

CABINET

Decision Notices and Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 15th May, 2014 at 5.00 p.m. at Dawley Town Hall, Dawley, Telford

PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY, 21ST MAY, 2014

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: TUESDAY, 27TH MAY, 2014)

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

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor W.L. Tomlinson (Liberal Democrat/Independent Group Leader), and Councillors C.R. Turley and M.G. Ion

CB-113 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 24th April 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CB-114 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

CB-115 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

CB-116 SCRUTINY REVIEW OF EMPTY PROPERTIES AND PRIVATE LANDLORDS

Key Decision identified as **Housing, Economy & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee Report on Empty Properties and Rogue Landlords** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 24 March 2014.

Councillor C.R. Turley, Chair of the Housing, Economy & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee, presented the Committee's report looking at bringing empty properties back into use and tackling rogue landlords to help address shortages in the availability of some types of housing.

The Committee had focussed on two main strands of enquiry:

- How to identify empty properties as early as possible?
- How to address issues of poor practice by private landlords?

There were an estimated 400 empty properties in Telford & Wrekin, around 97% of which were in private ownership. This was a waste of opportunity

when there were significant numbers of people on the waiting list for houses. In addition, empty properties were sometimes a cause of blight or focus of antisocial behaviour as well as a potential loss of New Homes Bonus income for the Council. Evidence was taken from the relevant Cabinet member, Council officers, Madeley and Ketley Town and Parish Councils (in whose areas high concentrations of empty properties had been identified), and from other local authorities who had been successful in bringing empty properties back into use. The Committee had looked at the national picture, local authority enforcement powers, and the local picture as described in a Cabinet report from September 2013.

The Committee had concluded that over recent months the Council was focussed on the issue of empty properties and overall found much to welcome in the overall direction of travel and work being undertaken. However, the review identified some areas it was felt could be strengthened, and the Committee had therefore made a significant number of recommendations which were intended as constructive suggestions as to how things could be improved. This was also based on the experiences in other authorities and examples of good practice that could be used to make a difference in Telford & Wrekin. The recommendations were set out in detail in the Scrutiny report.

Councillor C.F. Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing, Development & Borough Towns, responded to the report on behalf of the Cabinet. He thanked the Committee for the work they had done. The detailed response to each of the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations was appended to the report attached to the agenda. Most of the recommendations had been wholly or partially accepted, and actions identified to implement them. A couple of recommendations had been rejected, as it was not considered to be the right way forward – and the reasons for this were explained in the report. Considerable progress had been made over the past six months to assist owners to bring their property back into use. Where owners had not been willing to engage, intervention and support had been successfully used to clear or clean-up properties. There was also much more going on to identify empty properties at an earlier stage, and a number of the Scrutiny recommendations would enhance this.

Members welcomed the report, and the work being done to tackle these issues. While there were many good landlords, it was important that all landlords were made aware of their responsibilities in terms of keeping their properties maintained and fit for occupation –with action being taken if problems arise. Reference was also made to social landlords, who sometimes took some time to re-let vacant properties.

RESOLVED – that the recommendations made by the Housing, Economy & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee be noted, and the response set out in Appendix 1 of the Cabinet Member's report be approved.

**CB-117 SCRUTINY REVIEW OF LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE
PLANNING AND PROVISION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL
PLACES**

Key Decision identified as **Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee Report on the Review of the Planning and Provision of Primary School Places** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 24 March 2014.

Councillor M.G. Ion, Chair of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee, presented the Committee's report looking at the local arrangements for the planning and provision of primary school places between April 2013 and February 2014. He thanked all the people who had been involved in compiling the report and who had provided evidence.

With the rising birth rate and the scale of housing development in the Borough, the Committee's main concern was whether there would be sufficient capacity in primary schools to meet the growing demand. The review considered the methodology for projecting pupil places, how additional capacity was planned and the role of headteachers and governors in the process, and the link between the expansion of places and the quality of provision. Evidence was taken from the relevant Cabinet member, Council officers, members of the Primary Heads' Forum, school governors and an expert advisor from the National Governors Association.

