

## **CABINET**

**Decision Notices and Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 13th November, 2014 at 5.00 p.m. at the AFC Telford Learning Centre, Haybridge Road, Wellington, Telford**

**PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY, 19<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER, 2014**

**(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY, 24<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER, 2014)**

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

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor A.J. Eade (Conservative Group Leader), Councillor W.L. Tomlinson (Liberal Democrat/Independent Group Leader)

### **CB-49      MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16 October 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

### **CB-50      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None

### **CB-51      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

### **CB-52      HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY**

**Key Decision** identified as **Homelessness Strategy** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 15 October 2014.

Councillor C.F. Smith, Cabinet Member: Housing, Development & Borough Towns, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Family & Cohesion Services, which detailed the consultation that had taken place with stakeholders following approval of the draft Homelessness Strategy in September 2013. A copy of the finalised Strategy for the period 2014-2017 was appended to the report.

The Homelessness Strategy set out how the Council would work with partners to prevent and tackle statutory and non-statutory homelessness, including eliminating the need for rough sleeping. It also included an Action Plan (which was appended to the report) to achieve the three principal aims of the Strategy:

- Preventing homelessness in Telford & Wrekin
- Having appropriate housing pathways, including advice and support for homeless households in the Borough
- Meeting the statutory duty to accommodate the Gypsy, Romani and Traveller community.

Further consultation had taken place with Maninplace, the Salvation Army KIP project, Stay Supported Housing, Wellington & District YMCA, private and registered landlords and the Scrutiny Management Board. This had strengthened the collaborative working with partner organisations, which was co-ordinated through the local Homelessness Partnership.

Significant progress had been made through the delivery and implementation of the Action Plan, with key achievements to date including the launch of the Telford Housing Options Tool, the development of a gypsy and traveller transit site at Snedshill, the commencement of works to extend the permanent gypsy and traveller site at Lodge Road, Donnington Wood, and the phasing out of Bed and Breakfast for emergency accommodation.

Members welcomed the Strategy and the multi-agency approach being taken to supporting people and to ensuring there was joined-up working to prevent and tackle homelessness. It was noted that the impact of the Government's welfare reforms was leading to more evictions for rent arrears and people then presenting themselves as homeless.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (a) **that the Homelessness Strategy 2014-2017, as appended to the report, be adopted;**
- (b) **that the progress being made on the Strategy, as summarised in the action plan shown at Annex 1 of the report, be noted.**

#### **CB-53            REVISED SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA 2015/16**

**Key Decision** identified as **Revised Funding Formula for Telford & Wrekin Schools for 2015/16** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 15 October 2014.

Councillor P.R. Watling, Cabinet Member: Children, Young People & Families, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting, which sought approval for revisions to the funding formula used to allocate Government funding to mainstream schools in Telford & Wrekin.

The Department for Education had made only minor changes to the school funding regulations for 2015/16, apart from the introduction of Minimum Funding Levels for local authorities which sought to ensure that each local authority had sufficient money to fund its schools at minimum levels. This had resulted in Telford & Wrekin receiving a net increase in grant of 1.4%, which equated to £1.3m of additional Dedicated Schools Grant.

Consultation had taken place with the Telford & Wrekin Schools Forum on how to utilise the additional funds, and the Cabinet Member thanked the Forum for their input. It was proposed that £1m be used to remove the cap on increases in school funding per pupil. This would enable the new funding formula to take effect more quickly, with any remaining funding to be used to increase the basic per pupil funding rates. £300,000 would be used to support the 'High Needs' education budgets which were currently facing considerable pressures.

In response to a question from Cllr W Tomlinson (Liberal Democrat/Independent Group Leader) regarding how far the Government looked ahead in terms of pupil numbers and schools funding, the Assistant Director: Education & Corporate Parenting advised that the Department for Education captured numbers twice during an academic year and used that information to help determine the following year's grant allocation. So it was in effect "lagged" funding based on the previous year's pupil numbers.

**RESOLVED** – that the revisions to the funding formula for Telford & Wrekin mainstream schools for 2015/16 be approved.

**CB-54            AWARD OF NETWORK SERVICES, TELEPHONY, CONTACT CENTRE AND ASSOCIATED SUPPORT CONTRACT**

**Key Decision** identified as **Network & Voice Tender** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 15 October 2014.

Councillor H. Rhodes, Cabinet Member: Customer Services, Libraries & Transport, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Customer Services, which advised Members of the procurement and tendering process that had been undertaken for the supply of the Council's voice and data network.

Telford & Wrekin's network provided data and voice services for 186 sites, including 75 schools, and supported over 150 home and mobile workers. The network was now 9 years old and in need of investment to upgrade critical component parts, and to support new contact centre upgrades and the use of more cost effective channels for customers to do business with the Council. The existing contract with Capita ICT Services (formerly Synetrix) for the supply of the current network expired in June 2015. Following Cabinet approval on 30 January 2014, an EU Restricted Tender process had been undertaken to test the market place in order to select a preferred supplier for the provision of the voice and data network after June 2015. The contract would be for 5 years, with the option to extend for a further 5 years. Full details of the procurement process were outlined in the report. The new contract would enable the upgrade of critical network links and replacement of equipment as well as supporting new customer service innovations.

