

CABINET

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 10th January 2012 at Retford Town Hall

Present: Councillor G A N Oxby (Chair),
Councillors J Evans, S A Greaves, J A Leigh, S May, D R Pressley and A Rhodes.

Liaison Members: Councillors H Burton, M W Quigley, S Toms and C Wanless.

Officers: S Brown, P Clark, J Hamilton, M Hill, L Hull, D Hunter, M Ladyman, R Schofield, N Taylor and R Theakstone.

Standards Members: B Letherland.

(The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and read out the Fire Alarm/Evacuation Procedure.)

110. QUESTION TIME - PUBLIC

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

111. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

112. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

(a) Members

There were no declarations of interest by Members.

(b) Officers

Mrs J Hamilton declared a personal interest in Agenda Item No 15(b) as she is part of the Community Engagement and Performance Service but remained in the meeting.

113. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6TH DECEMBER 2011

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 6th December 2011 be approved.

114. MINUTES FOR ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

RESOLVED that the Minutes for Action and Implementation be received.

115. OUTSTANDING MINUTES LIST

RESOLVED that the Outstanding Minutes List be received.

SECTION A – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PUBLIC

Key Decisions

116. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – POLICY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

(a) Corporate Plan 2012-2015 (Key Decision No 316)

Members' approval was sought for the framework of the new Corporate Plan 2012-2015 and Members were updated on the corporate plan preparations. The new Vision, Ambitions and Priorities were appended to the report. The final Plan will be presented to Cabinet and full Council.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

The Council is committed to ensuring it clearly identifies those priorities that will be of greatest benefit to the people of Bassetlaw and concentrates effort on delivering those within the identified timeframe of 2012-2015 through the Corporate Plan.

It is important to identify key Ambitions so that the Priorities are focussed and the Plan itself can be developed with actions worked up and resources allocated.

RESOLVED that:

1. The proposed framework for the new Corporate Plan 2012-2015, as appended to the report, be approved.
2. Thanks be recorded to all Members and officers for their input in preparing the Plan.

117. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – FINANCE AND PROPERTY – COUNCILLOR J EVANS

(a) Medium Term Financial Plan 2012/13 to 2014/15 (Key Decision No 294) and Value For Money Strategy

Members were updated on the projections about the long-term financial sustainability of the Council in conjunction with current issues and the financial support required for Bassetlaw's priorities in the Corporate Plan. The Medium Term Financial Plan 2012/13 to 2014/15 was appended to the report.

The report outlined the key issues: reserves and balances; 2011/12 financial year; formula grant; National Non Domestic Rates; benefit support; staffing costs and job Evaluation; efficiency savings and Value For Money; fees and charges income; Council Tax; capital financing strategy; Icelandic bank investments; inflation; service improvements; and the taxbase growth.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

Bassetlaw needs to review its Financial Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan each year to ensure income equals expenditure and, where it doesn't or is projected not to, corrective action needs to be identified and put in hand.

The forthcoming budget round for 2012/13 is drawing to a close and benefits from the certainty provided by the second known year of the first Two Year Settlement. Members have the option to approve a zero Council Tax increase for the third financial year but need to carefully consider some of the cumulative issues that will start to become more prominent from 2013/14 onwards:

Withdrawal of Council Tax Freeze grant;
Changes to Formula Grant settlements;
Minimal NNDR funding increases;

Changes to a higher risk fixed grant Council Tax benefit scheme;
Potential withdrawal of the Housing Benefit Administration Subsidy Grant;
Lower levels of balances and reserves;
The impact on the starting position of any new local Council Tax benefit system.

RESOLVED that:

1. The projections for the next three financial years, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be noted.
2. The Medium Term Financial Plan for 2012/13 to 2014/15, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved as the framework for the next three years' budgets.
3. The impact of taking the Council Tax Freeze Grant for 2012/13 over the next month be considered in the finalisation of the budget plans for the next financial year.
4. The Value For Money Strategy for 2013/14 to 2014/15 be approved.

