

**CABINET MEETING – 16 APRIL 2014**  
**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 12 March 2014 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 12 March 2014 at 2.00pm.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Trueman in the Chair

Councillors Blackburn, Kelly, P. Smith and Speding

**Also present:-**

Councillor Wood

**Part I**

**Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12 February 2014 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**

There were no declarations of interest.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Gofton, G. Miller and P. Watson.

## **The Duty to Co-operate – Agreement of the Memorandum of Understanding Between the North East Local Planning Authorities**

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to advise of the new statutory requirement introduced by the Localism Act 2011 on all local planning bodies in respect of a Duty to Co-operate when preparing their Local Plans and to seek approval to a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the eight North East local planning authorities which set out the formal mechanisms in order to comply with the Duty.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Speding highlighted to Cabinet Members the introduction of a “duty to cooperate” on all local planning authorities, through the Localism Act. He reported that although this Council had a strong track record of co-operation with neighbouring authorities on planning issues, under the Duty there was now a statutory need for Councils to show how they had co-operated on the preparation of their emerging Local Plans. He advised that in order to make sure that the Duty was being properly complied with, a Memorandum of Understanding had been prepared between the eight North East Local Planning Authorities which would establish a framework for the identification and discussion of strategic and cross-border strategic planning issues as part of the preparation of their local development plans.

Cabinet Members were informed that whilst the Memorandum was not a legally binding document, it set out the agreed processes, links and roles of existing groups and structures and how strategic and cross-boundary matters in respect of emerging local development plans could be raised and resolved through an agreed governance structure.

Councillor Speding reported it was necessary to make certain amendments particularly to take account of the development of the Combined Authority but also to ensure that local consultation and the role of local politicians, through Planning and Highways Committee, was fully acknowledged and embedded within the agreed document and governance arrangements. He therefore suggested an amendment to the recommendation contained in the report; to approve, in principle, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the eight North East Local Planning Authorities and delegates authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to finalise and agree the MOU subject to appropriate amendments.

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

2. RESOLVED that approval be given, in principle, to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the eight North East Local Planning Authorities and to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to finalise and agree the MOU subject to appropriate amendments.

## **Review of the Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Relief Policy**

The Head of Financial Resources submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide an update the current policy of Discretionary Relief for Non-Domestic Rates awarded to Retail businesses to reflect the Government proposals announced in the Autumn statement on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013 and subsequent guidance recently received.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Speding in highlighting the report drew attention to the relief of up to £1,000 a year which was available for occupied retail businesses with a rateable value of £50,000 or less for 2014/15 and 2015/16. He explained that Appendix 1 to the report detailed the type of properties which would benefit from the relief.

Cabinet Members were also advised that 50% relief was available between April 2014 and 31st March 2016 for businesses that moved into retail premises that had been empty for a year or more.

Councillor Speding reported that the Government would fully reimburse the Council for the reduction in income from Business Rates as a result of the changes; therefore there would be no negative financial impact on the Council.

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

3. RESOLVED that approval be given to the amendment of the current policy on Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Relief effective from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 as detailed in the Government's Autumn statement, to include:-

- (i) relief of up to £1,000 per annum to occupied retail businesses with a rateable value of £50,000 or less for the financial years 2014/15 and 2015/16, and
- (ii) 50% relief for 18 months between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 for businesses that move into retail premises that have been empty for a year or more.

## **Collective Energy Switching Scheme**

The Executive Director of People Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval to enter into a contract with iChoosr to deliver a collective energy switching scheme for the City.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Kelly reported that the Cabinet was being asked to agree that Sunderland participated in the Collective Energy Switching Scheme, as part of the Affordable Warmth Strategy. He reminded Cabinet Members that this was a joined up approach with Warm Up North to make homes in the city more energy efficient, which could result in around 5,000 homes benefiting over the next four years. Collective Switching would be one part of the Council's approach to reduce fuel poverty and improve family resilience in the city.

Cabinet Members having been pleased that this initiative would help residents of the City out of fuel poverty, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that approval be given to:-
  - (i) establish a collective energy switching scheme for both domestic and SME businesses in the City,
  - (ii) the use of the NEPO procurement framework for Collective Energy Switching Schemes with I-Choosr as the switching agent,
  - (iii) the timescale of the first switching process, and
  - (iv) any income received over and above costs be used to support future fuel poverty initiatives.

### **People Services – Adult Social Care Grant Assistance Process**

The Executive Director of People Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to inform of the proposals for the adult social care grant assistance process from 2015/16, seeking approval for the proposals and to seek approval of the award of grant assistance funding to Third Sector organisations for 2014/15 for services that supported adult social care priorities.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman reported that the Directorate had historically provided grant assistance funding to the Third Sector to support adult social care priorities through an annual open application, evaluation and award process. He advised that in 2013/14, 21 organisations received funding for either core costs which contributed to the running of organisations or a range of different projects that were delivered on a citywide basis and that supported adult social care priorities.

The Chairman highlighted that it was recognised that continuing financial pressures and the potential for further reductions to the budget in the next few years would make it difficult to maintain the level of funding to the core funded organisations. Therefore, as part of the Council's ongoing review of processes and ways of working, for the financial year 2014/15, the Directorate intended to extend the funding provided to the organisations for a further 12 months with a view to reviewing the current adult social care grant assistance process for implementation 2015/16 onwards.

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

5. RESOLVED that the proposals for the adult social care grant assistance process for 2015 onwards and the funding proposed for 2014/15 be approved.

## **Low Carbon Social Housing Pilot – Biomass District Heating System and Small and Medium Sized Enterprise (SME) Supply Chain Training**

The Deputy Chief Executive and the Executive Director of People Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval to progress the delivery of the Low Carbon Social Housing Pilot project, approve the funding package and agree project management, partnership and procurement arrangements.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Blackburn highlighted that the project had been developed to respond to a European Regional Development Fund call for projects supporting “the application of testing of innovative energy efficiency and renewable energy measures in existing social housing”. He advised that the Council had secured £1.13m towards the total project costs of £2.38m and that following the withdrawal of the original partner, Gentoo would now deliver a low-carbon social housing exemplar in Sunderland.

Councillor Blackburn requested that agreement be given for the Council to progress this important low carbon project which would contribute to carbon emission reduction targets as well as delivering economic benefits to residents and businesses.

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

6. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Council be the applicant and accountable body for the project and acts as project manager;
- (ii) the Council enter into partnership and contract delivery arrangements with the project partner (Gentoo) and sub-contractors where appropriate;
- (iii) the Council procure a supplier or consortium of specialist training services for the targeted Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs);
- (iv) the Deputy Chief Executive and the Executive Director of People Services be authorized, in consultation with the Cabinet Secretary, to take all necessary steps to procure and deliver the planned activities subject, where appropriate, to relevant grant funding conditions; and
- (v) the terms of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Final Grant Offer and the requirement to enter into a funding agreement on this basis be acknowledged.

## **School Admissions Arrangements from September 2015**

The Executive Director of People Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval for the proposed school admission arrangements for the academic year September 2015/16 and to describe proposed amendments to published admission numbers (PANs) for the academic year 2014/15 where it was necessary to provide additional places.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Smith highlighted that approval was sought for the school admission arrangements for September 2015, which was a statutory requirement before submission to the Department for Education and published for parents to make school applications for September 2015. She explained that the proposed admission arrangements had been consulted on and would be published, in line with the School Admissions Code.

The attention of Cabinet Members was then drawn to the following appendices to the report which also required approval to make sure the Council complied with the duty to submit its admissions arrangements to the Secretary of State:

- (a) the admission policy and procedures;
- (b) details of the oversubscription criteria; and
- (c) published admission numbers

7. RESOLVED that in relation to the 2015/16 academic year, approval be given to the:-

- (i) Admissions Policy and procedures associated with the coordinated scheme of admissions. This includes a proposed change to the scheme as described in 5.5 – 5.7 of the report;
- (ii) criteria that will be applied where oversubscription occurs; and
- (iii) published admission numbers (PANS).

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

At the instance of the Chairman it was: -

8. 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) (Paragraph 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972). The public interest in maintaining this exemption 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.

