

## **POLICY COMMITTEE**

21<sup>st</sup> May 2013

**Present** –The Chairman (Councillor Knowles-Fitton) and Councillors Barrington, Beck, Paul English, Foster, Hart, Heseltine, Ireton, Kerwin-Davey (substitute for Barrett), Lis, Place, Sutcliffe, Turner and Wheeler

**Officers** – Chief Executive, Director of Services, Strategic Manager for Legal and Democratic Services, Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration, Communications and Partnerships Manager, Property and Assets Manager, Interim Finance Manager, and Committee Administrator.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barrett and Myers.

Start: 6.30pm

Finish: 8.48pm

The minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 23rd April 2013 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

### **Minutes for Report**

#### **POL.510                    INTERIM REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING – QUARTER 4** **2012/2013**

The Corporate Head of Financial Management submitted a report advising Members of the Council's revenue budget position based on a review of income and expenditure to the end of March 2013.

The Council had a General Fund unallocated balance of £1,030k at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 which had not been utilised during 2012/13 and it was suggested that this was used to create three earmarked reserves that had been proposed in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. It was also the Council's policy to increase the General Fund Balance to a prudent level in order to mitigate the risk for any unplanned movements from budgeted net expenditure levels and variances.

The Council had managed its 2012/13 budget and generated savings for its budget targets in 2013/14 and beyond. However, the 2013/14 budget was not without pressures and it was recommended that the contingency set at £67k was increased to £100k by using £33k of the 2012/13 surplus.

Main risk areas for the Council in the 2012/13 budget had been reduced income streams from car parking, development control and building control and these would continue into 2013/14 with regular monitoring through quarterly budget clinics.

**Resolved** – (1) That the revenue budget monitoring position as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 is noted.

(2) That £33,150 is carried forward to increase the 2013/14 contingency to £100,000.

(3) That the transfer of the balance of the revenue budget surplus to three earmarked reserves: building maintenance; IT development and replacement; and vehicle fleet replacement is approved and that the allocations are delegated to the Corporate Head (Financial Management) Section 151 Officer.

POL.511 **PERFORMANCE MONITORING – QUARTER 4 2012/2013**

The Corporate Head of Financial Management submitted a report presenting the Council's monitoring report for the 2012/13 fourth quarter in accordance with arrangements set out in the Council's Performance Management Framework.

The monitoring exercise had shown that good progress had been made with implementing the Council Plan actions with 6 of the 12 having been assessed as on target. Targets had been set for the six of the thirteen indicators attached to the Council whilst the remainder were viewed only as context information. Of the six indicators with targets, data was not available for two of them, two were on target and two were below target.

**Resolved** – That the report is noted.

POL.512 **TOUR DE FRANCE**

The Chief Executive submitted a report explaining how the first two stages of the world famous Tour de France would impact on the District on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> July 2014 and highlighted the important role the Council had to play in relation to the cycle race. The specific route through the District would be announced officially on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2013.

Welcome to Yorkshire, in partnership with local authorities and other partners in the region were working together to ensure the event was a success and brought economic benefits and a lasting legacy to Yorkshire. The Tour de France provided a fantastic opportunity to enhance international awareness of the area and hopefully would encourage more people to take up cycling thereby delivering benefits to the transport network and to public health.

A Craven District Council steering group had been established in order to help with the delivery of Le Tour and also maximising the benefits to local businesses and communities in the District.

Whilst Government and external funding was still to be finalised, the report highlighted the financial contributions that would be made by other local authorities on the route and requested that Craven made a contribution from the New Homes Bonus of £87,000.

Members wholeheartedly supported Le Tour and in agreeing to make a contribution of £87,000 made it clear that this would be the Council's maximum contribution.

**Resolved** – (1) That the decision to award the Grand Depart to Leeds and to route part of the race through the District on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> July 2014 is noted and welcomed.

(2) That £87,000 from the New Homes Bonus is set aside to cover the costs associated with the event.

POL.513 **STIMULATING THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

The Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration submitted a report reviewing the current state of the construction industry in Craven and exploring a range of options for a number of measures to help stimulate growth in the local construction industry.

To attempt to counteract the decline in construction, the Government had introduced a number of initiatives to help those wishing to get a foot on the housing ladder buy their first home.

An internal officer group had discussed a wide range of ideas and produced various options to encourage and support the construction industry to increase the build rate. The group recommended the following approach:

- That the affordable housing target should be reduced from 40% to 25% for a limited time of 24 months.
- Increase the threshold for affordable homes from 5 to 10 dwellings.
- Establish a CDC shared equity scheme that uses commuted sums and other funding opportunities to build new houses with the Council retaining part ownership.
- To use funding opportunities to build houses for private rent on Council owned land.
- To target the work of the Planning Enforcement Team on tackling buildings in disrepair.

Of the 572 houses completed from 2009 to date, 253 of these were affordable (44%). Funding however, is now much reduced and this was demonstrated by the fact that the number of affordable homes built in 2012/13 was 29, less than a third of the number in 2010/11.

Although Members were in support of bringing buildings in disrepair back into use and wanted to see an increase in affordable homes for sale and rent including properties geared for older people they could not, at this time, support either a short-term 25% reduction in the affordable housing target or an increase in the affordable housing threshold from 5 to 10 dwellings, and it was

**Resolved** – (1) That, it is agreed in principle, to establish a Craven District Council shared equity scheme that uses commuted sums and other funding opportunities to build new houses on Craven District Council owned land and that a more detailed report is presented to this Committee.