At the end of the tender process, the preferred supplier was Capita ICT Services. The capital cost of the contract would be funded through the Council's ICT capital programme. In revenue terms, the new contract would deliver budget savings of £160k. Schools would benefit as the reduced

contract costs would be fed into the charging model for the ICT Managed Service for Schools in 2015/16.

In response to a question from Cllr W Tomlinson (Liberal Democrat/Independent Group Leader) regarding guarantees against network out-ages and faults, the ICT Service Delivery Manager advised that the new contract had very robust arrangements for the supplier to provide financial recompense for disruption to business as a result of identified network problems. These arrangements could also be reviewed over the course of the contract.

### **RESOLVED –**

- (a) that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director: Customer Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Libraries & Transport, to award to Capita ICT Services the Network Services, Telephony, Contact Centre and Associated Support Contract;**
- (b) that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & People Services to agree and execute all necessary documentation, including the affixing of the common seal of the Council to contractual documents as appropriate;**
- (c) that the capital and revenue investment as detailed in the report and outlined in the ICT Capital Programme be approved.**

### **CB-55      COMMUNITY PRIDE FUND – GRANT ALLOCATION**

#### **Non-Key Decision**

#### **Part Recommendation to Full Council in relation to decision (d) below not subject to Call-in**

Councillor S. Davies, Cabinet Member: Neighbourhood Services, Employment & Skills, presented the report of the Managing Director which provided an update on the implementation of the Community Pride Fund and the process that had been undertaken to allocate grants from the Fund to applicants from the local community.

The Community Pride Fund was established to support the delivery of the Council's Pride in Your Community Programme, with £1m of capital funding being available to support local schemes/projects that would benefit the physical, social and economic regeneration of the Borough. The response had been overwhelming and, by the closing date of 5 September 2014, a total of 66 applications had been received from 60 different organisations amounting to over £2.5m. Due to the significant response and the quality of the applications received, it was proposed to increase the budget for the Fund to £1.260m. The additional money would be found from in-year savings, and would enable a greater number of projects to be funded.

The report detailed how the applications were evaluated and then scored against agreed criteria by the Community Pride Fund Advisory Panel. Thanks were extended to all those who sat on the Panel, which had cross-party Member representation as well as volunteers from the Co-operative Commission. It had been a robust process with the Panel carrying out qualitative evaluations of all the applications in order to prioritise the projects to be recommended for funding. Appended to the report was a list of the 37 projects, with a total value of £1.257m, that it was proposed to be funded through the Fund. It was noted that all areas of the Borough would benefit from the allocation of funding to these projects.

The Advisory Panel had recommended that plans be put in place to re-allocate funding should any of the prioritised projects not be able to deliver their scheme and spend the grant within the agreed timescales. The progress of the successful projects would be tracked through ongoing monitoring, with applicants being required to submit regular updates and encouraged to contribute to the Community Pride Fund 'blog'.

Members welcomed the success of the Community Pride Fund, which was a good example of co-operative working to help local communities help themselves. It would also open up other funding opportunities to these community groups and organisations. Thanks were extended to Rachael Jones and her team for the administration of the Fund and allocation process.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (a) that the budget for the Community Pride Fund be increased to £1,260,000 to enable a greater number of projects that contributed to the Council's priorities to be supported;**
- (b) that the projects that have been prioritised using the Funding Advisory Panel evaluations, as shown in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved for funding from the Community Pride Fund;**
- (c) that authority be delegated to the Managing Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member: Neighbourhood Services, Employment & Skills, to re-allocate any grant funding that has not been spent within the timescales for an approved scheme, based on the principle that the money is allocated to the next highest prioritised project on the list from the appropriate funding pot;**
- (d) To RECOMMEND to COUNCIL that the transfer of £0.260m into the Community Pride Fund, to be funded from the delivery of additional in-year savings in 2014/15, be approved.**

**CB-56      LOCAL CRISIS AND LOCAL RESETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE POLICY**

**Non-Key Decision**

Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Finance & Enterprise, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Customer Services, which sought approval for a revised policy for Emergency Welfare Assistance which would be funded directly by the Council.

Cabinet approved the Council's Crisis Assistance and Resettlement Assistance Policy in March 2013 in order to manage the Local Welfare Provision funding allocated to local authorities by Government as a replacement for the centrally run Social Fund. The basic principle of Telford & Wrekin's scheme was that the assistance would be via the provision of goods and services rather than cash payments. In January 2014, the Government announced that it would not be providing any funding for Local Welfare Provision after 2014/15. It would be for each local authority to determine whether it wished to continue to provide support from its own budgets.

The number of applications for assistance under the existing Policy had been significantly fewer than expected. The report detailed the key criteria for receiving assistance and the main types of assistance provided. These had provided local residents with an invaluable safety net to meet essential needs in the event of a personal or financial crisis. In light of the experience gained in operating the scheme, the Policy had been reviewed. The core principles had not been changed, but the document had been simplified and re-named as the Emergency Welfare Assistance Policy in order to avoid confusion with the Telford Crisis Network which operated the food bank scheme. A copy of the revised Policy document was appended to the report.

