

Cabinet
4 October 2016

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the CABINET held on Tuesday 4 October 2016 at 7.30 pm in the Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors J.W.Dean (Leader of the Council) (Chairman)
A.L.Perkins (Deputy Leader and Executive Member,
Planning, Housing and Community) (Vice-
Chairman)

D.Bell (Executive Member, Resources)
H.Bromley (Executive Member, Environment)
T.Kingsbury (Executive Member, Policy and Culture)
B.Sarson (Executive Member, Business, Partnerships and
Public Health)

R.Trigg (Executive Member, Governance, Community
Safety, Police and Crime Commissioner and
Corporate Property)

OFFICIALS Chief Executive (M.Saminaden)
PRESENT: Executive Director (N.Long)
Executive Director (S.Russell)
Head of Law and Administration (M.Martinus)
Head of Resources (T.Neill)
Governance Services Manager (G.R.Seal)
Communications Officer (T.Underwood)

67. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

68. ACTIONS STATUS REPORT

The status of actions agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 6 September 2016 in the report of the Director (Governance) was noted.

69. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

Councillor R.Trigg declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda item 16 Review of the Welwyn Hatfield Community Housing Trust as a Council appointed representative on the Trust Board and did not participate in the discussion of the item (Minute 79 refers).

Councillor D.Bell declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda item 7(a) Finesse Leisure Management Fee as a Council appointed representative on the Finesse

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Leisure Board and did not participate in the discussion of the item (Minute 70.1 refers).

70. ITEMS RELATING TO THE BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

The following item was considered:-

70.1. Finesse Leisure - Management Fee

Report of the Director (Finance and Operations) seeking the Cabinet's approval to increase the level of the annual management fee paid to Finesse Leisure by £44,000 from 2016/17 onwards.

Some years ago the Council agreed £100,000 of year on year savings with Finesse funded through a combination of efficiency savings, service and staffing reorganisation and payments from their operating surplus or their balances.

A shortfall of £44,000 remained to be found on an ongoing basis. However the proposals forwarded by Finesse required service reductions and changes and/or additional investment from the Council to be made. Increasing the management fee payment by £44,000 resolved this shortfall and it would be added to the budget for future years.

RESOLVED:

That the Council be recommended to approve an increase of £44,000 in the management fee payable to Finesse Leisure from 2016/17 to be met from balances with the ongoing impact to be included as part of the budget process.

71. ITEMS REQUIRING KEY DECISION

There were no items requiring key decisions to be considered.

72. RECOMMENDATION FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Recommendation from the meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 September 2016:-

72.1. Consideration of a Fly Grazing Protocol

The Committee considered the new powers provided in the Control of Horses Act 2015 for the Council to deal with fly grazed horses on land owned by the Council or other land where the owner had not given consent for the horses to be grazed.

The main issue arising from fly-grazed horses (aside from welfare concerns) related to road safety and a consistent approach across the County was needed

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to address the problem. Work had been underway with the police and other local authorities for some months and accordingly a protocol for dealing with the issue had been prepared.

RESOLVED:

That the protocol on Fly Grazing, as recommended by the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be adopted to form the basis of a working document to be updated as required operationally.

73. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET PANEL

Recommendation from the meeting of the Cabinet Housing and Planning Panel on 12 September 2016:-

73.1. Local Development Scheme for Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan

The Panel considered a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) timetable for the preparation of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan. The LDS was the Council's official timetable for the preparation and adoption of the Local Plan and other planning documents for the Borough. It was now proposed that the Local Plan be submitted to the Secretary of State in Spring 2017 to allow sufficient time for responses to the public consultation to be analysed and considered by Members.

RESOLVED:

That the revised Local Development Scheme, as recommended by the Cabinet Housing and Planning Panel, be adopted.

74. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEES

There were no recommendations from Scrutiny Sub-Committees to be considered.

75. RECEPTION MERGER

Report of the Executive Director updating the Cabinet on the progress being made to merge the Housing Trust and Council reception services and seeking approval to the proposed Contract Change Notice (CCN) which would have the effect of extending the existing Sopra Steria contract for provision of reception services, currently delivered on behalf of the Council.

The merging of reception services was part of the new package of shared services between the Housing Trust and Council.

Further benefits would be the provision of two additional interview rooms within the space in the reception area vacated by the separate Housing Trust reception desk.

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RESOLVED:

That the proposal to commission Sopra Steria to provide a joint reception service at the Campus East Council Offices and the proposed new arrangements be approved.

76. THE HATFIELD MARKET

Report of the Director (Finance and Operations) outlining the results of the trial to hold Hatfield market on the old St Albans Road as opposed to its previous home in the market place. The move was deemed to be a success and it was proposed that the town centre location for the market be made permanent.

Further, the market operators wished to trial a further market day on a Friday in the run up to Christmas.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet agrees that the trial relocation of the market had been a success and its town centre location on what was the Old St Albans Road be made permanent and to the operator's wish to trial a further market day in Hatfield by running a market in the town on a Friday in the run up to Christmas with a view to continuing this from 2017 onwards should the new day prove a success.

77. RELEASE OF BUDGET ALLOCATION

77.1. Replace a Retaining Wall at Lockley Crescent, Hatfield

Report of the Director (Finance and Operations) seeking the release of the budget to cover the cost of rebuilding a retaining wall supporting part of the car park at Lockley Crescent in Hatfield. Other options were considered and discounted on the basis of cost and the works were considered necessary to avoid the potential collapse of the wall.

RESOLVED:

That the release of the approved capital budget allocation of £30,000 in 2016/17 for this scheme be agreed.

78. RISK MANAGEMENT

Report of the Director (Governance) on the current top strategic and operational risks facing the Council.

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RESOLVED:

That the current Strategic Risk Register and top operational risks be reviewed particularly noting that relevant risks were assigned with mitigation plans in place where necessary with the correct current status and comments in respect of each risk where shown.

79. REVIEW OF THE WELWYN HATFIELD COMMUNITY HOUSING TRUST

Considerable work had been undertaken since January of this year in relation to shared management arrangements following the review of the Community Housing Trust by Campbell Tickell in October 2015. The report of the Chief Executive updated Members on the current position and proposed a new direction of travel for the future.

As time had passed and the Council and Housing Trust had moved further down the road of sharing management, it had become increasingly clear that better efficiencies and improved performance might be easier to achieve by becoming one organisation again. It seemed reasonably clear that running one organisation was likely to be more efficient than running two separate organisations and would avoid much unnecessary duplication of work and reduce bureaucracy

RESOLVED:

That, in order to address the savings and performance issues highlighted in the independent report, Officers start work on the option of ending the Management Agreement with the Welwyn Hatfield Community Housing Trust with a view to reintegrating the services performed under the Management Agreement back in with the Council.

(Note: The Chairman accepted this item as urgent because of the need to start this work now).

80. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100(A)(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting for agenda items 18 and 19 (Minutes 81 and 82 refer) on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in Section 100A(3) and paragraph 3 (private financial or business information) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

In resolving to exclude the public in respect of the exempt information, it was considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

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81. ITEM OF AN EXEMPT NATURE REQUIRING KEY DECISION

The following item of an exempt nature for decision in the current Forward Plan was considered:-

81.1. Hatfield Town Centre - Granting of Lease of the Flats (Forward Plan Reference FP775)

Exempt report of the Director (Finance and Operations) proposing the granting of a lease for the first batch of nine refurbished flats in White Lion Square, Hatfield.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Cabinet agrees to the proposal to grant the new head lease to Strats based on their quoted retained percentage of 15%.
- (2) That the Cabinet notes that, based on Strats' recommendation, the flats were now to be furnished to a reasonable standard at a cost of approximately £30,000 as advised by the agent to be met from existing budgets, speeding up the letting of the flats and also going a long way to minimising any void periods.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

The first batch of nine refurbished flats in White Lion Square, Hatfield, were almost ready to be occupied. Some final works were being carried out that could not be completed until the power supply was connected by the energy provider.

82. WRITE OFFS OVER £10,000

Exempt report of the Director (Finance and Operations) informing the Cabinet of three non-domestic rates write off cases of over £10,000 where no further recovery action could be taken.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet agrees to the three non-domestic rates write off cases detailed in the exempt report.

(Note: The Chairman of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been given notice in accordance with Regulation 5 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 that it was impracticable to comply with the requirement that at least twenty eight days notice must be given of the consideration of this item in the private section of the meeting because it was urgent and could not reasonably be deferred for the reason specified.)

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The reason for this item was to agree the write off of these debts where no further recovery action could be taken.

Meeting ended at 7.50 pm
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