

CABINET REFERRALS

25th July 2017

7.1 CA/076/17 Flexible Homeless Support Funding

Decision

Resolved to recommend:

- 1. The supplementary estimates for 2017/18 to established budgets as detailed in the body of the Cabinet report and Table 1 & 2 (as amended pursuant to recommendation 1) be incorporated into budgets for 2018/19.**

Reason for Decision

For Members to consider the proposals in ring fenced funding made available for homeless prevention.

Corporate Objectives

Affordable Housing

Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments

Monitoring Officer: The statutory changes are likely to give rise to a significant increase in legal challenges to decisions. Accordingly, it is important that a reserve fund/budget is allocated to fund associated legal costs required to defend challenges. This will need to be monitored over the next 12-18 months to assess if permanent additional staffing resource is required in the legal team.

Deputy S.151 Officer

The report sets out funding received and notified from central government that is ring fenced for specific purposes. The planned expenditure will have to be contained within the grant received.

Advice

Councillor Griffiths explained that the legislation was changing in October. Funding had been received from central Government and this report explained how this money would be used.

N Brathwaite explained that the increase in demand for homelessness and prevention services is set to grow significantly with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act which came into force on 1 April 2017 and which the Council must comply with from 1 April 2018.

M Gaynor added that the scale of the impact of this was significantly more than what the government had predicted. There would be more people in temporary accommodation and a longer time spent there. There would also be an impact on housing benefits and the ability to find people homes which they can afford. Therefore the more the council could prevent homelessness, the better.

N Brathwaite added that they believed the figures for homelessness cases will triple regarding the number spent in temporary accommodation and the time they spend there. Currently Dacorum had 100 households in temporary accommodation for an average of 6 months. Therefore the impact would be very high. The act would also give the council a wider remit as to those people who they could assist, which could result in an increase of more complex cases. She reported that she was already in contact with London Borough Councils as they were purchasing accommodation in the Dacorum area therefore restricting our options.

M Gaynor said that this was not bad legislation but just one that would have a massive impact.

E Brooks reported that the level of homelessness cases had recently already increased and the service were already seeing an impact on performance before the legislation has been introduced.

Councillor Harden asked if there had been any reassurance from government that the grant would continue.

N Brathwaite said there was assurance for 2 years but no mention for thereafter.

Councillor Griffiths referred to page 44 of the report and the £50k allocated for improvements to temporary accommodation and didn't feel that this was a good use of resources.

E Brooks explained that this was allocated for Leys Rd temporary accommodation which was run down. The use of this money would be explored.

Members felt that the approval of table 2 should be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Finance and Resources, along with M Gaynor.

N Brathwaite said there were additional pressures to try and work with people during a 56 day timeframe to prevent homelessness. If they didn't find accommodation then further investigation would be required. She would soon be meeting partners to increase the council's portfolio of housing stock.

Voting

None.

25th July 2017

7.2 CA/077/17 CREATION OF ADDITIONAL UNITS IN SUPPORTED HOUSING SCHEMES AND THE UPGRADE OF COMMUNAL FACILITIES

Decision

Resolved to recommend:

- 1. the approval of a supplementary capital estimate to create three new homes and refurbishment of communal areas at three Supported Housing sites. The details of the required supplementary estimate is in section 1 of the Part II appendix of the report to Cabinet.**

Reason for Decision

To outline a proposal to create 3 wheelchair accessible properties and improve office space, laundry facilities and communal areas at 3 Supported Housing sites in the Borough.

To seek delegated authority to award contracts in relation to the work that needs to be carried out at these 3 Supported Housing sites.

Corporate Objectives

Providing good quality affordable homes for those most in need.

The project will:

Provide three flats suitable for wheelchair users at Great Sturgess Road, The Driftway and Old House Court Supported Housing Schemes. The provision of wheelchair friendly dwellings will enhance the quality of life for residents who require a totally suitable and adapted property, enabling them to live an independent lifestyle in an affordable property.

Deliver modern, comfortable and easily accessible facilities, including new laundries and offices for the Supported Housing Officers for the tenants within the Great Sturgess Road, The Driftway and Old House Court Supported Housing Schemes. The Driftway project will also provide a new Guest Room facility. These new facilities will be at a central location enabling tenants to access them easier than they currently can.

Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments

Monitoring Officer:

The building contracts will need to follow a regulated procurement process in compliance with the Council's Commissioning and Procurement Standing Orders and the building works contracts should be checked by the council's legal team prior to completion.

The decision to award the contract should be documented in an Officer Decision Sheet signed by the Assistant Director (Housing) at the appropriate time.

Deputy S.151 Officer

The costs of developing these units can be met from the proceeds of high value properties already received. The final approvals from reserves can be finalised once contracts have been agreed and built into the next business plan considered by members.

Advice

E Brooks explained that the report explained the aims of the plan with regards to the 3 sites highlighted. The purpose was to create decent offices in the communal schemes. If the scheme was a success then sale of properties could be ongoing and give the council an opportunity to do something different.

