

Cabinet
1 December 2020

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the CABINET held on Tuesday 1 December 2020 at 5.00pm.

This Cabinet meeting was held remotely in line with new regulations passed under the Coronavirus Act 2020, using the Zoom application.

These regulations have been passed under to ensure Local Authorities can conduct any necessary business under the current public health emergency.

PRESENT: Councillors T.Kingsbury (Leader of the Council) (Chairman)
D.Bell (Deputy Leader and Executive Member, Resources)
S.Boulton (Executive Member, Environment and Planning)
T.Mitchinson (Executive Member, Leisure, Culture and Communications)
N.Pace (Executive Member, Housing and Community)
B.Sarson (Executive Member, Regeneration, Economic Development and Partnerships)
F.Thomson (Executive Member, Governance, Public Health and Climate Change)

OFFICIALS Chief Executive (K.Ng)
PRESENT: Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) (N.Long)
Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) (S.Russell)
Head of Law and Administration (M.Martinus)
Head of Resources (R.Baker)
Head of Housing Operations (S.Pearson)
Head of Community and Housing Strategy (S.Chambers)
Governance Services Manager (A.Marston)
Communications Officer (A.Wildey)

200. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2020 were approved as a correct record and noted by the Chairman.

201. ACTIONS STATUS REPORT

The status of actions agreed at the Cabinet meetings on 3 November 2020 in the report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) was noted.

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202. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillor S.Boulton declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda item 11(c) – Tewin Road Depot as a Member of Hertfordshire County Council (minute 206.3 refers).

203. RECOMMENDATION FROM GRANTS BOARD

The following recommendation from the meeting of the Grants Board on 4 November was considered:-

203.1. Grants Board - 4 November 2020

Recommendation from the meeting of the Grants Board on 4 November on the Award of Annual Community Grants for the 2021/22 financial year.

The award of such grants was overseen by the cross-party Grants Board. The Board met on 4 November 2020, to consider the award of grants for 2021/22 financial year.

The Board had been informed that £79,270 was anticipated to be ring-fenced for Annual Community Grants for the year.

The Board assessed applications according to criteria that were linked to the Council's priorities. They were unable to award grants totalling more than the indicative budget.

The documents that were attached were the report to the Grants Board, and the minutes of their meeting. Fifteen applications, totalling just over £209,000 were received, nearly three times the amount available, and the minutes set out the Board's recommended allocation of the £79,270 indicative budget.

As part of the Task and Finish Group discussions on the 2021/22 annual budget, it had been suggested that the Council should try and award more grants to organisations representing minority groups. The Council would consider this for the 2022/23 exercise, given the lead time involved.

RESOLVED:

That the inclusion of £79,270 for Annual Community Grants in the draft 2021/22 Council budget be confirmed, and that this is allocated according to the recommendations set out in the minutes of the Grants Board of 4 November 2020.

204. PERFORMANCE EXCEPTION REPORT - QUARTER 2 (2020-21)

Report of the Chief Executive summarising strategic performance data for Quarter 2 of 2020/21.

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The report summarised the Council's strategic performance data on an exception basis following the monitoring and review of performance reports by Corporate Directors and Heads of Service. The report covered the period 1 July to 30 September 2020.

- Business Plan Projects – 67 of the 71 published business projects have commenced in Quarter 2. A further 4 projects were yet to start as they were timed for later in the year. 3 of the projects were not on schedule at the end of September. These relate to the Local Plan, the Council's investment in commercial property and the voluntary registration of land with the land registry. All three projects were exception reported.
- Performance Indicators – 10 of the 53 key performance indicators did not meet their target in Quarter 2. There were all briefly exception reported. As the Council saw in Quarter 1, many of the reasons for this has been due to Covid-19, particularly where the indicator measured visitor numbers or community or home visits.

Services have continued to adapt over Quarter 2 so that projects set prior to the impact of Covid-19 being fully understood are being delivered. The Council's outturns for Quarters 3 and 4 are expected to be similarly impacted, but Officers remain committed to achieving the Council's published projects by the year end.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet noted the contents of the report and approved any proposed actions highlighted in the appendices.

205. 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 item 11 (Minute 206 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.

206. ITEMS OF AN EXEMPT NATURE REQUIRING KEY DECISION

The following items of an exempt nature for decision were considered:-

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206.1. Shopmobility (Forward Plan Reference FP1019)

Exempt report of the Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) on the modernisation review of the Shop Mobility service.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:
(unanimous)

Cabinet considered and approved to cease the Shop Mobility service with immediate effect and therefore not re-instate the service following its suspension in March 2020 due to Covid-19.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

The review of the service had been carried out as part of the Council's Modernisation Programme and had given thought to a number of issues and explored a number of options for the future of the service.

It was important that the Council regularly reviewed the non-statutory services it delivered to ensure they provided value for money and continued to have a positive impact on the wider communities of Welwyn Hatfield.

The demand for the Shop Mobility service had reduced by nearly 50% over the last couple of years, this in part was likely to be linked to mobility scooters now being more easily accessible for private purchase.

With the demand for the service decreasing and the cost to maintain the service increasing, the Council had made the difficult, but considered decision to propose to stop providing the service.

Members agreed that the Council had to make a difficult decision, especially as the cost to maintain the Shop Mobility service had increased and only benefited a few people.

206.2. Inspira House added units (Forward Plan Reference FP1010)

Exempt report of the Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) on the award of contract for the provision of three additional properties.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:
(unanimous)

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- (1) The Affordable Housing Procurement Board unanimously agreed in October 2020 to recommend to Cabinet that, due to the relatively small size of the project and the time and cost involved in a traditional procurement process, to utilise an existing procurement framework to help reduce upfront costs and minimise risk to the Council. The Procurement Hub recommended that Wilmott Dixon Limited (Wilmott Dixon), be the designated contractor.
- (2) Subject to planning approval, the development of three additional one bedroom properties is progressed at Inspira House via Wilmott Dixon.
- (3) That once a detailed design had been agreed and planning consent achieved, to award the construction contract to Wilmott Dixon through the Procurement Hub.
- (4) That delegated authority was given to the Director (Housing and Communities) in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Executive Members (Housing and Communities and Resources) to pay above the maximum value if exceptional circumstances warrant this.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

Inspira House was purchased by the Council in February 2019. It consisted of 54 studio and one-bedroom homes. It was currently being used as temporary accommodation.

Following discussions with the planning team about the potential to create additional properties on the site, it had been agreed to progress with a proposal to provide three additional one-bedroom properties on the ground floor.

Due to the relatively small size of the project and the time and cost involved in a traditional procurement process, the Affordable Housing Programme Procurement Board unanimously agreed to utilise an existing procurement framework to help reduce upfront costs and minimise risk to the Council.

206.3. Tewin Road Depot (Forward Plan Reference FP1014)

Exempt report of the Chief Executive on appointment of Principal Contractor for stage 2 of the redevelopment of Tewin Road Depot.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:
(unanimous)

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Cabinet, in accordance with the unanimous recommendation of the Cross Party Streetscene Mobilisation Board, awarded the construction contract for the redevelopment of Tewin Road Depot to RG Carter Cambridge Limited, subject to achieving satisfactory planning.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

Welwyn Hatfield Council is working jointly with Hertfordshire County Council to modernise the Tewin Road Depot and to co-locate a new household waste and recycling facility, which would replace the current site at Cole Green Lane.

At the Cabinet meeting in February, following the recommendation by the Cross Party Streetscene Mobilisation Board, the first stage contract (known as the Pre Construction Service Agreement (PCSA)) was awarded to RG Carter (Cambridge) Limited. The PCSA stage required RG Carter to fully design and cost the scheme. In August 2020, Cabinet agreed to grant delegated authority to award the final stage of the contract to RG Carter subject to two conditions.

The first condition was that planning consent must be obtained and the Council was pleased to report that planning approval for the redevelopment was unanimously agreed by the Hertfordshire County Council planning committee last week.

The second condition was that the construction cost must be no greater than £8.5M. At the detailed design stage, it was realised that the construction costs would be higher than budgeted for and the reasons were detailed in the report. The increase would be funded by a virement from the Strategic Property Investment capital budget, which due to the current climate will not be proceeding. This will be moved as part of the budget setting process. The capital costs associated to the project had already been incorporated into the Council's medium-term financial strategy so there was no increase to the budget gap arising from the virement.

(Note: Councillor S.Boulton declared an interest in this item – Minute 202 refers).

Meeting ended 5.21pm
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