

MINUTES of a meeting of the CABINET held in the Board Room, Council Offices, Coalville on TUESDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2015

Present: Councillor R Blunt (Chairman)

Councillors R D Bayliss, T Gillard, T J Pendleton and N J Rushton

In Attendance: Councillors R Adams, J Bridges, J Clarke, D Everitt, T Eynon, F Fenning, J Geary, D Harrison, G Hault, J Legrys and S McKendrick

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

55. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A V Smith.

56. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Members declared the following interests:

Councillors R D Bayliss and N J Ruston declared a non pecuniary interest in item 9 – Ashby Neighbourhood Plan – Proposed response to Consultation, as members of Ashby Town Council.

57. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2015.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor T Gillard and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2015 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Reason for decision: To comply with the Constitution.

58. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

59. GENERAL FUND AND SPECIAL EXPENSES REVENUE BUDGETS 2016/17

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members.

He informed Members that the report was to provide an update on progress in preparing next year's budget and included a brief summary on financial performance in the current year.

He highlighted that there was an underspend forecast for the current year of £422,000 which was due to an increase of over £500,000 in planning fee income and that the General Fund Reserve was being maintained at £2.4m which left potential for allocating the underspending to special projects, however he advised that a prudent level of reserves were to be maintained when the budget was set due to uncertainties around income from business rates, the New Homes Bonus and local fees and charges.

Chairman's initials

He stated that the budget position for the next year projected a surplus rather than the shortfall predicted due to additional income from the New Homes Bonus, planning fees and Council Tax, but highlighted that there were significant pressures from reduced recycling credits and additional costs for the Local Plan, adding that the Government's funding announcements later in the month may change this again.

He informed Members that it was proposed to freeze Council Tax for the seventh year and that no changes were being made to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, and that a statutory consultation would now be held on the budget including consideration by Policy Development Group at its meeting in January.

Councillor T Gillard stated that it was a very positive report.

Councillor T J Pendleton agreed that the Authority should be prudent and not spend if unless necessary.

Councillor R Blunt highlighted the 0% increase to the Council Tax and agreed that the Council should be prudent.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The 2016/17 budget proposals for statutory consultation be agreed.
2. In principle the continuation of the payment of Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) grants to Town and Parish Councils subject to confirmation by Cabinet when it sets the council tax base in January 2016 be agreed.

Reason for decision: Required to complete 2016/17 budget process.

60. CAPITAL PROGRAMMES - GENERAL FUND, COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSES AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (H.R.A). PROJECTED OUTTURN 2015/16 AND DRAFT PROGRAMMES 2016/17 - 2020/21

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members.

He advised Members that the report provided an update on the delivery of the current capital programmes and set out all the draft programmes for 2016/17 onwards.

He highlighted that the draft programme included £1m for essential vehicle fleet purchases and over £700k for Disabled Facilities Grants, that there were no new Coalville Special Expenses schemes planned for 2016/17 at this stage and that the Housing Revenue Account included decent homes, planned investment and resources for new build and acquiring affordable housing.

He informed Members that the report would go forward to Policy Development Group in January, then back to Cabinet for final approval and recommendation to Council to approve at its meeting on 23 February 2016.

Councillor R Blunt stated that he was happy to see the continued investment into the Improving the Customer Experience project and the second phase of the improvements to Coalville Market.

Councillor R D Bayliss highlighted the investment towards the 30 new homes to be built by the Council or acquired from external sources.

Chairman's initials

In the absence for Councillor A V Smith, Councillor N J Rushton highlighted the planned investment towards the maintenance of car parks and Council owned buildings in the Leisure service.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The estimated General Fund, Coalville Special Expenses and H.R.A. Capital Outturn for 2015/16 and planned financing be noted.
2. The draft Capital Programmes in 2016/17 detailed in:
 - Appendix "A" General Fund and Special Expenses Capital schemes
 - Appendix "B" for HRA Capital schemes
 And in 2017/18 these schemes only:
 - £630,000 for the vehicle replacement programme, as detailed in paragraph 3.2
 be agreed for consultation.
3. The indicative Capital Programme schemes for 2017/18 to 2020/21 be noted.
4. The proposed procurement routes and delegated authority to award the contracts, and any associated agreements in furtherance of the projects, as detailed in section 7 (procurement routes) of this report subject to final approval of the Capital Programmes in February 2016 be noted.

