



meeting

COUNTY COUNCIL

date

13th December 2007

agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND PROPERTY

A. FINANCE

1. Work on the County Council's budget for 2008/9 continues at pace, and following the Revenue Support Grant settlement earlier this month I have been working with colleagues and officers to finalise the budget proposals which will be considered by Cabinet on the 19th December and issued for consultation. During the period since last County Council meeting initial consultations with the public have taken place via the citizens panel – "Nottinghamshire Listens" through the County Councils website, and the Leader has also been interviewed on local radio regarding budget issues. The views of the public will be taken into account in formulating the final budget proposals. The consultation arrangements will be examined by Overview and Scrutiny in January as part of the normal process leading up to the approval of the budget.
2. In regards to Pensions I mentioned in my previous report that the Pensions Committee had expressed certain concerns to Government regarding the timing of the introduction of the new look Local Government Pension Scheme. The matter of greatest concern is the ability of payroll systems to deal with the new variable contribution rates and whilst we are confident the County Council system will be amended in time there is concern that all of the smaller organisations that are part of the Pension Fund may not have the required flexibility and the pay overs from the employers to the fund may be incorrect and need validating. This could potentially place a significant strain on the Pension team. The Pension Committee sent representations on this matter to Government and the response has been less than helpful. The Government still intend to press on with introducing the new scheme from April 2008. Members of the Pension Committee have suggested that the Local Government Association and the Employers Organisation should be requested to lobby Government to consider a delay.
3. Since the last County Council the Finance Member Reference Group has met once to consider budget issues and variations to the Capital Programme.

4. Through my Finance Portfolio meeting with officers, I have considered a number of reports prior to consideration at Cabinet. They included the proposal for temporary funding to the Creswell Crags Heritage Trust which was approved by Cabinet in November as well as the quarterly revenue budget and Capital Programme monitoring reports. A report on allocations from the contingency was also considered and this will go to Cabinet in December.
5. The main call upon contingency resources is in respect of flooding and the impact that had on the highways budgets. Costs incurred included the filling and distribution of sandbags to households affected, pumping out water from a number of establishments, road closures and signing, and dealing with the damage to drains and highways as a result of the floods. Expenditure just over £1,000,000 has been incurred which will be met from the contingency. Of that expenditure about £700,000 would be eligible under the Governments emergency assistance scheme known as the Bellwin Scheme but no such funding is made available until a financial threshold is exceeded. For the County Council that financial threshold is £1.6 million so at this stage the Council will receive no grant assistance. A precautionary claim has been lodged with the Government advising them of the scale of expenditure incurred in relation to the floods and forwarning them that should there be other emergencies / incidents during the remainder of the financial year then cumulatively the threshold may be exceeded and a claim submitted.
6. I have also been approached by the Environment Agency who are looking for a contribution towards a number of smaller flood alleviation schemes in the County area principally in Burton Joyce, Gunthorpe and a number of other villages and isolated properties in the lower Trent area. These are being evaluated by officers and I shall take a decision based on that evaluation.

PROPERTY

During the period 17 October to 27 November 2007 there were 3 Property Pre Agenda Meetings at which 21 separate reports were considered and these were taken on to the Property Portfolio Meetings for decisions.

- **A best practice case study has been published by the East Midlands Centre of Excellence detailing the Business Improvement Project undertaken by Building Direct.** The initiative has accelerated the change process within Building Direct and, as a result of the training undertaken by the business improvement team within the business, the potential Gershon efficiency savings have been identified for the next five years.
- **SCAPE/Willmott-Dixon Construction Framework Agreement.** SCAPE System Build Ltd is a Local Authority Controlled Company based in Nottingham, whose shareholders are Derby City, Derbyshire County,

Gateshead, Nottingham City, Nottinghamshire County and Warwickshire County Councils. A National Construction Framework Agreement has recently been set up and Peter Ware of NCC Legal Services has been involved in some groundbreaking legal work to create this agreement and his role in it should be formally recognised.

- **Members' Annual Property Tour 2007.** The Members' Annual Property Tour took place on 18 October 2007 and the feedback received from those who attended shows that it was a very successful day. Properties visited were the new Cotgrave Primary School, Lawn View House Offices at Sutton in Ashfield, Rufford Country Park Mill conversion, Ernehale Lea Day Centre at Arnold and Netherfield Primary School.
- **Lawn View House (Ashfield Area Office)** (Interserve contractor). All the occupiers have now moved into this landmark office building. The official opening by the Chairman of the County Council took place on 29 November 2007.
- **Candelby Lane Primary School, Cotgrave.** (Tomlinson contractor). This impressive new School was completed in November 2007.
- **Sherwood – The Living Legend Project.** “The Tree” design made the final shortlist for the TV programme and public vote is in early December 2007. The actor Brian Blessed is championing it.
- **The Samworth Church Academy, Mansfield.** Property is leading on a lot of work involved in the concept design and procurement of this project. The outline business case has been approved by Partnerships for Schools and the Department for Children, Schools & Families. The next phase is to appoint a contractor from the national framework. The provisional programme is for the building contract to be awarded in Nov/Dec 2008 for a practical completion in June/July 2010.
- **Rufford Country Park – Mill.** (Tomlinsons contractor). The major refurbishment of the “listed” Mill building at Rufford Country Park is almost complete and the shop was handed over in October.
- **Clarborough Primary School.** (Interserve contractor). There are still difficulties in getting the target cost within the project budget due in part to the design of the foundations and the recent flooding requiring a redesign of the proposed floor levels. Started on site 12 November.
- **Dukeries Youth Centre, Ollerton.** (Tomlinsons contractor). Work is progressing well on site for a completion in December 2007.
- **Hawtonville Youth Centre, Newark.** (Tomlinsons contractor). When the target cost is agreed with the contractor the project can start on site. Target cost is £35K in excess of LEC. Variation report to be submitted.

- **Dorkett View, Arnold.** (Interserve contractor). This new Day Centre is now completed.
- **The West Bridgford CHUB.** (Marriotts contractor). The concept architectural design for this joint project with Rushcliffe Borough Council has been approved by the Members Property Reference Group and is now out to public consultation. A planning application should be made in January 2008.
- **The Worksoop CHUB.** (Interserve contractor). The concept design is being developed, but there are significant site issues that need to be addressed. The external design is currently being developed.
- **Manor Park Children's Centre, Calverton.** (Marriotts contractor). This project has started on site.
- **Construction Frameworks.** An independent review of the Nottinghamshire Construction Framework (NCF) and the Building Direct/Robert Woodhead Construction Framework by an external consultant has been commissioned and should be completed in March 2008. The purpose of the review is to ensure that the original objectives of establishing the framework partnership improve the cost and quality management of projects.

**COUNCILLOR CHRIS BARON
CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND PROPERTY**