The Committee had concluded that, in spite of some challenging local pressures for particular primary schools in areas where there was a lot of new development, enough capacity was being planned within the existing primary schools to meet the demand from growing pupil numbers across the Borough as a whole over the next 5-10 years. However, the review identified some areas of concern in which it was felt some improvements could be made. The Committee had therefore made a number of recommendations which were detailed in the Scrutiny report. In particular, the Committee felt there was a lack of clarity regarding payments for education provision by developers under Section 106 agreements and how that money was used, and had made a recommendation for the publication of a Section 106 Annual Report.

Councillor P.R. Watling, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families, and Councillor C.F. Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing, Development & Borough Towns, responded to the report on behalf of the Cabinet. They thanked the Committee for their work on the Review, and for the high standard of scrutiny. The detailed response to each of the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations was appended to the report attached to the agenda. Recommendations 1, 2 and 6 had been wholly accepted, with recommendations 3, 4 and 5 being partially accepted for further consideration and investigation. The report set out the rationale regarding the response to these latter recommendations. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families added that Government education policy in favour of academies and free schools outside the LA was making it increasingly difficult to plan for future provision.

RESOLVED – that the recommendations made by the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee be noted, and the response set out in Appendix 1 of the Cabinet Members’ report be approved.

CB-118 TELFORD LOYALTY CARD

Non-Key Decision.

Councillor S. Davies, Cabinet Member: Neighbourhood Services, Employment & Skills, presented the report of the Managing Director which updated Members on the uptake of the Telford Loyalty Card (TLC) and plans to further develop the use of the Card to help to actively promote local businesses and to provide value-for-money for residents.

Since its launch in April 2013, around a third of the Borough’s population now had a registered TLC, which was a 151% increase compared with the Flex card it replaced. More than 230 Telford & Wrekin businesses had joined the scheme offering a wide variety of incentives to cardholders to use their business. Examples of the increase in trade and footfall of participating businesses/services were detailed in the report.

It was now intended to build on this success by increasing the numbers of businesses who supported the scheme, developing a smartphone app, encouraging greater use of TLC’s leisure offer, and improving the offer for visitors in relation to attractions and places to eat/drink. In terms of growing the number of TLC businesses, it was proposed to create TLC High Street Zones (particularly in the Borough Towns), and to develop the concept of a TLC that could be used by businesses when purchasing from other local businesses. It was also proposed to offer enhanced levels of support for businesses to buy into a series of graded levels offering a variety of options including enhanced web listings and digital marketing.

Members welcomed the report, and the further extension of the TLC scheme, which aligned with many of the Council’s key priorities. Councillor E.A. Clare, Cabinet Member: Leisure Services & Culture, referred to the role that the TLC was playing in encouraging people to participate in sports and leisure activities, and its usefulness as a marketing tool by the Council’s leisure facilities.

RESOLVED –

- (a) that a commitment to further developing the Telford Loyalty Card to strengthen Council services such as Leisure, Pride in Your Community and Public Health, including the offer of an enhanced level of support that businesses can buy into, be approved.**
- (b) that the success and achievements of the Telford Loyalty Card since its launch in April 2013, which has seen the card registered by around one third of Borough residents and a take-up by more than 230 businesses, be noted.**

CB-119 REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES 2014/15

Non-Key Decision

Councillor K.S. Sahota, Council Leader, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & People Services regarding the appointment of up to eight representatives to the Telford Trust for the 2014/15 Municipal Year.

Telford Trust was a long-standing local charity, which was now undertaking a more strategic, advisory and consultative role on promoting healthy and active lifestyles across the Borough. The Chair of Telford Trust had requested that Cabinet appoint the Council's representatives to the Trust for 2014/15 at this meeting in order to allow the appointees to attend the Trust's Annual General Meeting on 4 June 2014. The Cabinet Member for Leisure Services and Culture was an ex-officio appointee, and up to seven further appointments could be made. Political Group leaders had been advised to submit nominations, and it was reported that six nominations had been received.

RESOLVED - that Councillors E.A. Clare (as Cabinet Member for Leisure Services & Culture), A.R.H. England, R.C. Evans, G.M. Green, K.R. Guy, A.A. Mackenzie and P.R. Watling be appointed as the Council's representatives to the Telford Trust for 2014/15.

The meeting ended at 5.45 pm.

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

**Jonathan Eatough
Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & People Services
Date: 21 May 2014**

Signed:

Date: