

## REPORTS OF CABINET

(Meetings held on 3 January and 7 February 2007)

### 1. **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY (REPORT A – 3 JANUARY 2007) (MINUTE NO. 78)**

The Cabinet has agreed a revised Procurement Strategy for the Council.

The Corporate Overview Panel in 2005 focused their work programme on a number of reviews around the theme of procurement of goods and services. The reviews were identified as potential areas of concern because of slippage in the capital programme, contractual issues and the general opportunities that existed around the wider procurement agenda. The Council has already agreed new Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

Procurement is the foundation of providing cost effective and efficient services. Ensuring that the appropriate strategic framework is in place is essential in order for the Council to be proactive and innovative in the provision of value for money services. The Council has already undertaken significant work in this area. The previous procurement strategy encompassed many good practices identified in the National Strategy. However, the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment identified the need for further development of the existing strategy which was seen to be weak in terms of its contents regarding partnership and modern contractual principles and lacked guidance on areas of tender assessment.

The new Strategy builds on the work already undertaken and sets out the framework for the Council's approach to procurement in ensuring that this area of activity meets the requirements of the Council and directly contributes to the achievement of the Council's corporate aims and objectives.

The Strategy is supported by an Action Plan to develop further the Council's procurement policies and practices. The Plan also establishes a programme for continuous improvement whilst measuring targets against the milestones within the National Procurement Strategy.

In particular, the Cabinet are pleased to note that the Council will be working with the Regional Centre of Procurement Excellence to take advantage of regional collaborative opportunities and, in addition, are committed to actively engaging with small businesses in order to increase the amount of work, goods and services awarded locally.

### 2. **GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME (REPORT B – 3 JANUARY 2007) (MINUTE NO. 79)**

The Cabinet has agreed a Gender Equality Scheme, as detailed in Appendix 3 to Report B to them, as the Council's scheme for April 2007.

The Equality Act 2006 places a general duty on public authorities to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and promote equality of opportunity between men and women. The statutory duty comes into effect on 6 April 2007.

The Act places several specific duties on the Council:

- publish a Gender Equality Scheme (GES) no later than 5 April 2007;
- identify the gender equality goals and the actions that will be taken to meet them;
- the GES must be produced in consultation with employees and other stakeholders;
- undertake and publish an equal pay policy including promotion, development and occupational segregation;
- undertake and publish gender impact assessments for all legislation and major policy developments and publish criteria for conducting them;
- the GES must show how progress will be monitored and reviewed;
- produce an action plan for the next 3 years;
- review and report on progress every year; and
- review the scheme every 3 years.

This is the first time that the Council has had to produce a GES and care has been taken to follow the statutory code of practice published by the Equal Opportunities Commission. The purpose of the GES is to bring about change and remove any inequalities due to gender. It is therefore a requirement to include goals for action within the GES.

To assist in setting the goals an employee survey was undertaken in July 2006 the results of which have formed the basis of a set of goals against which progress on gender issues will be measured. The actions required by the GES will be undertaken in a range of ways. Some will be incorporated into services' day to day provision, whilst others will be carried out by the Equalities Unit or Human Resources.

Members noted that much of the content of the Scheme was already undertaken by the Council. The Action Plan and draft goals would sharpen the process and ensure that actions were put into practice

### **3. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT ESTIMATES 2007/08 (REPORT C – 3 JANUARY AND 7 FEBRUARY 2007) (MINUTE NO. 80)**

At their meeting in January the Cabinet considered the draft Housing Revenue Account for 2007/08 together with the anticipated impact of the draft Subsidy Determination on the Council's 2007/08 HRA estimates.

In particular members discussed the homelessness element of the budget. The homelessness assistance work is undertaken by the Housing Needs section of the Council. Members noted that whilst there had been a reduction in the HRA budget for this area of work, funding is also available in the General Fund budget. The homelessness service is demand driven and therefore there will always be fluctuations in funding requirements. However, the budget is managed in a proactive way and the Cabinet commended officers for the work their work in this area.

At their meeting in February, the Cabinet considered and agreed the updated Housing Revenue Account estimates with the details of the most recent variations.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) That service charges in line with the detailed proposals in section 2 of Report C to the Cabinet in January 2007 be agreed;**
- (b) That garage rents be increased by £1.15 per week (plus VAT for garages let to non-council tenants);**
- (c) That an average increase of 5% in rents for 2007/08; in line with rent restructuring guidelines be approved; and**
- (d) That the updated budget as set out in Appendix 1 to report F on 7 February 2006 be approved.**

**4. GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET AND ALL CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2007/08 – 2010/11 (REPORT D – 3 JANUARY AND 7 FEBRUARY 2007) (MINUTE NO. 81)**

At their meeting in January the Cabinet were updated on the work that had taken place since November 2006, the provisional grant settlement and other proposals that would affect the General Fund budget.

