

CABINET

Decision Notices and Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 26th July, 2012 at 5.00 p.m. at the Civic Offices, Telford

PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY, 1st AUGUST, 2012

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY, 6th AUGUST, 2012)

PRESENT: Councillor K.S. Sahota (Leader and Chair), E.A. Clare, S. Davies, A.R.H. England, W.A.M. McClements, H. Rhodes, C.F. Smith and P.R. Watling

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor A.J. Eade (Conservative Group Leader) and Councillor W.L. Tomlinson (Lib Dem/Independent Group Leader)

CB-21 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 28th June 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

CB-22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor R.A. Overton

CB-23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

CB-24 COUNCIL MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2012/13 – 2014/15

Key Decision identified as **Council Plan** in the Forward Plan published on 16th May 2012

Council Decision – not subject to Call-in.

Councillor S. Davies, Cabinet Member: Neighbourhood Services & Co-operative Council, presented the report of the Managing Director, attached to which was the draft Council Medium Term Plan 2012/13 – 2014/15.

The Council Plan identified the high level strategic focus for the organisation over the next 3 years, including the Council's vision, priorities and values; its approach to a co-operative way of working; the medium term financial strategy; and its strategy for "Putting Customers First" and being a "Business supporting, Business Winning Council". Against each proposed Priority, the Plan set out how 'delivery' would be measured, although specific measures would be kept under review as strategies and initiatives were developed. Progress reports on the delivery of the Plan and the Priority would be presented to Cabinet at regular periods.

A key challenge was to communicate and embed the Priorities within the organisation alongside the Co-operative values. This could be achieved through Personal Development Discussions between managers and their staff, and by ensuring all Council reports and plans identified how they contributed to delivering the Priorities. The report also outlined a number of suggestions for communicating the message within the organisation.

Reference was made to the new Development & Business Charter, and the series of pledges it made to ensure that the Borough was 'open for business'.

RESOLVED – that the draft Council Medium Term Plan 2012/13 – 2014/15 be approved, and to **RECOMMEND** to COUNCIL that it be adopted.

CB-25 CO-OPERATIVE COUNCIL UPDATE

Non-Key Decision

Councillor S. Davies, Cabinet Member: Neighbourhood Services & Co-operative Council, presented the report of the Managing Director, which provided an update on the progress that had been made in putting co-operative working into practice.

The programme of work to translate the vision into action was focussed on four main areas:

- (i) Adopter projects – achievements over the last 12 months included the employment of around 100 apprentices within the Council, a Small Business Loans Fund, launch of an employability centre, environmental improvements in Brookside, and a Ward Co-operative Fund. A number of other projects were in progress – including Family Connect, bringing Dawley Town Hall back into community use, and free Wi-Fi in Council owned buildings. It was proposed to incorporate a Food Bank project into the current programme. Whilst some voluntary organisations already provided food parcels, it had been identified that there was a growing need for a co-ordinated Telford & Wrekin Food Bank facility, and support to tackle the underlying issues. It was proposed to allocate up to £5k from the Co-operative Council budget towards the cost of this project.
- (ii) Co-operative and Employee Commissions – recommendations from both Commissions had been agreed by Cabinet in May 2012. In conjunction with Commissioners, work had started on implementing the recommendations, including the launch of a Business & Development Charter and promoting volunteering. Both Commissions would meet again in October to review progress and agree next steps.
- (iii) Partnership Working – including developing a Health & Wellbeing Strategy and refreshing the Children, Young People & Families Plan.
- (iv) Community Agreements – existing community agreements such as the Parish Charter and the Customer Charter were being reviewed to better reflect the Council's Co-operative Values and approach.

RESOLVED –

- (a) that the progress in delivering the Co-operative Council Work Programme, as set out in Section 4 of the report, be noted;
- (b) that the inclusion of the Food Bank project in the Co-operative Council Work Programme be approved.

CB-26 2012/13 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

Key Decision identified as **2012/13 Financial Monitoring** in the Forward Plan published on 15th June 2012.

Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Resources & Service Delivery, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Finance, Audit & Information Governance, which provided Members with the latest financial monitoring information for 2012/13.

It was reported that revenue spending for the year was projected to be within budget at year end, after the use of £2.6m of the budgeted contingency. There were still a number of significant pressures on the budget, including the cost of Adult Social Care purchasing (projected overspend of £0.320m, largely due to the Council having to fund the support to people who had had their funding withdrawn by the PCT); the cost of Children in Care placements and use of agency staff in the Safeguarding service (projected variation of £1.970m); the cost of Specialist Education (projected overspend of £0.3m); along with income shortfalls, particularly in School Meals. Projected variances of over £0.100m for individual service delivery units were detailed in the report. There were benefits from active treasury management, vacancies and other small service variances.