(b) Housing Capital Programme 2012/13 to 2016/17 (Key Decision No 302)

Members' approval was sought for the Housing Capital Programme for 2012/13 to 2016/17. The Housing Revenue Account Five Year Capital Investment Plan and the proposed window and door programme for 2012 were appended to the report, which outlined: fuel poverty; crime and community safety; disability; vehicle replacement; funding; and affordability.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

2012/13 signals the final tranches of funding for the national Decent Homes programme and the start of the new self-financing regime for the Housing Revenue Account.

Members can decide what schemes to include or exclude and the timing of those commitments. In coming to a view on what priorities Members want to establish, consideration must be given to the overall limit on investment set by the Overall Borrowing Limit of £106.5m, as this does not increase with any allowance for inflation.

If approved, the Five Year Plan, as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report, will limit the overall level of borrowing to £98.672m by 2016/17.

RESOLVED that:

1. The programme for 2012/13, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved and recommended to full Council on 13th February 2012.
2. The indicative programmes for 2013/14 to 2016/17, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved and recommended to full Council on 13th February 2012.
3. An increase of £27,517,000 in the treasury management borrowing limits be approved and delegated powers be given to officers for the period of March and April 2012 to accept the additional debt being transferred from the DCLG and the loan from the Public Works Loan Board to pay for it.

(c) Housing Revenue Account Budget 2012/13 and Future Years to 2014/15 (Key Decision No 295)

Members' approval was sought for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2012/13 and the indicative figures for 2013/14 and 2014/15 which will set the budget and rent levels for 2012/13. The rent restructuring and the HRA three year budget forecast were appended to the report which outlined: Value For Money and the A1 Housing Management Fee; rents; 2011/12 forecast out-turn; reserves; repairs and maintenance; Supporting People and wardens' services; pensions provisions; community centres; and depreciation.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

The Council needs to set a balanced budget for its HRA services with income equalling expenditure to ensure that it does not breach the overall borrowing limit of £106.5m at any stage (the District Auditor will take action if it does) and that the HRA remains solvent, with the adequate reserves of a “going concern”.

The Council also needs to achieve the convergence of its rents to the national guideline by 2015/16 but it is unclear what sanctions there are for this if this is not achieved, and as such, this is an unknown risk.

This budget sets out an approach to maintain levels of quality and investment, comply with the borrowing limit, and meets the Government’s rent assumptions in a move to meet its rent convergence target by 2015/16. The rent increase of 7.15% could be lowered but this will impact on the levels of investment and impact on successive financial years, as these resources will be denied over the successive years of financing plan. It will also result in a Direction from Central Government to meet convergence by 2015/16, if not now then within that timescale.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2012/13 and the indicative figures for 2013/14 and 2014/15, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved and recommended to full Council on 13th February 2012.
2. An average rent increase of 7.15% for 2012/13 be approved, in accordance with the nationally set Rent Guideline criteria, and recommended to full Council on 13th February 2012.
3. In accordance with best practice, indicative increases of 3.43% for 2013/14 and 2.44% for 2014/15, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, be approved and recommended to full Council on 13th February 2012.
4. The minimum level of HRA reserves be increased from £0.75m to £1.0m from 2012/13 onwards in recognition of the increased overall funding value of the HRS to £106.5m.

Other Decisions

118. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – POLICY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – COUNCILLOR G A N OXBY

(a) Forward Plan – January to April 2012

Members were presented with the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the coming four months.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

The report is for noting.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan for the period January to April 2012 be approved.

(b) Heroes Welcome

Members’ approval was sought for the Council to join the ‘Heroes Welcome’ scheme that offers support and recognition for the role of service men and women across the country.

It was noted that a Financial Reference of 12/579 had been given.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

The Council has the option of either participating in the scheme or not. There are no particular risks identified arising from participating. The Council has a long track record of recognising and appreciating the role of armed forces, including Freedom of the Town to the local regiment and past involvement with the former RAF Finningley.

RESOLVED that Bassetlaw District Council joins the Heroes Welcome scheme and officers be authorised to undertake all necessary functions to promote and co-ordinate the scheme and encourage local businesses to participate.

119. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – COMMUNITY PROSPERITY – COUNCILLOR D R PRESSLEY

(a) Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Members' approval was sought for the Draft Preliminary Charging Schedule and a consultation period of six weeks. The commercial and residential CIL Charging Zones and rates were appended to the report.

