

CABINET

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 1st October 2013 at Retford Town Hall

Present: Councillor S A Greaves (Chair),
Councillors A Chambers, J Evans, J A Leigh, S May, J White and
G J Wynne.

Assistants: Councillors G Jones and J Potts.

Advisory Members: Councillors H M Brand and D Challinor.

Liaison Members: Councillors B Barker, H Burton and K H Isard.

Officers: D Armiger, G Blenkinsop, S Brown, J Hamilton, M Hill, L Hull,
M Ladyman, N Taylor, J Unstead (for Agenda Item No. 8(a) only) and
S Wormald.

Also present: Councillor J M Sanger.

(The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, read out the Fire Evacuation Procedure, and also enquired as to whether any member of the public wished to film the meeting or any part thereof.)

(The meeting opened at 6.30pm.)

59. QUESTION TIME - PUBLIC

Council Procedure Rules were suspended for fifteen minutes to allow questions from the public; however, no members of the public were present.

60. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors I J Campbell, M Gregory, C Palmer and C Wanless.

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

(a) Members

Councillor J A Leigh declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item No. 9(a) – Housing Act 2004 – Charges for Enforcement Action (Key Decision No. 429) as she owns and rents out a property in the form of accommodation. She left the meeting and took no part in the discussion and voting thereof.

(b) Officers

N Taylor, Interim Chief Executive, declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item No. 12(a) – Discretionary Grant Scheme for the Voluntary and Community Sector as he is the Honorary Treasurer of the BCVS; he remained in the meeting.

62. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3RD SEPTEMBER 2013

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd September 2013 be approved.

63. MINUTES FOR ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

RESOLVED that the Minutes for Action and Implementation be received.

64. OUTSTANDING MINUTES LIST

RESOLVED that the Outstanding Minutes List be received.

65. FORWARD PLAN

A Liaison Member enquired as to when the Site Allocations document could be expected to appear on the Forward Plan, and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration replied that a date should be set in the near future and that the document is awaiting some other elements.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be received.

SECTION A – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PUBLIC

Key Decisions

66. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – FINANCE – COUNCILLOR J EVANS

(a) Climate Change Strategy 2013/14 and Sustainability Strategy (Key Decision No. 423)

(J Unstead, Property Manager, presented this item on behalf of the Sustainability Officer.)

Members' approval was sought for the draft Strategies which had been attached for Cabinet, Assistant, Advisory and Liaison Members and deposited in the Members' Room.

The Climate Change Strategy sets out how the Authority intends to tackle and mitigate the effects of climate change within the District and Council services. In the face of these challenges, the Council has worked to minimise future risks through appropriate adaptive measures initiated by research, policy and partnership.

The Sustainability Strategy outlines how the Authority is committed to making its estates and services as sustainable as possible. The Strategy will allow the principles of sustainability to be embedded across the board within the Council and be considered with every future policy, plan and project. These sustainable principles will help to deliver continued budget savings.

Seven key areas for focussing action within the District, which are essential in developing a comprehensive approach to climate change, were outlined in paragraph 3.2 of the report. It was noted that a Carbon Management Programme is being drafted/finalised. Initiatives continue to be developed and carried out for both areas in order to ensure that the Council meets improvement targets and works in accordance with legislation. The Council's performance will be compared with other local authorities by the Sustainability Officer.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

No other options have been put forward as it is essential that the Council takes a leading role in tackling climate change issues in the District.

RESOLVED that the Climate Change Strategy 2013/14 and the Sustainability Strategy 2013 be approved.

67. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – HOUSING – COUNCILLOR A CHAMBERS

(a) Housing Act 2004 – Charges for Enforcement Action (Key Decision No. 429)

Members' approval was sought for the introduction of charges for statutory housing notices, in accordance with Section 49 of the Housing Act 2004 which allows local authorities to recover such reasonable charges as it considers appropriate incurred in serving such notices. The relevant notices/orders were listed in paragraph 3.1 of the report.

The report outlined issues for consideration and the benefits and disadvantages of charging for notices and/or orders. Details of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, the notice charging fee calculation and a list of authorities who currently charge for Housing Act Notices and their charges were appended to the report.

Members raised issues/asked questions on: how is sub-standard housing reported; what action can be taken; and membership of the Council's Accredited Landlord Scheme.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

Option One – To adopt the initiatives outlined in the report to recover reasonable expenses from the person on whom the Notice or Order has been served when formal action under Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 is required to be taken.

Option Two – To not adopt the initiatives outlined in the report which would mean that the opportunity to recover reasonable charges is lost.

