

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 4 DECEMBER 2012 FROM THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE PANEL 27 NOVEMBER 2012**

### **RP82: EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED:** That under Section 100(a)(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 paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

### **RP83: EXEMPT REPORT: ASSET MANAGEMENT REPORT**

The Property Services Manager presented a report which highlighted the performance of Property Services in a few areas of work it undertook on behalf of the Council. Members were informed that the report would also help to highlight the importance of the Council's property portfolio not only in terms of delivery of its services to the public, but also its potential to significantly contribute to the Council's activities by providing revenue income streams as well as capital funds to help deliver its Capital Programme.

The Property Services Manager responded to questions and comments from the Panel.

**RESOLVED:** The Panel noted the report.

### **RP84: EXEMPT CABINET REPORT: ASSET MANAGEMENT, DOWNHAM MARKET – POTENTIAL SALE OF LAND**

The Property Services Manager presented the report which provided information on the proposed disposal of land at Church Road, Downham Market.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Mrs Mellish, Ward Member addressed the Panel.

The Property Services Manager responded to comments and questions from the Panel.

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Commercial Services addressed the Panel and gave an undertaking that he would include the comments and views of the Panel when presenting the report to Cabinet.

**RESOLVED:** That Cabinet be informed that the Resources and Performance Panel supports the recommendations as set out in the report to Cabinet.

### **RP85: EXEMPT CABINET REPORT: COST REDUCTION PROGRAMME – APPLICATION FOR EARLY RETIREMENT**

The Panel received the above report and the Chief Executive invited questions and comments from those present.

There were no comments or questions from the Panel.

**RESOLVED:** That Cabinet be informed that the Resources and Performance Panel supports the recommendations as set out in the report to Cabinet.

### **RETURN TO OPEN SESSION**

RP86: **CABINET REPORT: LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME – END OF CONSULTATION PERIOD**

Councillor H Humphrey left the meeting during consideration of this item.

In presenting the report, the Revenues and Benefits Manager explained that The Welfare Reform Act 2012 would abolish the current system of Council Tax Benefit (CTB) on 31 March 2013. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 then introduced a statutory requirement for Billing Authorities to devise their own local schemes for Council Tax Support (CTS) for those in their area on low incomes. The new schemes would start from 1 April 2013.

To reduce the Welfare Bill by over £450 million the Government had cut the funding for CTS by 10% compared to estimated CTB expenditure for 2013/2014. Billing Authorities must decide how to manage this reduction in income and distribute the funds available between its residents. The Government had also set certain other parameters around the scheme to be taken into consideration.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager explained that local schemes for CTS for Year 1 (2013/2014) must be agreed by the Council and be in place by 31 January 2013. The Council agreed a draft CTS scheme for consultation on 21 August 2012 and consulted between 23 August 2012 and 18 October 2012.

The report summarised the draft scheme for CTS, responses to the consultation and made recommendations for the final CTS scheme for Year 1 (2013/2014). Members were advised that the report should be read in conjunction with the Cabinet report of 21 August 2012.

The Panel's attention was drawn to the following sections of the report:

- Section 1: Introduction.
- Section 2: Progress to Date – Timetable, Cabinet Report 21 August 2012, Draft CTS Model, Consultation Process, Equalities Impact Assessment.
- Section 3: Funding.
- Section 4: Government Initiative – Capped Scheme and Transitional Grant.
- Section 5: Actions resulting from the Consultation and Equality Impact Assessment.
- Section 6: Full Council TAX Support Scheme for 2013/2014.
- Section 7: Future Years.
- Section 8: Financial Implications.
- Section 9: Notice of Motion from Council.

- Section 10: Risks.
- Section 11: Statutory Implications.

In response to questions from Councillor de Winton on the Council picking up the shortfall of £85,000, the Revenues and Benefits Manager explained that if the Council agreed a Council Tax Scheme that met the specific criteria a one off grant of £28,178 would be received in addition to the funding outlined in the Cabinet Report dated 21 August 2012. However, the net shortfall for the Council would still be approximately £85,000.

Following comments from Councillor J Collop which included the proposal to defer the implementation of a Local Council Tax Scheme for one year and his Notice of Motion to Council, the Leader explained that it might well be necessary for Councillor Collop to bring back his Notice of Motion to Council in a year's time. The decision had not been easy for the Council to agree to defer the Local Scheme for a year and outlined the background for the Council's decision, in particularly referring to the technical changes. He added that the Chief Executive and himself had earlier that day attended a meeting with all Norfolk Councils to agree a common approach across Norfolk. However, it was doubtful that all other Norfolk Councils would adopt the approach the Borough Council had chosen to take.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager reminded Members that the consultation on the proposed technical changes had been considered by the Panel during the previous year.

The Chief Executive commented that it was important that it was made clear that the Borough Council was only a part player. The Council would have a £85,000 shortfall, but it was important that the technical changes were linked to the other public partners - the Police and Crime Commissioners and County Council to ensure they were able to balance their respective budgets. The Chief Executive referred to the meeting earlier that day which the Leader and himself attended and advised that all authorities involved were close to reaching a uniform scenario across the county.

**RESOLVED:** That Cabinet be informed that the Resources and Performance Panel supports the recommendations as set out in the report to Cabinet.