

CABINET MEETING – 6 APRIL 2011
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

MINUTES, PART I

Author(s):

Head of Law and Governance

Purpose of Report:

Presents the minutes of the last meeting held on 9 March 2011 Part I.

Action Required:

To confirm the minutes as a correct record.

At a meeting of the CABINET held in the CIVIC CENTRE (COMMITTEE ROOM NO. 1) on Wednesday 9 March 2011 at 2.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor P. Watson in the Chair

Councillors Allan, Anderson, Blackburn, Charlton, Gofton, P. Smith, Speding, Trueman and D. Wilson.

Part I

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16 February 2011, Part I (copy circulated) were submitted.

(For copy report - see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Receipt of Declarations of Interest

Councillors Allan, Anderson, Blackburn, Charlton, Gofton, P. Smith, Speding, Trueman and D. Wilson declared personal interests in Item 9, "School Admission Arrangements – September 2012," as Governors of Primary and Secondary Schools in the City,

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Report of the Meeting of the Personnel Committee

The report of the meeting of the Personnel Committee held on 24 February 2011, Part I (copy circulated) was submitted and consideration was given thereto.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

2. RESOLVED that the report of the meeting of the Personnel Committee held on 24 February 2011, Part I, be noted.

Green Infrastructure Strategy Framework

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to inform of the preparation by the Attractive and Inclusive City Partnership of the Green Infrastructure Strategy Framework and to seek endorsement of its proposals.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Charlton highlighted that the Green Infrastructure, or 'GI' was the network of open spaces and countryside that surrounded towns and villages and permeated through built areas and connecting to adjacent local authority areas. He reported that national planning policy encouraged green infrastructure as necessary to ensure the delivery of sustainable communities that the development of a GI strategy was recommended in the Sunderland Strategy 2008-2025, the Economic Masterplan (2010) and, as requested by the Homes and Communities Agency, in support of the emerging 'Sunderland's Housing Priorities Plan'.

Councillor Charlton advised that the Attractive and Inclusive City Partnership agreed that production of a green infrastructure strategy for the city would be included in the Sunderland Partnership's delivery plan and that a 'Framework' for a local strategy would encompass 6 main elements that set out key actions and dates as well as main responsibilities and cost implications. He added that agreement to the Green Infrastructure Strategy Framework would confirm the basic principles for the development of a full Strategy for a network of green infrastructure within Sunderland and other related strategies and policies, complying with national and local requirements.

Cabinet Members were advised that comments made by the Environment and Attractive Scrutiny Committee and the Planning and Highways Committee had shaped the document presented before Cabinet.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Green Infrastructure Strategy Framework be endorsed as the basis for the production of a GI Strategy for Sunderland; and

- (ii) the provisional 'Vision' and 'Principles' included in the framework be adopted for interim use, pending the final strategy, in preparing the Local Development Framework, green-space related schemes and as a material consideration in spatial planning and other planning decisions.

Market Square Public Realm Improvements – Appointment of Contractor

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek authority to award the contract for the Market Square Public realm Improvements.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Charlton reminded Cabinet Members of the release of the previously allocated funding in January last year to be supplemented by additional funding from the 2010/11 City Centre Capital Programme Provision. He reported that the budget for the overall scheme has £1.04 million and the first phase of works in Union Street (South) had been completed before Christmas. There had been advance purchase of materials including selected paving and lighting materials which would enable the timely delivery of the next phase.

Councillor Charlton explained that for the main contract of the Public Realm Improvements, excluding seating, expressions of interest were sought from contractors in May 2010 and 20 expressions of interest had been received from which 7 contractors had been shortlisted to submit tenders. He drew attention to the tender received from Bardon Construction Ltd. which had not been the lowest tender but scored the highest overall from a scoring assessment matrix based upon a combination of value and quality. The value of the contract was £574,251.40 and the works were programmed to start on site in April 2011.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the Deputy Chief Executive be authorised to award the main works contract for the Market Square Public Realm Improvements to Bardon Construction, following a competitive tender process.

Sunderland City Council Local Development Framework: Annual Monitoring Report 2009/10

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) on the Council's Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for 2009/10.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Charlton highlighted that this was the Council's sixth Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and covered the 2009/2010 financial year. He explained that this year, given the new Government's proposal to close all regional Government Offices, there had been uncertainty as to whether an AMR would be required. Following late clarification from Government Office for the North East, a streamlined AMR which only reported on the regulatory requirements was prepared and given the need for an end-of-calendar-year submission, a draft AMR was submitted to GONE on 23 December 2010.

Cabinet Members were advised that the AMR had two main functions, namely outlining progress on bringing forward the City's Local Development Framework as set out in the Local Development Scheme, the LDF project plan, adopted in March 2009 and assessing whether policies use effective in achieving their intended aims and objectives by reporting on changes in key land use quantities.

Councillor Charlton reported that work had progressed on the LDF Core Strategy and progress on the Area Action Plan for Hetton Downs had been affected by issues arising from the School Place Planning process and further consideration was now to be given as to how best to take this plan forward.