RESOLVED that:

1. Approval be given for the introduction of a charge of £250 plus VAT for the service of notices for statutory action taken under Sections 11, 12, 20, 21, 40 and 43 of the Housing Act 2004, as set out in the report.
2. The charge to be introduced with immediate effect.
3. The charge be included within Bassetlaw District Council's Scale of Fees and Charges and be reviewed in accordance with the Council's Policy on Fees and Charges.

(Councillor J A Leigh declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the above item, left the room and took no part in the discussion and voting thereof.)

Other Decisions

68. REFERRAL(S)

(a) Joint Employee Council – 11th September 2013 – Minute No. 17(c) - Annual Employee Award Scheme

RESOLVED that the Annual Employee Award Scheme for the Council be approved.

69. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – POLICY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – COUNCILLOR S A GREAVES

(a) Implementation of the Localism Act in Bassetlaw

Members were provided with an update on the implementation of the Localism Act in Bassetlaw. Copies of an information presentation were appended to the report which set out the Council's action to date.

The Council was recently audited on its response and was found to have implemented all the necessary requirements within the Act. However, it was recommended that the action be reported so that a collective public record of the Council's response is documented.

Feedback from the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) suggests that the use of these new powers by councils and local communities is mixed. The planning powers appear to be most used, followed by the Community Right to Bid. At the time of producing the report, the LGIU was not aware of any successful use of the Community Right to Challenge powers.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

The Council has a statutory duty to respond to the requirements of new legislation.

RESOLVED that the update and action taken to implement the Localism Act in Bassetlaw be noted.

(b) Bassetlaw Youth Unemployment Taskforce

Members were updated on the Bassetlaw Youth Unemployment Taskforce – an initiative proposed and led by the Leader of the Council to reduce youth unemployment, particularly long-term, in Bassetlaw. The Taskforce comprises training providers, large-scale local businesses and elected Members/officers from the District Council.

The report detailed what the Taskforce has found and what initiatives have been progressed with the overall objective of helping young people develop the skills they need to access employment. Of particular note is the Volunteer event to be held on 31st October 2013; the Council providing training opportunities for 70 young people as part of the National Citizenship Service which is to be repeated in the Autumn; and the Skills Made Easy Programme through the Sheffield City Region which should result in 390 additional apprenticeships being created, also up-skilling opportunities for another 250 people. Further initiatives will be pursued/supported through the Bassetlaw Community Partnership.

Members raised issues/asked questions on: transport issues for young people, particularly in rural areas; the work of the Council's Young People's Ambassador, Councillor R Leigh; and the work of the North Nottinghamshire College in finding apprenticeships appropriate to the area.

Tables which show the percentages of employment of 16-24 year olds and the occupation of employed 16-24 year olds were appended to the report, together with official labour market statistics for Bassetlaw. A Liaison Member queried the "unemployed" figures within Appendix 2 of the report, which are to be clarified by the Corporate Development and Policy Manager.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

The Council does not have specific statutory responsibilities in respect of young people and therefore does not have to engage in this type of partnership activity to increase the employment opportunities of young people.

The Council chose to find out more about the issues affecting the employment of young people in Bassetlaw and has taken forward some initiatives that were within its control to move this agenda forward. It has also made a longer term commitment to this work.

RESOLVED that:

1. The report and the action that the Council has taken to date in respect of youth unemployment be noted.

2. It be also noted that the Council will continue to work with partners through the new Bassetlaw Community Partnership to promote employment opportunities for young people in Bassetlaw.

(c) Equality and Diversity - Update

Members were provided with an update on progress against the Council's Equality Objectives. A more detailed update on progress has been deposited in the Members' Room.

The report outlined recent activities undertaken by the Council since the last update to Cabinet, including: the LGBT Forum; and work on women's services, older people and young people. The Public Sector Equality Duty Review has been undertaken by the Government and its recommendations have now been published. The Local Government Association is planning a conference in November to discuss the impact of these recommendations.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

There is a statutory duty to produce and publish equality objectives for the next four years. The objectives have been previously approved by Cabinet and are reflected in the Corporate Plan.

RESOLVED that:

1. The progress against the Equality Objectives be noted, and updates on progress be provided as part of the overall Equality updates.
2. A further report on the outcomes of the Public Sector Equality Duty Review be submitted to a future meeting of Cabinet.

70. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – FINANCE – COUNCILLOR J EVANS

(a) Discretionary Grant Scheme for the Voluntary and Community Sector

Members' approval was sought for a new model of administering the voluntary/community sector grants programme. It was proposed that the Bassetlaw Community and Voluntary Services (BCVS) takes over the task of awarding Bassetlaw District Council grants to third sector organisations in Bassetlaw and implements the award of grants for the 2014/15 financial year and subsequent years, subject to an annual review. This work would be carried out in exchange for a management fee, and based on the principles and approach already agreed, which was appended to the report, together with the agreed grants for 2013/14. The BCVS will also carry out other tasks for the District Council as set out in a Service Level Agreement.