The capital programme totalled £112.7m, which reflected re-phasing approved as part of the outturn. Robust programme management and monitoring was in place to ensure schemes were delivered. Appended to the report were a number of new allocations and slippage for approval. The capital programme over the next few years relied on a significant amount of capital receipts as part of its funding, and the position was being closely monitored. There was no variation from receipts delivered compared to expectation to date.

Collection levels for Council Tax and Sales Ledger debt were behind target, while NNDR income was ahead of target at the end of June 2012.

Councillor A.J. Eade (Conservative Group Leader) referred to the continued overspend on the cost of placements for Children in Care, and that promises to get this expenditure under control had not been met. In response, Councillor P.R. Watling (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families) stated that the Administration was clear on the direction of Children's Services, and that it would not put a price on children's safety. Councillor McClements added that measures were being taken to reduce the unit costs of placements, and recent monitoring had shown these were

coming down. Although the numbers of children coming into the care system was largely outside the Council's control, it was hoped that the overspend would not be any greater by the end of the financial year.

RESOLVED –

- (a) that it be noted that the 2012/13 revenue spend is projecting to be within budget at year end;
- (b) that the uses of the budgeted contingency detailed in paragraph 6.1 of the report be approved, and that the existing delegated authority be extended in relation to approving bids against the capacity fund to cover the additional amount approved;
- (c) that the position in relation to capital spend be noted, and **TO RECOMMEND to COUNCIL** that the slippage and new allocations identified in Appendix 3 be approved;
- (d) that it be noted that NNDR income collection is ahead of target while Council Tax collection and Sales Ledger outstanding debt are behind targets set.

CB-27 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT – DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

Key decision identified as **Draft Statement of Community Involvement** in the Forward Plan published on 16th May 2012.

Councillor C.F. Smith, Cabinet Member: Housing, Regeneration & Economic Development, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Business, Development & Housing which set out a Co-operative approach to developing a framework for community engagement in relation to planning. Attached to the report was the proposed draft Statement of Community Involvement.

The Statement of Community Involvement was a regulatory requirement in relation to the development of the Local Plan, and set out minimum standards that the Council would deliver when engaging the public. It would provide greater overall clarity for investors in terms of how to engage with the planning process, and reflected the pledges contained in the Business & Development Charter in relation to streamlining the process. In terms of engagement with Members, it was proposed to focus engagement through the Cabinet, whose role was to directly shape and drive the Development Plan, and the Scrutiny structure. This would replace the current Development Plan Steering Group – a small cross party group that had worked with Officers on the new Plan.

If approved, the draft Statement of Community Involvement would be subject to a six week period of public consultation between 20 August and 1 October 2012. The Council would then review the comments made and make any alterations where appropriate prior to adoption by Council.

RESOLVED –

- (a) that the Statement of Community Involvement be approved for public consultation;
- (b) that the amended approach for Member engagement through Cabinet and the Scrutiny Programme be approved.

CB-28 PLANNING OF SCHOOL PLACES: HOLLINSWOOD INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS

Key Decision not in the Forward Plan but taken with the consent of the Chairman of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee, in accordance with paragraph 2.7 of the Cabinet Decision Procedure Rules as set out in part 4 section 4 of the Constitution.

Councillor P.R. Watling, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families, presented the report of the Assistant Director for Education, Culture & Skills which detailed the responses to the consultation on a proposed amalgamation of Hollinswood Infant and Junior Schools.

Following the Cabinet decision on 31 May 2012 to engage in formal consultation on the merger of the two schools, officers had been involved in several meetings with parents, pupils, staff and governors to seek and collate the views of all stakeholders. Further discussions had been held with headteachers and governors to explain the timetable and process necessary for any possible changes to be implemented by January 2013. Consultation responses and notes of consultation meetings were appended to the report. A further three responses received after publication of the agenda were tabled at the meeting, although it was reported that the response from a staff member was not to be considered, as they had subsequently asked for it to be withdrawn.