(2) That, it is agreed in principle, to use funding opportunities open to Craven District Council to build houses for private rent on Craven District Council land and that a more detailed report is presented to this Committee.

(3) That, the Planning Enforcement Team target their work on tackling buildings in disrepair using Section 215 Orders.

(The Chairman, Councillor Knowles-Fitton declared an Appendix A interest in the above item as he was often involved in discussions with local developers, and he left the meeting and took no part in the voting thereon. Councillor Foster, the Vice-Chairman took the Chair for this item. Councillors Heseltine and Kerwin-Davey declared Appendix B interests as they were Trustees of land that could come forward for future development. Councillor Turner also declared an Appendix B interest as her partner was also a Trustee of land that could have future development potential)

POL.514

### **INFRASTRUCTURE RESERVE: CONNECTING THE DALES**

The Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration submitted a report informing Members of the Connecting the Dales project and requested a contribution from the New Homes Bonus Infrastructure Reserve to support the delivery of the project.

In recent years, a number of initiatives had improved parts of the towpath infrastructure but this had resulted in a stretch of unimproved towpath broadly aligned to the Craven District boundary that was recognised as one of the poorest along the length of the Canal.

A steering group and several interested organisations had put together proposals to improve the towpath, which would be in two phases due to the level of investment required. In addition, in order to create a sustainable link to communities and employment sites, Sustrans, a charity heavily involved with creating better walking and cycling links had recommended a number of highway improvements that would be undertaken in partnership with North Yorkshire County Council, subject to further development and available finance.

Members were fully supportive of the project, which would be of benefit to local residents and visitors alike and felt that it was an ideal initiative to be financed through the New Homes Bonus Infrastructure Reserve.

**Resolved** – (1) That, the submission of the funding bid to the Department for Transport, in conjunction with the Canal and River Trust, is endorsed.

(2) That, subject to the award of funding from the Department for Transport's linking communities programme, a contribution of £75,000 from the New Homes Bonus Infrastructure Reserve to the Connecting the Dales project, is approved.

(3) That, £5,000 of the New Homes Bonus Infrastructure Reserve is allocated to additional preliminary planning work to support survey and design work to enable improvements to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal towpath between Gargrave and the border with the Pendle district.

POL.515

### **EMPTY HOMES RESERVE**

The Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration submitted a report providing details of the operation of the Empty Homes Reserve and seeking approval for its implementation.

The Empty Homes Reserve would make grants of approximately £20,000 per dwelling to housing associations for the acquisition of empty properties in order that they could be refurbished and returned to use as affordable housing. The scheme would also reduce the level of empty properties and provide a stimulus to the local construction industry.

Members noted that it was expected that between May 2013 and March 2015, approximately 20 affordable homes would be delivered through this initiative.

**Resolved** – (1) That the detail of the operation of the Empty Homes Reserve in terms of grant amount, repayment of grant and geographical spread, as set out in the report now submitted, is approved.

(2) That the inclusion of a lease scheme within the Empty Homes Reserve as set out in the report now submitted, subject to consultation with the Lead Member (Housing) on individual proposals, is approved.

POL.516

### **TRANSFER OF LAND (STRIP) ON GARGRAVE ROAD, SKIPTON**

The Director of Services submitted a report seeking approval to transfer a strip of land to Craven College, adjacent to their new Aireville Campus building for the purpose of providing a tree screen to the building.

Residents of Stirton and Aireville Grange had approached the Council in order to seek a solution to the lack of space on college land to provide adequate screening for the new building. An assessment of the spatial requirements for the trees identified that the area of land as shown on the plan submitted would be sufficient to accommodate a tree screen.

**Resolved** – That the transfer of the strip of land to Craven College for nil consideration, as illustrated on the plan at Appendix A to the report now submitted, is approved.

(The Chairman, Councillor Knowles-Fitton declared an Appendix B interest in the above item as he was a governor of Craven College.)

POL.517

**SUB-COMMITTEES AND PANELS: APPOINTMENT**

The Strategic Manager for Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report asking the Committee to consider appointing sub-committees and a consultative group, and to consider the terms of reference of those bodies.

**Resolved** (1) That the Craven Spatial Planning Sub-Committee is re-appointed for 2013/14, on the same basis as 2012/13, with a membership of seven and three named substitutes, comprising the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of the Planning Committee, Leaders from the Independent and Liberal Democrat Groups and three other Councillors to ensure political proportionality (2 Conservatives and 1 Independent).

(2) That the Craven Employees' Consultative Group is re-appointed for 2013/14, on the same basis as 2012/13, with a membership of four, comprising the Leader of the Council, one other Conservative and one member from each of the Independent and Liberal Democrat Groups, with terms of reference as shown in the Appendix to the report submitted.

(3) That the Community Grants Sub-Committee is re-appointed for 2013/14, on the same basis as 2012/13, with a membership of seven comprising four conservatives, two Independents and one Liberal Democrat, with terms of reference as shown in the Appendix to the report

POL.518

**MEETINGS : START TIME**

**Resolved** – That for the current municipal year ordinary meetings of this Committee continue to be held at 6.30pm

**Minutes for Decision**

None

Chairman