Reason for decision: To enable projects to be included in the Programmes for consultation.

61. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2016/17

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members.

He advised Members that that following recent statements from the Government the report contained a revised approach to the four year rent reduction regime and as such a number of savings need to be made to compensate. He further advised that changing the post 2020 future rental inflation assumption in the business plan from 2.5% to 1.5% would impact on future income, therefore requiring further savings and efficiencies, and that work on this was ongoing, the details of which would be incorporated into a later version of the report.

He informed Members that currently half the Council properties were paying rent at the converged rate and due to the rent reduction scheme the budgeted income would be less than previously thought.

He highlighted that on a positive note the business plan had been re-written to weather the storm, further work on the plan was ongoing and advised that the budget would follow the same consultation process as the General Fund.

Councillor R Blunt advised that the Council needed to heed the direction from Central Government as it had a new agenda and that the Authority needed to be able to respond quickly, which would be a challenge that the Housing Service would be up to.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

Chairman's initials

1. The assurance statement by the Section 151 Officer be noted,
2. The draft HRA budget proposal as detailed in this report and associated appendices for consultation be approved.
3. The transfer of HRA balances to a savings reserve for the purposes of repayment of loans be approved.

Reason for decision: To enable the Council to set a balanced Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2016/17.

62. HOUSING ENERGY STRATEGY

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members.

He advised Members that the aim of the report was to allow the Authority to improve the energy efficiency of the Council's housing stock. He highlighted that it would be of benefit to both the Council and its tenants, that no additional staffing resources were required and therefore there were no financial implications.

Councillor R Blunt stated that the strategy was in line with Government policy to assist with fuel poverty, that due to the age of the properties improvement was required and that there were a number of villages within the district that did not have mains gas. He added that it was an excellent idea as being able to afford to heat a home was an important issue when choosing a new home.

Councillor T J Pendleton stated that the Authority had replaced kitchens, bathrooms, doors and windows and that energy efficiency was the next step.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The contents of the report be noted; and
2. The 2015-2020 Housing Energy Strategy be approved.

Reason for decision: To ensure that the Council delivers its objectives to improve the energy efficiency of the Council's housing stock and to reduce fuel poverty in the area.

63. ASHBY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - PROPOSED RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

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

He advised Members that officers had been working with the Neighbourhood plan group to ensure that both plans worked together and that it would be the right of Ashby to take into account the comments of the District Council and to help the town to develop their local area.

It was moved by Councillor T J Pendleton, seconded by Councillor T Gillard and

RESOLVED THAT:

The response to the draft Ashby Neighbourhood Plan as set out in Appendix B of this report be ratified by Cabinet.

Reason for decision: The District Council is a consultee and so it is appropriate to provide comments to assist with the formulation of the neighbourhood plan.

64. FORMER TENANT RENT ARREARS, CURRENT TENANT RENT ARREARS, COUNCIL TAX, NON DOMESTIC RATES AND SUNDRY DEBTOR WRITE OFFS

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members.

He highlighted to Members that there were two Non Domestic Rate debts over £10,000 in respect of which approval to write-off was being sought. He assured Members that all the appropriate steps had been taken to try to recover the debts and that the Council would bear 40% of the cost which would have an impact on the collection rate for the year. He advised that he had requested work be started on a new recovery policy that he planned to bring back at an early date.

Councillor R D Bayliss reminded Members that the Authority was part of the Leicestershire Partnership for Revenues and Benefits and that any amendments to the collection policy would need to be implemented by the Partnership

Councillor N J Rushton stated that when debt recovery took place the Council didn't want to be in second place to HMRC in receiving what was owed.

Councillor R Blunt stated that the Government planned to move back to local collection and therefore the Authority would have more control over the recovery. He added that the residents would want to know that the Council was doing what it could to bring the money in.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The write offs over £10,000 detailed in the report be approved.
2. The amounts written off under delegated powers be noted.

Reason for decision: To comply with proper accounting practices.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 5.28 pm