

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE MEETING

held in the Council Chamber, The Symington Building, Adam and Eve Street,
Market Harborough

held on 29 June 2017

commencing at 5.00p.m.

Present:

Cllr Pain (Chair),
Councillors: Bannister (from 5.13 pm), Brodrick, Hallam, King and Rickman

Officers: D. Atkinson, S. Hamilton, B. Jolly, S. Riley and V. Wenham

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Councillor King updated the Executive on the collection rankings for National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) for 2016/17 highlighting that Harborough District Council is ranked 9th out of 326 Councils across England, and in relation to the collection of Residential Council Tax, the Council is ranked 68th out of 326 Councils, which is in the top quartile. Harborough District Council is the leading authority in Leicestershire for the collection of NNDR and residential Council Tax.

MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on the 12th June 2017 be approved as a correct record.

It was agreed by The Executive that the exempt reports relating to the Declaration of Air Quality Management Area in Kibworth that were discussed at the 12th June 2017 Executive meeting can now be made publically available.

DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Hallam declared a personal pecuniary interest in the item on Land at Northampton Road. The nature of the interest was that Councillor Hallam and his children are members of the Market Harborough Rugby Club and he has previously been a coach at the Club.

BAD DEBT WRITE OFF (REVENUES AND BENEFITS)

The Executive was advised on the debts which have been written off this current financial year under delegation for the revenue and benefits service area as outlined in the report.

RESOLVED that the information contained within the Bad Debt Write Off report be received and noted.

Summary of Reasons

The Council's Constitution and supporting Financial Regulations delegates the responsibility for writing off individual debts up to and including £10k to the Head of the Revenues and Benefits Partnership under the scheme of delegation. Above this threshold debts (greater than £10k) are written off by the Executive.

The Council only writes off debt where it is irrecoverable for example where a customer has died and there are no assets, or a business is bankrupt and has no assets. The only exception to this is where a debt is not cost effective to recover.

The Council is prudent in managing debt and makes provision for them in its annual statement of accounts. This ensures that the writing off of bad debt has no detrimental affect on in year service provision or the council taxpayer. In the case of National Non Domestic Rates the Government meets 50% of the cost of writing off bad debt and the remainder is met by the major precepting bodies through pooling arrangements.

The table below is for information on the amounts that have been written off for the period 1st April 2017 through to 17th May 2017.

Fund	Debts Written Off greater than £10k (Previously authorised)	Debts Written Off under £10k (Reported previously)	*Debts Written Off this period under £10k	Totals
Council Tax	£0.00	£0.00	£19,065.79	£19,065.79
Non Domestic Rates	£0.00	£0.00	£302.55	£302.55
Housing Benefit Overpayments	£0.00	£0.00	£5,035.26	£5,035.26

The table below illustrates in percentage terms the amount that has been written off when compared with total collectable against each heading as shown.

Total collectable is the sum total of net charge raised to include gross arrears outstanding as at 18th May 2017.

Position as at 18th May 2017	Net Charge raised in 2017/18	Arrears Position	Total Collectable	Amount written Off	Percentage shown below is derived from the amount written off when compared with Total Collectable
Council Tax (Net of Council Tax Support)	£55,910,570	£2,113,835	£58,024,405	£19,065.79	0.03%
Non Domestic Rates (Net of reliefs)	£41,434,520	£273,844	£41,708,364	-£302.55	0.00%
		Due inclusive of arrears			
Housing Benefit Overpayments	£18,162	£1,031,702		£5,035.26	0.49%

The table below is an analysis of what has been written off in previous years.

Amount Written off					
Fund	Year 2013/14	Year 2014/15	Year 2015/16	Year 2016/17	
Council Tax	£118,303.47	£181,958.43	£43,649.64	£154,392.00	
Non Domestic Rates	£81,496.64	£138,412.42	£99,585.36	£64,903.00	
Housing Benefit Overpayments	£27,354.90	£16,001.15	£5,425.59	£2,369.00	

SCRAPTOFT LOCAL NATURE RESERVE: CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED DE-DECLARATION

The Executive considered a report which proposed that the de-declaration of the Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve be subject to public consultation. This would enable the public and interested parties to make representations on the proposal before Council makes a final decision on the de-declaration of the Local Nature Reserve.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the proposal to de-declare the Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve be subject to a 6 week period of public consultation which will run concurrently with the period for public representation on the Proposed Submission Local Plan, currently anticipated to being in September 2017.

Summary of Reasons

The de-declaration of the Scraptoft Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is proposed for a number of reasons; the site is required for housing and is proposed for allocation within the emerging Harborough District Local Plan as part of the Scraptoft North Strategic Development Area; the LNR does not appear to have been managed as per the original management plan, suggesting, in accordance with the relevant Act, that the LNR should be de-declared; and the ecological value of the most significant parts of the site can be protected and enhanced through alternative means.