Members discussed the way in which the grant settlement is formulated and the varying aspects of the revenue support grant and the non domestic rate element. Members were of the view that there is an imbalance in the distribution of the Government grant funding across the country. They will be looking further at information in relation to funding per head of population in the New Forest compared to the rest of Hampshire and the country.

In considering the detail of the budget the Cabinet noted that the level of DEFRA grant funding for local coastal protection works continues to reduce. Only the capital schemes that were contained within the current Shoreline Management Plan were fully grant funded. Again they will look further at information on any proposed capital schemes that are outside of that Plan.

The Chairman thanked the Finance and Efficiency Portfolio Holder and all the individual committees and review panels for the work they had undertaken so far on the budget preparation.

The Cabinet, at their meeting in February, considered the final draft General Fund Revenue and Capital Budgets for the financial year 2007/08. They considered the comments from Review Panels and Committees and agreed a number of minor amendments to the proposals that had arisen since their meeting in January.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) That the General Fund budget for 2007/08 be set at £21.836m;**
- (b) That the Capital Programme for 2007/08 be agreed as £15.751m;**
- (c) That the Council tax be agreed at £145.22 for a Band D property for 2007/08; and**

**(d) That the site licence fees and service charges at Stillwater Park be increased by 3.0%.**

**5. REVIEW OF THE HOUSING ENFORCEMENT POLICY (REPORT A - 7 FEBRUARY 2007) (MINUTE NO. 86)**

The Council has certain duties to deal with poor housing in the area. The duty covers all privately owned and rented housing and rented social housing. Minimum standards are set by the Department for Communities and Local Government and are designed to ensure that housing is safe, in reasonable repair and with a minimum level of facilities.

Following the introduction of the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System and the new enforcement powers in the Housing Act 2004, the Cabinet has agreed a revised Enforcement Policy. The Policy is a statement of how the Council fulfils its duties and helps to stimulate good quality local housing in line with the aims of the main Housing Strategy.

The revised Policy will ensure that the Council is able to respond to complaints about sub standard housing and comply with its statutory duties as a housing authority. However, the Council will still attempt to deal with issues informally where appropriate and take the least intrusive action possible in owner occupied dwellings.

**6. BLACKFIELD NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE (REPORT B - 7 FEBRUARY 2007) (MINUTE NO. 87)**

The Cabinet has agreed revised arrangements for the management of the Blackfield Neighbourhood Centre. In 1996 the Council granted a 10 year lease of the Blackfield Community Centre to the Blackfield Neighbourhood Centre Committee, a community based group set up solely to run the building. That Trust disbanded in November 2006.

The local area is one of very high social need and the Centre provides a valuable service for the local community. The Cabinet has therefore agreed that the Council should maintain responsibility for managing the building. An agreement for the day to day management of the Centre will be drawn up with Totton College.

**7. THE FUTURE OF CENTRAL CONTROL (REPORT C – 7 FEBRUARY 2007) (MINUTE NO. 88)**

In June 2006, the Cabinet agreed that tenders be invited for the provision of a monitoring service for the Council's out of hours service and the monitoring of the Council's sheltered housing and lifeline customers. The Cabinet has now considered the outcome of this process and the recommendations of the working party established to oversee it. As a result they have agreed that 'Tunstall Response' be appointed to provide the Council's central control service from 1 April 2007 at an annual cost of £59,411.

Following detailed consideration of all the tenders received, the working party was satisfied that Tunstall Response is best able to provide a quality service to residents at a price that is acceptable. The company already provide services to many other local authorities and registered social landlords across the UK. The company has

worked with the Council in the past and, although the call centre in Doncaster, is not local, the working party were impressed with the efforts that the company has made to reassure both the Council and residents that this is not an issue that will adversely affect the proposed service.

The Housing, Health and Social Inclusion Review Panel support the proposal and are of the view that the process had been very thorough. The tenants also support the proposals and are pleased that the emergency calls will now be separated from general maintenance calls. They feel that this will provide an enhanced service.

The service will be monitored very carefully to ensure the standard of provision is maintained.

