

CABINET

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 14th March 2017 at Worksop Town Hall

Present: Councillor S A Greaves (Chair),
Councillors J Evans, J A Leigh, D G Pidwell, S Scotthorne, S E Shaw and
J White.

Advisory Member: Councillor H M Brand.

Liaison Members: Councillors H Burton, K H Isard and T Taylor.

Officers: D Armiger, S Brown, K Childs, L Dore, L Prime, N Taylor, and
R Theakstone.

(The meeting opened at 6.30pm).

(The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and read out the Fire Evacuation Procedure. He enquired as to whether any member of the public or press wished to film/record the meeting or any part thereof; however, although there were members of the public present, this was not taken up).

115. QUESTION TIME - PUBLIC

Council Procedure Rules were suspended for fifteen minutes to allow questions from the public. The Chairman made the large group of children present from Worksop Junior Council feel especially welcome.

Using a prepared speech, some of the children present took turns to read out their request for assistance with their 'KURB' project. They explained that the project had been a topic for discussion following which they decided to create a campaign to tackle racism and bullying - Kindness, Understanding, Racism, Bullying. A poster competition had been organised to support the project and an image of the winning poster, created by Grace Woolley of Prospect Junior School, was shown to Members. The children had been involved in workshops in schools but now needed to get the message out to a wider audience. They sought assistance in promoting the campaign to both adults and children within the district and asked for help and resources to: find a venue where sufferers of racism and bullying can go and talk to an adult about it; produce large copies of the winning poster and help with circulation of them; buy wristbands to sell to show support for the KURB project; buy flags to use in a parade on Children's Day.

The Leader of the Council thanked and complimented the children for their presentation. He was especially pleased that the winner of the competition was a pupil at a school in his Ward.

He commented that it was clear the children wanted to see a positive change to stop bullying and abusive behaviour and offered to speak to people to see what could be done to assist. He mentioned the Council's Communication Department, Nottinghamshire County Council, the local Business Forum and Worksop Charter Trustees as possible options.

The Leader agreed with the need to raise the concerns that the children had highlighted and stated that he would respond directly to them in a letter to Worksop Junior Council regarding their request. He thanked them for the challenge to Cabinet to assist them in their project and asked that they return to a future meeting to inform Cabinet of their progress.

116. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Dukes, K H Isard and T Taylor.

117. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

(a) Members

Councillor G J Evans declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item No. 10(b) Harworth and Bircotes Intervention Strategy, as she is the Ward Member; she remained in the meeting.

(b) Officers

There were no Declarations of Interest by officers.

118. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9TH FEBRUARY 2017

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meetings held on 9th February 2017 be approved.

119. MINUTES FOR ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

RESOLVED that the Minutes for Action and Implementation be received.

120. OUTSTANDING MINUTES LIST

RESOLVED that the Outstanding Minutes List be received.

121. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be approved.

SECTION A – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PUBLIC

Key Decisions

122. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – POLICY, STRATEGY AND COMMUNICATIONS - COUNCILLOR S GREAVES

(a) Quarter 3 2016/17 Performance (Key Decision No. 598)

Members were presented with the Quarter 3 performance report for 2016/17 which provided an update on the delivery of the Corporate Plan and the performance of a suite of key performance indicators. Members were asked to confirm what action is being taken to address performance that is currently off target and to identify any required additional action.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

In presenting performance reports to Cabinet/Overview & Scrutiny Committee we ensure Portfolio-holders take responsibility for delivery of the Corporate Plan and are committed to ensuring the Council is properly managing corporate performance.

Failure to manage delivery of the Corporate Plan adequately could result in service failures and/or impacts on current budgets.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Quarter 3 performance report be noted, also action being taken to address areas of performance which are currently off target.

(b) The Council Plan 2017-2020 (Key Decision No. 622)

Members were presented with a report which sought their approval for the framework of the new Council Plan 2017-2020 and which also provided an update on corporate plan preparations.

Following the end of the current Corporate Plan 2014-2017, work has been undertaken to assess the challenges the district is facing for the future including the austerity agenda and associated public sector spending reductions.

The timetable for the adoption of the new Council Plan 2017-2020 was included in the report along with details of the Mission Statement and three new Ambitions. A number of priorities have been set within each Ambition and the framework for completion of these was appended to the report.

The Leader commented that the report was just the start of the process which included the name change from 'Corporate Plan' to 'Council Plan'.

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 2017-2020 through its Council 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 the proposed framework for the new Council Plan 2017- 2020 as detailed in Appendix A be approved.

123. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – HOUSING – COUNCILLOR S SCOTTHORNE

(a) Choice-based Lettings Policy - Review of Policy Changes (Key Decision No. 437)

Members were presented with a report which provided an overview of the outcomes from the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Policy changes approved in March 2015 and implemented in September 2015. The CBL Policy is the method by which BDC allocates Council homes to prospective tenants and is managed by A1 Housing. The report proposed changes to the current policy to enhance its operation in practice.

The Cabinet Member for Housing commented on the challenge undertaken by the working group, including officers from both the Council and A1 Housing, to review the current Policy in place. The result of the work and discussion was the implementation of a new band - Band F.

The Head of Regeneration informed the meeting that the introduction of Band F would offer more financial resilience by offering tenancies into void housing stock refused by others in other Bands. It was a non-discriminatory way forward offering the opportunity of economic prosperity to anyone who wished to reside and work in Bassetlaw. In response to a question regarding the monitoring of the proposed Band F, the Head of Regeneration added that it could be built into the existing performance monitoring already undertaken.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

There is a strong risk that the continued reduction in waiting list numbers, and increase in rejections will detrimentally impact upon the ability to re-let properties promptly. This is

likely to result in a loss of income for the council, and lead to anti-social behaviour associated with empty properties, increasing tenancy and estate management costs.

The following excerpt from the Chartered Institute of Housing, 'How To Effectively Manage Voids' guide states that it is important to have an effective approach to re-letting empty properties for the following reasons:

“Effective asset management: maintaining empty homes in good condition is vital if the value of a landlord’s assets is to be maintained. Where properties are empty for lengthy periods of time, this can result in:

- *increasing repairs and maintenance costs as the physical fabric of the property declines*
- *security costs*
- *costs of dealing with dilapidation and vandalism*
- *where empty properties are not effectively maintained, this can result in customer dissatisfaction and higher turnover costs”.*

(See background papers – Chartered Institute of Housing).

Further to the non-introduction of Band F there is a risk of legal challenge if the Councils procedures do not comply with section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Equality Duty). The Public Sector General Equality Duty requires public bodies, (such as Bassetlaw District Council), to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups.
- Foster good relations between people from different groups.

The purpose of this policy review is to address matters arising following an impact study, whilst recognising the need for financial resilience and a broader offer of support for existing and potential Bassetlaw tenants.

The introduction of Band F to the Housing Register will support economic growth whilst reducing re-let times and reducing rent loss.

RESOLVED that the amendments as outlined in Section 4 (paragraphs 1 to 7) and the amended policy be approved and referred to full Council for formal ratification.

(b) Homelessness Management (Key Decision No. 625)

The approval of Members was sought for the development of a new Homeless Prevention Strategy. The Council is required to consider housing needs within its area, including the needs of homeless households, to whom Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide assistance in accordance with The Homeless Act 2002.

The Homeless Strategy for Bassetlaw as implemented in 2012 is out of date and needs to be refreshed to reflect current trends. A working group has been established to address the Homeless Strategy and investigate all the options for the prevention of homelessness within the new Strategy. The membership of the working group was appended to the report.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

There is a legal requirement to have a Strategy setting out our priorities and intentions for the managing homelessness, and it is intended for this to be incorporated into the Housing Strategy as this document addresses the needs of the Bassetlaw population. Not having an up to date Strategy demonstrating the management of homelessness across the district would mean the Council would fail in their legal obligations.

Re-focusing the approach to homelessness through a specific Homeless Prevention Strategy will ensure needs are recognised, and that objectives are put in place to underpin delivery in the future, which will offer a customer efficient service.

RESOLVED that the development of a new Homeless Prevention Strategy, to replace the outdated Homeless Strategy, to reflect the current situation and legislative requirements, be approved.

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

(a) Business Improvement District (Key Decision No. 540)

Members were presented with a report which provided an update on the progress of North Notts Business Improvement District (BID) and asked them to consider the implications to the Council.

BIDs are business-led partnerships focussed on improving and enhancing commercial areas. They are funded through a nominal levy calculated on the rateable value of business rates payers within a defined area. Councils collect a levy which is then passed to the BID company to deliver their suite of activities outlined in a business plan. For the levy to be applied, business rate payers must be balloted and the majority by number and rateable value must vote in favour of the plan. The BID operates for a 5 year period following which a re-ballot is necessary to continue.

North Notts Place Board CIC (of which the Council is a member) is the proposer for the North Notts BID. Details of the progress to date and the next stages were included in the report which also outlined the Council's responsibilities as outlined in the regulations within the Local Government Act 2003. Subject to a successful ballot, the levy could be collected monthly from September 2017, however, it would take time to generate enough cash to deliver projects so the report proposed an upfront 50% loan of levy income is made to the North Notts BID in order that economic benefits can be realised locally from year 1.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration commented that this would be the first BID to be created in the country and informed the meeting that only businesses with a rateable value (RV) of £12,000p.a. and over will be subject to the levy which will be 1% of their RV. The maximum payment will be capped at £12,000p.a. with hospitals and hospices excluded from the levy. It is anticipated that £3m will be generated over a three year period which will be used to improve and enhance town centres and industrial areas in the district to increase trade and footfall. She added that the Business Plan will be launched to businesses at Hodsock Priory on 29th March 2017 with a postal ballot taking place between April 18th and May 16th 2017. The result will be announced the following day and assuming a successful outcome and cooling off period, the North Notts BID will be incorporated as a Company Limited by guarantee and commence work on 1st September 2017. The main concern was that the person whose name was on the invoice was the person entitled to vote and they might need pursuing for a response.

The Leader commented on the significant difference the initiative of the North Notts BID would make to opportunities for growth and investment. He gave his full support to the proposal which would enable the business community to access funds that the Council as a local authority would be otherwise unable to provide. He also commended the intensive work put into developing the initiative which was ground-breaking and had huge potential.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

A successful BID would bring in considerable resources to help grow the local economy (£3.2 million over 5 years).

The main themes are:

- Business Voice (includes retention of talent, encouraging Innovation)
- The Experience (footfall generators, events, safety)
- The Destination (Place identity, external marketing, tourism)

Are all entirely consistent with the Council's vision and Corporate Plan priorities.

The Council is a partner in the BID and subject to levy payment.

An upfront loan payment of 50% of the income is relatively risk-free, since this ensures the Council is covered for bad debt provision and businesses are legally obliged to pay the levy.

The Council will collect the BID levy on behalf of the BID for an agreed fee payable by the North Notts BID company. This activity will require the purchase of Northgate BID software, which will be purchased by the Council and billed to North Notts BID. The cost for this is an annual license of £10,000 plus a one-off implementation and training cost of £4,375 and annual support costs of £2,500.

The Council will enter into an operating agreement and baseline agreements with the BID, setting out how the Council collects the BID levy on behalf of the BID, including debt management and payment procedures. The baseline agreement sets out what services the Council currently delivers in the BID area and how the BID provides added value.

RESOLVED that:

1. The creation of North Notts Business Improvement District (BID) be supported and approved.
2. The decision to vote in favour of the BID - 1 vote per hereditament over £12,000 Rateable value, i.e. 23 votes, be approved.
3. The approval of the Operating Agreement be delegated to the Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods with the approval of the Council's Section 151 Officer.
4. A loan payment to the BID of 50% of the levy to North Notts BID to enable the BID to operate from day one of the company's formation be approved for the first year only. It is also noted that the interest chargeable on this loan is waived and that the loan will be deducted from the collected levy sum.
5. The one-off cost of the ballot and Council's levy liability for 2017/18 which can be met from existing resources be noted.
6. The on-going levy liability to be factored into the budget setting process for 2018/19 be noted.

(b) Harworth & Bircotes Intervention Strategy (Key Decision No. 615)

A report was presented to the meeting in order to establish the need for an Intervention Strategy for Harworth & Bircotes using the evidence collected from recent pieces of background work, the Neighbourhood Plan and also opportunities identified by an officer working group. The

report also sought approval for officers to commence work on a range of regeneration initiatives in Harworth & Bircotes.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration commented on the significant growth through the development of housing and large employment sites as progressed through the current Corporate Plan and the vision and groundwork of the Harworth Neighbourhood Plan. She highlighted the overarching aims of the Intervention Strategy which included: redeveloping the old colliery site; sustaining and regenerating the town centre as the heart of the community; developing a new footpath and cycle network linking the new and older housing developments to town services and facilities; encouraging family friendly restaurants and cafes to locate in the area; deliver housing growth that reflects the local community's needs; protect and enhance Harworth and Bircotes environmental assets for current and future generations; safeguard existing and provide new community facilities, open spaces and public transport.

The Head of Regeneration added that progress was testimony to the partnership between officers and Harworth and Bircotes Town Council in working towards a sustainable community which everyone would be proud of.

The Leader welcomed the report and noted that in comparison to other former mining communities in other districts, the transformation of Harworth and Bircotes was a tremendous result of partnership working.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

Whilst it is possible not to progress further work on this project it is considered that to do so would lead to a further decline in the town centre and would not support the aims of the Corporate Plan. In addition, taking the Intervention Strategy forward at this stage does not carry any specific risk for the Council and it is therefore recommended that it is supported.

RESOLVED that the principles of the Intervention Strategy for Harworth & Bircotes be endorsed.

Other Decisions

125. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER – POLICY, STRATEGY AND COMMUNICATIONS - COUNCILLOR S GREAVES

(a) Apprenticeship Levy and Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets

Members were presented with a report which provided information of the Government plans to introduce an apprenticeship levy on 6th April 2017, and the potential impact for the Council and its Community. It also set out the requirements for public bodies to meet specific apprenticeship targets from 2017/18 to 2020/21. Members' approval was sought for the recommended policy approach in responding to these matters.