Councillor Hallam having declared a personal pecuniary interest left the room for consideration of the subsequent item.

LAND AT NORTHAMPTON ROAD, MARKET HARBOROUGH

The Executive considered a report detailing requests and options for the land holding at Northampton Road, Market Harborough. Harborough District Council were approached by Market Harborough Rugby Football Club (MHRFC) and Harborough Town Football Club (HTFC) in April 2015 with requests to vary their current occupational arrangements at Northampton Road, Market Harborough.

A number of meetings have been held with both parties since June 2015 to ensure all parties benefit from the revised arrangements and that it meets the needs of each organisation. Both clubs are currently having difficulty in meeting demand and would like to address this. In addition, the Football Club have proposals to improve the club and to put it in an even stronger financial position.

Market Harborough Rugby Football Club have requested two additional full size pitches to address current demand. Harborough Town Football Club (HTFC) have requested to acquire the freehold of the main pitch and surrounding associated land. This is due to the desire to install a new 3G pitch and a freehold acquisition would assist with funding bids.

In September 2015, the Executive agreed to explore options for transfer of any remaining land to HTFC under a new lease or other legal arrangement to provide improved facilities, access and management of the site, including reduction of HDC's operational costs. The land, which is one of the largest land holdings owned by the Council, is on the south side of Market Harborough, in a predominantly residential area. This land, if the current uses were re-located, could offer a redevelopment opportunity for alternative uses in the future.

A public notice regarding the "disposal" of the land to the two clubs was placed in the Harborough Mail on the 1st and 8th June 2017, inviting written representations on the proposals. The notice invited written representations on the proposal by 22nd June 2017.

The Executive considered the consultation responses which covered both the three main areas of concern and the associated mitigation of these concerns.

The concerns and mitigation are as follows : 1. Whether other clubs and community groups can continue to use the land. The clubs have confirmed their willingness to cooperate and accommodate other sports clubs and community groups. 2. The need to have a facility for dog walking. There will still be areas for dog walking, and the area of land retained by Harborough District Council will be able to accommodate a purpose-built dog walking facility. 3. Whether buildings could be put on the land. There is no intention to put buildings on the land and furthermore the Clubs would not be able to build anything without the consent of the landlord, i.e. Harborough District Council.

Councillor King highlighted that there would be efficiencies and practical benefits for both the MHRFC and HTFC if the recommendations within the report were agreed but also reiterated the concerns from interested parties. He asked for reassurance on securing strong commitment through the agreement from the MHRFC and HTFC to enable the public and other ad-hoc users of the site to benefit from using the space. In regard to this point, the Corporate Director (BJ) advised that there was likely to be an agreement outside the lease and would ensure that the Portfolio Holder, Councillor King, was satisfied with the agreement before the new arrangements were entered into.

Councillor Rickman reiterated the point that the HTFC had demonstrated its willingness to accommodate other users through being part of the Harborough Town Community Trust.

Councillor Rickman also updated the Executive on the issue of dog fouling and sports pitches, which was a concern raised by Sports Clubs and Parishes at the Annual Parish Liaison Meeting held in November 2016. He advised that he was currently following up the specific concerns.

Councillor Brodrick commented that she was reassured that a circular dog walking route would still remain around the edge of the piece of land being considered and the Corporate Director (BJ) confirmed that there would be an enhanced dog walking facility.

Councillor King also informed the Executive that Harborough District Council have a very substantial piece of land on Burford Green on Western Avenue, Market Harborough which is currently under-utilised and under-developed for recreational use. It is anticipated that consideration will be given as to how Harborough District Council can develop this area.

Councillor Pain provided an overview of the benefits of the recommendation, commenting that the proposals were good for both sport within the District as well as for HTRFC and HTFC. The proposal also demonstrated significant partnership and collaborative working.

RESOLVED that:

- i) the proposals as set out in 4.14.1, 4.14.2 and 4.14.3 to the report be approved.
- ii) authority be delegated to the Corporate Director (BJ) in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Portfolio Holder Financial and Assets to finalise the surrender of the existing leases and the granting of two new leases and take whatever steps are necessary to implement the decision outlined in (i) above.

Summary of Reasons

The Corporate Delivery Plan 2017/18 Objective CO8 "The Council makes effective use of its assets and resources" will be satisfied as well as furthering good asset /property management of the Council's assets. In addition, maximum benefits from the Council's assets will be realised.

The recreational activities at Northampton Road, Market Harborough will be enhanced and the proposals will also assist with the Corporate Delivery Plan 2017/18 Objective CO4 "People have opportunities to access a range of leisure, sport and physical activities.

The meeting closed at 5.33 pm