

MINUTES of a meeting of the CABINET held in the Board Room, Council Offices, Coalville on TUESDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2014

Present: Councillor R Blunt (Chairman)

Councillors R D Bayliss, T Gillard, T J Pendleton, N J Rushton and A V Smith MBE

In Attendance: Councillors D De Lacy, R Johnson, J Legrys, T Neilson and S Sheahan

Officers: Mr S Bambrick, Mr R Bowmer, Ms C E Fisher, Mrs C Hammond, Mr G Jones and Miss E Warhurst

59. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

60. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor N J Rushton stated that should the debate on item 6 – General Fund Revenue Budget Proposals 2015/16 go into detail relating to the operations of the market he would declare a disclosable pecuniary interest , as the owner of the indoor market in Ashby de la Zouch and would leave the meeting.

61. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no public questions received.

62. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2014.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor T J Pendleton and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2014 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Reason for decision: To comply with the Constitution.

63. LOCAL PLAN - REPRESENTATIONS MADE IN RESPONSE TO REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION

The Regeneration and Planning Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members.

He advised Members that the Regulation 18 consultation was the first stage of the process in preparing the Local Plan. He informed Members that the two most significant issues that were highlighted in the responses were renewable energy and heritage, and it was now proposed to include these in the Local Plan.

It was moved by Councillor T J Pendleton, seconded by Councillor R D Bayliss and

RESOLVED THAT:

Cabinet notes the representations made in response to the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation and the Council's response set out within appendix B, as attached.

Chairman's initials

Reason for decision: To ensure that Cabinet is aware of the outcome of the Regulation 18 consultation.

64. GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2015/16

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members.

He advised Members that the proposals detailed in the report would go out for consultation and would be considered by Policy Development Group in January and it would then be reported back to Cabinet in February to agree a recommendation to Council. He highlighted that there was an underspend forecast of £800,000 due to increases in income from planning fees, recycling and additional New Homes Bonus. He stated that a number of savings had been put in place including reductions in the Revenues and Benefits Partnership contributions and ICT efficiency savings.

He informed Members that it was proposed to use £500,000 of the Value for Money reserve to establish a Business Bidding Fund, and allocate funds from the General Fund reserve to fund additional costs of the Local Plan and additional works to Coalville Market. He also advised that the Council proposed to continue the Local Council Tax Support Scheme Grants to the Town and Parish Councils and that it was intended to freeze Council Tax for a sixth year.

Councillor T J Pendleton advised Members that there had been an unprecedented amount of planning applications submitted recently, but stated that this may not continue. He informed Members that to ease the pressure with the extra applications and to ensure that the Local Plan was produced appropriately extra staffing would be required.

Councillor A V Smith stated that she was very proud of the recycling rate within the district and thanked the residents for their hard work. She highlighted that the income generated was dependent on the market value and that the Council had to get the best price.

Councillor T Gillard informed Members that the money that had been spent on Coalville Market had been received well. He stated that the traders were happy and that they had seen an increase in footfall.

Councillor R D Bayliss advised Members that the Revenues and Benefits Partnership had now been going for four years and that it had maintained costs, but was now starting to show savings following the review.

Councillor R Blunt stated that there were concerns about how the partnership would work and that it was observed that savings were not always made straight away.

It was moved by Councillor N J Rushton, seconded by Councillor R Blunt and

RESOLVED THAT:

Cabinet

1. Approves the General Fund Revenue Budget proposals as set out in this report;
2. Approves the allocations of resources from reserves detailed in section 5; and
3. Agrees in principle to continuing the payment of LCTS Grants to Town and Parish councils subject to confirmation by Cabinet when it sets the Council Tax base in January 2015.

Reason for decision: To enable the Council to set a balanced budget as required by law.

Chairman's initials

65. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2015/16

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members.