It was noted that the CIL Charging Rates, as appended, are per square metre. Also that the CIL will be levied on all new floorspace but the Council will still be able to negotiate Section 106 Agreements on certain developments for new infrastructure. Current calculations suggest that, if the requisite levels of development come forward over the Plan period, some £33.5m may be secured towards the delivery of infrastructure in the District.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

Option One – The Council can stop work on the CIL Charging Schedule and continue to rely on Section 106 Agreements as a means of securing funding for new infrastructure in the District. The risk of doing so is that the Council is unable to secure the level of contributions that it may wish from new development, given the restrictions on pooled contributions in the CIL Regulations.

Option Two – The Council can progress the CIL Charging Schedule. There are no significant risks in doing so.

The Council would have an independently agreed, transparent Schedule setting out the charges that a developer will need to consider. There will be greater certainty over the amount and timing of receipt of the funds for wider infrastructure required to support new growth across the District. CIL will, viability issues notwithstanding, be levied on all new development. This should result in a greater return for the Council which presently only tends to secure S106 funds from major housing applications.

RESOLVED that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule be amended and approved for public consideration in order to comply with statutory requirements and to allow the Council to progress towards the process of examination and adoption.

(b) Supplementary Planning Documents – Affordable Housing and Parking Standards

Members' approval was sought for consultation on Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) on Affordable Housing and Parking Standards, with a view to their subsequent adoption. These have been produced as a consequence of the adoption of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document on 22nd December 2011.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

Option One – The Council can halt progress on the SPDs. The risk of doing so is that the Council may be unable to secure the level of affordable housing contributions that it may wish from new development and may find residential parking provision to be inappropriate.

Option Two – The two SPDs be made available for public consultation with a view to subsequent adoption as part of the Local Development Framework.

RESOLVED that the Supplementary Planning Documents on Affordable Housing and Parking Standards be made available for public consultation with a view to subsequent adoption as part of the Local Development Framework.

120. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE – COUNCILLOR J A LEIGH

(a) Bassetlaw Games

Members were updated on the planning and delivery of the Bassetlaw Games, the timetable for the Games, and the sources of information available regarding the programme for the Games. The timetable was appended to the report.

Following Cabinet approval in September 2011, the Bassetlaw Games Steering Group has engaged with many local organisations to develop an extensive programme of sporting and cultural activity. The programme contains fully-inclusive events that cover 31 different sports, 27 Olympic and 4 non-Olympic. The programme is being delivered by 44 different clubs and organisations and 170 opportunities are being provided for people to participate in the Games. External sponsorship and products/goods have been secured for the project.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

The Bassetlaw Games concept has quickly grown into a huge event that involves large numbers of local residents. The project has been superbly supported by the voluntary sports sector as well as other statutory bodies and the Council's leisure management partners. The excellent nature of the project, reflecting the involvement of all sectors and all members of the local community has been rewarded with the awarding of the prestigious Inspire Mark by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG).

The Bassetlaw Games is at the forefront of community engagement projects based around the London Olympics 2012. The enormous programme of activities is largely being delivered by local communities, for local communities, with the District Council providing leadership and assistance to facilitate the process. The District Council is running events where there is not sufficient capacity to do so in local sports groups.

RESOLVED that:

1. The progress that has been made in developing and delivering the Bassetlaw Games programme be noted, particularly the efforts of the Sports Development Team and the voluntary sports clubs in compiling the programme.
2. The location of the regularly updated activity programme at www.bassetlaw.gov.uk/bassetlawgames be noted.
3. Thanks be recorded to the Sports Development Team for their work and commitment to the Games.

121. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – FINANCE AND PROPERTY – COUNCILLOR J EVANS

(a) Annual Audit Letter

Members were presented with the District Auditor's Annual Audit Letter for 2010/11 which was appended to the report. The findings comprise two key messages: an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements; and proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

The Council is obliged to receive the Auditor's report but Members have the discretion to respond to the points made in the Letter.

RESOLVED that:

1. The District Auditor's Annual Letter for 2010/11 and its findings be accepted.
2. Thanks be recorded to the Finance officers for their work in producing the 2010/11 accounts.

122. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – HOUSING – COUNCILLOR A RHODES

(a) Installation of Photovoltaic (PV) Panels

Members' approval was sought for the installation of energy efficiency measures to properties within the Council's housing stock through participation in the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP).

