

# MEETING OF THE RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

THURSDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2013

2.30 PM



---

## GROUP MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Jean Bevan  
Councillor Nick Craft (Chairman)  
Councillor Alan Davidson  
Councillor Nick Robins

Councillor Bob Sandall  
Councillor Trevor Scott (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Jacky Smith

## PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Councillor Mike Taylor, Portfolio: Strategic Resources - Well Run Council

## OFFICERS

Strategic Director, Corporate Focus  
(Daren Turner)  
Head of Finance (Richard Wyles)  
Head of Community Assets (Paul  
Stokes)  
Head of Property Development (Neil  
Cucksey)  
Property Services Manager (Liz Banner)  
Assistant Service Manager –  
Improvements (Liz Bishop)  
Community Engagement & Policy  
Development Officer (Carol Drury)  
Principal Democracy Officer (Jo Toomey)

## OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing

---

## 34. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

No interests were disclosed.

## 35. ACTION NOTES FROM THE MEETING ON 3 OCTOBER 2013

The action notes from the meeting on 3 October 2013 were noted.

*Your council working for you*

## 36. UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chairman informed members that instead of him writing to MP Nick Boles about Welfare Reform, the Chief Executive had raised the PDG's concerns during a meeting.

Members noted the decisions bulletin on the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

## 37. COMMUNITY ENERGY SCHEMES

At the request of the PDG, officers had researched community energy schemes. Officers presented a briefing note which gave information on a collective fuel switching project and bulk oil buying.

### Collective fuel switching

- Schemes would give communities the opportunity to switch supplier and reduce their energy bills.
- iChoosr specialised in collective customer auctions, using the number of people to bargain with providers, acting as a broker and administering the scheme.
- Householders interested in participating would be directed to the statement-of-interest website run by iChoosr. The householder would only be required to sign-up once the auction was complete.
- The process was confidential and the lowest price was offered to the householder.
- Any contract would be between the householder and the supplier.
- There would be no direct cost to the Council however officer time would be required to publicise the scheme and answer any questions.
- South Holland district council had implemented the scheme with iChoosr. It ran its first auction in the district in 2012 when 270 households achieved average annual savings of £171.
- A second auction was running in South Holland where 18,000 households had signed-up to take part.

Members of the PDG supported the idea of a collective fuel switching scheme. Several members referred to the success of schemes that they had experienced.

The commitment of officer time required to support the scheme was unknown; members suggested South Holland District Council might be able to provide advice or support. It was further suggested that they might be a potential partner in delivering the scheme.

Members discussed different ways any scheme could be publicised including information events and using SK Today.

If the decision was taken to promote iChoosr and the outcome was successful,

it was suggested that the Council could consider promoting other collectives, for example, internet service providers.

#### Oil buying groups

- The potential to deliver savings to the authority by promoting oil buying groups was limited because only three Council properties, which were in rural locations, were serviced by oil.
- Oil buying groups were open to all householders and schemes were already operating in many villages across the district.

#### **Recommendation:**

#### **The PDG recommends that:**

- 1. The Council should focus on promoting collective fuel switching schemes rather than oil buying syndicates**
- 2. Officers prepare a detailed business case on the use of iChoosr including ways to publicise the scheme**
- 3. Approaches be made to South Holland District Council to consider opportunities for partnership-working and knowledge-sharing**
- 4. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the PDG be authorised to review the business case and determine whether the scheme should be recommended to Cabinet**

### **38. FEES AND CHARGES PROPOSALS 2014/15**

The Head of Finance presented report number HOF257, which detailed the fees and charges proposals made by the PDG during a workshop session. Cabinet was scheduled to consider the proposals at its meeting on Monday 2 December 2013. The report recommended increases to most charges and a number of headings were highlighted for Members attention:

- Car parks – maintain current parking tariffs (to establish the impact of Civil Parking Enforcement after full-year of implementation)
- Markets – inflationary increases in Bourne and Stamford and maintaining current charges in Grantham
- Grantham cycle centre – inflationary increase to cover operational costs (e.g. utilities, business rates, etc.)
- Arts centres – inflationary increase but maintain current fees for Bourne Corn Exchange

Discussion ensued on the proposals relating to the district's markets. One Councillor expressed strong opposition to increasing fees in Stamford and Bourne but not Grantham. During the workshop members had determined the appropriate fee level by taking account of differences in demand for pitches across the district and the disruption caused to Grantham traders during improvement works in the Market Place.

Charges for the use of Bourne Corn Exchange were also being maintained to attract customers back to the venue following disruptions caused by the development of the Bourne Community Access Point.

***Recommendation***

***The PDG endorsed the fees and charges proposals 2014/15, as listed in report number HOF257, to Cabinet.***

**39. FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2013/14 - MONITORING INFORMATION**

The Head of Finance presented report number HOF259 which provided a financial update for members. The report provided information to the end of September 2013. The report also showed the forecast movement since the last report was made to the PDG (to the end of July 2013).

Members were advised that there was a forecast underspend for the General Fund of £321k and their attention was drawn to key variances:

- Leisure centres – the Council had received back-dated tariff income for Stamford and Bourne following the installation of photovoltaic panels. Information for Grantham was still pending.
- Corporate – a number of small variances against different headings.
- Development and Growth – income higher than budgeted as a result of three major planning applications.
- The Georgian Festival was delivered under budget, generating a £9k saving. Ticket and merchandise sales also exceeded budgeted levels.
- Planning policy – funding had been set aside from work not undertaken during the current financial year and would roll over into 2014/15.
- Wifi project – the project was running with 5 rural pilot areas. Wider rollout was planned for 2014/15 and funding would rollover.
- Housing Solutions – salary savings made pending a review of the team
- People, projects and performance – forecast outturn higher than budgeted as a result of costs associated with setting-up the citizen's panel. This was a one-off cost funded through year-end set-asides.

The Housing Revenue Account showed a forecast underspend of £9k, equating to a £62k movement from the previous forecast at the end of July 2013. Officers reported that the void rate was running at 1.08% against a budgeted level of 1.5%. The void rate was subject to regular monitoring to enable a rapid response if it deteriorated.

Members noted that expenditure had been incurred as a result of using contractors to help clear a backlog of repairs and improvements.

No significant issues were reported in relation to the Capital Programme. Most General Fund expenditure related to Grantham growth projects which had been

put to one side; the underspend would be put back into reserves. The HRA Capital Programme was on budget, delivering a programme driven by maintaining the Decent Homes Standard.

Officers gave a brief update on the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme (LAMS). The provider, Lloyds, had suspended the scheme to consider the impact of the national 'Help to Buy' scheme. Lloyds had since announced that it intended to continue with LAMS and on 28 November 2013 the Strategic Director Corporate Focus and the Head of Finance had approved the transfer of the further £1m investment. The initial £1m invested by the Council had been fully utilised.

Members noted variances related to headcount.

#### **40. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS**

The Head of Property Development updated members on a working group meeting that considered options for paying car parking charges using mobile phones. The joint Resources and Communities PDG working group met with a representative from RingGo, which was part of the same company as Park Mobile. Information was also received from Bemrose Booth.

Both RingGo and Parkmobile offered the pay by mobile service in car parks. Using RingGo meant that customers could use their mobile phones to pay and display, while Park Mobile provided a pay on exit solution. Signing up for one service would mean automatic entry onto the database for the other. Members of the PDG expressed an interest in running both systems in parallel, so that the customer could choose which most suited their needs. This would be the first example of this dual arrangement in the country, which the PDG felt could bring good publicity for the authority. No costs would be incurred by the Council however an additional 20p charge would be placed on the user each time they used the service.

The group asked questions about risks, including the potential loss of income from fixed penalty notices and safety mechanisms for people using 'pay on exit' who forget to register the end of their parking period. While development was needed to bring together the back office systems for RingGo and Parkmobile, database access would be quick and easy for parking enforcement officers.

Members were reminded that any pay by mobile option would be provided in addition to traditional payment methods. In future, when setting its fees and charges, the Council could consider a wider range of tariff bands for Parkmobile users so that they could pay for exactly what they used.

#### ***Recommendation:***

***That the Council introduces RingGo and Parkmobile pay by mobile technology for its car parks.***

**41. WORK PROGRAMME**

Noted.

**42. ANY OTHER BUSINESS, WHICH THE CHAIRMAN, BY REASONS OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, DECIDES IS URGENT.**

Two items were raised as urgent business

- Members considered the idea of introducing parking orders with a maximum stay of 2-hours in Bourne to ensure turnover of car parking spaces. There was some discussion about the possible introduction of car parking charges. Consideration was given as to whether charging would be cost-effective and car parks were of sufficient quality to justify a charge. No consensus was achieved. The PDG agreed to recommend the introduction of parking orders to help shoppers wanting to use the town centre.
- As part of its programme to build new Council housing, it was suggested that wherever possible South Kesteven District Council should incorporate photovoltaic cells.

***Recommendation:***

***The PDG recommends to Cabinet the introduction of parking orders for Bourne to limit the maximum stay to 2-hours, encouraging turnover of parking spaces for shoppers.***

**43. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting was closed at 15:43.