He advised Members that the Government had announced that from 2015/16 new guidance on setting rent increases would be introduced and, if adopted, this would have a downward effect on future rental income predictions. He stated that officers had looked into the possible options for the Council to approach for rent increases and these were detailed in the report and option C – Accelerated Convergence was the recommended approach. This would enable the Council to continue to invest in bringing the housing stock up to a high standard, and also result in all tenants paying the same rent for similar properties. He informed Members that under option C the reserves would be in a position to enable the Council to repay its outstanding loans in seven years.

It was moved by Councillor R D Bayliss, seconded by Councillor N J Rushton and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The assurance statement by the S151 Officer be noted.
2. Cabinet approves the draft HRA Budget proposal as detailed in this report, with option C as the recommend approach for rent increases and associated appendices for consultation.

Reason for decision: To enable the Council to set a balanced Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2015/16.

66. APPROVAL OF HOUSING POLICIES

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members.

He advised Members that the report included both refreshing existing policies and adopting new ones.

He highlighted that the Under Occupation Policy had been amended to include incentive payments, which consisted of a payment of £2,000 to tenants who moved from a house to a supported or sheltered property, and a payment of £1,000 to tenants liable to pay the under occupation charge who moved to a smaller Council or Housing Association property.

He informed Members that two new policies were to be introduced relating to garages and tenancy. The Garage Policy will enable the Council to review all garage sites and put them to the best possible use. Under the Tenancy Policy, he explained the two types of tenancy that the Council would now offer – Introductory Tenancies for new tenants, and Lifetime Secure Tenancies to existing tenants. As the latter would help foster stable communities, and avoid transient neighbourhoods, he felt the Council should offer lifetime secure tenancies.

Councillor R Blunt stated that he would be happy to back the decision to stay with lifetime secure tenancies.

It was moved by Councillor R D Bayliss, seconded by Councillor R Blunt and

RESOLVED THAT:

Cabinet approves the adoption of the policies detailed in appendix A of the report.

Chairman's initials

Reason for decision: Policies have been reviewed and created to reflect the requirements of the service for the medium term.

67. AUTHORITY TO AWARD BANKING CONTRACT

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members.

He reminded Members that the main banking contract had been awarded last year, however the bank had now made it clear that they wished to leave the local authority banking market. He advised Members that there was a new ESPO contract framework that would assist with the tendering process, but there were not many suitable banks in the market and the Council would be looking for a smooth transition.

Councillor R Blunt asked what problems would be envisaged with moving banks.

Councillor N J Rushton stated that it was hoped that the new bank would come in and pick up where the current bank had left off.

The Head of Finance stated that it was expected the current bank would fully co-operate with the transition and that the Council did have a contingency plan in place. He informed Members that the new contract would be in place in time for the new Council Tax billing run.

It was moved by Councillor N J Rushton, seconded by Councillor R Blunt and

RESOLVED THAT:

Cabinet

1. Notes the tender process selected for the banking services contract;
2. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Corporate Portfolio Holder to award the banking services contract.

Reason for decision: The level of potential expenditure exceeds the authority threshold in the Scheme of Delegation.

68. NWLDC APPROACH TO COMMUNITY RIGHTS

The Community Services Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members.

She informed Members that she was pleased with how the community had responded to the Right to Bid and that the report detailed a range of assets that had been nominated so far.

She advised Members however that the Community Right to Challenge and Community Asset Transfer had not had the same level of interest. She stated that the report contained a new process for considering requests in the future and highlighted that delegated authority was being sought to allow the Director of Services to decide asset transfers on an initial five year lease to test whether or not the arrangement was viable.

It was moved by Councillor A V Smith, seconded by Councillor R D Bayliss and

RESOLVED THAT:

Cabinet:

1. Approves the Council's approach to the exercise of community rights in the district;
2. Delegates authority to the Director of Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to decide community asset transfers on an initial 5 year lease to test viability.

Reason for decision: To provide a framework for Community Rights requests.

