1024 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following members declared an interest in the matters listed below. Unless indicated otherwise, they remained in the meeting.

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<tr>
<th>Councillor</th>
<th>Minute</th>
<th>Declaration</th>
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<td>Cllr B McClenning</td>
<td>1025</td>
<td>Personal Interest – member of family is employed by SNC</td>
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1025 a) REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2012/13

Members considered the report which was introduced by Cllr G Wheatley. The Financial Services Manager went through the main points contained in the report and members discussed the issues raised.

Cllr B McClenning expressed concern that an additional £1 million of savings was still required over the next two years and wondered whether this was a realistic target. Officers confirmed that future shared services opportunities together with efficiencies through the Lean Lite process would make the proposed savings achievable.

With regard to localism funding, members discussed the allocation of the proposed spending and the role of the Neighbourhood Boards. Officers assured members that the spending would be community-led but would not be available for proposals that were the primary duty of other organisations.
The Chief Executive reminded members that the Council was in a strong position financially and was ready and fit to face the future. Members were also reminded that the proposed Community Empowerment pilot scheme would run for a year, and would be reviewed through the scrutiny process.

Responding to members’ questions the Financial Services Manager confirmed that the waste collection service had recently been reviewed. The process had suggested a number of improvements which had been implemented and included the reduction in the number of bin lorries, and the redirecting of routes. Staffing levels had been reduced as a result, the whole operation was working more efficiently and considerable savings had been achieved.

Cllr K Weeks raised concerns regarding the possibility of future borrowing needs under Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) obligations. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that this was a valid concern and one which the Council was taking very seriously. External expert consultants had been appointed to assess the position and ensure that the Council was not exposed to additional, avoidable risk.

Members voted 5-0, with 4 abstentions to endorse Cabinet’s recommendations. Cllrs Bell, Hardinge, Lewis and Watt reserved their position on this matter until the 22 February 2012 meeting of Council

RESOLVED

1. To endorse the recommendations of Cabinet for the Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2012/13

2. Members resolved to commend and thank officers and Cabinet regarding the 0% increase in Council Tax.

b) CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2012/13 TO 2014/15

The Financial Services Manager introduced the report which focused on the use of capital resources to deliver all the Council’s priorities as well as revenue savings and income. Members were advised that the programme was fully financed from within existing resources without the need to borrow, although some land sales were to be relied upon. Funding had been put aside to support the localism and neighbourhood projects until CIL funding became available.

Members discussed the issues raised in the report, including the replacement and maintenance of Council-owned vehicles and retail premises owned (and let) by the Council.

RESOLVED To recommend to Council the Capital Programme 2012/13 to 2014/15
c) TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2012/13 TO 2014/15

The report was introduced by the Financial Services Manager and members discussed the issues raised.

Officers advised members that the money markets remained in a state of flux and that arrangements have been put in place by the Council to minimise the inherent risks.

Members discussed the issues around possible future borrowing needs arising from the CIL obligations and were advised by officers that this issue would be looked at very closely at the appropriate time as it was likely that there would be a number of options to consider.

Members were advised that a tendering exercise had recently taken place and that the Co-operative Bank were the successful bidder as the Council’s bank, despite not meeting the Council’s minimum credit criteria of A- (or equivalent). Officers explained that local authority banking was a very specialised area, and that no other bank had competed in the tendering process.

The Chairman thanked the officers for the tremendous amount of work that had been done in setting the budget this year.

RESOLVED To recommend to Council to approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy 2012/13 to 2014/15

SCRUTINY, OVERVIEW SUB-COMMITTEES’, ACCOUNTS, AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMMES AND THE CABINET CORE AGENDA

Cllr Lewis requested that with regard to “Community Empowerment” Delivering the Localism Agenda in South Norfolk, the issue of the ground rules be brought before either a Scrutiny Committee or an Accounts Audit and Governance Committee prior to the full Council Meeting in May 2012. The Chief Executive confirmed that this would be arranged and that members would be advised of which was the most appropriate committee to consider this issue in due course.

(The meeting concluded at 10.45 am)

Chairman