

CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS
5th March, 2012

Present:- Councillor Akhtar (in the Chair); Councillors Goulty and Kaye.

An apology for absence had been received from: - Councillor McNeely.

J55. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET MONITORING 2011/12

The Finance Manager, Neighbourhood and Adult Services, presented a report on the Housing Revenue Account which, to the end of January, 2012, was projected to outturn on budget with a transfer to Working Balance (HRA reserves) of £4.944M, this being £331,000 above the approved budget.

A forecast increase in Repairs and Maintenance expenditure, due mainly to increased activity in empty homes turnover rates, could be contained within existing resources as a result of savings within supervision and management costs together with a forecast increase in income.

The report provided details of:-

- Budget Operating Statement (Appendix A)
- Income and expenditure charged to the HRA
- Projected outturn based upon activity to the end of January 2012 (Appendix A Column B)
- Expenditure/commitments to date including major changes
- Repairs and Maintenance - increased spend
- Supervision and Management - forecast underspend
- Forecast additional income

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

J56. AREA HOUSING PANELS

The Business Support Director, Neighbourhood and Adult Services, reported on the outcome of the review of Area Housing Panels (AHPs). Following the return of the housing management ALMO to direct Council management and changes in national housing policy, a review of the role of AHPs had been considered timely.

The review had been an open consultation process, which followed the criteria within the Code of Practice on Consultation that had been issued by the Better Regulation Executive in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. The scope of influence of the consultation included three overarching outcomes required by the Council:-

- A strong governance framework which linked to other local democratic activities
- Robust accountability for the expenditure of HRA funding
- Wider involvement

Almost 100 people had attended the open meeting organised by RotherFed on

22nd November, 2011, where formal presentations had been presented. The proposals that had been generated addressing the three outcomes were:-

A strong governance framework for Area Housing Panels (AHPs) which linked to other local democratic activities

- A. Area Assemblies to liaise with AHPs when appropriate and to consider co-opting a member of the AHP should a community vacancy arise on the Co-ordinating group
- B. The same RMBC officer to service the Area Assembly, Co-ordinating Group and AHP in an area
- C. AHPs to send invitation and agenda to all Ward Councillors for each meeting
- D. At least 1 member of the AHP should attend the Area Assembly meeting and feed back to the Panel on local initiatives and issues discussed
- E. Each AHP continue to nominate a member to serve on the Board of RotherFed

Demonstrate robust accountability for HRA expenditure

- F. Minutes of AHP meetings to be sent to the Area Assembly for information and inclusion in the record posted on the Council's website
- G. Minutes to include a clear record of decision to award HRA funding to a project
- H. HRA funded projects to be monitored and evaluated and findings minuted

Involve Area Housing Panels in a wider range of activities supporting the co-regulation required of social housing providers

- I. Resident Engagement Champions to work with Area Housing Co-ordinators and AHP Chairs to identify potential members for each Panel to reflect its catchment area
- J. 1 representative from each AHP to serve on the Local Offers Monitoring Group in addition to its current membership
- K. AHP can play a more active role in assessing the quality of housing services and making recommendations for service improvement
- L. All AHP members to participate in service improvement task and finish groups as required
- M. Tenants and residents involved with AHPs receive training appropriate to their roles
- N. Consideration is given to AHPs being asked to form the local Tenant Panel (from April, 2013)

The Business Support Director confirmed that proposals A – N could be implemented on a cost neutral basis.

The review of AHPs had been undertaken in parallel with similar work regarding the Local Offer Monitoring Group. The next stage would be to look at the roles of Tenants and Residents Associations and RotherFed to ensure the framework for engagement was robust, relevant and effective especially with regard to the new requirements of the Localism Act as they were enacted over the next 2 years.

This report had also been considered by the Improving Places Select Commission and their comments had been incorporated into the recommendations.

Discussion ensued and included the following salient points: -

- Potential for Area Assemblies (or it's co-ordinating group) to co-opt a member of the AHP
- The servicing of the AHP meetings, including calling meetings and disseminating agenda items
- The benefits of the meetings being serviced by Area Assembly staff to ensure linkages between the different Area Assembly forums to improve communications and avoid duplication
- The welcome timing of the review and the positive way in which it had been conducted

Resolved:- That implementation of proposals A - N, as set out above, be approved.

J57. NEIGHBOURHOODS GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2011/12

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Finance Manager, Neighbourhood and Adult Services, in relation to the budget monitoring during the 2011-12 financial year of the Neighbourhood General fund. The report detailed the projected end of year outturn position as at 31st January, 2012. The latest forecast showed a projected underspend of £313,000 as at 31st March, 2012.

The overall underspend was due to the services within the budget projecting balanced or underspent positions at year end.

In the main, the forecast outturn was due to: -

- Management of vacant posts
- One-off utility bill refunds
- Impact of Council wide moratorium on non-essential spend

Discussion ensued, and the following issues were raised: -

- Service performance

Resolved: - That the report be received.

J58. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:- That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public 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 those paragraphs, indicated below, of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

J59. CONTRACTS FOR ACCOMMODATION BASED SERVICES

The Cabinet Member noted a report which had been considered by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care on 30th January, 2012 (Minute No. H46 refers) regarding the extension of contracts for accommodation based services for the Supporting People Programme.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

(Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council))

J60. SERVICE TRANSFER - PEST CONTROL AND DOG CONTROL

Further to Minute No. 97 of 9th November, 2011, Cabinet meeting, Discussions had taken place with Environment and Development Services Streetpride regarding the transfer of the Pest Control, Dog Control and Off-Road Motor Vehicles Services.

Agreement had been reached to transfer the Services with effect from 1st April, 2012, possibly earlier for the Off-Road Motor Vehicle aspect.

The transfer gave an opportunity to re-structure the Pest and Dog Control Services to enable new team leadership required from the loss of the former Pest Control Manager's post as part of the management review.

Resolved:- That the proposed structural changes set out in the report submitted be approved.

(Exempt under Paragraph 4 of the Act – information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated negotiations in connection with any labour relations matter)

J61. AGED PERSON AND SHELTERED BUNGALOWS

Consideration was given to the report presented by the Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods that outlined the integration of the Council's in-house Sheltered Warden Service and the Care and Enabling Service. The Allocation Policy in respect of the letting of bungalows required updating to take into account changes made in April 2011 to the Sheltered Warden Service.

In April 2011, the Council's in-house Sheltered Warden Service was integrated with the Care and Enabling Service. This meant that Wardens no longer lived on the complex. Customers were now individually assessed by Adult Services on a needs basis for a free Health and Wellbeing visit.

Following the services' integration, the re-housing medical assessment process and the allocation policy for bungalows needed to be updated.

The proposed new process retained existing mandatory rules for tenants, including paying associated charges such as Rothercare charges, Communal/Services charges, and it was noted that although the Health and Well Being visits would be free, tenants would not be able to opt out.

Resolved: - That the Cabinet Member agreed the amendments to the medical

assessment process and allocation policy as detailed in the submitted report.

[Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council)]

J62. CANKLOW REGENERATION

The Director for Housing and Neighbourhood Services presented the submitted report that referred to the Canklow regeneration project that was set out and approved by the Former Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods on 2nd March, 2009 (Minute number 162 refers).

In pursuit of the regeneration of Canklow, the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods had approved the plan that was a two-phased approach to acquire by agreement and demolish properties identified on Castle Avenue, Warden Street and a section of Canklow Road. Funding was available for Phase 1, but Phase 2 was subject to securing additional investment.

In 2011, the Government withdrew the Housing Market Pathfinder Programme and funding support for the scheme was adversely affected. Concerted effort had been made to identify additional funding investment, and in June 2011 the Council committed funding towards Phase 2 from the New Homes Bonus Grant. However, due to an investment shortfall, Phase 2 cannot be wholly supported and an amendment to the original decision was now requested to remove dwelling numbers 231 to 225 Canklow Road, and 2 Castle Avenue from Phase 2 of the Canklow regeneration plans.

The area of Canklow Road originally identified for Phase 2 included Numbers 231 to 263 Canklow Road. These properties included dwellings, a health centre, a pharmacy, two convenience stores and a take away. With Ward Members' support, a series of meetings were held with the owners of these properties. The purpose of the meetings was to give the owners information on the withdrawal of the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Programme and the current lack of funding to continue with the proposed clearance plans.

Feedback from many of the owners stated that the removal of the properties from Phase 2 would allow them to either obtain private sector finance to invest into their properties or lease them on a long-term basis. In this difficult time of public funding, the owner's plans were considered to be a more realistic prospect.

Notwithstanding this proposal, the Council would continue to maintain its commitment to the regeneration programme in Canklow.

Resolved: - That the revision to Phase 2 of the Canklow regeneration plans be agreed as detailed in the submitted report.

[Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council)]