Following Cabinet approval in September 2011, it was agreed to install photovoltaic (PV) panels to 500 Council-owned properties under the Feed In Tariff (FIT) Scheme. However, on 31st October 2011, the Government reviewed the FIT Scheme and reduced the tariff available by up to 50%. Officers therefore explored further potential schemes to assist in reducing fuel poverty.

The Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) is an obligation on the energy companies and promote a whole house multiple measure approach delivered through the development of community based partnerships. The energy companies work on a scheme together with the housing provider and calculate a tonnage of carbon that will be saved; this is then purchased at an agreed rate off the housing provider. In addition to the PV installation, the properties will also receive external insulation, cavity wall insulation, boiler upgrades and electrical upgrades. The Council, through A1 Housing, will supply and fit double glazed windows and new front doors. The CESP scheme will include 200 properties within Worksop South East, Retford East, Carlton, Sandy Lane and central Manton i.e. areas of high deprivation.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

Option One – To not agree to the proposed PV scheme, the Council will not be able to take advantage of the CESP investment.

Option Two – To agree to the proposed PV scheme and take advantage of the CESP initiative, thus enabling the Council's tenants to reduce their energy costs.

RESOLVED that:

1. The proposed Community Energy Saving Programme be approved and work be commenced as soon as possible.

2. Thanks be recorded to Bassetlaw District Council and A1 Housing officers for their speedy efforts in identifying an alternative scheme.

123. REPORTING MINUTES

- (a) Joint Employee Council – 13th September 2011

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Joint Employee Council held on 13th September 2011 be received.

- (b) Information Technology and Access Sub-Committee – 15th September 2011

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Information Technology and Access Sub-Committee held on 15th September 2011 be received.

- (c) Bassetlaw Enterprise Board – 17th October 2011

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Bassetlaw Enterprise Board held on 17th October 2011 be received.

124. 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 Paragraph 2, and therefore, in accordance with Section 100A of the Act, the press and public be excluded from the meeting:

Agenda Item No 15(a) – Health and Safety Shared Services - Paragraph 2

Agenda Item No 15(b) – Community Engagement and Performance Service Review – Paragraph 2

SECTION B – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PRIVATE

Key Decisions

None.

Other Decisions

125. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – POLICY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – COUNCILLOR G A N OXBY

- (a) Health and Safety Shared Services

Members' approval was sought for a shared Health and Safety Service between Bassetlaw, Bolsover and Mansfield District Councils. A full Business Case and revised job descriptions were appended to the report.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

Option One – To continue with the status quo at all three Councils, with more collaboration on training procurement/sharing of expertise.

Option Two – To proceed with a full shared service with the appointment of a lead authority employer.

Option Three – To proceed with a shared health and safety management resource with individual health and safety officers remaining employed by each Council. This is the best option to deliver a more resilient health and safety service at Bassetlaw whilst realising service efficiencies.

RESOLVED that approval be given to proceed with a shared Health and Safety Manager whilst retaining a Health and Safety Officer presence at each Council.

(b) Community Engagement and Performance Service Review

Members were presented with the rationale behind proposed changes to the structure within the Community Engagement and Performance Service and approval was sought to commence consultation with affected staff in accordance with the Council's Organisational Change Policy and Procedure.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

The Council is facing significant pressure both structurally and financially, therefore the need to review and restructure all services is of paramount importance. However, the impact of the successful application of VER to those members of staff requesting this option must be considered and any duties remaining be absorbed wherever possible both to up-skill remaining members of staff and to mitigate any risk to the Council.

Members have the option of either progressing or not progressing with the proposed changes identified in this report. However, should the decision be made not to progress with the proposals, then this will have an impact on performance management and support to the Audit and Performance Scrutiny Committee; capacity and expertise in administering Elections and the Council's Committees; and further, not adequately responding to the emerging outward focussed communications and consultation agenda.

RESOLVED that the proposed new arrangements for specific posts within the Community Engagement and Performance Service be noted, and consultation with affected staff be commenced in accordance with the Council's Organisational Change Policy to enable the final proposals to be presented back to Cabinet for final approval in due course.

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

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