

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 6th February, 2014

Present:- Councillor David Stringer – in the Chair
Councillors Holland, Loades, Matthews and Mrs Williams

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Cairns.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. CALL IN - ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

A request for a call-in had been submitted in relation to the decision made by Cabinet at the meeting held on 15th January 2014 regarding the Asset Management Strategy.

Members of the Committee listened to the arguments put forward by the lead call in member including the reasons for the call in and justification for the proposal set out on the call-in form.

The main grounds for the Call-in were:

- That the decision was inconsistent with a previous Overview and Scrutiny recommendation, which had been accepted by the Council or the Cabinet.
- That the decision had or would demonstrate a significant adverse public reaction.

The Lead Call In Members stated that the process needed to be clear and open and that lessons had to be learnt from the 2011 NDP process that had resulted in the removal of specific sites from the strategy. It was stated that all Council owned land should be included and that there should be a clear system of prioritisation based on sound financial reasoning.

Concern was also raised regarding a decision in principle being made by Cabinet prior to any public consultation taking place.

The Portfolio Holder stated that as this was only a decision in principle, the real process including full public consultation was now due to commence and that it was this process that would result in the full list of sites including costs, plans and timetables.

It was thought that the information currently available on the sites was vague and that additional information was required by ward councillors and residents such as

whether the sites were Greenfield or Brownfield. It was stated that this information was available and would be provided to ward councillors. It was also confirmed that the list included all brownfield sites that were suitable at this time.

There was a general agreement and understanding that land had to be sold by the Council but some members were still concerned regarding the selection process in relation to the chosen sites and this needed to be made open to Members and the public.

A vote was taken and 5 members voted in favour of the call in and 6 members rejected the call in.

Resolved: That the call-in be rejected and the decision made by Cabinet at the meeting held on 15th January 2014 take immediate effect.

4. CALL IN - NEWCASTLE HOUSING ADVICE SERVICE CONTRACT AWARD

A request for a call in had been submitted in relation to the award of the Homelessness, Housing Advice and Housing Register contract to Midland Heart for the period 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2017 with the option to extend for a further three years on satisfactory performance.

Members of the Committee listened to the arguments put forward by the Lead Call-In Member including the reasons for the call-in and the justification of the proposals set out in the call-in form. The main grounds for the call-in were:-

- That the decision was inconsistent with another Council policy.
- The decision gave rise to significant legal, financial or property issues.

The current arrangements for the Homelessness, Housing Advice and Housing Register contract were due to expire on the 31 March 2013 and the Council had a statutory duty to ensure that services were in place to meet the needs of local residents regarding homelessness and housing options.

The Portfolio Holder stated that only one tender had been received with lengthy discussions carried out with the organisation. It was acknowledged that Aspire Housing had absorbed some costs and this would be taken into account.

A vote was taken and three Members voted in favour of the call-in and five Members rejected the call-in.

Resolved:-

- (a) That the call-in be rejected and the decision made by Cabinet at the meeting held on the 15 January 2014 take immediate effect.
- (b) That the item be submitted to a future Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny for monitoring.

5. URGENT BUSINESS

COUNCILLOR DAVID STRINGER
Chair