It was clear there were mixed views on the proposal, with the Infant School not being in favour of a merger. However, the merging of the schools would be in line with the national trend to reduce the number of single phase schools, it would ease the transition of pupils from KS1 to KS2 and more likely lead to improved attainment for all children, and would offer opportunities for staff to enhance their skills by gaining experience across more than one key stage. In the last seven years, only 4 pupils had not transferred from the Infant School to the Junior School. Cabinet were therefore minded to proceed with the amalgamation, but would work closely with the Infants School to address the concerns of staff and to make sure the transition was as smooth as possible.

RESOLVED – that, having taken into consideration responses to the formal consultation that ended on 23 July 2012, Public Notices be published in respect of the merger of Hollinswood Infant and Junior Schools.

CB - 29 HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE – WINTER SERVICE REVIEW

Key Decision identified as **Annual Winter Maintenance Review** in the Forward Plan published on 15th June 2012.

Councillor S. Davies, Cabinet Member: Neighbourhood Services & Co-operative Council, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Neighbourhood & Leisure Services, which provided a review of the performance of the service during the 2011/12 winter season, proposals for service efficiencies amounting to £50k along with Co-operative Council initiatives to enhance the winter service provision.

To increase resilience without increasing costs, the rate of spread for salt applied to the roads for the winter of 2011/12 was reduced to reflect national guidelines and common practice elsewhere. This had been monitored, and there did not appear to have been any adverse impact. It was therefore proposed to continue with this rate of spread for the 2012/13 winter season. Following a review of all gritting routes, it was proposed that the number of gritting routes could be reduced from nine to eight – resulting in efficiency savings without reducing the defined network coverage. In response to stakeholder requests, the A4640 Redhill Way slip roads to Donnington Business Park had been added to the roads to be gritted.

In order to help members of the public with the effects of significant snowfall or adverse weather, it was proposed to introduce and support a Snow Warden initiative commencing in winter 2012/13. Based on the Co-operative model, the aim was to establish a network of up to 50 volunteer wardens – further details on how it would work and the financial/insurance implications were appended to the report. The newly created Parish Environmental Teams in St Georges & Priorslee, Great Dawley and Madeley would also provide assistance at times of adverse weather.

Members welcomed the report and thanked all those people who worked hard in often difficult circumstances to keep the roads clear of snow and ice.

RESOLVED – that the changes to the Highways Maintenance Winter Service outlined in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report be approved, namely:

- Existing treatment routes to remain the same for 2012/13 with the addition of one location- the slip roads off A4640 leading to Donnington Business Park and reduce the number of gritting routes from nine to eight without affecting network coverage and in turn delivering efficiency savings;
- Existing Grit Bin Policy to remain for 2012/13 but to continue close working with Parishes and community groups for local co operative opportunities;
- To provide ongoing resilience and efficiencies – continue with salt storage at the same capacity and the rate of spread of salt of 10g per m2 for frost prevention and 20g per m2 for snow events be adopted as ongoing service policy;

- **Continue to improve communication channels and access to information for residents, parish councils and businesses within the Borough and to promote Co-operative Council opportunities including the introduction of up to 50 volunteer Neighbourhood Snow Wardens.**

CB-30 OUTCOME OF CALL-IN REQUEST

Non-Key Decision

Councillor D.R.W. White, Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board, reported on the Board's consideration of a Call-in of the decisions taken by Cabinet on 31 May 2012 regarding Waste Management Services Procurement. The Board had not supported the Call-in but the discussion generated had raised a number of issues and ideas. It was therefore recommended that:

- a detailed evaluation of the option of a Council owned and managed Transfer Station should be undertaken as part of the evaluation of solutions before going out to contract;
- benchmarking reviews should be undertaken at minimum 5 yearly intervals throughout the terms of the contract;
- scrutiny will be involved throughout the procurement process – this would be led by the Housing, Economy & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee

Councillor S. Davies, Cabinet Member: Neighbourhood Services & Co-operative Council, presented the Cabinet's response to the Scrutiny recommendations arising from the Call-in – a copy of which had been tabled.

A detailed evaluation of the option for a Council owned and managed Transfer Station would be undertaken, and assessed when the market submitted costed bids at detailed solution stage. In terms of benchmarking reviews, these would be built into the contract when it was drafted. A Scrutiny Engagement Plan would be produced, and discussions had taken place between the Project Team and Scrutiny Officer to agree on how the process was to be developed.

RESOLVED - that the Cabinet's response to the Scrutiny recommendations be approved.

CB-31 STATION ROAD, NEWPORT – UPDATE AND APPROPRIATION

Key Decision identified as **Station Road, Newport** in the Forward Plan published on 15 June 2012.

