



meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 16 DECEMBER 2004

agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND PROPERTY

SECTION A - FINANCE

1. Following pressure from MP's and the Local Government Association, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his pre-budget statement on 2 December 2004 that he was making available additional resources to Local Government equivalent to £1 billion for next year. This was achieved by a mixture of additional cash and relaxation of some performance targets. The Chancellor's pre-budget statement was followed the same day by an announcement by Nick Raynsford on the provisional revenue support grant settlement for 2005/6, an improvement of £5 million compared to the expected grant position for 2005/6. This additional money is for one year only. However, there is an offset against this from the decision by the Government to issue an RSG Amending Report for 2003/4 to take account of some problems with Census population data in London and elsewhere. Whilst it was right for these errors to be corrected, it does not seem right to me that this should be funded by top-slicing grant from other Authorities, particularly after the year has ended, and particularly since the amount involved for us is £1.2 million. The Leader has written to Local MP's asking them to ask the Government to review this decision.
2. I have approved increases to the Capital Programme to allow for improvements to catering facilities at Brunts and Manor Schools and at Sutton Centre. The expenditure is being financed from DLO reserves on an "invest to save" basis.
3. I have continued to attend meetings of the Berry Hill Sports Project, and was pleased that Mansfield District Council have recently given

planning permission for stage 1 of this project. When completed, it should be an excellent facility not only just for Mansfield but also for the rest of the County.

4. The budgets for electoral divisions has now been operating for just over 1 year, and in the first year, Members have allocated £240,000 towards schemes. A report will shortly go to the Standards Committee to demonstrate the types of support that Members have been giving to their local areas.
5. Following the Pension Fund's success in the Corporate Governance Category of the LGC Awards recently, Councillor Pulk and Julian Brown were asked to speak at the recent annual conference of the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum on our approaches to securing shareholder value through Corporate Governance activities. The LAPFF is particularly active in these areas, and now has over 30 of the Local Authority Pension Funds in Membership. Councillor Pulk was appointed Vice-Chair of the Forum at its recent Annual General Meeting.

SECTION B

1. During the period 10 November to 3 December there has been 1 Property Progress meeting at which 13 separate reports have been considered, and these will be taken on to the Finance Portfolio Meeting for decisions.
2. The Rushcliffe Local Plan Inquiry commences in January 2005, and the County Council will be promoting as landowner a number of sites for allocation within the plan.
3. The Panel has made their recommendation following the examination in public of the Joint Structure Plan Review. Gedling Borough Council have been awaiting this and will determine if this will affect their response of their Local Plan Review. This may impact of the County Council's land ownership within the Borough.
4. The Planning application for the Rushcliffe Extra Care Scheme has been submitted. The OJEC Survey for Design and Build Contractor has been placed and is generating a lot of interest. A bid for Department of Health Grant Funding for Extra Care Schemes in Mansfield and Ashfield has been submitted.
5. The final Select Committee Meeting of the Best Value Review of Property has been scheduled for December and the final report is being produced. As part of the review, the Council has received a detailed benchmarking report from PricewaterhouseCoopers which suggests that there are areas for potential savings from property running costs. This will be included in the action plan in the final report.
6. We continue to seek a site for office accommodation in the Ashfield Area and have submitted an outline planning application for a site in Station Road, Sutton-in-Ashfield.

7. The County Council's Planning Committee at its meeting on 30 November 2004, approved the revised scheme for opening up part of the River Maun Culvert at Meadow House, Mansfield. The work has now been ordered with the Environment Department for an anticipated start in March 2005. There is significant grant aid from the Environment Agency.
8. The Corporate Planned Buildings Maintenance Programme is progressing satisfactorily and a full spend of the 2004/05 budget is expected.
9. The County Hall Accommodation project, which has facilitated various staff moves associated with the restructuring of the Chief Executive and Resources Departments and the vacation of Penn House, West Bridgford, has been satisfactorily completed.

COUNCILLOR JOHN CARTER
CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND PROPERTY

Report/County Council 16 December 2004