

CABINET

Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Monday, 26th November, 2018 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor Jason Zadrozny in the Chair;

Councillors Christian Chapman, Tom Hollis,
Robert Sears-Piccavey, John Wilmott and Helen-
Ann Smith.

Officers Present: Craig Bonar, Carol Cooper-Smith, Ruth Dennis,
Martin Elliott, Theresa Hodgkinson,
Peter Hudson, Robert Mitchell and Nicky Moss.

In Attendance: Martin Rigley (Chairman Ashfield Place Board)

CA.45 To receive apologies for absence, if any.

There were no apologies for absence.

CA.46 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests.

There were no declarations of interest.

CA.47 To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 1 October 2018

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CA.48 Place Enhancement

The Interim Director of Place and Communities submitted a report to provide a progress report on the delivery of the key projects, programmes and initiatives within the Place Leadership agenda, as set out in the Corporate Plan (2016-2019). The Corporate Plan objectives had identified an aspiration for "Place Enhancement", making Ashfield a location and destination of choice for business and visitors and a desirable place to live for all residents. The Assistant Director, Place and Wellbeing and the Chairman of the Ashfield Place Board, Martin Rigley attended the meeting to present the report.

One of the key projects in the Place Enhancement Programme was to develop a Place Plan to capture and develop Ashfield's unique character for those that

lived, worked and visited the area. In order to enable this a wide a wide range of stakeholders and partners had been involved in identifying what made the area distinctive and to enable a better understanding the 'Ashfield Story'. In order to further develop on these ideas, the Ashfield Place Board had been established to develop and deliver the Place Plan, part of which was the task to develop and define the Ashfield "Brand". The "Discover Ashfield" brand had subsequently been developed to resonate with different audiences within Ashfield and to help invigorate the area, raise its profile, boost growth and increase the sense of pride in the community. The officer's report included examples of the "Discover Ashfield" logo as well the other visuals that had been developed, alongside examples of how they could be used.

The officer's report included details of the Discover Ashfield Board's next steps in implementing key actions from the Place Plan which included Discover Ashfield launch activities and events, refreshing the Town Centre Masterplans, launching the Ashfield Ambassador programme and exploring the feasibility of a Business Improvement District in Ashfield.

The Leader thanked Martin Rigley, Chairman of the Ashfield Place Board for all the work he had done in moving the project forward and for being an outstanding ambassador for Ashfield.

RESOLVED

- a) that the officer's report be noted.
- b) that the further development of the Ashfield Place Leadership programme, as detailed in the officer's report be approved.

REASONS FOR DECISION

To continue the work to contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan commitments to:

- Enhance the identity and brand for Ashfield; so it is cherished by those who live or work here, desirable to those who visit, and attractive to those who bring jobs and investment.
- Raise the profile of Ashfield as a place where people want to visit and spend their time enjoying themselves.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR REJECTION

The option of not doing anything was not recommended for a number of reasons. The insight work carried out to date in conjunction with public, private and voluntary sector stakeholders has allowed the Council to increase understanding of the District by creating the 'Ashfield Story' and future requirements. The 'Ashfield Story' will be central to the successful delivery of the Place Leadership Programme objectives set out within the Corporate Plan (2016-2019).

CA.49 HS2 Consultation Response

The Interim Director – Place and Communities submitted a report seeking approval for the submission of the Council’s response to HS2’s Phase 2b Consultation on High Speed Rail (Crewe to Manchester and West Midlands to Leeds) Working Draft Environmental Statement relating to HS2 community areas LA07: Hucknall to Selston and Pinxton to Newton and Huthwaite LA08. The full draft consultation response was attached as an appendix to the officer’s report.

The report noted that HS2 had the potential to offer significant positive benefits for Ashfield in improved transport connectivity, as well as in regards to providing new development and employment opportunities. The Leader advised that while the potential benefits for Ashfield were significant it was essential that there were mitigating actions incorporated within the plans in order to reduce negative impacts including the impact of noise and vibration on local communities, the proximity of the line to Annesley Hall and on local landscapes and wildlife habitats caused by HS2. The Leader also advised that the previously planned closure of Junction 27 of the M1, during the construction phase of the scheme would now not happen which was very welcome news as the junction provided essential connectivity for businesses both in its immediate vicinity and in the wider Ashfield District. In addition to the Council’s response, the Chief Executive noted that local residents were being encouraged to take part in the HS2 Phase 2b Consultation.

RESOLVED

- a) that the consultation response as set out in the appendix of the officer’s report be approved for submission to HS2, and brought into effect from 26 November 2018.
- b) that authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder, to approve any minor drafting amendments to the consultation response.

REASON FOR DECISION

To enable the Council to inform HS2 of the Council’s concerns, to encourage opportunities to expand the economic benefits of the new infrastructure and highlight the key changes required to the proposals to mitigate the impact on the District.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR REJECTION

The alternative option was not to submit comments to HS2. This was not recommended as it would have been a lost opportunity to put forward for consideration the Council’s views on the impact of HS2 on the District’s communities, environment and economy.

