

**LOUGHBOROUGH AREA COMMITTEE
18TH SEPTEMBER 2019**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Hamilton)
The Vice Chair (Councillor Tillotson)
Councillors Bailey, J. Bradshaw, Brennan,
Draycott, Forrest, Goddard, C. Harris, K. Harris,
Mercer, Miah, Morgan, Parsons, Smidowicz and
Ward

Chief Executive
Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces
Head of Neighbourhood Services
Head of Leisure and Culture
Head of Finance and Property Services
Democratic Services Officer (NC) and Democratic
Services Officer (SW)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Boldrin, Bolton, Campsall and Parton

The Chair stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. He also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

10. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19th June 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed.

11. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

The following disclosures of pecuniary and personal interests were made:

Councillor Miah disclosed a personal interest in agenda item 5 as a Trustee of Fearon Hall, Loughborough.

Councillor Ward disclosed a personal interest in agenda item 5 as a Trustee of Gorse Covert Community Centre, Loughborough.

12. QUESTIONS UNDER COMMITTEE PROCEDURE 12.8

No questions were submitted.

13. LOUGHBOROUGH SPECIAL EXPENSES BUDGET

A report of the Head of Finance and Property Services was submitted, setting out an itemised schedule of activities financed by the Loughborough Special Expenses Budget 2019/20 (item 5 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Chief Executive, the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces and the Head of Leisure and Culture supported the consideration of the item and the following summarises comments and observations made by Members of the Committee present and responses to questions raised:

- the charging procedure for purchasing plots at Loughborough Cemetery was explained and residents that lived in Loughborough were charged a lesser rate than those living in and outside of the Borough. The vast majority of plots at Loughborough Cemetery were purchased by Loughborough residents.
- it was possible to make the new cemetery site at Nanpantan cost neutral, and a review of costs could be carried out in order to potentially achieve this. Benchmarking with other Local Authorities indicated that the Council was in the mid-range for fees and charges of this nature. The cemetery had capacity for 200 years, but a balance would be sought to attract interest in using the cemetery in order to generate the required income.

Cllr Morgan arrived at the meeting at 6:20pm.

- the percentages funded by the Loughborough Special Expenses Budget, such as the 23% of Loughborough CCTV costs, 75% of a Voluntary and Community Sector Development Officer post and the 50% of Carillion Tower upkeep, were not routinely reviewed. The budget had been predetermined by the Council and the percentages were fixed to provide stability to the budget and rates.
- many charges within the Loughborough Special Expenses Budget were precontracted and were not negotiated as a separate entity, creating further difficulty in any adjustments within the budget.
- regarding the potential for periodic reviews of any underspends throughout the year, it was explained that this was a possibility and that transferring funds from one account to another could be done. It was stated that ongoing budgets were monitored by the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee.
- the income generated by the November Fair was based upon fees and charges for pitches. An inflation rate was added to valuable pitches each year, which had been set at 3% for 2019. In addition, the Council sought measures of cost reduction each year to ensure the fair was profitable, and the budget was monitored closely. Annual costs such as traffic management, health and safety and lighting could vary.
- information on the number of users at the sports and recreational grounds referred to in the report was not readily available at the meeting. However, it was stated that most of the grounds were near or at full capacity. The facility at Shelthorpe Golf Course did have the capacity for increased usage and options were being explored. Activities aside from traditional golf were being considered, including foot golf and frisby golf. There was no time frame guideline for the implementation of these activities and further developments would require a business case and initial financial investment.

- increasing the prices set for sports bookings would not produce any additional income. A contractual agreement with grounds management service provider Idverde stipulated that a payment of £50,000 per annum was received by Charnwood Borough Council regardless of income. Idverde were not achieving a profit from the contractual work undertaken and were themselves supplementing income generated to meet the £50,000.
- the bookings for use of sports facilities at the recreational grounds mentioned in the report was the responsibility of Idverde and the Council were encouraging Idverde to consider using an online booking system.

Members of the Committee were disappointed about the lack of opportunity for input on the Loughborough Special Expenses Budget 2019-20 previously. It was stated that:

- Members had not been able to influence the budget and that this had also happened in preceding years. The Loughborough Area Committee could benefit from assessing any valuable assets to Loughborough and subsequently reviewing affordability. Consultation with Members of the Cabinet prior to the budget setting at Full Council could be advantageous.
- the necessary process to set the budget created difficulty in allowing Members to alter the Loughborough Special Expense Budget. The budget set for Loughborough special expenses each year was based on the Loughborough tax base and the Loughborough special rate. The draft Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2020 to 2023 included an estimated 1.75% increase in the tax base and a 1.99% increase on the Loughborough rate to cover costs. A review of the Loughborough Special Expenses Budget would be undertaken as part of the budget process for 2020.
- Local Government and Financial legislation did not allow Local Authorities to raise rates over expenditure. Underspends were adjusted for in subsequent years and there was no certainty of an underspend until the budget for the following year had been set. The headroom available in previous years was due to an accumulation of underspend but this had now been depleted. The recurrent budget was set on recurrent expenditure and the current budget was back to the status quo.

Cllr Julie Bradshaw left the meeting at 6:53pm.

RESOLVED

1. that the Chair and Vice Chair of the Loughborough Area Committee in consultation with the Lead Member and relevant Officers be given the opportunity to comment on potential projects using forecast underspends in the Loughborough Special Expenses Budget and that it be investigated when it would be appropriate to do so during the budget monitoring process.

2. that specific information on the numbers of users for the sports facilities and itemised activities be circulated to the Committee.

Reasons

1. to ensure that Members of the Loughborough Area Committee have greater input into the consideration of the Loughborough Expenses Budget.
2. to provide Members with additional understanding of how sports facilities in Loughborough are used.

14. MEETING DATES

Further meetings of the Committee have been scheduled for:

Wednesday 18th December 2019,
Wednesday 18th March 2019.

During the consideration of this item, the Chair referred to the Local Plan Consultation as this would have an impact upon the Loughborough Area. The Local Plan was being reviewed by Cabinet on the 17th October 2019 and would then enter a public consultation period. The Committee was invited to respond to the Consultation during the six-week period of public consideration. Members were concerned whether a Committee of the Council could provide feedback on the Council's own Local Plan. It was confirmed that this was within the scope of the Committee **.

It was noted that the consultation response deadline was 16th December 2019 and that the Committee was not due to meet again until 18th December 2019.

** Post meeting note: Following the meeting, it was confirmed that the Planning Code of Good Practice permits Councillors of consultee bodies to participate in debates on proposals when acting as part of a consultee body.

RESOLVED

1. that the Loughborough Area Committee meeting on 18th December 2019 be rescheduled for 11th December 2019.
2. that the following items be added to the agenda of the next meeting of the Committee:
 - Town Centre Masterplan
 - High Street Funding

Reasons

1. to enable Members to contribute towards the Local Plan Consultation.

2. to enable Members to receive an update on the Town Centre Masterplan and High Street Funding.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 4th November 2019 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Loughborough Area Committee.