

## RESOURCES POLICY ADVISORY GROUP

Meeting - 13 June 2013

Present:

Mr D Smith, Mr Anthony, Mr Chhokar, Mr Harding and Mr Kelly

Also Present:

Mr Bagge

### 1. MINUTES

The minutes of the following meetings of the Policy Advisory Group were received:

- 21 January 2013
- 21 March 2013

### 2. REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000

The PAG considered a report explaining that as a result of statutory changes it was necessary to adopt a new Corporate Policy and Procedure Note on the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000 as set out in an Appendix.

Provisions introduced by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 and amendments to the RIPA statutory instruments have made 2 significant changes to how local authorities use RIPA:-

- All authorisations and notices under RIPA for the use of covert techniques must now be approved by a Justice of the Peace before they can take effect. There is still, however, a requirement for authorisation to be granted internally first. The role of the JP is to ensure that the Council has followed correct procedures and taken appropriate factors into account;
- The use of directed surveillance (e.g. covert CCTV, taking up observation posts, following people etc) is confined to cases where the offence under investigation carries a custodial sentence of 6 months or more and a limited number of other offences relating to underage sale of alcohol and tobacco.

The report went on to explain how the new Corporate Policy and Procedure Note reflected and incorporated these changes.

Having considered the comments of the PAG, which indicated its support for the new Policy, the Portfolio Holder has **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet and the Council

1. That the revised RIPA policy and procedures note attached at Appendix 1 of the report be approved.
2. That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be designated as the Senior Responsible Officer for the purposes of RIPA.
3. That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to keep the RIPA procedures up to date and to amend relevant provisions as necessary after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources.

### 3. JOINT PLANT MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

Both South Bucks District Council and Chiltern District Council have similar facilities management requirements and the PAG considered a report explaining that SBDC had started the procurement process for a plant maintenance contract. The report also contained a proposal for the procurement process to be carried out jointly with CDC.

Having considered the advantages as set out in the report, the PAG indicated its support following which the Portfolio Holder **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet that subject to subject to the agreement of Chiltern District Council a joint procurement exercise be carried out for plant maintenance contract with South Bucks District Council being the lead authority.

#### 4. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT FROM 1 APRIL 2014

The PAG considered a report reviewing the operation of the Council Tax Support Scheme since it was introduced in April 2013.

The PAG noted that whilst it is very early within the financial year to reach a definitive conclusion early signs appear to suggest that there was a general acceptance of the need to contribute to Council Tax. The PAG endorsed the view expressed in the report that a clearer picture would emerge by Spring 2014 when the scheme had been in operation for a year.

The report, after setting a proposal for the Scheme to remain unchanged for 2014/15, explained the process and timetable that would need to be followed to revise the Scheme for 2015/16.

Having considered the advice of the PAG, which supported the proposal, the Portfolio Holder has **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to the Cabinet that the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2014/15 remain unchanged and that the matter be the subject of a further report in Spring 2014 so that a decision can be made in respect of the Scheme for 2015/16.

#### 5. COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNT CHANGES FROM 1 APRIL 2014

The decision made by the Cabinet on 5 February 2013 for levels of discounts awarded in respect of empty properties and second homes for 2013/14 to mirror the previous levels of exemption had been an interim measure pending a further report setting out in options for 2014/15.

The PAG now received this further report which in paragraph 6.3 set out a number of options together with their financial benefits. The report also set out in paragraph 8 the charges made by other Bucks authorities.

After considering the options the PAG indicated its support for the proposals following which the Portfolio Holder **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet

1. That the Class C discount period be reduced to 3 months with a minimum occupation period of 6 weeks between discounts
2. That the discount for Class D discounts be removed (0%)
3. That the second home discount of 10% be removed.
4. That a premium of 50% be applied to properties empty for over 2 years.

#### 6. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2012/2013

The Council's Treasury Management function is a key element to the Financial Strategy which in turns feeds into the use of Resources, one of the Council's Management Principles, and the PAG considered a report setting out the Treasury Management performance of the Council for 2012/13.

The report, after providing a reminder of the new matrix for in house investments as approved by members as part of the Treasury Management Strategy 2013/14, set out:

- A summary of movements in the year
- A summary of the Council's holdings of callable and fixed deposits as at 31 March 2013
- Investments in the first quarter of 2013/14
- The current market value of the Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens Fund.

The report also provided a more detailed assessment of the economic background from Sector together with their summary outlook.

During the discussion the PAG was pleased to note that despite the low rates of interest the target for generating investment income in 2012/13 had been overachieved by £42k.

In connection with Appendix C which showed a number of corporate bonds that would meet the Council's counterparty criteria the PAG felt that it would be prudent to avoid investing in corporate bonds issued by financial institutions and to explore further the potential for investing in corporate bonds issued by utilities.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**7. DROPMORE ROAD DEPOT UPDATE**

The PAG received a report providing an update on the project to redevelop the Council's Depot on Dropmore Road following the granting of planning permission on 26 March 2013, subject to conditions as set out in paragraph 4. The report provided details of the procurement process and a separate report in Part II of the agenda provided details of tender submitted by the preferred bidder Borrás Construction Ltd to carry out the redevelopment work.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**8. 2011 CENSUS - SOUTH BUCKS SUMMARY**

The PAG received a report which provided an overview of the 2011 census results for South Bucks.

The PAG noted that the first phase of Census data for local areas was released between November 2012 and February 2013 and that more detailed information was due to be released in stages in 2013. Members were made aware of the headline results from the 2011 Census as set out in the report and were advised that more detailed Census information could be found in Appendix A of the report and on the Council's KnowledgeSource system.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

**9. EXEMPT INFORMATION**

Members noted that the following items contained exempt information which was not available to the press and public:

**Part II minutes of the meeting of the PAG held on 21 March 2013  
(Schedule 12A part 1 para 3 - because of information relating the financial or business affairs of any particular individual person)**

The PAG noted the minutes.

**Land at the Rear of Toilets at Windsor End  
(Schedule 12A part 1 para 3 - because of information relating the financial or business affairs of any particular individual person)**

The Portfolio Holder agreed to recommend to Cabinet that the licensing arrangement should continue.

**Bath Road Depot  
(Schedule 12A part 1 para 3 - because of information relating the financial or business affairs of any particular individual person)**

Consideration of the report deferred pending the outcome of the planning application.

**Stoke Place Farm  
(Schedule 12A part 1 para 3 - because of information relating the financial or business affairs of any particular individual person)**

The Portfolio Holder agreed to recommend to the Cabinet that negotiations should continue with the tenant.

**Land by East Lodge, Manor House, Stoke Poges**

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**(Schedule 12A part 1 para 3 - because of information relating the financial or business affairs of any particular individual person)**

The Portfolio Holder agreed to recommend to the Cabinet that negotiations should continue.

**The Future of the South Bucks District Council Websites**

**(Schedule 12A part 1 para 3 - because of information relating the financial or business affairs of any particular individual person)**

The Portfolio Holder agreed to recommend to Cabinet that the quotation form GOSS be accepted.

**Dropmore Road Depot, Update**

**(Schedule 12A part 1 para 3 - because of information relating the financial or business affairs of any particular individual person)**

The PAG noted the sum tendered by the preferred bidder Borrás Construction Ltd.

The meeting terminated at 7.55 pm