

MINUTES of a meeting of the POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 9 JANUARY 2013

Present: Councillor T Gillard (Chairman) (In the Chair)

Councillors N Clarke, J Cotterill, J G Coxon, D Everitt, T Neilson, A C Saffell and N Smith.

Officers: Mr R Bowmer and Mrs R Wallace

**40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Clayfield and R Holland.

**41. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

**42. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no questions received.

**43. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2012.

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2012 be approved and signed as a correct record.

**44. DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2013/14**

The Head of Finance presented the report to the Committee and outlined the decisions made by Cabinet at its meeting on 12 December 2012 as detailed within the report. He reported that the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, which was not known at the time of writing the report, had been confirmed and was around £50,000 less than assumed.

The Head of Finance gave the following responses to questions from Members:

- There would be a 7.5% reduction in Government funding in comparison to the 2012/13 financial year.
- Leicestershire County Council had not formally decided on the service delivery model for the Social Fund.
- The budget consultations did not include proposals for savings for the 2014/15 financial year but as the Council was becoming more efficient each year, this would continue.

Chairman's initials

- There were no plans for any of the New Homes Bonus to be given directly to Parish Councils. The funds would continue to be put towards Council services which would benefit the wider district. Further budget savings would be required if the New Homes Bonus was not used to fund services.

A Member commented that he was in favour of a 2% increase in Council Tax for the coming financial year instead of continuing with the Council Tax freeze as in previous financial years. As part of further discussion, other Members said they would not be in favour of an increase in Council Tax.

A number of Members were unhappy with the proposed staffing reductions as they felt it would have a large impact on the service provided and would affect income raised in the service areas. The Head of Finance assured Members that the savings would outweigh any loss of income. A Member also raised concerns regarding the loss of a Community Focus Officer as it will affect the area working in the district as there would be two officers over three areas, this could cause confusion.

Members were pleased that the Council were moving forward with the Head of Regeneration and Planning post as they felt it was important to have structure in place.

Members thanked Officers for a good budget proposal.

RESOLVED THAT:

The comments of the Policy Development Group be considered by Cabinet when it recommends its budget proposals to the Council.

#### **45. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman referred to the previous meeting at which a request was made for the creation of a working party to investigate the Community Engagement Strategy and was therefore placed on the work programme. Since the meeting, Officers had advised that as the Community Engagement Strategy had only been approved in May 2012 a review would be too soon as there would not be sufficient information to use. It was suggested that the working group be put onto the work programme for quarter 1 2014/15 so that the findings be used to shape the strategy refresh for the next Engagement Strategy covering 2015-2018.

All Members were happy with this suggestion.

Councillor D Everitt arrived at 6.34pm.

Councillor A C Saffell arrived at 6.45pm.

The meeting closed at 7.00pm.

Chairman's signature