CA.50 Ashfield Spring Clean

The Assistant Director - Neighbourhoods and Environment submitted a report to advise Cabinet on the successes, the cost of delivery and the impact made, along with lessons learned from the first Big Ashfield Spring Clean campaign, which had been a district wide clean-up campaign delivered over a three-week period between 19 May and 9 June 2018. The report also made recommendations for potential delivery methods for future Big Ashfield Spring Clean campaigns.

The Big Ashfield Spring Clean 2018 had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7 November, 2018 (Minute No. OS15 2018/19). The recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny Committee were included in the officer's report. It was noted that several of the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been incorporated into the proposals for the Big Ashfield Spring Clean 2019 including the greater use of "flying skips" and ensuring that static skips were manned at all times to prevent the dumping of hazardous waste. The Leader noted the success of the project and welcomed the development of the scheme for 2019.

RESOLVED

- a) that the full evaluation of the 2018 Big Ashfield Spring Clean, as detailed in the officer's report be noted.
- b) the plans for the 2019 Big Ashfield Spring Clean, as set out in the officer's report be approved.
- c) that authority be delegated to the Director of Place and Communities and Assistant Director Neighbourhoods and Environment, in conjunction with the Deputy Leader of the Council, Outward Focus, to lead on the project.

REASONS FOR DECISION

To use the evaluation and lessons learned from the Big Ashfield Spring Clean to inform the most effective way forward for 2019 and future years.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR REJECTION

1. Repeat the Big Ashfield Spring Clean campaign in its current format – This option was not recommended as it would not take into account the learning points from the Big Ashfield Spring Clean 2018.
2. Community led spring clean campaign with free bulky waste collections – This option was not recommended as while there is a recognition that there are pockets of active volunteers and groups in Ashfield there is no consistent approach Districtwide.

CA.51 Scrutiny Consideration of Play Strategy for Rural Areas / Green Space Projects

The Service Manager - Scrutiny and Democratic Services submitted a report to provide a summary of the considerations and recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the meeting of 7 November following the call-in meeting that had been held on the topic on 17 October.

At the meeting held on 7 November members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had discussed:

- the further information that had been provided with regards to the status of the Car Parking Strategy 2016 – 21, the Public Open Space Strategy 2016 – 26 and the Ashfield District Council Play Strategy. The Committee were also advised at that the improvements made under the emerging play strategy would be carried out on a schedule determined by location but any required maintenance to any play area would be carried out as required as the extra funding identified in the emerging play strategy was for new play areas;
- Section 106 contributions received for public open space and grant funding secured since 2014/15;
- Selston Parish Council Play strategy;
- Wharf Road improvements;
- their concerns regarding the parking at Brand Lane and discussed how any Section 106 monies would be spent to relieve parking and traffic issues in the Brand Lane vicinity created as a consequence of housing development in the area.

The meeting had concluded by noting the further information provided by officers and by the Deputy Leader of the Council (Outward Focus) in relation to future funding, play area development and enhancement in the district but asked that future improvements to play areas be carried out on the basis of need rather than location. (Minute No. OS14, 2018/19).

Members noted the considerations and the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Leader emphasised that the planned phased investment that was outlined in the emerging play strategy was extra investment in play areas in addition to previously planned and essential works that would be carried out on play areas right across the district.

RESOLVED

- a) that the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.
- b) that the Deputy Leader (Outward Focus) attends a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explain Cabinet's response to the committee's recommendations and to provide a progress report on the investments being made to play areas
- c) that it be noted that Cabinet had looked at the Section 106 agreement for Brand Land, but that it be noted that the agreement could not be amended without the consent of the developer.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To consider the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee following the call-in regarding the Play Strategy for Rural Areas / Green Space Project and the topic being referred back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR REJECTION

The option of approving the recommendation made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee “that the proposed schedule of work for investing in play areas, as detailed in the emerging Play Strategy be informed by specific needs for investment, and that these needs be recorded, rather than investment being determined solely on a schedule and list of areas” was rejected in order to ensure that play areas in rural areas received the same levels of extra funding as play areas in other areas of the district.

CA.52 Budget Monitoring (position to end of September 2018)

The Corporate Finance Manager submitted a report that set out the detail of income and expenditure forecasts for 2018/19 compared to the latest approved budgets for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and the Capital Programme. This forecast outturn position reported was based on activity to the end of September 2018.

RESOLVED

- a) that the forecast variances against revised budgets for the General Fund (underspend of £66,000), Housing Revenue Account (underspend of £3.126m) and Capital Programme (slippage of £9.059m), be noted.
- b) that a one-off transfer of £20,000 from the forecast underspend on Legal and Governance services be used to contribute, along with a number of the Nottinghamshire districts, towards legal and financial assessment costs associated with the LGR/Unitary work.
- c) that £29,000 of the forecast underspend be used to fund a second Ashfield Big Spring Clean early in 2019.
- d) that the new capital schemes included in the officer’s report be recommended to Council for approval.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To report to those charged with Governance the financial position to September 2018 and comply with the Council’s Financial Regulations.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS AND REASONS FOR REJECTION

There were no alternative options identified.

CA.53 Fees & Charges/Income Update

The Corporate Finance Manager submitted a report seeking approval for the implementation of the reviewed fees and charges for 2019/20. It was noted that a review of fees and charges was carried out annually as part of the Council's budget process. The proposed levels of fees and charges for 2019/20 had been set taking the following factors into account.

- Market conditions;
- Increases in costs incurred by the Council in delivering the service;
- Charges levied by the private sector where applicable;
- Restrictions due to any contractual arrangement.

It was noted that the level of some fees and charges were set by the Government and as such these had not been included in the review.

RESOLVED

- a) that the revised Fees & Charges for 2019/20, as detailed in the officer's report be approved, with all applicable increases taking effect as soon as practically possible after 1 April 2019.
- b) note that where reviews are ongoing and the proposed 2019/20 fees and charges are not yet available that these will be included in the Council's 2019/20 Budget Setting Report.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

Additional income generated will contribute towards the Council's saving targets and continue to support the financing of a range of services. An annual review of fees and charges is also part of sound financial management practice and a requirement of the Council's Financial Regulations.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR REJECTION

The option not to review fees and charges was not recommended as this would have necessitated the identification of further savings to assist in closing the funding gap. Not reviewing fees and charges would also lead to the further subsidisation of some services where full cost recovery is a requirement.

CA.54 Mid-Year Treasury Review

The Corporate Finance Manager submitted a report to advise Cabinet on the mid-year position in respect of the treasury activity and performance against the prudential indicators. The mid-year report had been prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management and provided information including.

- An economic update for the 2018/19 financial year as at 30 September 2018;
- The Council's capital position (prudential indicators);

- The Council's investment portfolio for 2018/19.

RESOLVED

- a) that the change from existing Constant Net Asset Value (CNAV) Money Market Funds to Low Volatility Net Asset Value (LVNAV) Money Market Funds be noted.
- b) that the mid-year position in respect of the treasury activity and performance against the prudential indicators be noted.

REASON FOR DECISIONS

To inform Cabinet of the current Treasury Management performance position and to meet the requirements of the Council's Financial Regulations (C.30).

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR REJECTION

There were no alternative options considered as it is a requirement to report on Treasury Management performance during the year in accordance with Financial Regulations.

CA.55 Universal Credit Support Staff

The Service Manager - Housing Management and Tenancy Services, submitted a report seeking approval for a Welfare Reform Officer to be added to the establishment for a fixed term of two years in order to assist with the wider roll out of Universal Credit and to assist tenants in paying their rent.

The report noted that many of the Council's tenants were already experiencing financial difficulties as a result of the Government's welfare reform programme, where Universal Credit was replacing and combining a number of existing benefits, including Housing Benefit, into one single payment made directly to the claimant. It was noted that Universal Credit had been phased in within the Ashfield area, with the full roll out of Universal Credit across Ashfield scheduled to be completed by November 2018.

The report highlighted concerns, based on the evidence of the roll out of Universal Credit in other areas, about tenants' capacity to manage the direct payments of housing costs, as families and particularly vulnerable tenants, may be un-used to receiving multiple benefits directly in one combined monthly payment and spreading that money across the month. It was noted that as a consequence of these changes there was a significant risk that tenants could potentially use the housing element of the Universal Credit payment to cover other bills and debts instead of prioritising rent payments, and as a consequence of this put approximately £13 million of rental income to the Council at risk. It was noted that 81 of 102 tenants in Ashfield currently in receipt of Universal Credit were currently in rent arrears. In order to mitigate this risk, it was proposed that a Welfare Reform Officer to be added to the establishment for a fixed term of two years to assist tenants, and particularly those vulnerable tenants, with budgeting and support in paying their rent on time in order for them to avoid getting into rents arrears, and as a

consequence protecting the Council's Housing Revenue Account income stream.

RESOLVED

that a Welfare Reform Officer, to assist with the wider roll out of Universal Credit and assist tenants in paying their rent, be added to the Council's establishment for a fixed term of two years.

REASON FOR DECISION

To increase the range and capacity of advice and support offered by the Council to tenants in order to both reduce the risks of rent arrears and also assist in the sustainment of tenancies.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR REJECTION

1. Not to recruit - This option was not recommended due to the number of tenants who will be directly affected by the introduction of Universal Credit and the need to protect the Housing Revenue Account income stream which faces significant risk due to the direct payment of housing costs to tenants rather than the Council itself.
2. Outsourcing the provision of advice - This option was not recommended due the potential delays it may cause, the need to have a data sharing agreement and for the potential for advice contrary to Housing's 'rent first' policy when using Housing Revenue Account money to provide monetary advice.

The meeting closed at 11.21 am

Chairman.