

CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 4 MAY 2016

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CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 4 MAY 2016

Present:

Councillor G Baxter MBE Leader (in the Chair)

Councillor J Austen

“ N Barker

" M Gordon

Councillor P R Kerry

“ Mrs L Robinson

802 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs E A Hill.

803 Declarations of Interests

Members were requested to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or other interests, not already on their register of interests, in any item on the agenda and withdraw from the meeting at the appropriate time.

There were no interests declared at this meeting.

804 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 6 April 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

805 Urgent Business (Public Session)

There was no urgent business to be considered in the public session at this meeting of Cabinet.

806 Exclusion of Public

RESOLVED - That the public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the following items of business to avoid the disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 3 & 4 Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006). [The category of exempt information is stated after each Minute].

807 Acquisition of Enhanced Software for Revenues and Benefits Service

Cabinet considered Report No PRK/32/15-16/BM of Councillor P R Kerry which recommended for approval upgrades to the Revenues and Benefits software.

The purposes of the upgrades to this software were to:-

- Improve the level of income collected from Council Tax and National Non Domestic Rates to the benefit of both this Council and other local authority bodies operating in our area.
- Secure improvements in the flexibility and accessibility of the service for local residents to enable transactional internet access to the Revenues and Benefits service.
- Secure service efficiencies through facilitating the use of self service.
- Use data matching to reduce the potential for error and fraud to enter the system and to secure service efficiencies by adopting a “risk based” approach to managing claims.
- Participate in a Derbyshire wide consortium that may open up further opportunities for joint working.

Over the last few months a Derbyshire wide consortium of District/Borough Councils had developed, with the support of the County Council. North East Derbyshire District Council had not been part of the consortium originally, however, by joining the consortium funding through the County Council’s Transformation Challenge Fund had been made available to the Council for the project. The consortium had developed a business case for the proposed software upgrade which sought to achieve the benefits set out above.

The report outlined the options and opportunities that were available to the Council through the consortium, including details of the implementation costs and the annual charges. Details of the savings which would be achieved to offset the increase in costs were also outlined in the report.

While the business case had been fully developed there were a range of detailed issues outstanding, in contractual terms, procurement, compatibility with existing IT systems, and data protection which were to be resolved.

RESOLVED - That:-

- (1) Approval be given for the upgrade of the Council’s Revenues and Benefits system, as outlined within the report, on the basis of work undertaken by a consortium of Derbyshire authorities at an initial cost of £53,000, with an increase in annual costs of £52,000, which it is anticipated would be fully covered by increased income and improved efficiency. The initial costs will be met from the Invest to Save Reserve, with the increased annual costs and income levels reflected within base budgets.
- (2) Officers be requested to monitor the progress of the project through both the Council’s performance framework and Transformation Programme in order to ensure that the additional revenue costs of operating the enhanced software are achieving the financial savings and/or other benefits to the Council.

- (3) That delegated powers be granted to the Executive Director – Operations following consultation with the Portfolio Member to agree final contractual terms following the resolution of outstanding matters of detail.

Reason for Decision

To secure an improved level of income from Council Tax, to reduce the level of error and fraud in both the Council Tax and Housing Benefit transactions undertaken by the Council and to provide online access to manage Council Tax and Housing Benefit claims, therefore improving customer access and securing back office efficiencies.

Other Options Considered and Rejected

The alternative option not to take part in the Derbyshire Wide consortium to access upgrades to the Revenues and Benefits service was rejected as this would have prevented the Council in accessing the anticipated benefits as outlined above.

(Executive Director – Operations)
(Paragraphs 3)

808 Management of Corporate Debt – Write Off of Outstanding Amounts

Cabinet considered Report No PRK/33/15-16/BM of Councillor P R Kerry which sought agreement to a proposed list of write offs of debts in respect of two General Fund accounts and a number of National Non-Domestic Rates arrears.

The details of the debts proposed to be written off were attached to the report.

RESOLVED – That Cabinet agrees to write off the debtor accounts totalling £122,908.56 as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

Reason for Decision

Given that all appropriate recovery actions had been exhausted in the case of these debts it was important that the Council recognised the position and approved the write off of debt given that there was no realistic prospect of recovery.

Other Options Considered and Rejected

As all appropriate recovery actions had been exhausted there were no alternative options.

(Executive Director - Operations)
(Paragraphs 1 & 3)

809 Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 to 2018/19 Update

Cabinet considered Report No PRK/34/15-16/BM of Councillor P R Kerry. The purpose of the report was:-

- To update Cabinet with respect to progress on work to ensure that the Local Plan would be produced in a timely manner.

- To make Cabinet aware of a critical Audit report concerning the administration of Section 106 payments, together with the action that had been taken by officers in conjunction with the Audit and Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee to address the issues identified.
- To seek agreement to an “in principle” disposal/acquisition of a limited number of individual Council properties to support the ongoing process of maintaining the financial sustainability of the Council’s Housing Revenue Account.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That Cabinet notes that the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, will utilise the existing Policy Planning Reserve to approve additional expenditure commitments up to £50,000 in order to ensure that the Local Plan is completed at the earliest opportunity.
- (2) That further reports be brought back to Cabinet concerning the progress in the delivery of the Local Plan.
- (3) That Cabinet notes the position in respect of the Internal Audit report on Section 106 funding, together with the work undertaken by the Audit and Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee, to ensure that the issues identified will be fully resolved.
- (4) That Cabinet agrees to officers undertaking further work in respect of the two Housing Revenue Account properties identified for sale on the open market and progresses negotiations to agree proposed terms for the purchase of the property identified within the report, with any acquisitions or disposals being subject to the agreement of a future meeting of Cabinet.

Reason for Decision

To ensure the completion of the Local Plan at the earliest opportunity, to ensure the financial sustainability of the Council and to assist in improving services and minimising costs.

Other Options Considered and Rejected

Alternative options were considered through-out the report.

(Executive Director - Operations)
(Paragraphs 1, 3 & 4)

810 Urgent Business (Private Session)

There was no urgent business to be considered in the private session at this meeting of Cabinet.

Before the close of the meeting, the Chair thanked Cllr Mrs L Robinson on behalf of the Council for her service on the Cabinet during her term as this was her last Cabinet meeting as a Cabinet Member.