

CABINET

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

on Thursday, 18th January, 2018 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Cheryl Butler in the Chair;

Councillors Amanda Brown, Tim Brown,
Don Davis, Jackie James and Keir Morrison.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Nicolle Ndiweni.

Officers Present: Craig Bonar, Richard Crossland, Ruth Dennis,
Jacqui Harvey, Sharon Lynch, Robert Mitchell
and Paul Parkinson.

In Attendance: Councillor Tom Hollis, Councillor Helen-
Ann Smith and Councillor Jason Zadrozny

CA.41 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Personal Interests and Non-Disclosable Pecuniary / Other Interests

No Declarations of Interest were received.

CA.42 Minutes

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Thursday 30 November 2017 were approved as a true record.

CA.43 Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) Update

The report to Cabinet explained that the Council's policy on the use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) had been reviewed. This review had confirmed that no changes to the Policy were required. Members were also told that the Council had not used its powers under RIPA to carry out any covert surveillance during the last year.

RESOLVED

- a) That Cabinet notes that the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act Policy is up to date and that there are no proposed amendments to the Policy;
- b) That Cabinet notes that the Council has not authorised any covert surveillance pursuant to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act powers during the last twelve months.

Reasons

The current Code of Practice and Council policy requires that Members are updated on RIPA authorisations on an annual basis. The Policy also has to be reviewed regularly in order to make sure that it remains up to date and fit for purpose.

CA.44 Corporate Scorecard: April to September 2017 Position

Members were asked to consider the Balanced Scorecard information for the period April to September 2017. The report to Cabinet explained that 65% of the measures had improved compared to the same period of 2016 and that 77% of the measures had been achieved or exceeded their targets. Members welcomed this.

Cabinet discussed how the Council and its services had performed. Members were especially pleased that the Council had been able to process all types of planning application much more quickly than the nationally set target times. They also welcomed the prompt action to tackle poor standards in private sector housing and the reduction in homelessness levels due to domestic violence. These were two thirds lower than in the previous year.

Cabinet then discussed the areas where performance needed to improve and what action could be taken to achieve this. Members noted that in line with national trends, service requests for fly tipping had increased significantly. Cabinet was told that Ashfield District Council, in conjunction with other East Midlands local authorities, was seeking to develop proposals for action at a national level to help combat the problem. Members welcomed this as a way of ensuring that more effective action could be taken across local authority boundaries to tackle something affecting the country as a whole.

Members also heard that the number of new affordable homes built in the District had been lower than planned. For the most part, this reflected a reduction in new developments. Cabinet was told that Council hoped be able to increase the supply of these homes by using land that it owns for development. Cabinet welcomed this.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet notes the levels of performance achieved against the Corporate Scorecard as at Quarter 2 of 2017/18 in order to facilitate the delivery of the Corporate Plan and the improved performance of the organisation.

Reasons

In March 2016 Cabinet agreed the use of a 'Balanced Scorecard'. This methodology places greater emphasis on customer satisfaction and service quality. It provides a more rounded way of understanding how the Council's Corporate Priorities are being delivered.

CA.45 Selective Licensing - The Next Phase

Members were reminded that the Selective Licensing Scheme for private sector rented housing had been in operation for nearly a year. The first two phases of the scheme had covered the Sutton Central and Stanton Hill areas. The report to Cabinet explained that during this first year 87 properties had their electrical systems rewired fully and new windows and rooves were fitted to 47 homes. The report also explained that 26 properties had been proactively identified as having major safety risks. These were then inspected by Environmental Health Officers as a matter of urgency, so that action could be taken to make them safe.

Cabinet discussed the report. There was a consensus that the Selective Licensing Scheme had been a success and that it had made a valuable contribution to improving the quality of life both for individual tenants and for those communities where it had been implemented. Members were especially pleased to hear about the action to identify and tackle serious safety concerns. They recognised that this could have prevented deaths or injuries from occurring.

Cabinet made it clear that it wanted to extend the Selective Licensing Scheme to other parts of the District. As a first step towards achieving this goal, the report proposed that a research project be carried out to determine where the next phases of the scheme might be. It was explained that following on from this research project, a statutory public consultation period on any proposals to extend the scheme would then take place.