Councillor C.F. Smith, Cabinet Member: Housing, Regeneration & Economic Development, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Development, Business & Housing which provided an update regarding the progress of the sale of the Station Road, Newport site for redevelopment as a superstore and

associated development and sought an in principle decision to appropriate the land for planning purposes.

Before the site was appropriated for planning purposes, the Council was required to consider whether the land was no longer required for the purposes that it was currently used. It was considered that more productive use could be made of the land and the Council, as landowner, had made its intentions clear in respect of the future use of the land. It was considered that appropriation for planning purposes would facilitate and indeed was necessary for carrying out that development, and therefore the appropriation would contribute to the promotion and improvement of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the Council's area as detailed in the report.

RESOLVED –

- (a) **that in principle, and in accordance with section 122(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Station Road, Newport site is no longer required to be held by the Council for general landholding purposes;**
- (b) **that in principle the Station Road site, as identified in Appendix 1 of the report, be appropriated for planning purposes, subject to the consideration of representations as to the effect taking that step will have on affected landowners' interests;**
- (c) **that it be noted that an advertising and consultation process will be undertaken, and a final decision on the above matters will be taken following that process and having regard to any objections received;**
- (d) **that it be noted that the Leader will consider any representations received and make the final decision whether to appropriate the Site for planning purposes.**

CB-32 HOUSING KICKSTART PARTNERSHIP – WEST MIDLANDS

Key Decision identified as **Demobilisation & Assignment of Home Owner Loans to TWC** in the Forward Plan published on 16 May 2012.

Councillor C.F. Smith, Cabinet Member: Housing, Regeneration & Economic Development, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Development, Business & Housing which outlined the implications for the Council of the wind-up of the West Midlands Kickstart Partnership established to administer the national programme in the Region.

The National Kickstart Programme was established in 2004 to provide loans to residents on low incomes unable to access finance for home improvements that would enable them to remain living independently. The Council joined the West Midlands Partnership in 2008 with the Home Improvement Agency linking residents with the Programme team. 59 households in the Borough had benefitted from the Scheme, and a number of equity share and

unsecured types of loans were offered. Following the Government decision to cease to provide Kickstart loan finance, the Partnership had had to wound up, with the remaining secure and unsecure loans being assigned to the relevant local authority. Although final figures were still being clarified, it was anticipated that the Council would take responsibility for 27 secured loans totalling £328k and 21 unsecured loans with a balance of £18k to be repaid.

The report set out the actions and responsibilities that now fell on the Council and how these would be dealt with. For the unsecured loans it was proposed that the in-house Invoicing and Collection teams manage the loan repayments. As part of the changes, the Council had received £15,000 of capital from the Project Management Team.

RESOLVED – that all secured and unsecured loans, as listed in the respective Deeds of Assignment of Loans schedules are formally assigned to Telford & Wrekin Council so that it can legitimately deal with any queries from borrowers relating to those loans and with any enforcement issues (where deemed appropriate).

CB-33 TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Non-Key Decision

The Leader presented the report of the Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & Public Protection which asked Members to consider proposals for the Council to operate in an even more transparent, open and accountable way in line with the values and ethos of a Co-operative Council and in accordance with Government guidance arising from the Localism Act 2011

The options outlined in the report were varied but focussed on the issues involving transparency for elected Members and public accountability to the Council's meetings and decision making processes. For example, further information and details could be published on any payments by the Council to companies or businesses that a Councillor had an interest in. In terms of Council meetings, it was suggested that greater public engagement could be achieved through a public question session at full Council meetings. Similarly, the filming and recording of Cabinet and Council by members of the public and the use of social media during meetings was being promoted by the Government as a way of allowing citizens to observe local decision-making. Implementation of some of these options would require consideration of protocols etc, and would need to be discussed by the Council Constitution Committee and full Council in relation to any consequent changes to the Constitution.

Members welcomed the report, and it was

RESOLVED –

- (a) that the following measures for increasing transparency and improving public accountability be approved:

- Publication of information on Councillors who trade with the Council
 - Publication of Councillor attendance figures for appointed meetings of the Council
 - Public Question session at Full Council Meetings
 - Filming/Recording of Cabinet and Council meetings by members of the public on a trial basis
 - Use of Social Media by members of the public during meetings
 - Voluntary publication of Council expenditure over £100
- (b) that, prior to implementation, further detailed protocols be agreed for consideration and approval by Council Constitution Committee and full Council.

The meeting ended at 5.56 p.m.

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Jonathan Eatough
Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & Public Protection
Date: 1st August 2012

Signed:

Date: