

Cabinet
6 August 2019

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET held on Tuesday 6 August 2019 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

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)
B.Sarson (Executive Member, Regeneration, Economic
Development and Partnerships)
F.Thomson (Executive Member, Governance, Public Health
and Climate Change)

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

28. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29. APOLOGY

An apology for absence was received from Councillor N.Pace (Executive Member, Housing and Community).

30. ACTIONS STATUS REPORT

The status of actions agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 9 July 2019 in the report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) was noted.

31. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET PANEL

The following recommendations from the meeting of the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel on 1 August 2019 were considered:-

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31.1. Housing Delivery Test Action Plan

The National Planning Policy Framework required Councils to prepare an action plan where housing delivery had fallen below the housing requirement. The plan sought to identify the main issues associated with housing delivery in the Borough and the main actions that could be taken by the Council and other parties to speed up delivery. The plan reviewed Government guidance, considered the views of relevant stakeholders and analysed existing data and other knowledge in order to identify a series of actions that would be taken over the coming months and years to help increase housing delivery.

Following questions and discussion by Members, the Panel agreed amendments to the key action points in the Plan to include:-

- Progress the adoption of the Local Plan
- Review the scope for technology and modernisation to improve pre-application advice and the handling of planning applications.

An updated Action plan, showing track changes was submitted to the Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That the Action Plan and the series of actions within it that the Council would seek to implement over the coming months and years, as agreed by the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel, be noted.

31.2. Introduction of Resident Permit Parking Scheme and Double Yellow Lines in Lambs Close, Cuffley

The Cabinet Panel had considered the proposed introduction of a resident permit parking scheme and double yellow lines in Lambs Close, Cuffley together with the comments and objection received.

Following a request by Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council for the Borough Council to take on the responsibility for the sales and management of the resident permit scheme, a new Traffic Regulation Order was required to set the charges for the permits and this would have the benefit of allowing residents to have the opportunity to purchase visitor parking vouchers for the first time.

It was also identified that the single yellow lines left in situ from 2000 were in sections of the road where it was not suitable for parking and it was therefore proposed that double yellow lines be introduced.

A total of 82 residents had been consulted and only one objection was received.

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RESOLVED:

That having considered the reasons for the proposals, the comments and objection received and in particular the issues raised around equalities and diversity, together with all the details including any proposed mitigating actions, the Cabinet agreed to proceed with the amended proposals and the creation of the Traffic Regulation Order as unanimously recommended by the Cabinet Panel.

32. QUARTER 1 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2019/20

Report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) presenting the forecast revenue outturn position as at 30 June 2019 for the financial year 2019/20 and outlining the main variances from the original budget for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account.

Within the General Fund £50,000 had been transferred from reserves to an earmarked reserve for potential climate related expenditure, as agreed at the Extraordinary Council meeting on 19 June, 2019 (Minute 13.4 (8) refers).

There had been only relatively minor changes to the original budget and overall a drawdown of General Fund reserves for 2019/20 of £106,000 was forecast against an original budget of £95,000.

Whilst General Fund risks and opportunities were net positive, it was too early at this stage to amend the full year forecast for these.

For the Housing Revenue Account there were no significant variances at this stage with a forecast closing balance on the account of £2.6M.

The recent Local Government Association Peer Review Challenge was extremely positive about the Council's financial position and the recommendation made to review the budget process in the light of underspends was being actioned in preparation for the 2020/21 budget process which had now started.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the revenue forecast outturn position as at Quarter 1 be noted.
- (2) That virements as detailed in Section 3.4 of the report be approved.
- (3) That the position on debts be noted.

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33. QUARTER 1 CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2019/20

Report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) presenting the capital expenditure and associated capital funding at the end of Quarter 1 of 2019/20 and detailing the changes to the original 2019/20 capital programme and funding plans.

Within General Fund schemes further deferral of the crematorium project meant that forecast capital spend for 2019/20 was now £3.5M less than the original budget and would be re-phased into future years. This delay would obviously have an adverse impact on the 2020/21 General Fund revenue budget.

Within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) certain capital schemes had progressed earlier than anticipated and £3.5M of expenditure had been re-profiled from future years into 2019/20.

Also within the HRA, there had been some re-categorisation within the Affordable Housing Programme capital budgets.

RESOLVED:

That the overall position as at Quarter 1 of 2019/20 of the capital programme, and the update on the capital funding and reserves position be noted.

34. CROSS PARTY WELWYN GARDEN CITY TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION MEMBER BOARD

Report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) proposing the setting up of a Member Board to oversee the Welwyn Garden City town centre regeneration including procurement related activities.

The Council would like to build upon the success of the Hatfield regeneration process as recommended in the Peer Review and use this as a model for Welwyn Garden City. Commitment to this was further given in the Leader's response to a question by a Member at the Council meeting on 22 July 2019 (Minute 18.2 refers).