Members welcomed the proposal. They were keen that the Selective Licensing Scheme should benefit other communities in the District as soon as possible.

RESOLVED

- a) That Cabinet approves the implementation of a research programme, prior to a statutory 3 month period of public consultation, in relation to the expansion of the Selective Licensing Scheme of private landlords;
- b) That Cabinet notes the purpose of this research programme would be specifically to identify potential future phases;
- c) That Cabinet approves in principle to potential new phases of the Selective Licensing Scheme, subject to justification through the research;
- d) That Cabinet agrees that the potential new phases of the Selective Licensing Scheme be: PHASE 3 – Sutton North, PHASE 4 – Sutton East, PHASE 5 – Kirkby in Ashfield, PHASE 6 – Huthwaite areas as detailed in the Private Sector Renewal Strategy.

Reasons

The Selective Licensing Scheme was introduced in Sutton Central and Stanton Hill on 1 February 2017 and has made an important contribution to improving private sector rented accommodation in those areas.

CA.46 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Budget Monitoring to November 2017 and 2017/18 Budget Update

Members then considered a monitoring report on the Council's budget. Both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account had been underspent up to November 2017. The General Fund was projected to be overspent slightly for the 2017/18 financial year as a whole, while the Housing Revenue Account was projected to be underspent.

Cabinet discussed the report. There was general agreement that the Council was managing its budget prudently and meeting the financial challenges facing it. Members noted how as part of this prudent approach, the Council's financial reserves were being used to help cushion the long term budget reductions that had to be made.

Cabinet considered the reasons why specific areas of expenditure had varied. During this discussion, Members learned that 'transfer payments' such as the cost of Housing Benefit, that the Council receives from Government, but which are then passed on to others, was currently £92k under budget. Cabinet also heard that the amount of income from Planning Applications had fallen and was expected to be £200k below the projected figure by the end of the financial year.

Members recognised that decisions by developers to submit Planning Applications lay outside the Council's control, which made it difficult to predict income levels. Nevertheless, it was pointed out that several potential large planning applications might be submitted in the near future, which could significantly increase the amount of planning income received.

Cabinet heard that Housing Revenue Account net income was currently £127k greater than expected while expenditure on Tenancy Services, Responsive and Void Repairs and the Housing Courts were all below budget. For the year as a whole, the Housing Revenue Account was projected to be underspent by £164k.

The report then explained that changes to both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account would have to be made in order to take into account recent developments. Cabinet supported the proposed changes and agreed to recommend them to Council.

RESOLVED

- a) That Cabinet notes the budget monitoring to November 2017 for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and approves the reductions in the budget by £183k for the General Fund and £790k for the HRA;
- b) That Cabinet approves the movements from earmarked reserves to fund specific projects as set out in the report, noting that these improvements will have no impact on the position of the General Fund;
- c) That Cabinet approves the budget changes as set out in the report and recommends them to Council in accordance with Financial Regulations.

Reasons

To report to those charged with Governance the financial position to November 2017 and comply with the Council's Financial Regulations.

CA.47 Fees and Charges 2018/19

The report to Cabinet explained that a review of the Council's Fees and Charges had taken place. The purpose of this review had been to make sure that the Council recovers fully the cost of its services rather than to run them at a loss. Members recognised how important it was to do this, given the need to make substantial financial savings.

Cabinet reviewed the specific changes which had been proposed. Members noted the increase in planning fees, set by Central Government. These fees were due to rise by 20% nationally. Members noted that the cost of outdoor market stalls in the District was significantly lower than in many neighbouring authorities. Cabinet welcomed this and hoped that this price advantage would help make the District's outdoor markets more attractive to potential stall holders.

RESOLVED

- a) That Cabinet agrees the revised Fees & Charges booklet for 2018/19;
- b) That Cabinet agrees that all the applicable increases take effect as soon as practically possible after 1 April 2018.

Reasons

Additional income generated will contribute towards the Council's saving targets and continue to support the financing of a range of services.

The meeting closed at 6.55 pm

Chair.