Councillor Williams didn't have any negatives to raise. He asked if the council planned for this accommodation in the new builds.

E Brooks confirmed this for our own stock as well as being able to influence others and their developments.

Voting

None.

25th July 2017

7.3 CA/078/17 Business rate relief schemes

Decision

Resolved to Recommend:

- 1. to introduce a Supporting Small Business rate relief scheme**
- 2. to introduce a Support for Pubs rate relief scheme**
- 3. consultation with Herts County Council on option 3 of the cabinet report for the Revaluation Relief scheme, and that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director (Finance & Resources) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources to agree to introduce a scheme based on these principles after the County's response is received**
- 4. to introduce a 100% rural rate relief scheme**
- 5. to introduce a Local Newspaper rate relief scheme**
- 6. that authority be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources to agree the introduction of future discretionary rate relief schemes which are proposed, fully funded and have detailed guidance provided by Government**

Reason for Decision

To consider the introduction of discretionary business rate relief schemes to provide additional help for businesses in line with announcements made by the Chancellor in the 2017 Spring Budget

Corporate Objectives

These reliefs will support the corporate objective of Ensuring economic growth and prosperity.

Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments

Monitoring Officer:

No comments to add to the report.

Deputy S.151 Officer

This is a Deputy S151 Officer report.

Advice

Councillor Elliot introduced the report and said that the recommendations set out would enable Dacorum to implement various business rate relief schemes announced by the Chancellor at the last Budget and where the details were not finalised until June. Government are fully funding these schemes, so there is no cost to DBC. The details of most schemes have been set by DCLG, but we have a degree of flexibility about the "Revaluation relief" scheme, discussed in section 4 of the report. The proposed option demonstrates the commitment of Dacorum to help support small local businesses.

C Baker added that there were a range of different schemes, those set as national legislation for longer periods of time and those allowing local government to implement short term schemes and will be fully funded.

Councillor Williams felt that this was fairly straightforward and supported by government.

Councillor Tindall referred to the backlog of appeals and asked if that was a result of the government guidance and would the situation change.

C Baker said there were new ways to put in place for rate payers; however they wouldn't know the impact of this for another few years.

Councillor Williams asked if the situation with the backlog was improving.

C Baker said that the backlog nationally had been cleared but this had since increased drastically.

Voting

None.

25th July 2017

7.4 CA/079/17 Financial regulations review

Resolved to recommend:

- 1. the approval of the revised Financial Regulations as detailed in paragraphs 4 to 15 of the Cabinet report.**

Reason for Decision

To seek Cabinet approval of the recommended changes to the Financial Regulations 2017.

Corporate Objectives

The efficacy of the Financial Regulations supports all of the Council's objectives.

Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments

Deputy S151 Officer

This is a S151 Officer report.

Monitoring Officer

No comments to add to the report.

Advice

Councillor Elliot introduced the report and said that the purpose was to update Financial Regulations for approval levels for invoice reductions and disposal of assets to ensure authorisation levels are consistent with Procurement Standing orders and other sections of the Financial Regulations and to update the Regulations to take account of Electronic Purchasing Cards (EPCs) as the Council moves away from credit cards. These updates have been proposed after taking account of feedback from Audit Committee who requested some minor amendments to some of the wording.

Voting

None.

25th July 2017

7.5 CA/080/17 Medium Term Financial Strategy

Decision

Resolved to recommend:

- 1. the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2017/18 – 2021/22 be approved**

Reason for Decision

To present to Cabinet the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy for approval.

Corporate Objectives

The Medium Term Financial Strategy supports the delivery of all five of the Corporate Objectives.

Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments

Monitoring Officer:

No comments to add to the report.

S.151 Officer

This is a Section 151 Officer report.

Advice

J Deane introduced the report and referred Cabinet Members to Appendix A, the MTFS Update.

He explained that the Council had a multi-year savings programme in place which involved managers working towards identifying savings more than one year in advance. This has led to some of the future years' savings targets having already been identified, and that work

must now focus on ensuring that these projects are delivered. In order to ensure that progress against these longer term projects is robustly monitored, updates on key initiatives will be included within quarterly finance reports to Members throughout the year.

J Deane also explained that there were some significant risks to the Council's medium-term funding streams assumed in Appendix A, as follows:

- Revenue Support Grant – although the period 2019/20, inclusive, is covered by the 4-year Settlement agreement with government made in 2016, the tariffs assumed for the years beyond 2019/20 are estimates and subject to change. Given the size of previous years' reductions, any further reductions within these estimates could have significant implications for the Council.
- Business Rates Retained – uncertainty remains over Government's implementation of 100% rates retention by the local government sector: including any additional responsibility it might bring for the council, when it will happen, and, given that the Local Government Finance Act was omitted from the Queen's Speech, *whether* it will happen. Again, given the scale of Business Rates retained within the context of the Council's overall budget, any changes to the amounts assumed in this MTFS could prove significant.

Councillor Elliot felt that it was important to keep a close eye on those savings identified but not yet delivered.

Councillor Williams agreed as delivery was key to help contribute to the overall savings.

Voting

None.