**8. FINANCIAL REPORT – FORECAST FULL YEAR AND ACTUAL FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2006 TO DECEMBER 2006 (REPORT D – 7 FEBRUARY 2007) (MINUTE NO. 89)**

The Cabinet has considered the forecast budget variations of all portfolios and committees from the approved original estimates for 2006/07. They have agreed the revised General Fund budget, the revised capital expenditure programme and, subject to the recommendation below, the revised Housing Revenue Account budget as set out in Appendices 1, 2 & 3 of Report D to them. They have also noted the financial position of Commercial Services and the actual expenditure to profiled budget positions of the General Fund, the Capital Programme and Housing Revenue Account.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) That, in the Housing Revenue Account budget, a supplementary estimate of £70,000 in respect of service charge income be agreed; and**
- (b) That it be noted that in accordance with Financial Regulation 1.3, the Director of Resources suspended Financial Regulations, in order that additional capital expenditure of £260,000 could be incurred on the purchase of a property in Hythe for the improvement of the Council's land holding on adjoining properties.**

**9. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2007/08 (REPORT E – 7 FEBRUARY 2007) (MINUTE NO. 90)**

The Cabinet has considered a strategy for the treasury management function of the Council for 2007/08. Members have noted the detail of the financing of the capital expenditure for 2007/08 and the borrowing and investment of funds.

Under the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, the Council must approve, revise and monitor a minimum number of mandatory prudential indicators. The indicators cover the affordability and prudence of capital expenditure, external debt and the Council's treasury and investment strategies for each financial year.

The purpose of the indicators is to provide a framework for capital expenditure decision making. They highlight the level of capital expenditure and the impact of that expenditure on borrowing and investment levels, which will affect the treasury management strategy for future years.

The Cabinet noted that the balance sheet continues to be strong in line with the published Council objectives, and no immediate problems are revealed in the forecast position.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) *That the prudential indicators as detailed in Appendix 1 to Report E to the Cabinet be approved; and*
- (b) *That the treasury management strategy be approved and the treasury prudential indicators as detailed in Appendix 2 to Report E to the Cabinet be adopted.*

**10. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT – DESIGN WASTE MANAGEMENT IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS (REPORT H – 7 FEBRUARY 2007) (MINUTE NO. 93)**

Following public consultation, the Cabinet has agreed a Supplementary Planning Document 'Design of Waste Management Facilities in New Development' (as set out in Appendix 2 to Report H to them) along with an updated Sustainability Appraisal Report.

The Policy will promote planning policies and infrastructure to make recycling easier. It is not the intention to promote any particular form of waste storage, but to ensure that facilities are designed into new developments to accommodate such storage methods as are deemed appropriate at the present time, as well as leaving scope for any future changes.

**11. PROJECT INTEGRA – REVISIONS TO CONSTITUTION AND ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN (REPORT I – 7 FEBRUARY 2007) (MINUTE NO. 94)**

The Cabinet has considered some revisions to the Project Integra Constitution together with the annual Business Plan and recommends the adoption of both documents.

The Constitution has been revised to reflect developments over the last five years and to clarify the role of Project Integra and that of its partners. The revised Constitution will generally provide more opportunities for joined up working and collaboration within the scope of the partnership. However, each individual authority retains its independent status within the partnership.

The Project Integra Partnership continues to stand out in the UK with an 81% level of diversion from landfill now achieved. The overall recycling/composting rate is approximately 35%, with an energy recovery rate of around 46%.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) *That the revised and updated constitution as set out in Appendix A to Report I to the Cabinet for the Project Integra Strategic Board be agreed; and*
- (b) *That the Project Integra Annual Business Plan for 2007 – 2012 as set out in Appendix B to Report I to the Cabinet be approved.*

**12. RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY DELEGATIONS UNDER THE GAMBLING ACT 2005  
– 7 FEBRUARY 2007 (MINUTE NO. 95)**

The Cabinet has considered new delegations in relation to the Gambling Act 2005.

**RECOMMENDED**

- (a) *That the Head of Planning, Development Control Manager, Area Planning Officers, Principal Planning Officer and Senior Planning Officer – Enforcement be authorised to carry out the Council's functions as a responsible authority under section 157 (e) of the Gambling Act 2005; and***
- (b) *That the Environmental Health Manager, Senior Environmental Health Officers, and Environmental Health Officers be authorised to carry out the Council's function as a responsible authority under section 157 (g) of the Gambling Act 2005.***

**Cllr M J Kendal  
CHAIRMAN**

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