

## Decision Digest

Edition 139

**Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 1st to 26th November 2013.**

### UPDATE ON REDESIGN OF LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

A position statement on the on-going implementation of the redesign of local mental health services was reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being). A question raised on the number of acute referrals made from the Hinchingsbrooke catchment area to Fulbourn and to Peterborough will be put to representatives of the Clinical Commissioning Group when they attend the Panel's January 2014 meeting. Assurances have also been requested on the support provided to mental health patients whom have been discharged into the community.

Redesigned community services are in the process of being implemented. The Panel will postpone its planned public consultation on mental health services until this process has been completed.

### FACING THE FUTURE 2013

The Overview and Scrutiny Panels have met on seven occasions in November to undertake the "Facing the Future" service reviews. Reviews have been carried out on the following areas:-

- ❖ Development Management;
- ❖ Planning Services (Policy);
- ❖ Strategic Housing;
- ❖ Housing Needs;
- ❖ Customer Services;
- ❖ Local Taxation;

- ❖ Benefits;
- ❖ Facilities Management;
- ❖ Environment;
- ❖ Building Control;
- ❖ Projects and Assets Management;
- ❖ Information Management Division;
- ❖ Economic Development;
- ❖ CCTV;
- ❖ Refuse and Recycling;
- ❖ Vehicle Management;
- ❖ Grounds Maintenance; and
- ❖ Street Cleansing;

The Panels have considered proposed priority areas for each service area and made a number of suggestions for further investigation. The Panels will continue to meet in December and will report to the Cabinet in January 2014 on the outcome of their reviews.

### EQUALITY (EMPLOYEES)

### MONITORING

Having noted that the 2010 Equality Act requires the Council to publish information relating to the characteristics of its employees, the Employment Panel has considered the results of the equal opportunities monitoring of its employees during 2011/12 and 12/13.

The Panel has asked Managers, the Staff Council, LGSS and the Chief Officers Management Team to undertake a range of measures to address the workforce issues which have been identified within the report.

## WORKFORCE INFORMATION

A quarterly report on Human Resource matters impacting on the performance of the organisation, has been considered by the Employment Panel. On this occasion, the report has included the latest position and trends relating to:-

- ❖ employee numbers;
- ❖ employee turnover;
- ❖ sickness absence reporting and
- ❖ the Human Resources caseload.

The Panel noted that the average days sickness per FTE employee had reduced again in the last quarter and that this was also lower than the corresponding period in the previous year.

In an effort to streamline the options for reporting sickness and to simplify the existing process, the Panel has asked LGSS to look at the categories for recording sickness in neighbouring authorities. The outcome will be reported to the next meeting of the Panel.

## LGSS PERFORMANCE

As part of its monitoring function, the Employment Panel has considered the performance of LGSS Human Resources, Payroll and Organisational Workforce Development services during the period 1st April to 30th June 2013.

Although the majority of service standards have been met, the Panel has discussed the issues which had been raised with the recruitment team and the measures which have been put in place to address these. Also discussed was the take-up of training courses and the change in culture which the LGSS contract had posed for Managers.

Having been advised of the outcome of a recent audit of the Council's relationship with LGSS and the mechanisms which are being put in place to improve the monitoring of the contract, the Panel has requested further information on performance to ensure that the Council is receiving good value for money. Information has also been requested on the mutual benefits of improved resources.

## REDUNDANCY POLICY

The Employment Panel has considered the content of an amended Redundancy Policy for the Authority. This had been revised to address a number of specific issues and to update a number of areas in line with current best practice and legislation. The opportunity has also been taken to make it easier for employees and managers to understand.

As there were still a number of matters that were subject to negotiation with the Staff Council, the Panel has authorised the Chairman and Vice Chairman, in consultation with the Executive and Deputy Executive Leader to endorse the contents of the final policy on their resolution.

## PAY REVIEW PROJECT

An update on the progress being made on the Council's Pay Review project has been received by the Employment Panel. A consultation with all employees on a new pay and grading framework and appeals process has now commenced and will conclude on 9th December 2013.

## FINANCIAL MONITORING

The Assistant Director, Finance and Resources has drawn the Cabinet's attention to spending variations in the revenue budget for the current year and

modifications to the approved capital programme. It was noted that the expected outturn of revenue expenditure was now £21.8m which represented a slight reduction to that previously forecasted.

### **TECHNICAL REFORM OF COUNCIL TAX – LOCALLY DEFINED DISCOUNTS**

The Cabinet has agreed to reduce the Council Tax discount awarded to properties which are inhabitable and requiring/undergoing structural alteration or major repair to 0% with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014. The change will encourage owners to re-occupy properties, remove financial incentives to do otherwise and will achieve both income generation and efficiency savings in terms of administrative burdens.

### **SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEME AT LANGLEY COURT AND LANGLEY CLOSE ST IVES**

The Cabinet has considered the contents of a petition presented to Council on 13th November 2013, concerning the potential closure of the Sheltered Housing Scheme at Langley Court and Langley Close, St Ives together with a Motion by Councillor Churchill on the matter.

Local Ward Members were in attendance at the meeting and drew attention to discussions with Langley Court residents over proposals by Luminus to demolish the existing building in order to build an extra-care facility. They concluded that improvements could have been made to the way the scheme was communicated to residents. Residents had been left confused, anxious and uncertain about their future. However, it was now Members' understanding that existing residents will be rehoused

locally whilst the rebuild takes place and given the opportunity to return to the new facility if they wish to. Having regard to this advice and to evidence which suggests that the majority of residents have indicated their willingness to move, the Cabinet has recommended to Council that it is in the best interests of the residents to ensure that necessary steps are taken, at the earliest opportunity to resettle them and that Langley Court, given its central location, is considered to be the most appropriate site for an extra care home.

### **LOAN TO LUMINUS**

The Cabinet has approved terms for a loan to Luminus of up to £5.5m over 30 years to fund a new extra care scheme at Langley Court, St Ives. The Assistant Director, Finance and Resources has been authorised to make the loan following consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resources, who will have the right to require agreement of the final details by Cabinet if he feels it is necessary to do so.

In expressing their support for the scheme, the Cabinet has stressed that:

- no residents should be asked to leave until planning permission for the scheme is granted;
- provision be made to allow any resident that wishes to return to do so after the new build is finished;
- every possible effort be made to ensure that any resident that wishes to return is temporarily housed in St Ives; and
- the need to make improvements to working relationships between the Luminus Board and District Council appointed Members.

**DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT  
MONITORING**

In addition to its determination of development applications, the Development Management Panel has reviewed the performance of the Development Management Service over the period 1st July to 30th September 2013 in comparison with the preceding quarter and that of the corresponding quarter in 2013. Having been advised that several Officers would be leaving the service shortly, the Panel noted that the consequences of fewer staff would impact on the length of reports to be prepared for Panel and a reduction in dedicated Officer time to respond to detailed matters before meetings. More positively, the receipt of several major applications recently would impact in a good way on fee income and offset the slight reduction in income compared to the corresponding period in 2012.



