

Cabinet
8 August 2017

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET held on Tuesday 8 August 2017 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

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

D.Bell (Executive Member, Resources)
T.Kingsbury (Executive Member, Policy and Culture)
R.Trigg (Executive Member, Governance, Community Safety,
Police and Crime Commissioner and
Corporate Property)

ALSO

PRESENT: T.Mitchinson

OFFICIALS Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) (K.Ng)
PRESENT: Executive Director (Housing and Communities) (S.Russell)
Head of Law and Administration (M.Martinus)
Governance Services Manager (G.R.Seal)
Communications Officer (N.Burrows)

25. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H.Bromley (Executive Member, Environment) and B.Sarson (Executive Member, Business, Partnerships and Public Health).

26. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27. ACTIONS STATUS REPORT

The status of actions agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 11 July 2017 in the report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) was noted.

Under this Agenda item the Deputy Leader reported that a Social Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee met on 7 August following the call-in of the decision made at the Cabinet meeting on 11 July 2017 to approve the transfer of the freehold of Goldings House, Hatfield to Paradigm Housing Group (Minute 24 refers).

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Having considered all of the information provided and having put a series of questions to the Portfolio Holders who had been invited to attend the meeting, the Sub-Committee was unable to reach a majority decision to refer the decision back to the Cabinet for reconsideration. This meant that the original Cabinet decision stood and the transfer of the freehold of Goldings House, Hatfield to Paradigm Housing Group with the capital receipt being used to support the Council's Affordable Housing Programme would now proceed.

The Minutes of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting would be reported to the Cabinet meeting on 5 September and the Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 11 October 2017 for noting.

28. ITEM REQUIRING KEY DECISION

The following item for decision in the current Forward Plan was considered:-

28.1. Business Rates - Budget Changes and New Discretionary Rate Relief (Forward Plan Reference FP813)

Report of the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) on the final guidelines agreed under the delegated authority given by the Cabinet and in consultation with Hertfordshire County Council, together with an update on budget announcements.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:

That the local discretionary rate relief guidelines to support businesses that faced the steepest increases in their business bills as a result of the 2017 revaluation be noted.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

The April Cabinet meeting agreed to give delegated authority to the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services), in consultation with the Executive Member (Resources), to agree non-domestic rate discretionary relief guidelines for those businesses facing large increases in rates payable following the 2017 rating revaluation (Minute 157 refers).

Rateable values were used by local Councils to calculate business rates and revaluation was the updating of rateable values of business properties.

The Valuation Office Agency generally reassessed rateable values in England and Wales every five years based on their open market rental value on a fixed date, although the last revaluation was in 2010. The April

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2017 revaluation was based on rental values on 1 April 2015. The purpose of revaluation was to maintain fairness in the system by redistributing the total amount payable in business rates, reflecting changes in the property market.

Concerns had been raised nationally following the revaluation exercise and this had resulted in business rate budget changes to absorb the impact of some of the rate increases following revaluation. One of the measures announced was to distribute funding to local authorities to provide discretionary relief to target individual cases, where business rates bills had increased significantly following revaluation.

(Note: There were no declarations of interest by a Member(s) in respect of the matter decided).

29. RECOMMENDATION FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The following recommendation from the meeting of the Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 July 2017 was considered:-

29.1. Consultation on the Police and Crime Commissioner's Proposal to Collaborate Officially with Herts Fire and Rescue

The Committee had considered information on a consultation on the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) proposal to collaborate officially with Herts Fire and Rescue.

The proposal from the PCC was to bring the governance of police and fire services within the same organisation.

The Committee had noted that the consultation period was short and was to take place partly over the school holiday period. The Council was not a statutory consultee, but had the option to respond if desired.

The following points had been discussed by the Committee:-

- there did not appear to be any financial savings
- there was not provision for scrutiny of the Fire Service
- would the Ambulance Service be the next to be taken into the control of the PCC?
- the PCC could make a recommendation to the Secretary of State to go ahead with the proposal even if the responses to the consultation were not in favour
- it was understandable that the County Council would be against the proposal as it was a service that it provided which it would not want to lose

It was noted that the consultation would end on 14 August and any decision by the PCC would be submitted to the Secretary of State by 21 August.

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The Committee had been advised that Hatfield Town Council had discussed the proposal and had voted to respond to the consultation stating that it did not support it.

Concern had been expressed that the Committee was being asked to comment on what was ultimately an important decision without the full facts and it was suggested that a recommendation should be made to the Cabinet that the Council would not give a response to the consultation.

However, the Committee overall had felt that it was important for the Council to respond to the consultation with the following comments:

- there was no faith in the business case
- there was already a lot of joint working
- the proposal appeared to be more about making cuts
- there would be a transparency issue

Delegated authority had been given to Officers to prepare the wording of the response and to circulate it to the Committee prior to its submission to the Cabinet. Comment had been made in the response regarding the short consultation period and the fact that it was taking place during the holiday period.

RESOLVED:

That a response to the consultation should be submitted which opposed the proposal, as recommended by the Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

30. REVENUE BUDGET QUARTER 1 MONITORING FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2017/18

Report of the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) presenting the revenue outturn for the first three months of the financial year 2017/18 and outlining main variances from the approved original budget for both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account services.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the changes to the General Fund forecast outturn as at 30 June 2017 be agreed and included in the current budget, which in turn would then be used as the basis of comparison to the forecast outturn.
- (2) That the changes to the Housing Revenue Account forecast outturn as at 30 June 2017 be agreed and included in the current budget which would be used as the basis of comparison to the forecast outturn.

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(3) That the position on debts and rechargeable works be noted.

31. BUDGET CAPITAL MONITORING AS AT 30 JUNE 2017 (PERIOD 3)

Report of the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) presenting the capital expenditure and associated funding for the first quarter of the current financial year:

RESOLVED:

(1) That the overall position on the capital programme funding and reserves at Period 3 be noted.

(2) That the forecast outturn be agreed.

(3) That the Prudential Indicators be noted.

32. WEBCASTING AND RECORDING OF MEETINGS

Report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) proposing to start and provide a webcasting and recording service for meetings in the Council Chamber.

RESOLVED:

That approval be given to waive Contract Procedure Rules to allow the award of a three year contract to Nuway Ltd with effect from 1 September 2017 to provide a webcasting and recording service for meetings in the Council Chamber based on 100 hours per annum, but with the flexibility to purchase more hours if required and subject to budgets being available.

33. NEW STREETSCENE CONTRACT

Report of the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) on the timetable for the procurement of the new Streetscene contract and the appointment of a Member Board.

RESOLVED:

That the draft procurement timetable be noted and the set-up of a procurement board and associated terms of reference be approved.

34. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - HARDSHIP RELIEF AND DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENT UPDATE

Report of the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) providing an update on the operation of the scheme in the first quarter of 2017/18.

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RESOLVED:

That the operation of the Council Tax support scheme in the first quarter of the current financial year be noted.

Meeting ended at 7.52 pm
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