The Leader commented on the significant implications for the Council and A1 Housing and the need for a clear approach on how the issue should be dealt with. Apprenticeships have previously been funded by the Government but this would now cease, however, targets for apprenticeships had been set and had to be met. In essence, funding had to be transferred into a digital account from the Council and A1 Housing and if it was not used this would be retained by the Government and allocated elsewhere.

The HR Service Manager highlighted the indicative levy payments as provided in the report, i.e. almost £38k for the Council and just over £16k for A1 Housing. They are subject to a 10% top up by the Government and are restricted solely to the purchase and delivery of apprenticeship training by registered, pre-approved apprenticeship training providers. In

order to meet targets, the forecast headcount in 2017 suggests the Council would need to provide an average of 11 apprenticeship starts per year for the next four years (43 in total). With 5 apprenticeships in the current year, (this is more than in recent years), the challenge will be in funding as the levy will not cover all the costs for an increased number. It is possible to offer an apprenticeship to an existing employee and it was noted that this would equate to 20% release time.

The report suggested a weighted approach to achieving the set target over a longer period of time using a procurement framework for apprenticeship training. Should targets change in future then the change could be easily incorporated.

Members agreed with the principal of apprenticeships but expressed concern regarding the imposed targets and also at the potential loss of cash in the digital account. There was also agreement with the suggestion of a joint approach to procuring training with other local authorities and also working with other public sector organisations.

The HR Service Manager added that hiring an apprentice into a vacant position or offering an apprenticeship to an existing staff member has to be balanced against the impact on the team, i.e. the team has to offer more support. On the other hand, the Council cannot simply create 43 new jobs.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

The Apprenticeship levy is a mandatory charge and as such must be complied with.

The public sector target of 2.3% per year new apprenticeship starts will prove extremely challenging in the current economic climate, with the financial pressures the Council already faces. As a minimum (i.e. assuming all apprenticeships are offered to existing staff rather than new “apprenticeship” hires) the employment costs of their release time equates to more than two FTE staff a year, estimated at around £60,000 per annum and £246,000 over the period being measured. If the apprenticeship starts are new staff, this rises to approximately £195,000 per annum and £754,000 over the period being measured. These costs are in addition to the payment of the levy. The targets only apply to public sector bodies and so the private sector (whilst still subject to the same levy charging mechanism) is not required to meet specific targets.

The Authority has some flexibility in its approach to achieving the 2.3% target of apprenticeship starts per year. The Council could aim to achieve 11 new apprenticeship starts per year (average) or implement a weighted approach for achieving the Government target across the defined period, starting with a lower target. A weighted approach is recommended for the reasons outlined in 4.5 above.

Clearly in terms of the volume of apprenticeships the public sector is tasked with over the next four years, this will be significant in terms of procurement and the Authority is exploring with neighbouring local authorities options to work together in developing a joint approach to procurement of apprenticeship training.

RESOLVED that:

1. The content of this report in terms of the requirements to pay an Apprenticeship Levy and the challenges brought about by the introduction of apprenticeship targets for public sector bodies be noted.

2. The options outlined in section 6 of the report be noted and the recommendations contained within 6.3, be approved i.e.:
3. The Council implements a weighted approach for achieving the Government apprenticeship targets across the defined period from 2017/18 to 2020/21;
4. The options for a joint approach to the procurement of apprenticeship training are explored with neighbouring local authorities.

126. REPORTING MINUTES

None.

127. 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. 13(a) – Special Purpose Vehicle for Delivery of New Housing (Key Decision No. 633) – Paragraphs 2 and 3.

SECTION B – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PRIVATE

Key Decisions

128. REPORT(S) OF THE CABINET MEMBER - REGENERATION - COUNCILLOR J WHITE

(a) Special Purpose Vehicle for the Delivery of New Housing (Key Decision No. 633)

Members were asked to consider the benefits of establishing a Special Purpose Vehicle which will enable the Council to engage directly in the delivery of new residential and commercial developments on both Council and privately owned land in order to ensure achievement of its growth ambitions.

Officers have reviewed the options for the Council to engage directly in the delivery of new development including information from HM Treasury and discussion with neighbouring authorities who have been considering similar options. Generally, for complex development projects, there are two methods of delivering with a development partner, i.e. a Development Agreement or a Joint Venture Company.

Options, Risks and Reasons for Recommendations

Cabinet may choose not to create a Joint Venture Company and seek to deliver development through other arrangements, such as individual Development Agreements.

RESOLVED that:

1. The principle of establishing a Joint Venture Company for the purpose of delivering new residential and commercial developments be approved.
2. A report is brought back to a subsequent meeting setting out the detailed legal, financial and organisational implications along with proposals for the selection of an appropriate partner.

Other Decisions

None

129. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

As there was no other urgent business, the Chair closed the meeting.

(Meeting closed at 7.45pm).