69. DELEGATION OF BUSINESS RATES POOLING DECISIONS

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members.

He advised Members that the report was asking for authority to be delegated to the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer in consultation with himself, to enter or withdraw from the business rates pooling rather than continuing to bring a report to Cabinet.

It was moved by Councillor N J Rushton, seconded by Councillor T J Pendleton and

RESOLVED THAT:

Cabinet delegates authority to the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer, in conjunction with the Corporate Portfolio Holder, to enter and withdraw from future business rates pooling agreements and negotiate their terms.

Reason for decision: To improve the efficiency of business decisions.

70. MINUTES OF THE COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSES WORKING PARTY

The Community Services Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members.

She thanked the Members of the Working Party for the continuing work that they had done. She stated that she was pleased with the progress on the Coalville Park Peace Garden and that the wheeled sport facility at Cropston Drive had been completed, with further improvements being looked into. She added that whilst investment and improvement to the outdoor spaces and play provision was continuing, the Council needed to ensure that there was enough warden resource available.

She advised Members that plans were in place for the Christmas lights switch on and was pleased that the Working Party was already planning ahead for the next year. She highlighted the proposal for Proms in the Park.

She informed Members that she would be recommending items a, b and c detailed at 3.1.1 of the report however item d would be removed as the grass cutting offer was no longer available to District Councils.

It was moved by Councillor A V Smith, seconded by Councillor T J Pendleton and

RESOLVED THAT:

Cabinet notes the recommendations made by the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party as detailed within the minutes and approves the recommendations as summarised at 3.0 as amended by the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for decision: To progress Coalville Special Expenses projects and programmes.

71. CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2013/14

The Regeneration and Planning Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members.

He informed Members that a joint audit of all the District and Borough Councils in the County had been undertaken and that the Authority was doing very well, however following the audit there were two areas in which there was room for improvement. He highlighted the number of designated officers within the Council and that there was a seasonal rise in the number of incidents reported that was in line with other agencies.

It was moved by Councillor T J Pendleton, seconded by Councillor A V Smith and

RESOLVED THAT:

Cabinet notes the continuing focus on safeguarding in North West Leicestershire District Council.

Reason for decision: For Cabinet to be informed of procedures and annual data in relation to the Council's statutory duty to ensure compliance with safeguarding duties as detailed in Sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004 and Working Together 2013.

72. 2014/15 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Leader presented the report to Members.

He informed Members that all three benefit performance indicators had exceed targets, 100% satisfaction had been achieved with the Decent Homes works and that it was projected that there would be a significant underspend for the year on the General Fund of £800,000. He highlighted that the absence rate was slightly below target at 3.67 days per full time equivalent employee.

He advised Members that following the launch of the re-designed website he was pleased to report that the number of customers using it to report incidents and request services had increased, and following a quality assessment at Hood Park Leisure Centre the facility was assessed as good overall. He stated that a Head of Partnership had recently been appointed for the Revenues and Benefits service and that customer satisfaction for Development Control remained high at 91%.

Councillor T J Pendleton highlighted that there had been 2 slippages within the Development Control targets, however following the recruitment of the new Head of Regeneration and Planning and other support staff it was hoped that the slippages would be put right.

Councillor T Gillard highlighted that the improvement works to Coalville Market had seen an increase in trading and revenue.

Councillor R D Bayliss highlighted the performance indicators for housing. He stated that in relation to the choice based lettings, bids had to be done online so some residents who did not have access to the internet may find it difficult to bid and that some residents struggled to understand the banding process. In relation to the average re-let times, he advised that work was being undertaken by the Interim Decent Homes Team Manager, alongside the Director of Housing to assist with returning void properties to use.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor A V Smith and

RESOLVED THAT:

Cabinet receives and comments on the Quarter 2 Performance Report (July – September 2014).

Reason for decision: The report is provided for members to effectively monitor the organisation's performance.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 5.55 pm