Members raised issues/asked questions on: the exclusion of any person involved with recipient organisations from the selection process; the amount of grant to the BCVS; the possibility of a tender process; and how the BCVS could help organisations with their bids to such grants and also other available funding.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

Option One – To review its discretionary grants programme and continue to manage this in the same way as it does currently.

Option Two – To revise the scheme and develop a more equitable and transparent approach as proposed within the report. As the umbrella infrastructure organisation for the third sector in Bassetlaw, the BCVS has a clear knowledge of the needs of the area and the Bassetlaw organisation that are currently delivering important community services. Equally they have close links with the Council, understand the ambitions of the Council and can ensure that the award of grants contribute to our aims and ambitions.

RESOLVED that:

1. The administration of the award of grants to third sector organisations for 2014/15 and subsequent years by the Bassetlaw Community and Voluntary Services (BCVS) be approved, subject to an annual review.
2. The award of the grant be based on the principles agreed by Cabinet on 3rd September 2013, as appended to the report.
3. The details of the scheme be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Finance working with the Head of Finance and Property and the Corporate Development and Policy Manager.

(N Taylor, Interim Chief Executive, declared a non-pecuniary interest in the above item but remained in the meeting.)

71. REPORTING MINUTES

- (a) Joint Employee Council – 19th June 2013

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Employee Council held on 19th June 2013 be received.

- (b) Health and Safety Committee – 20th June 2013

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Health and Safety Committee held on 20th June 2013 be received.

72. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RESOLVED that, in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and after considering the public interest test as set out by the officer in the body of the report, Members agreed that the following items of business involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 2 and 3, and therefore, in accordance with Section 100A of the Act, the press and public be excluded from the meeting:

Agenda Item No. 14(a) – Provision of Insurance Services 2013/14 (Key Decision No. 392) – Paragraph 3

Agenda Item No. 15(a) – Review of Tourist Services (Key Decision No. 416) – Paragraph 2

(Councillor J M Sanger remained in the meeting with the Chairman's permission.)

SECTION B – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PRIVATE

Key Decisions

73. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – FINANCE – COUNCILLOR J EVANS

- (a) Provision of Insurance Services 2013/14 (Key Decision No. 392)

Members were updated on the insurance arrangements put in place for the Council from 1st October 2013.

The new arrangements represent a £27,300 budget saving for the General Fund in 2013/14. Further savings should be realised by the offer of a further 5% discount and a 'low claim discount' may also be available. The focus for the Council in the future must be to concentrate on the reasons why insurance claims are made against the Council. Action is being taken by the Risk Management Group to address these issues.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

The OJEU tender process has tested the market and has achieved the best outcome for the Council. There are no financial consequences on the termination of the current insurance arrangements with the current providers. The options and risks for the renewal of the insurance arrangements from 1st October 2013 are outlined in paragraph 3.5 of the report.

RESOLVED that:

1. Thanks be recorded to officers for their work in achieving such savings.
2. The new insurance arrangements with the new insurance service providers from 1st October 2013 be accepted.

74. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – REGENERATION – COUNCILLOR J WHITE

(a) Review of Tourist Services (Key Decision No. 416)

Members' approval was sought for the proposed changes to the delivery of tourism services within the District, including the proposed changes to the Tourist Information Centres at Worksop and Retford.

Members discussed various options for the relocation of the Tourist Information Centres.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

There is an option to do nothing and maintain the status quo. However, the service review has been based in part upon the need to provide a service that can improve and deliver a higher level of service than the current offer.

It is possible that alternative delivery models for the provision of tourist information services could be found through a commercial partnership or social enterprise. However, to date only one request has been made and this asks for a Council subsidy equivalent to the current budget and offers a reduced service. It is therefore unlikely that any budget savings would be made.

The alternative option, which is recommended, is to accept the proposals within the report.

RESOLVED that:

1. The commencement of consultation with staff and trade unions be approved, with regard to the impact of the proposed changes as detailed in the report, in accordance with the Council's Job and Structure Redesign Policy and Procedure.
2. Formal discussions take place with the County Council with a view to reaching agreement on the establishment of an information point in Worksop provided by the County Council.

Other Decisions

None.

75. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

As there was no other urgent business to be considered, the Chairman closed the meeting.

(Meeting closed at 8.05pm.)