

MINUTES of a meeting of the POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 11 JANUARY 2017

Present: Councillor M Specht (Chairman)

Councillors N Clarke, J Cotterill, J Geary, D Harrison, G Hoults, V Richichi, A C Saffell and N Smith

In Attendance: Councillors R Johnson and S Sheahan

Portfolio Holders: R D Bayliss and N J Rushton

Officers: Mr S Bambrick, Mr C Brown, Mr P Collett, Mr A Hunkin, Mr G Jones, Mr S Outama, Mr P Padaniya, Mr J Richardson and Mrs R Wallace

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor T Eynon.

17. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

18. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

No questions were received.

19. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting on 28 September 2016.

An amendment was requested to insert Councillor R D Bayliss into the attendance list as he was at the meeting.

It was moved by Councillor J Geary, seconded by Councillor D Harrison and

RESOLVED THAT:

Subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2016 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

20. LOCAL POLICING UPDATE

The Local Policing Unit Commander, Inspector Helena Bhakta gave an update to Members on matters including the current resources and demand, crime rates, strategic priorities and performance.

Councillor N Smith commented that he was pleased to see armed police recently and asked if there was any intention of extending it further into the District as he felt that it helped with people's behaviour. Inspector Bhakta was pleased that Councillor N Smith viewed armed police officers positively as unfortunately many people did not. She explained that areas were assessed and armed police officers were used where the threat was, generally in crowded areas rather than villages. She did not see this being extended any further, especially as it was resource intensive with highly trained officers.

Chairman's initials

In response to a question from Councillor N Clarke, Inspector Bhakta reported that there was not an issue with hate crime in the area which was very positive.

In response to a question from Councillor V Richichi, Inspector Bhakta explained that serious organised crime were organisations that had a clear hierarchy of command with high business operations that made a lot of money, such as dealing drugs.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Bhakta for attending.

21. HS2 - PRESENTATION FROM SLC RAIL

The Director of Services introduced the representatives of SLC Rail and reminded Members that the consultants were working on behalf of the Council not HS2.

A presentation on North West Leicestershire's current position for Phase 2 of HS2 and the next steps available was given to Members.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting for a comfort break at 7.38pm and reconvened at 7.42pm.

Councillor D Harrison raised concerns regarding the housing development in Measham which would be affected, as well as the impact on the neighbouring villages. He believed the village of Measham would be destroyed and he did not see any benefits. He felt strongly that there should be a station at East Midlands Airport. Mr M Beckett noted the comments regarding the adverse impact on Measham and he felt the arguments from HS2 regarding the reasons for the route change were less convincing and unclear. He stated that unfortunately the opportunity for a station in the area had passed and other Local Authorities in the East Midlands had already agreed with the proposed station at Toton.

Councillor M Specht did not agree that the opportunity for a station in the District had passed and commented that it was more important to take into account what the people of the District wanted rather than other Local Authorities. He believed that it was ridiculous not to utilise the airport when the aim of HS2 was to obtain an integrated service.

Councillor N Smith reported that he had attended a recent public meeting regarding phase 2 of the route which had a very high turnout. He explained that many questions were asked about the proposed changes in Measham when other options were available, unfortunately HS2 were not clear in the responses. In response to a question from Councillor N Smith, the Director of Services recommended that any concerns be directed to him. Mr M Beckett confirmed that the suggestion that East Midland Parkway would be used instead of Toton was only a rumour.

Councillor V Richichi did not believe that there were any benefits for the District with the current proposals as the nearest stations were too far away.

Councillor N Clarke concurred with Councillor V Richichi and felt that the District needed to see more long term benefits other than a faster journey time. Mr B Hulland agreed that the benefits was something that needed to be investigated and thanked Members for raising the point. He added that HS2 would improve the rail network with more routes and trains. He confirmed that they were unable to influence the location of the stations but the route was something that people's views could be fed into.

The Chairman thanked the guests for attending.

Chairman's initials

22. DRAFT GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS AND CAPITAL PROGRAMMES 2017/18

The Financial Planning Manager presented appendix one of the report and updated Members that since the proposals were considered by Cabinet in December the Local Government Financial Settlement had been announced. The two key elements in relation to the announcement was that the four year settlement that was offered last year had been confirmed and the changes to the New Homes Bonus Payments meant that the Council would benefit in the short term.

