surfacing at the new recreation facilities at Coton Park, Linton.

RESOLVED:-

That the request from the Community Services Committee to allocate additional capital to a maximum of £5,000 for this project be approved.

FM/119. **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 19th February 2002 were received.

ILL HEALTH RETIREMENT (Paragraph 1)

The Committee agreed to retire the employee outlined in the report on the grounds of ill-health.

CASH ALTERNATIVE GRIEVANCES (Paragraph 1)

The Committee delegated this matter to the Licensing and Appeals Committee to make any recommendations back to this Committee.

NATIONAL PAY NEGOTIATIONS (Paragraph 1)

The Committee received and noted a detailed report on this matter.

DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF (Paragraph 5)

The Committee refused one application for additional discretionary relief from the organisation outlined in the report but agreed to continue to grant the current level of discretionary rate relief. The Committee deferred one application in order for further information to be obtained. Officers were asked to investigate what strategies other authorities had with regard to dealing with applications from charitable organisations.

REDUCTION OR REMISSION OF THE NON-DOMESTIC RATE (Paragraph 5)

The Committee approved an application from the organisation outlined in the report for a reduction or remission of the non-domestic rate.

RURAL RATE RELIEF (Paragraph 5)

The Committee approved an application from the organisation outlined in the report for an additional amount of rural rate relief.

GEORGE HOLMES BUSINESS CENTRE (Paragraph 7)

The Committee agreed a course of action with regard to the George Holmes Business Centre and in accordance with this course of action resolved to consider the matter again at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 16th May 2002.

FOOTPATHS AGENCY (Paragraphs 1 and 11)

The Committee agreed a course of action with regard to the Footpaths Agency.

PAYMENT OF ABATED RENTAL TO FORMER RESIDENT WARDEN (Paragraph 1)

The Committee referred this matter to the Licensing and Appeals Committee and asked that any recommendations arising therefrom be referred back to the Finance and Management Committee.

STAFFING ISSUES – CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S DIRECTORATE (Paragraph 11)

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

P.J. WILKINS

CHAIR