

CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2020

Present:

Councillor Martin E Thacker MBE JP (Chair)
Councillor Alex Dale (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Charlotte Cupit
Councillor Paul Parkin

Councillor Barry Lewis
Councillor Alan Powell

Also Present:

M Broughton	Joint Head Of Service - Partnerships & Transformation
J Dethick	Head of Finance and Resources
K Drury	Information Engagement & Performance Manager
K Hanson	Joint Strategic Director - Place
L Hickin	Joint Strategic Director - People
G Lucas	Interim Director of Economic Development & Growth
A Maher	Senior Governance Officer
L Shaw	Managing Director - Rykneld Homes Ltd
S Sternberg	Joint Head Of Service - Corporate Governance & Monitoring Officer

509 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence submitted to this meeting.

510 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received at this meeting.

511 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 9 January 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader of the Council.

512 Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 to 2023/24)

As part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan covering the years 2020/21 to 2023/24, Cabinet received a report of Councillor P Parkin, Portfolio Holder for Finance. This report set out the proposed budget for 2020/21 for the General Fund, Capital and Housing Revenue Accounts. Cabinet was asked to endorse the proposed budget and recommend it to Council for approval.

Cabinet considered the proposed budget for the General Fund and Capital Programme. Members were reminded that Council had successfully achieved the savings of £0.770m that had been required to balance the current year budget and that the forecast was now for a surplus of £0.186m to be achieved. Any surpluses generated, it was explained, would be transferred to reserves.

Members heard that the proposed budget for 2020/21 included a shortfall of £0.217m, which would require further savings to be achieved. In this context, Cabinet emphasised the importance of maintaining the Council's momentum on progressing the growth and transformation agenda, in order to help secure the necessary efficiency savings.

Cabinet then considered the proposed budget for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Councillor C Cupit, A Dale and A Powell declared an interest at this point in their capacity of members of the Board of Rykneld Homes Limited. They indicated they would not participate in the debate or in Cabinet's decision on the HRA and left the meeting.

Cabinet discussed the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget. As part of this Members were reminded that from April 2020 the new Social Housing Rent Standard would come into force. This Standard would be applied to all social housing 'registered providers'. It would allow them to increase their rents over the next five years by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), plus 1%. Previously, Councils had been expected to decrease rents by 1% per annum.

Cabinet discussed what rent increase it thought would be appropriate to recommend to Council. Members recognised the scope which additional rent income would create in terms of investing further in the Council's housing service. However, Members made it clear that they were concerned about the additional financial burden which a large rent increase would place on tenants. Cabinet did not think that this would be appropriate. There was a consensus that it would be more appropriate to recommend a proposed increase in rents of 1.7%, which would be in line with the rate of inflation.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That Cabinet endorsed the proposed budget for 2020/21 for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan covering the years 2020/21 to 2023/24.
- (2) That Cabinet endorsed the specific recommendations set out in Section 6 of the report and agreed that they be recommended to Council on 17 February 2020 for approval.

REASON FOR DECISION – To enable Cabinet to consider and endorse a budget for the 2020/21 financial year and to recommend this to Council for approval.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED – The Council has a statutory duty to set a balance budget for the 2020/21 financial year.

513 Bonfire and Fireworks Display Safety Campaign 2020

Councillors C Cupit, A Dale and A Powell returned to the meeting at this point. Councillor M E Thacker MBE declared a non-pecuniary interest, in his capacity as President of the Chesterfield and North Derbyshire branch of the Royal Society

for the Protection of Animals (RSPCA). He indicated that he would remain in the meeting and participate in the Cabinet's deliberations and determination on this item.

Cabinet considered a report of Councillor C Cupit, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change. This set out initial plans for a bonfire and firework display campaign. The campaign would be launched in September 2020 and run through to the Bonfire Night period. It would seek to raise awareness for the principle safety concerns and risks associated with fireworks and bonfires.

In addition a voluntary registration scheme and code of conduct for public displays would also be introduced. This would seek to address safety and noise concerns about the use of fireworks and to raise awareness of events taking place in local communities.

Cabinet was keen to ensure that the impact of fireworks on communities should also be adequately assessed, so that action could be taken to protect them. There was a consensus that local people ought to be given an opportunity to express their views on this, so that appropriate measures to combat any problems could be developed and implemented.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That Cabinet supported the introduction of a Firework and Bonfire Registration Scheme and Code of Conduct for the District.
- (2) That officers be authorised to meet the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals (RSPCA) to consider their call for additional controls and measures over fireworks and bonfire, including a reduction in the maximum noise level of fireworks sold to the public; ensuring that fireworks are labelled accurately and a requirement that all public firework displays be licensed.

REASON FOR DECISION – To help raise awareness of the principle safety concerns and risks associated with fireworks, bonfire and uncontrolled displays through the introduction of a voluntary registration scheme and code of conduct for public displays.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED – The service considered other options, which were rejected for the reasons specified in the report.

514 Publication of Brownfield Land Register - Update

Cabinet considered a report a Councillor C Cupit, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change on the North East Derbyshire Brownfield Land Register. This Register, it was explained, set out what previously developed (Brownfield) land in the District could be reused for new housing. Members were reminded that the Council, along with other local planning authorities, had to produce and maintain this register. The Council was also legally required to publish the register on its website.

Cabinet welcomed the register, and especially how it would help to make clear what development plans were already in place for Brownfield sites in the District. Members agreed that it should be published on the Council's website.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That Cabinet approved the content of the North East Derbyshire Brownfield Land Register.
- (2) That the North East Derbyshire Brownfield Lane Register be published on the Council's website.

REASON FOR DECISION – The Council has a statutory duty to prepare, maintain and publish on its website a Brownfield Land Register for the District.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED – No other options were considered at this time.

515 Corporate Plan Targets Performance Update - October to December 2019 (Q3 - 2019-20)

Cabinet considered a report of Councillor A Powell, Portfolio Holder for Communications, which set out the Quarter 3 outturns for the Corporate Plan 2019-20 targets. This explained that 88% of the targets were on track or had been achieved. Some areas of concern remained. Members heard about the action being taken to address them.

RESOLVED – That Cabinet noted the progress made against the Corporate Plan 2019-20 targets.

REASON FOR DECISION - To inform Cabinet of progress against the Corporate Plan targets and to bring to its attention specific achievements and areas of concern.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED & REJECTED – No other options were considered. The report provided information and overview of performance. It did not set out any options which required decision by Cabinet.

516 Digital Strategy

Members considered a report of Councillor J Kenyon, Portfolio Holder for Business Strategy, Commerce and Assets. This asked Cabinet to approve the proposed Digital Strategy, which had been recommended by the Transformation Governance Group.

Cabinet heard about the Strategy's aims and objectives, and how it would help to achieve the Council's ambitions for digital options to be the primary gateway for accessing its services. In particular, Members were informed that significant progress had been made recently towards achieving the Council's goal for at least 50% of transactions to be made through digital channels by December 2024.

Cabinet recognised the contribution of digital transformation and how it could help to improve the way in which users access services and to achieve significant savings for the Council, by enabling more cost effective ways of working to be developed. Cabinet asked for, and received, assurances that the move towards digital access would be widely publicised, so that residents and businesses in the District could understand fully what had changed and what they now needed to do in order to access Council services.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That Cabinet endorsed and adopted the Digital Strategy.
- (2) That Cabinet agreed that the Digital Strategy be utilised to shape future service delivery.

REASON FOR DECISION - The Strategy will help to drive forward digital transformation, which is fundamental to the Council's business activities.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED & REJECTED – Not adopting the Strategy was considered but rejected as this would not provide a clear direction to officers on the Council's aims for digital transformation.

517 Housing Strategy

The report to Cabinet asked Members to consider and adopt the draft Housing Strategy 2020/24.

Cabinet was informed that the proposed Housing Strategy built on the themes and priorities established by the Council Plan and demonstrated how housing could contribute to each of them. It was intended to provide a guide so the Council could seek to ensure that future housing findings in the District were met.

Cabinet discussed the report. There was a consensus that the Council provide a strategic approach to ensure that the District's current and future housing needs were met. Members also recognised the important contribution which good housing could play in helping to achieve the Council's ambitions for economic growth and business development. They welcomed the contribution which the Strategy would make towards achieving this goal.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That Cabinet approved the Housing Strategy 2020-23, with the Director of Place in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio of the Council, Portfolio Holder and Managing Director of Rykneld Homes to make any minor changes required to the strategy.
- (2) That officers be authorised to promote the approved Housing Strategy 2020-23 to all stakeholders, partners and to the local media.

REASONS FOR DECISION – To enable the Council to clearly set out how it will provide and enable the development of housing in the District.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED & REJECTED – No other options were considered as the Council needs a clear strategic approach to housing in the District.

518 Rent Collection Cycle and Rent Standard

The report to Cabinet proposed that the rent collection cycle be changed from 48 weeks to 52 weeks. It was explained that this change would benefit those tenants who received Universal Credit. They were often currently classed as 'in arrears' as a consequence of the way in which that benefit was paid. The Chair would present this.

Members welcomed the proposed change and noted that the Council tenants would pay slightly less per week than at the moment. They also hoped that by helping those tenants receiving Universal Credit the new rent collection cycle would assist them in managing their rents better and so avoid any financial difficulties.

Cabinet was then informed that the Regulator for Social Housing had recently issued a policy statement on rents for social housing. Members heard that the rent standard would now be applied to local authorities as well as to private registered providers. As a consequence, the Council's Rent Policy would need to be reviewed in order to make sure that it complies with the standard.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That Cabinet approved the change to a standard 52 week per annum rent collection cycle, from April 2020.
- (2) That Cabinet agreed a review be undertaken of the Council's rent policy to ensure compliance with the Regulator for Social Housing's Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing, issued in February 2019.

REASONS FOR DECISION – The operational change in the rent cycle from 48 to 52 weeks would assist those Council tenants who receive the Universal Credit form of benefits, which would result in all tenants paying a slightly lower amount per week than at the moment.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED & REJECTED – The option of doing nothing was considered but rejected. The proposal to move to a 52 week collection pattern would enable a more transparent service for customers and more efficient processes for the Council and Rykneld Homes Limited (RHL) as managers of its housing stock.

(Joint Strategic Director – Place)

519 Urgent Items

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

520 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 and 5 Part 1 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].

521 CCTV in Taxis

Cabinet considered a report of the Solicitor to the Council on the installation of closed circuit television (CCTV) systems in licensed hackney carriage and private hire vehicles (taxis).

Cabinet discussed the report. Members made it clear that they supported the policy of installing CCTV in those private hire vehicles and hackney carriages licensed by the Council. However, they recognised that progress on this would need to take into account various national developments, such as further government guidance and the conclusion of outstanding court cases. Cabinet asked that consultation take place with taxi drivers, operators and other interested groups, to hear their views on the benefits of CCTV in licensed taxi vehicles and what form, if any, this might take.

RESOLVED –

- (1) Cabinet recommended that a policy of CCTV in taxis is progressed, but includes consultation and consideration of further government guidance when it becomes available and the current court cases and ICO actions have been concluded.
- (2) That following on from the publication of the imminently expected government guidance, consultation with the taxi drivers forum and other interested groups takes place to determine their views on the benefits of CCTV in licensed taxi vehicles.
- (3) That Licensing Committee be informed of the Cabinet's conclusions and recommendations.

REASON FOR DECISION – To ensure that the Council can properly assess the introduction of a policy on the use of CCTV in taxis, pending once the legal and other issues at a national level.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED & REJECTED – The option of moving forward immediately with the establishment of a policy on the use of CCTV in taxis was considered, but rejected for the reasons specified in the report.

(Solicitor)
(Paragraphs 3 & 5)

522 Environmental Health & Enforcement Update

Cabinet considered a report of Councillor C Cupit, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change. This updated Members on the progress of the Environmental Health and Enforcement Review and specific staffing proposals to be taken forward.

Members discussed the report and supported the specific staffing proposals to be now taken forward.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That Cabinet noted the progress made on the Environmental Health and Enforcement Review.
- (2) That Cabinet should receive a further report proposing a final draft service structure and improvement plan, including the financial implications.
- (3) That Cabinet requested the Joint Strategic Director – Place, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to finalise the report to be presented to Council recommending changes to the management arrangements for the service, as specified in the report.

REASON FOR DECISION – To support the provision of additional capacity to enhance and strengthen delivery of the Council’s strategic and services based objectives, including those impacting on the visible environment, public health and business.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED & REJECTED - The option of doing nothing was considered but rejected for the reasons specified in the report.

(Joint Strategic Director – Place)
(Paragraph 1)

523 Structure Proposals for the Economic Growth & Regeneration Directorate

RESOLVED – That consideration by Cabinet of the report be deferred.

524 Human Resources and Organisation Development (HR & OD) Review of Service

Cabinet considered a report of Councillor A Dale, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Council Services, on the creation of an additional post of a Human Resources (HR) Officer for the Joint Human Resources and Organisation Development Service. Members discussed and approved the proposal.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That Cabinet supported the additional capacity for the Joint HR & OD Service as specified in the report.

(2) That Cabinet requested the Chief Executive to use his delegated powers to vary the establishment of the Joint HR & OD Service, as specified in the report.

REASONS FOR DECISION – To enable the Joint HR & OD Service to meet the operational challenges facing it.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED & REJECTED – The option of doing nothing was considered but rejected, as this would not enable the service to meet the challenges facing it.

(HR & OD Manager)
(Paragraphs 1 & 3)

525 Urgent Items

Cabinet received an update on the contingency planning arrangements that were in place to combat a possible outbreak of the Coronavirus in North East Derbyshire and surrounding areas. Members were informed that no cases of the illness had been recorded in the District or in the County of Derbyshire. They were also informed of the extensive co-operation between the Council and other organisations to help prevent the illness from spreading.