In response to questions from Councillor N Clarke, the Financial Planning Manager stated the following:

- The one off cost increases in the waste service was due to the County Council's withdrawal of recycling payments from 1 April 2018; a temporary round consisting of extra staff was required.
- The additional funds for information management had made a noticeable difference as more information was now available online for people to view instead of submitting Freedom of Information Requests which was a lengthy and costly process. Some processes had also been streamlined so that information was only input once which would save money in the long term.
- The surplus was less than originally forecasted in the Medium Term Financial Strategy due to key factors such as delays in some areas of business rate income, employment costs and some income not as much as predicted. He added that the change in New Homes Bonus meant that the figure would now be slightly higher.

Councillor N Clarke commented that he was pleased that the Council Tax Support Benefit would remain at the same level as it helped many people within his Ward. Councillor N J Rushton commented that it was a tough decision but he felt it was a good one for the level to remain the same.

In response to a question relating to the additional costs as a result of staffing numbers from Councillor D Harrison, the Interim Director of Resources explained the importance of maintaining adequate staffing levels and in general there would not be a lot of growth in budgets or levels of staff. He added that any major changes would need to be investigated seriously before being implemented.

The Financial Planning Manager presented appendix two of the report.

In response to questions from Councillor N Clarke, the Financial Planning Manager stated that although reducing the number of refuse vehicles may have been mentioned in the past due to lower levels of recycling, this was not included in the proposals. Councillor N J Rushton added that recycling still needed to be collected even if the levels were lower. Also there had been an increase in households in the District and therefore the vehicles were required.

The Director of Housing presented the HRA Capital Programme section of the report to Members.

Councillor M Specht was pleased with the building of new council homes.

Councillor N J Rushton commented that he was very proud that new council homes were being built for the first time in 30 years.

Chairman's initials

It was moved by Councillor J Geary, seconded by Councillor D Harrison and

RESOLVED THAT:

The comments made by the committee be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 February before making its recommendations to Council.

23. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2017/18

The Director of Housing presented the report to Members highlighting the proposed budgeted surplus of £276,000 and the estimated balance on the Housing Revenue Account to be £8.5million by March 2018. He referred to the consultation process with Council tenants and reported that the comments were mainly around the building of new council homes which was well received, the proposed parking improvements on estates were welcomed and a preference for air source heat pumps heating systems over gas central heating, even though they were more costly to install.

Councillor D Harrison was pleased to see an improvement in the turnaround time for void properties and asked what the current figures were. The Director of Housing reported that the turnaround time was now 35-36 days. He also informed Members that rent loss due to void properties was now down to 1.2 percent from 1.8 percent last year, this equated to approximately £100,000 additional rent income.

Councillor N Clarke referred to the repayment of debts as detailed at paragraph 2.2 of the report and asked if it was still due to be repaid as per the planned timescales. He also added that he was delighted about the new build council homes and thanked the Director of Housing for all the work undertaken to try and acquire the site at Cropston Drive for development. The Director of Housing confirmed that the debt repayment was on track as planned and that complex negotiations were ongoing in relation to acquiring the Cropston Drive site.

It was moved by Councillor D Harrison, seconded by Councillor J Geary and

RESOLVED THAT:

The comments made by the Committee be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 February before making recommendations to Council on 24 February.

24. ICT SERVICES UPDATE

The ICT Team Manager presented the report to Members highlighting the current procurement process for the provision of a secure private data centre, the outcome of which would be considered by Cabinet in February.

Councillor A C Saffell commented that as he had experience of working in the industry, he had concerns regarding issues during the migration of data, he asked what the contingency was. The ICT Team Manager reported that in terms of the migration, the work would be conducted on a phased approach over a set period of time. The contingency plans would be included in the contract. In response to a question, the ICT Team Manager confirmed that the contract could be made available for Members if required. The Interim Director of Resources commented that the procurement process would make sure that the correct company was used to cover all risks.

It was moved by Councillor D Harrison, seconded by Councillor A C Saffell and

RESOLVED THAT:

Chairman's initials

The report be noted.

25. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor N Clarke referred to the recent Council meeting at which the appointment of the Head of Economic Development was ratified, and suggested that a report on the local economy of the area be considered by the Committee. He asked for the following points to be included:

- the current employment outlook in the District by sector for example distribution, manufacturing, retail and service sectors;
- where the growth was occurring;
- which sector was struggling;
- How the Council could help the local economy become more resilient, broader based and self sustaining.

RESOLVED THAT:

The work plan be noted.

Councillor N J Rushton left the meeting at 8.26pm.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.44 pm