

CABINET

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

on Thursday, 24th November, 2016 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Cheryl Butler in the Chair;

Councillors Jim Aspinall, Tim Brown, Don Davis,
Jackie James, Keir Morrison and
Nicolle Ndiweni.

Officers Present: Carol Cooper-Smith, Richard Crossland,
Edd deCoverly, Ruth Dennis, David Greenwood,
Alan Maher, Robert Mitchell and Pam Wharfe.

In Attendance: Councillor David Griffiths and Councillor
Paul Roberts

CA.42 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Disclosable Pecuniary / Other Interests

There were no Declarations of Interest at this point.

CA.43 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2016 were approved as a true record. In relation to Minute CA.40, Members noted that the reincorporation of the housing service back into the Council had been well received by tenants. Similarly, the corporate induction sessions for the former Ashfield Homes staff who were now Council employees had also been well received.

CA.44 Regeneration Shared Service - Service Level Agreement

The report to Cabinet explained that the Council had operated a shared economic regeneration service with Mansfield District Council since April 2012. This shared service had focused on delivering a Joint Economic Master Plan for the two districts. It had helped to secure over £1 million of funding from the European Union to support economic projects across Ashfield and Mansfield.

Members were told that the current Service Level Agreement with Mansfield District Council for the shared service was due to end in April 2017 and that the European funding used to support these regeneration projects was no longer available. In order to respond to the changed circumstances, the service had been remodelled. A revised Economic Growth Plan had also been drawn up, setting out a range of strategic priorities and specific objectives to be achieved.

Cabinet discussed the report. There was a consensus that the shared service was working well and making a valuable contribution to the regeneration of the District and creating jobs. Considerable progress had been made over the last five years, but it was felt that a lot more still needed to be done. Members believed that the new Economic Growth Plan would play an important part in moving forward Ashfield's economy.

Cabinet made it clear that it was especially keen that the Council should continue to promote the so-called 'Maid Marian' railway as a way of making it a more attractive place for the wider UK and world economies by linking it to the HS2 rail line.

RESOLVED

- a) That Cabinet approves the continuation of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Mansfield District Council (MDC) for the Regeneration Shared Service, for the further period of 5 years;
- b) That Cabinet approves an annual review of progress, to be presented through Cabinet;
- c) That Cabinet approves the new Economic Growth Plan, with its new suite of strategic priorities and its associated Delivery Plan;
- d) That Cabinet grants delegated authority to the Chief Executive (in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth) to drive delivery of the Growth Plan and Delivery Plan priorities, in conjunction with MDC and to make minor changes, where necessary.

Reasons

To ensure progress continues to be made on the regeneration of the District.

CA.45 Capital Programme 2016/17 - 2019/20

Members then considered the Council's revised Capital Programme for the period 2016/17 to 2019/20. The report explained that for the General Fund overall expenditure would increase by £1.3m. Expenditure through the Housing Revenue Account would fall by £3.7m. There would also be an increase by £86k for Area Committee schemes, which would be funded from Section 106 payments (or money paid by developers as a condition placed on approved planning applications) and other grants.

Cabinet discussed some of the specific schemes included in the revised Capital Programme. In particular, Members highlighted the building works to accommodate the Police and Department for Work and Pensions in the Council's main offices, measures to make the Kingsmill Reservoir more accessible to visitors and the installation of new market stalls in Hucknall.

Finally, Members noted that Cabinet would be asked to agree a new Capital Strategy early in the New Year. This strategy would set out criteria for assessing whether individual spending proposals ought to be supported. It

would replace the interim Capital Strategy that had been put in place while the Council's new Corporate Plan and performance framework were developed.

Cabinet welcomed the revised Capital Programme and the work which had been done to help fund projects by actively seeking grant aid and funding from other organisations. Members made it clear that they looked forward to the new Capital Strategy and the opportunities this would provide to help focus capital spending on meeting the long term needs of the District and its communities.

RESOLVED

- a) That Cabinet endorses the revised Capital Programme;
- b) That Cabinet recommends the revised Capital Programme to Council for approval.

Reasons

To agree projects to allow capital investment for the period 2016/17 to 2019/20

CA.46 Update on the Council's Budgets Post Transfer of Ashfield Homes Limited (AHL)

The report to Cabinet explained that the Management Fee paid to Ashfield Homes Limited had now been reallocated to the Council's relevant housing-related budgets. The specific budget changes were set out in the report. It was explained that these changes would have to be formally endorsed by Council. Members discussed the changes and welcomed the fact that the money would continue to be used to support the service for the benefit of tenants.

RESOLVED

- a) That Cabinet notes the budget movements following the transfer of Ashfield Homes Ltd back into the Authority;
- b) That in line with the Authority's Financial Regulations Cabinet recommends such changes to the Council for approval.

Reasons

To note and endorse the budget movements following the transfer of Ashfield Homes Ltd back within the Authority.

CA.47 Treasury Management Strategy Mid-Year Review 2016/17

Cabinet then considered the mid-year review of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy. As part of this, Members heard about the role played by treasury management in helping to manage the Authority's cash flows during the year, investing money in order to secure the best return and funding the Council's capital plans.

Cabinet discussed the report. Members heard that investment income, or in other words the amount which the Council receives from its investments in shares and bonds etc. had been lower than expected. One of the reasons for this was the continuing low interest rates.

Members also heard about the Chancellor of the Exchequer's recent Autumn Statement and the projected increase in Government borrowing. Cabinet was disappointed that there had been no clarity in the statement on key issues facing the Authority, such as the future of the New Homes Bonus, the local government grant settlement and the future of Business Rates. Members were told that on the local government grant settlement was likely to be in place before Christmas. Cabinet welcomed this.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet notes the mid-year position in respect of the Treasury Activity and performance against the Prudential Indicators.

Reasons

To make Members aware of the current position and to meet the requirements of the Council's Financial Regulations (C.29).

CA.48 Loan Policy for Major Works for Leaseholders

Cabinet then considered a report on the provision of flexible loans for leaseholders in Council properties, so that they can carry out major repairs or upgrades to their homes. The current policy, it was explained, needed to be updated in order to bring it into line with legislative changes, which had been introduced by central Government in August 2014.

Members discussed and welcomed the revised policy. There was a consensus that it would help to ensure that major repairs were carried out with alacrity, and not delayed because individual leaseholders did not have the necessary money to pay for them. This, in turn, would help to maintain and improve the District's housing stock, in line with the aims of the Council's new four-year Housing Strategy.

RESOLVED

- a) That Cabinet adopts the new discretionary loans policy as set out in the report for Council leaseholders;
- b) That Cabinet recognises that the Government has capped all major works costs that can be transferred to resident council leaseholders to £10,000 (but only where the works involve central government funding) and agrees that the cap would apply to both mandatory and discretionary schemes in that circumstance.

Reasons

By providing an affordable solution for leaseholders to improve their properties alongside the Council's improvements to its own housing stock this will improve the overall quality of housing in the District.

CA.49 Adoption of Updated Playing Pitch Strategy

The report to Cabinet asked Members to adopt the updated Playing Pitch strategy for the District. The existing strategy, it was explained, was due to expire at the end of the year and so needed to be reviewed. An up to date strategy was also required as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan and to support funding applications to improve sports facilities.

Members discussed and welcomed the draft strategy. They felt that it built on the Council's already excellent record of creating and improving open spaces. They also felt that the draft strategy would have an important impact in terms of improving health and well-being in the District.

RESOLVED

- a) That Cabinet adopts the updated Playing Pitch Strategy;
- b) That Cabinet authorises any minor amendments to the strategy to be made following consultation with Sport England and the relevant sport National Governing Bodies, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder.

Reasons

The Playing Pitch Strategy forms part of the evidence base for the Local Plan and is also required to support funding applications for improvements to sports facilities.

CA.50 Exclusion of Public and Press

RESOLVED

That in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting during the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and in respect of which the Proper Officer considers that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

CA.51 Council Offices Kirkby - Letting Part of the Ground Floor to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

At this point Councillor Tim Brown declared an Interest in his capacity as a civil servant in the Department for Work & Pensions.

The report to Members set out revised terms for the leasing of part of the ground floor of the Council Offices to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. Members were asked to agree these terms.

RESOLVED

- a) That Cabinet approves the leasing of part of the ground floor of the Council Offices to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the terms set out in the report;
- b) That Cabinet delegates authority to the Chief Executive or the Service Director – Planning and Economic Development to conclude the negotiations relating to the final lease terms in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Asset Management;
- c) That Cabinet instructs the Assistant Chief Executive (Governance) to draw up the necessary documentation in consultation with the Estate Manager, including any variation to the above terms.

Reasons

To facilitate the co-location of the Department of Work and Pensions in the Council Offices.

CA.52 Carol Cooper Smith and Pam Wharfe

Members were informed that the Interim Service Director – Planning and Economic Development, Carol Cooper Smith and the Interim Service Director – Housing, Pam Wharfe were leaving the Council shortly and that this would be the last Cabinet meeting they attended. Members thanked them both for their excellent work during their time at the Council and wished them well for the future.

The meeting closed at 7.10 pm

Chair.