

At a meeting of the CABINET held in the CIVIC CENTRE (COMMITTEE ROOM NO. 1) on WEDNESDAY 20 APRIL 2016 at 2.00pm

Present:-

Councillor P. Watson in the Chair

Councillors Gofton, Kelly, G Miller, Mordey, P Smith, Speding and H. Trueman

Also present:-

Councillor M. Dixon

Part I

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 23 March 2016, Part I (copy circulated) were submitted.

(For copy report - see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 23 March 2016 Part I be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Receipt of Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Proposal to establish a new company/trust to deliver Children's Services functions on behalf of the City Council

The Director of People Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to set out the outline proposals to establish a new company/trust to deliver Children's Services functions. The report also detailed the engagement of consultants with relevant specialist expertise to support the development of the detailed proposals through to subsequent implementation and operation.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Smith reminded Cabinet Members that as a Council service delivery options were being examined which would improve outcomes to residents and in this case, the Council also needed to respond to the 'direction' regarding safeguarding and services for looked after children. She explained that establishing a company would enable arrangements to be put in place which would deliver improved services in an holistic way.

Councillor Smith emphasised that this was an area of importance to the Council and it was necessary to ensure that the arrangements put in place were the right arrangements. She reported that to do this the need for additional capacity and support had been recognised and the Council was working with Mutual Ventures who had the necessary skills and expertise to give us this added capacity and support.

Councillor Smith highlighted that the issues of services in scope and governance were referenced in the report and there would be opportunities for Members to be involved in those areas prior to further reports coming back to Cabinet.

Councillor Kelly commended the hard work of the Children's Services Portfolio Holder and the officers for the progress made since the Ofsted report to bring improvements to the service. The Chairman advised that the Secretary of State and the Commissioner had agreed that the Council had made significant progress and it was vital to change perceptions of the service in order to speed up recruitment to take the service forward.

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

2. RESOLVED that:

- (i) the establishment of a new company/trust to deliver Children's Services functions be approved in principle;
- (ii) the engagement of all necessary consultants with relevant specialist expertise to support the detailed development of the proposals be endorsed and approved;

- (iii) subject to the principles set out in this report, the Director of People Services and Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Interim Director of Corporate Services, be authorised to take all necessary steps to give effect to the matters set out in the report; and
- (iv) a further report be submitted to Cabinet in June regarding the proposed scope of services to be undertaken by the new company/trust, the governance model and the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City Council and Department for Education (DfE) in respect of the proposals, and to receive further regular reports as appropriate regarding the further development of the proposals.

Hetton Downs Housing Delivery Plan – Phase 2 Implementation

The Executive Director of Commercial Development submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval for the funding arrangements for Phase Two of the Hetton Downs Housing Delivery Plan 2013 – 2020.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Speding referred to the programme of housing led regeneration in the Hetton Downs area being undertaken by the Council. He highlighted that the Hetton Downs Housing Delivery Plan 2013 – 2020 sets out how this would be delivered within three distinct phases. He reported that Phase One sites were being developed by a national house builder and Phase Three would not commence until the proposed northern access road was formally agreed. He advised that a Planning and Development Brief for the development of five sites with the necessary infrastructure within Phase two would be sent out at the end of April to invite expressions of interest from developers.

Cabinet Members were advised that a financial viability assessment had shown that the cost of the housing development, including affordable housing, and the provision of two key roads was likely to result in a shortfall of funding. The road at Fairy Street in the renewal area had been brought up to an adoptable standard and this had resulted in a dramatic decrease in empty properties. Consequently, there were savings in the empty property programme for this area which could be transferred to the Phase Two development.

Cabinet Members having welcomed the proposals and the progress of the development, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the proposals within Phase Two of the Hetton Downs Housing Delivery Plan be noted; and
- (ii) the funding arrangements for the delivery of Phase Two of the Hetton Downs Housing Delivery Plan 2013 – 2020 and the resultant variation to the capital Programme which will be reported to Scrutiny and Council for information be approved.

Acquisition of freehold land and grant of a lease of land at Deptford, Sunderland

The Executive Director of Commercial Development submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval to acquire and grant a lease of approximately 3.65 hectares (9 acres) of land at Deptford, Sunderland, as shown edged in bold black on the plan attached to the report.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Speding reported that the land at Deptford Terrace, Sunderland, was the site of the former Smiles waste recycling business which had been put into liquidation and the site was currently unoccupied

Cabinet Members were advised that the acquisition of the site presented the Council with an opportunity to deal with the site in order to bring back into beneficial use a strategically important employment site in the City which would contribute towards the Council's priorities of creating employment opportunities.

Councillor Speding advised that terms had been provisionally agreed to acquire the property and grant a long lease of the site to an adjoining business to enable expansion of their current operation. He added that the grant of a lease was an appropriate commercial mechanism which would enable essential remedial works to be carried out to the site without any upfront capital cost to the Council.

Cabinet Members were assured that the approval to the acquisition of the property together with the grant of a long terms lease to the adjoining business would be on a best consideration basis and this arrangement would allow the planned expansion of the business operation which would create employment opportunities for approximately 70 new high quality jobs.

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

4. RESOLVED that approval be given for the Council:-
 - (i) to acquire approximately 3.65 hectares (9 acres) of freehold land at Deptford, Sunderland on terms to be agreed by the Executive Director of Commercial Development in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Secretary; and
 - (ii) to grant a lease of the land at a price which is the best reasonably obtainable and otherwise on terms to be agreed by the Executive Director of Commercial Development in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Secretary.

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

At the instance of the Chairman it was: -

5. 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 the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3). The public interest in maintaining these exemptions outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

(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.

