

**DEPUTY LEADER
17th February, 2014**

Present:- Councillor Akhtar (in the Chair); Councillors Sims.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Gosling.

N44. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13TH JANUARY, 2014

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13th January, 2014.

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th January, 2014 be approved as a correct record.

N45. SYSTEM OF INSPECTION - TRIPS AND SLIPS ON HOUSING OWNED FOOTPATHS AND WALKWAYS

Further to Minute No. 32 of the meeting of the Deputy Leader held on 16th December, 2013, consideration was given to a report presented by Paul Elliott, Business and Commercial Programme Manager, which provided an overview of options to mitigate costs arising from personal injury insurance claims on footpaths (outside curtilage of the property) managed by the HRA given this was highlighted as an area of high risk by the Council's Insurance Section. Maintenance of the highways infrastructure was likely to be a corporate priority for 2014/15.

Further information was provided on the insurance claims and costs arising from HRA footpaths and a summary of claims received.

Details of the three options were provided along the costs associated with each option.

Further information was also sought on the differentiation of areas of responsibility between the HRA and the General Fund, options appraisal and value for money, potential for savings long term, factoring in of a proactive approach and the requirement for an infrastructure assessment for 2015/16.

Resolved:- (1) That the proposed options to mitigate the costs of insurance claims arising from personal injury due to slips, trips and falls on HRA managed footpaths be noted.

(2) That, in view of the costs involved as opposed to the costs of claims paid, Option 2 be recommended to the Cabinet Member with responsibility as the preferred approach for 2014/15 with the proviso that discussions take place between relevant officers in taking forward this as

part of the recognition of infrastructure assets on the Council's Balance Sheet for the 2015/16 financial year.

N46. CRISIS LOANS

Consideration was given to a report presented by Carole Haywood, Partnerships and Policy Manager, and Clare Burton, Commissioning Officer, which set out details of how the current contract to provide crisis loans to vulnerable people that were Rotherham residents would end on the 31st March, 2014.

It was noted that the Council established the loan budget as part of the "Fund for Change" on the 1st April, 2013 and this provided the opportunity to offer a 'crisis loan' service in conjunction with other initiatives operated by the Council aimed at supporting individuals and families that required financial support.

The "Fund for Change" was established using Local Welfare Provision funding from the Government. This was allocated to local authorities to provide support to people following their abolition of loans and grants through the "discretionary social fund".

LASER Credit Union was currently providing the crisis loan service. Applications for loans were received through the Council's Customer Service Centre who assessed the individual's eligibility for a crisis loan. Those eligible were then referred to LASER to complete the process.

It was proposed that the current contract with LASER Credit Union be extended for a further year, 1st April, 2014 until 31st March, 2015. Having carefully considered the options in relation to providing a crisis loan service, it was felt that extending the existing contract with a contract variation as opposed to commissioning a new service was the better option and, therefore, a request to waive Standing Orders and the reasons for this request were highlighted in the report.

The proposal to extend the contract with LASER with a variation to contract for a further year had been discussed with Legal Services and given the circumstances detailed above; approval had been given to waive Standing Orders.

Further information was provided on the repayment success and arrears and the sustainability of this facility going forward from 1st April, 2015.

Resolved:- That the exemption of the provision of Crisis Loans from Standing Order 47 (contracts valued at more than £50,000 should be commissioned) in line with Standing Order 38 (exemptions) be approved.

(THE CHAIRMAN AUTHORISED CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING URGENT ITEM IN ORDER FOR THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS TO BE UNDERTAKEN)

N47. E-LEARNING PROVISION FOR CORPORATE TRAINING AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Consideration was given to a report presented by Phil Howe, Director of Human Resources, which detailed how the Council had successfully developed its offering of training available as e-learning over the last few years. This had been provided by Learning Pool, and was originally commissioned via the Local Government Association on behalf of participating Councils. The marketplace for e-learning platforms and learning resources had developed significantly in recent years and it was intended to commence a procurement exercise in 2014 for future e-learning provision.

Approval was, therefore, sought for exemption from normal Contract Standing Orders to continue Learning Pool provision during 2014 whilst the procurement exercise was completed.

Further information was provided on the flexible development of packages and the proposals for an Ipad app going forward.

Resolved:- (1) That the contracting of e-learning (both Corporate and Adult Social Care packages) be approved and exempted from Standing Order 47.6.3 for 2014.

(2) That a procurement process be undertaken during 2014 to secure the most appropriate and cost-effective package of e-learning for the whole Council.

N48. CABINET REPORTS AND MEMBERS' ISSUES

Phil Howe, Director of Human Resources, reported on:-

- The resolution of the staffing dispute at Abbey School.
- Potential for industrial action by schools on the 26th March, 2014, over terms and conditions and pensions.
- Approval of one hundred members of staff to leave under voluntary severance with the potential for further reductions following the outcome of reviews in some Directorates.
- National Pay Award and the proposal put forward by Trade Unions for a £1.00 an hour increase across all pay bands. This would be the equivalent of an average pay increase of 8% across the board. Most Councils had only budgeted for a 1% pay award. There was

also the potential for the National Minimum Wage to increase which would need to be factored in to future Council pay structures.

Stuart Booth, Director of Finance, reported on the three reports to be presented to Cabinet on the 26th February, 2014 on the 2014/15 Budget and Council Tax Proposals, Treasury Management and Performance Indicators and the Icelandic Bank investments.

Richard Copley, Corporate ICT Manager, reported on the progress to date with the transfer of circuits to the new suppliers in line with the timetable which should be completed by the August, 2014 deadline.

Jacqueline Collins, Director of Legal and Democratic Services, reported on:-

- Two reports to be presented to Cabinet on the 26th February, 2014 on the obligations to record votes for any budget decisions and the establishment of the Sheffield City Region.
- Attendance at the Procurement/Commissioning Scrutiny Review chaired by Councillor Beck.
- Successful completion of the Law Society Inspection.
- A day's observations by a Crown Court Judge and an assessment to undertake covert surveillance.
- Partial success of a Judicial Review on behalf of two regions and the action to take forward via the appeals procedure.

Resolved:- That the information be noted.

N49. 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 Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act (as amended March, 2006 (information relates to finance and business affairs)).

N50. PROCUREMENT OF ANNUAL SOFTWARE SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE FROM NORTHGATE - MAIN REVENUES AND BENEFITS SYSTEM

Consideration was given to a report presented by Stuart Booth, Director of Finance, which set out that in order to enable the Council to ensure ongoing use and reliability of the Northgate Revenues and Benefits System functionality from 1st April, 2014 to 31st March, 2015, there was a

need to have a Support and Maintenance agreement with the software supplier.

Maintaining the reliability of Northgate was essential in maintaining an excellent customer service in the administration of benefits, ensuring efficient billing of Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates and ensuring that income collection is maximised.

Exemption from Standing Orders for procuring this software support and maintenance was sought as the provision of the document management and workflow software support can only be supplied by Northgate.

Resolved:- That the contract for the purchase of Annual Support and Maintenance for the Northgate Revenues and Benefits System be exempt from the provisions of Standing Order 48.1 (requirement to invite three to six tenders for contracts with a value of £50k or more) and that the purchase be made from Northgate.

N51. PROCUREMENT OF ANNUAL SOFTWARE SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE FROM NORTHGATE - LHA SOFTWARE

Consideration was given to a report presented by Stuart Booth, Director of Finance, which set out that in order to enable the Council to ensure ongoing use and reliability of the Northgate Revenues and Benefits System functionality from 1st April, 2014 to 31st March, 2015, there was a need to have a Support and Maintenance agreement with the software supplier.

Maintaining the reliability of Northgate was essential in maintaining an excellent customer service in the administration of benefits, ensuring efficient billing of Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates and ensuring that income collection is maximised.

Exemption from Standing Orders for procuring this software support and maintenance was sought as the provision of the document management and workflow software support could only be supplied by Northgate.

Resolved:- That the contract for the purchase of a software licence key be exempt from the provisions of Standing Order 47.6.2 (requirement to invite at least two oral or written quotations for contracts with a value of £5k, but less than £20k) and the purchase be made from Northgate.

N52. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting take place on Monday, 17th March, 2014 at 8.30 a.m.