The attention of Cabinet Members was drawn to some significant developments that had taken place over the course of 2009/10 which included:-

- Business Development and Town Centres – Some 22,500m² of new employment floorspace was built, primarily for office and general industrial uses;
- Housing – Net additions to the housing stock – gross completions less demolitions and changes of use out of housing – totalled 384 houses being the third highest net gain since 2000;
- 99.7% of all new dwellings were built on brownfield land which is in excess of the national target of 60% and the highest since 1995;
- Waste – 27% of the city's municipal waste was recycled or composted, which shows a steady rise year on year since 2006/07;
- Renewable Energy – in total, some 9.8MW of renewable energy capacity were installed taking the total installed capacity in the city 17.2MW; and

Councillor Charlton reported that these were impressive facts, particularly in the context of the current unfavourable economic climate and they indicated that the City continued to develop within a strong and sustainable manner. He added that whilst the draft AMR had been submitted to the Secretary of State in order to comply with the requirements of the 2004 Planning Act, he requested Cabinet to approve the AMR as set out in the report and forward it to GONE as the finalised document.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the Annual Monitoring Report be endorsed as the basis for measuring how policies in the LDF are performing in terms of both its implementation and effectiveness.

Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) Annual Report 2010

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) on the Annual Report of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) (2009-2010).

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Smith reported that the CYPP 2009-2010 was endorsed by Cabinet in April 2009. She explained that the CYPP 2009/10 was an extension of the previous CYPP, which ran from 2007-2009 and that it was a statutory requirement of a Local Authority, on behalf of Children's Trusts.

Cabinet Members were advised that every year an annual report was prepared on the CYPP to set out what had been achieved during the year and what actions had been taken to help realise these achievements. All of the priorities and actions in the annual report had now either been completed or changed and progressed as a result of changes in national policy and/or local delivery.

Councillor Smith drew attention to paragraph 4.3 of the report which highlighted several key achievements, particularly that school attainment levels continued to improve.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the CYPP Annual Report (2010) be approved.

School Admission Arrangements - September 2012

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval of the school admission arrangements for September 2012.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Smith reported that all Local Authorities must consult, determine and publish their admission arrangements, in accordance with the School Admissions Code. She explained that this report sought approval of the school admission arrangements for September 2012 which was required prior to submission to DfE and publication for parents making application for school places for September 2012. She highlighted that the report included the arrangements for processing admissions and the timescales that would be applied to applications for school places as follows:-

- the deadline for applications for secondary schools to be received by 31 October 2011 and a national offer day of 1st March 2012, and
- the deadline for applications for primary schools to be received by 15 January 2012 and parents notified of place offered on 1 April 2012.

Cabinet Members were advised that the report also set out the published admission numbers (PANs) for each school and the criteria that would be applied if there were more applications than there were places available. In addition the report set out the following proposed changes to PANs from last year, for approval namely for:-

Hylton Castle Primary School to reduce the PAN from 45 to 30 to reflect the admissions trend,

Hasting Hill Primary to increase the PAN to 50 to reflect the oversubscription and successful appeals trend of the previous three years

Farrington Primary to increase the PAN to 55 to reflect the oversubscription and successful appeals trend of the previous three years

Councillor Smith advised that since the submission of the report, the governing body of Houghton Kepier Sports College had indicated that they would like to reduce their PAN from 225 to 210, as a result of falling pupil rolls.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

7. RESOLVED that approval be given to:-
 - (i) the admission policy and procedures,
 - (ii) details of the oversubscription criteria, and
 - (iii) published admission numbers (PANS)

Housing Financial Assistance Policy (FAP) 2011-14

The Executive Director of Health, Housing and Adult Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval to the Housing Financial Assistance Policy (FAP) 2011-14 which provided the policy framework for the range of assistance available through the Council's strategic housing functions.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Trueman highlighted that the current policy, which was approved by Cabinet in December 2007, expired at the end of March 2011 and as such it needed to be renewed. He explained that the Regulatory Reform Order was the legislation that outlined the requirements for a FAP and whilst it only stipulated that the powers of the Order such as private housing renewal, need to be publicised, Sunderland's policy covered all forms of assistance offered by the council. He added that this made a more complete set of information accessible to customers to help them to make informed decisions. He highlighted that as a consequence the whilst the following products, the Rent Deposit Scheme, the Mortgage Rescue Scheme and the Repossession Prevention Fund were now included within the Policy, were new to the FAP they were, however, not new products to the council.

Councillor Trueman reported that one change had been introduced was an increase of fees associated with the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants and Housing Assistance from 11% to 12%. He added that the work associated with the support given verified that the cost of this service was appropriate and the fee level would be in line with other councils in the region. He was pleased to report that the council's policy was recognised as the most robust in the region and with the additions mentioned above the Financial Assistance Policy would represent best practice and be more accessible for its customers.

Councillor Anderson having congratulated the Portfolio Holder and the Executive Directorate on the policy framework which had been developed enquired if the Mortgage Rescue Scheme would be used to rescue eligible customers by providing loans or helping out with mortgage payments to prevent house repossessions. Councillor Trueman advised that the whole package of advice and assistance under the policy was all about preventing homelessness and reiterated that it had been viewed by other local authorities as being the robust policy.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

8. RESOLVED that the Housing Financial Assistance Policy (FAP) 2011-14, appended to the report, be approved.

Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

At the instance of the Chairman, it was:-

9. RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during consideration of the remaining business as it was considered to involve a likely disclosure of information relating to any individual, which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual, the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) or to consultations or negotiations in connection with labour relations matters arising between the Authority and employees of the Authority (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4).

(Signed) P. WATSON,
Chairman.

Note:-

The above minutes comprise only those relating to items during which the meeting was open to the public.

Additional minutes in respect of other items are included in Part II.