In terms of financing the scheme for 2015/16, it was proposed that £138,000 be allocated – to be funded from rolling forward a projected underspend of £104,000 of 2014/15 grant money with a top-up of £34,000 from Council resources in order to meet the forecasted costs of operating the scheme next year.

Members expressed concern that the Government had decided to cease funding a scheme that was designed to provide emergency support to the most vulnerable. Even many people in work were reaching crisis point, and it was important that the scheme should continue alongside the valuable work of the voluntary sector in providing Food Banks etc.

**RESOLVED –**

- (a) that the change of name for the scheme to Emergency Welfare Assistance be approved;**
- (b) that the Emergency Welfare Assistance Policy, as shown at Appendix A of the report, be approved;**

- (c) that budgetary provision of £138,000 be allocated for 2015/16 to fund the administration and awards of assistance under the Policy.

**CB-57            GRANT FOR PROVISION OF SHORT-TERM COMMUNITY LOANS**

**Non-Key Decision**

Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Finance & Enterprise, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Customer Services, which proposed the making of a grant to enable a local credit union to provide an ethical, short-term loans scheme to support some of the most vulnerable people in the community.

There was an increasing problem with people getting into debt as a result of taking out payday or other short term loans to meet everyday needs. The interest rates charged by the lending companies tended to be very high (up to 7000% APR). Credit unions offered lower-cost loans but, unlike payday lenders, they tended not to offer loans for shorter time periods. However, some credit unions were now starting to offer affordable alternatives to payday loans, and an officer/member working group had been working with colleagues from the Citizens Advice Bureau to investigate the viability of working with a local credit union to create a low-cost ethical loans scheme. A specification for such a scheme was drawn-up, with assistance from the Co-operative & Communities and Budget & Finance Scrutiny Committees. It was proposed that the Council provide a grant of up to £100,000 to cover any set-up and administration costs for the life of the project and to fund the capital pot to be used for the awarding of loans. In July 2014, invitations were issued to three local credit unions asking them to submit bids for the funding. One bid, from Just Credit Union Ltd, was received, and details of their operation were provided in the report. They had estimated that the £100k grant would enable them to make loans to the value of £272k.

The proposed £100k payment to Just Credit Union would be funded from an amount rolled forward from the Crisis Assistance funds allocated for 2013/14. The Council would support Just Credit by raising awareness of the loan scheme.

Reference was made to the motion that had been passed by Council in March 2013 regarding the proliferation of legal loan sharking, and that this was a practical and pro-active means for local people to be offered a low-cost alternative to unaffordable payday loans. The involvement of a local credit union was welcomed. All Councillors were urged to help get the message out to residents about the availability of this scheme, and reference was made to how people using other Council services could be signposted to the scheme if they were in need of short term financial assistance.

**RESOLVED –**

- (a) that £100,000 of funding from the 2013/14 Crisis Assistance allocation be ring-fenced to fund a grant to enable a local credit union to provide an ethical short-term loans scheme (that mirrors some of the benefits of the payday loans concept at significantly reduced charges) to local residents who would otherwise be unable to access low interest rate credit;
- (b) that the grant be allocated to Just Credit Union Ltd, who had successfully bid through a competitive process;
- (c) that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director: Customer Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member: Finance & Enterprise, to approve the detail of an ethical short-term loans scheme and oversee its implementation;
- (d) that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & People Services to approve and execute all necessary contractual documentation in accordance with the Constitution.

**CB-58      EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED** – that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it may involve the disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

**CB-59      DISPOSAL OF LAND AT ALLSCOTT**

**Key Decision** identified as **Land at Allscott** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 15 August 2014.

Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Finance & Enterprise, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Development, Business & Employment, which sought approval for the disposal of a surplus land asset at Allscott.

A 2.1 acre site in the village of Allscott was held within the Council's Property Investment Portfolio (PIP), and was currently occupied by way of an annual grazing licence. A recent review of assets within the PIP had identified this site as a possible opportunity for residential development. If approved for disposal, an outline planning application for residential use would be submitted and, if granted, the site would be brought forward for open market disposal to achieve best consideration.

The report detailed the value of the land based on its current use and the potential value should it achieve residential planning consent. A significant

proportion of the land sale would be used as part of the corporate capital receipts programme.

**RESOLVED –**

- (a) that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director: Development, Business & Employment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member: Finance & Enterprise, to
  - promote a planning application on the site identified on the plans appended to the report;
  - market and dispose of the freehold interest as outlined in the report;
  - apply the capital receipt as detailed in the report, and update the capital programme as necessary.
  
- (b) that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & People Services to seal or sign any documents required to give effect to the recommendation above.

The meeting ended at 5.50 pm.

**Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices**

**Jonathan Eatough**  
**Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & People Services**  
**Date: 19 November 2014**

**Signed:** .....

**Date:** .....