

**SCHEDULE OF ITEMS RECOMMENDED FROM COMMITTEES AND OTHER MEMBER BODIES**

Committee: Council

Date: 20 February 2024

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Report No: Y150

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**1.0 AUDIT COMMITTEE – 16 OCTOBER 2023**

**Risk Management Policy and Framework Update**

The Committee considered a Report (Y64 attached at Appendix A) containing updated drafts of the Risk Management Policy and Framework documents following a recent review.

A Motion to accept the recommendations in the report was proposed by Councillor Pettitt and seconded by Councillor Horgan.

A Member challenged the statement in paragraph 3.1 of the report that this Committee was responsible for Risk Management. The Director Legal and Monitoring Officer then referred to the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Committee and highlighted that paragraph 3.5 of the ToR stated:

‘To oversee and monitor the Council’s Corporate Risk Register and recommend revisions to the Council’s Risk Management Strategy.’

The Chairman commented that as the wording of 3.1 didn’t directly impact upon the recommendation, it remained appropriate for the Committee to discuss.

Nevertheless, Councillor Cane asserted that she did not consider that this Committee was responsible for Risk Management.

A number of questions relating to this Agenda item had been submitted by Members prior to the meeting and these, along with answers provided by officers, were set out in an Appendix to the minutes.

A Member raised a number of follow-up questions, which the Director Finance explained had been dealt with under Minute 19. The Member referred to paragraph 3.8 of the Risk Management Framework on Action Planning and challenged the wording on the escalation process and the clarity of the wording overall. The Director Finance agreed to review the wording to ensure that it was consistent in all relevant Risk documents.

In response to the query on the wording of paragraph 3.1 of the report, a Member acknowledged that this needed amending and asked if this could be amended to reflect the wording of the Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee to ensure clarity as to the role of the Audit Committee. The Democratic Services Manager stated that paragraph 3.1 of the report was an officer interpretation and that the remit of the Audit Committee was as set out in the Terms of Reference. Therefore, the Democratic Services Manager confirmed that the report was compliant with paragraph 3.5 of the ToR for the Committee.

The Chairman and other Members of the Committee commended the effectiveness of the review process and amended documents.

**It was resolved TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:**

**That the updated Risk Management Policy and Framework documents attached at Appendix 1 and 2 to the submitted report be approved.**

## **2.0 FINANCE & ASSETS COMMITTEE - 23 NOVEMBER 2023**

### **Treasury Operations Mid-Year Review 2023-24**

The Committee considered a report, (Y99 attached at Appendix B) detailing an update on the Council's 2023/24 Treasury Management Strategy.

Cllr Sharp proposed and Cllr Bovington seconded the recommendations in the Officer's report.

**It was resolved to RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL:**

**That the Mid-Year Review of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report, be noted.**

## **3.0 FINANCE & ASSETS COMMITTEE – 24 JANUARY 2024**

### **(i) 2024/25 Annual Treasury Management Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy**

The Committee considered a report, (Y114 attached at Appendix C) that detailed the 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy, the Annual Investment Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement.

A question relating to this item had been provided prior to the meeting from a Member and this, along with the answer provided by officers, was set out in an Appendix to the minutes.

Members commended the fact that the Council had no external borrowing.

**It was resolved unanimously to RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL:**

**That approval be given to:**

- 1. The 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy**
- 2. The Annual Investment Strategy**
- 3. The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement**
- 4. The Prudential and Treasury Indicators**

It was further resolved:

That the Director Finance be authorised to amend the Strategy between Committee and Council to build into it any changes required to reflect the decision made at this Committee with regard to the Bereavement Centre project.

***(The updated Strategy is attached at Appendix C1)***

**(ii) Bereavement Centre Full Business Case**

The Committee considered a report, (Y124 attached at Appendix D) containing the Full Business Case (FBC) for the proposed development of a Bereavement Centre, consisting of a crematorium and modular functions room, with associated natural burial and pet cemetery facilities at the Council owned site, Ireton's Way, Mepal.

The Director Operations highlighted two typographical errors in recommendations 2.1 iv & v which should read section 4.11 and 4.16 respectively. The Director Operations then gave a detailed overview of the Business Case for the project for the benefit of Members of the Committee.

The Chairman reminded Members that all of the appendices relating to the project were Exempt. Therefore, the Press and Public would need to be excluded for any questions and discussion on these appendices. The Committee then would return to public session to take a decision on this item. A number of Members indicated that they had questions/points to make on the Exempt appendices. Therefore, the Chair invited questions/comments on the Public report prior to exclusion of the Press and Public.

During detailed discussion on the Public report, questions and comments were raised by Members as follows:

A Member queried if a 3.6% return, as detailed on page 5 of the report, was considered an appropriate level, bearing in mind the degree of risk and investment involved. The Member also questioned the reliability of the specialist VAT advice on the proposed operating model of in-house Council operation of the Bereavement Centre.

Some Members queried how the closer working with the publicly owned neighbouring crematoria referred to in paragraph 4.6 iii of the report would operate and whether this could be considered as a 'Cartel'. The Director Operations stated that this was more about working in partnership with the public sector to mutually complement the offer and better managing the peak operating months.

Some Members referred to the fact that the Council was proposing to commit over £9m of CIL income with the potential to only achieve a breakeven position on the funding. In response, the Director Operations stated that a key objective was to provide community infrastructure for the residents of the District that was not presently available, without impacting on the MTFS position. However, any surplus could support the MTFS in the future.

A Member queried whether the Council could offer pre-paid plans. The Director Operations reported that this was a rapidly changing area and further investigation would be undertaken on the issue.

A Member challenged the re-branding of the Crematorium as a Bereavement Centre and the use of CIL funding to potentially subsidise the Council Tax. They expressed the view that the location was unpopular with the public and would be convenient to only a small proportion of residents of the District. The viability could also be dependent upon a price war with neighbouring competitors. The Member expressed concern at the secrecy, lack of preparation, research and risk analysis for the scheme. Two other Members echoed these concerns and stated that the £9.03M of CIL funding could usefully be spent on more appropriate community facilities.

However, another Member of the Committee expressed disappointment at the disrespect shown to the work and motivation of officers by some of the above comments and referred to the fact that a level of secrecy had been necessary due to the fiercely competitive nature of the market and potential for legal challenge by competitors. The Member challenged the assertion of lack of support for the proposed facility with alternative facts and figures and reminded Members of the long history of the site that had led to the closure of the original outdoor centre, attempts to find an alternative leisure operator and the incidents of vandalism and arson to the buildings. The proposed facilities would enhance the beautiful natural setting and offer a welcome and tranquil place for residents to remember loved ones at the saddest time of their lives. The designation as a County Wildlife Site limited the uses for the land. The CIL funding pot was constantly being replenished leaving further funding available for other community projects. This scheme represented a great use of the site and would deliver a high-quality community facility providing an excellent service for residents.

Other Members supported the above views and highlighted the benefits of the location being on good road and bus routes. They also referred to the fact that this was a true community facility that everyone would need to use and was not available in the District at present.

*At 6.51pm the meeting was adjourned for a comfort break and to go into Exempt session. On resumption in Public session at 7.24pm:*

The recommendations in the Public report were moved and seconded and a recorded vote was requested. Upon being put to the vote, the recommendations were declared to be carried with voting as follows:

FOR (6): Councillors Bailey, Goldsack, Goodearl, Hunt, Miller, Sharp.

AGAINST (5): Councillors Colbert, Dupré, Inskip, Trapp, A Whelan.

ABSTAIN (0):

**It was resolved to RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL:**

**That approval be given to:**

- 1. The full business case as detailed in appendices 1-4 of the submitted report.**
- 2. A Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allocation up to £9.06m for the capital build.**

- 3. Authorise the Director Finance to secure alternative funding where CIL is not available, in consultation with the Chair of Finance and Assets Committee (as detailed in section 5 of the submitted report).**
- 4. Secure provision of a partner to manage fishing rights on the site as set out in section 4.11 of the submitted report.**
- 5. Approve the future operating model of the Bereavement Centre as set out in section 4.16 of the submitted report.**