A significant amount of work had already been performed by the Estates and Development team in conjunction with the Planning department as part of the Welwyn Garden City Town Centre North project, but it had to be recognised that the retail environment had become significantly more challenging over time.

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RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet agrees to a cross party Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Regeneration Board being set up comprising seven Members in the ratio:3:2:2 with the terms of reference as shown in Appendix A to the report.

35. 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 13(a) – (c) (Minutes 36.1 to 36.3 refer) on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in Section 100A(3) and paragraphs 3 (private financial or business information) and 5 (legal and professional privilege) 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.

36. ITEMS OF AN EXEMPT NATURE REQUIRING KEY DECISION

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

36.1. Award of Preconstruction Services Agreement for a Build Contractor for the Redevelopment of Minster Close, Hatfield (Forward Plan Reference FP926)

Exempt report of the Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) informing the Cabinet of the outcome of the procurement process to select a build contractor to enter into a Pre-Construction Services Agreement for the re-development of Minster Close, Hatfield.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet, in accordance with the unanimous recommendation of the Affordable Housing Programme Procurement Board, approves the award of the Pre Construction Services Agreement for the redevelopment of Minster Close to RG Carter Cambridge Limited for the sum of £1,069,917.50.

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(2) Reasons for the Decision

The Minster Close redevelopment within the Council's Affordable Housing Programme involved the demolition of existing flats and bungalows and the construction of a modern sheltered housing scheme for the over 55s.

A robust procurement exercise had been performed and the highest score was achieved by RG Carter Cambridge Limited.

36.2. Housing Asset - Development Appraisal (Forward Plan Reference FP934)

Exempt report of the Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) proposing that a consultation and stakeholder engagement process commenced immediately to enable tenants, residential and commercial leaseholders, as well as other stakeholders to give their views on options for the future of Queensway House. A revised report setting out updated information was provided as an exempt Addendum.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet approves the following actions to be taken:

- (1) To implement a robust communications strategy, involving all stakeholders, including residents, commercial leaseholders, Hertfordshire County Council and Members which would mark the beginning of a formal consultation process.
- (2) To carry out a six-week consultation with tenants and residential and commercial leaseholders commencing on 12 August 2019 giving them the opportunity to give their views on the different options available relating to the future of Queensway House with the findings from the consultation process being brought back to the Cabinet to consider these when deciding which option would be taken.
- (3) To stop further uneconomical planned works at Queensway House whilst the consultation was taking place, including sprinkler and ducted extractor system installation, with a responsive repairs service and other essential improvements still being provided.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

Queensway House had been the subject of considerable effort and concern particularly since the Grenfell Tower tragedy in June 2017.

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Officers had worked closely with fire safety advisors, Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Government to ensure that the block remained safe.

A recent analysis of projected expenditure requirements over the next five years, when compared with projected rental income, had prompted a review of the future of the block.

In addition to the technical and financial challenges faced, Queensway House was a stock anomaly in that it was the Council's only tower block. The block suffered from a perception of anti-social behaviour, making it resource intensive to manage and the flats themselves had been historically difficult to let.

Evolving Government advice and anticipated changes to fire safety legislation to residential tower blocks had hastened the need for a review of the block's future.

The Cabinet considered the current challenges and the options for meeting these.

The Council is required to consult with tenants, private leaseholders and commercial leaseholders on these options before any decision could be made.

No final decision on the option to be adopted would therefore be made before consultation responses had been assessed. A further report would therefore be brought to the Cabinet after the consultation had closed.

36.3. Redevelopment of Former Lido Site Stanborough Park North - Award of Contracts for Site Operator and Main Contractor (Forward Plan Reference FP927)

Exempt report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) on the outcome of the tender exercise for the selection of the main contractor and site operator for the development of the former Splashlands lido site at Stanborough North Park.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the contract for the future management and operation of the new Splashlands facility be awarded to Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) for an initial period of five years to be documented via a management agreement and lease for the site.

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- (2) That the Cabinet agrees to give delegated authority to the Corporate Director (Environment, Resources and Cultural Services), in consultation with the Executive Member (Leisure, Culture and Communications) and the Splashlands Member Procurement Board, to award the main contractor contract for the Splashlands development.
- (3) That once all the procurement associated with the Splashlands project was complete, the Cabinet agrees to rename the Splashlands Member Procurement Board the Splashlands Member Mobilisation Board to oversee the construction phase of the development as well as the opening of the facility.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

The cross party Splashlands Board had met and agreed the evaluation criteria prior to the issue of tender for the site operator. Following the evaluation which was assessed by a professional consultancy firm it was unanimously agreed by the Board to recommend to the Cabinet to award the operator contract to GLL.

Delegated authority was sought for the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services), in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Executive Member (Resources) and the Cross Party Splashlands Board, to award the main contract. This approach had been unanimously agreed by the Board.

Meeting ended 8.00pm
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