



meeting **COUNTY COUNCIL**

date **18 JANUARY 2007**

agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE & PROPERTY

SECTION A – FINANCE

1. Colleagues will be aware that Cabinet on 10 January 2007 agreed a set of budget proposals for consultation. In the period between now and the full County Council meeting on 22 February we will be finalising the proposals for 2007/8 and looking forward into the Medium Term Financial Plan period up to 2009/10. The consultation proposals, if approved, would require a Council Tax increase of around 4% which would bring the Council Tax for a Band D household in respect of County Council services up to £1,124 per annum. This would be an increase of £43 per annum.
2. During the consultation period a copy of the report will be available via the County Council's website and members of the public have been invited to respond to a number of questions about the proposals. In addition Strategic Directors will carry out consultation with a range of stakeholders and I shall be chairing the annual meeting with representatives of the business community. Copies of the Budget proposals have also been sent to Nottinghamshire Members of Parliament inviting comments and observations.
3. The consultation proposal is for a total budget of £417.3 million which is an increase of £18.3 million over the 2006/7 budget. This increase is required largely to cover the costs of inflation and the full year effects of the Capital Programme. There are also some new growth areas which have been addressed as the demands on our services are ever increasing and these have been broadly offset by changes elsewhere in lower priority areas.
4. At a recent meeting of the Finance Portfolio I received reports relating to a review of the departmental reserves and forecast underspendings and proposed carry forwards. In summary, forecast underspendings of £4.7 million are anticipated in 2006/7, some of which will be carried forward to assist with budget pressures that have not been funded within the budget process, and to mitigate some of the proposed

reductions. These adjustments will be taken into account when the final budget proposals are made to the County Council on 22 February.

5. I also received a report which proposes some modest improvements to Members' accommodation and this will now be considered for formal approval by Administration Committee in January.

SECTION B - PROPERTY

During the period 16 November to 8 January 2007 there were 2 Property Pre Agenda Meetings at which 16 separate reports were considered and these were taken on to the Property Portfolio Meetings for decisions.

1. Estates Management

- The sale of surplus land adjacent to the Alderman White School at Chilwell Lane, Bramcote, has now been completed. Crest Homes have paid in excess of £5m for the site and will be developing 55 residential units.
- Design ideas for the new Sherwood Visitors' complex have been launched prior to submission of bids to the Big Lottery fund. Terms have been agreed to take an option to acquire land from Thoresby Estates to relocate the new venture.
- The Government has granted Programme Entry Approval to NET Phase 2 which will require numerous property acquisitions in the Beeston, Chilwell, Wilford and Clifton area. Discussions are taking place with the NET team to examine early acquisition of blighted properties along the proposed route together with other valuation issues related to the schemes.
- Negotiations are ongoing with West Notts College at Mansfield to relocate the campus onto County Council owned land adjacent to the Mansfield/Ashfield Regeneration Route. It is expected to agree Heads of Terms in the early part of 2007.

2. Strategy and Development

- A joint submission to the Big Lottery Fund has been successful and NCC has been awarded £500,000 grant to aid the wood burning boiler programme to reduce CO² emissions.
- The first phase tender for the fire risk assessment contract has been completed with 10 consultants shortlisted out of 31 submissions
- A new Asset Management Database supplier has been appointed and implementation of the new system will commence during January

- The Leawood Manor RHOP and daycentre project was completed on time and to cost and opened for business in December
- An option appraisal is being developed for the proposed Northern Area Office and this will be presented to CAMG

3. buildingDIRECT

- On 16 November I visited the offices of *buildingDIRECT* at Rolleston Drive, Arnold, where I was given an introduction into the full range of services both offered and delivered by the organisation. I was appraised of the challenges and successes and was introduced to a number of the staff.
- An extensive range of surveys of The Robin Hood Theatre, Averham, Newark, was commissioned and completed during November and early December. These resulted in the County Council recommending the immediate closure of the Theatre on 29 November on the grounds of public safety. There had been found to be a number of serious non-compliances in respect of fire safety and means of escape. A further meeting is to be arranged in the New Year.

4. Design and Procurement

- The successful launch of the Nottinghamshire Contractor Framework (Interserve, Marriotts, Tomlinsons and R Woodhead) took place in the Council Chamber on 13 December to an invited audience of consultants and other Local Authorities.
- Agreement has been reached on target Costs for Holles Street and Dorket View (Adult Services projects). Work will start on site early next year.
- Sir Edmund Hillary School workshop extensions have been successfully handed over before Christmas through the partnership with Woodhead Building Contractors.
- A planning application has now been made for a new school for Church Drive, Arnold. This is a circular plan school based on the success of the Barnby Primary which was completed to critical acclaim last summer.
- Work is on site for the new Candleby Lane School at Cotgrave. This is the first NCC project being delivered through the new Nottinghamshire main contractors framework.
- Sherwood Forest Visitors' Centre – the shortlist of six architects have now submitted schemes which have received huge public interest. Design & Procurement are managing the selection process with a decision to be made on 12 January 2007.

- Mansfield Bus Station - Nottinghamshire County Council in partnership with Mansfield District Council held a public consultation on 8 & 9 December. This generated lots of interest and enthusiasm.

The project is to replace the very poor existing bus station facilities in Mansfield and to stimulate regeneration by setting high design standards.

The planning process should be completed by the end of 2007 and the bus station will be ready for use by 2010.

A new footbridge from the train station will help with meeting the DDA requirements and improve access to the town centre.

Cllr Chris Baron
Cabinet Member for Finance and Property