

CABINET

Wednesday, 10th February, 2016

Present:- Councillor Elizabeth Shenton – in the Chair
Councillors Beech, Kearon, Turner, Williams and Rout

1. **APOLOGIES**

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. **MINUTES**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January, 2016 be agreed as a correct record.

4. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

In relation to item 9 of the Minutes, Members were advised that a group of residents were keen to operate as a Management Committee for the Holly Road, Chesterton, Community Centre.

A petition had been received last week asking that the Community Centre be kept open.

The Chair explained that there were currently no plans to close the centre, the existing management committee had asked the Council to take back the keys at the end of 2015.

The Cabinet requested that the group of residents be sought so that discussions could be entered into.

5. **CERAMICS VALLEY ENTERPRISE ZONE**

A report was submitted to Cabinet advising Members of the designation of an Enterprise Zone covering a number of sites along the A500 – referred to as the Ceramics Valley Enterprise Zone.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Portfolio Holder for Town Centres, Business and Assets be invited to represent the Borough Council on the Enterprise Zone Board.
- (ii) That officers continue to work with those of the City and County Councils to promote the Zone for investment and with landowners and developers to help bring forward its development.

6. **CAPITAL STRATEGY**

A report was submitted to Cabinet to consider the recommendations of the Special Council meeting held on 27 January, 2016 in respect of the report of the Assets Policy Committee.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance IT and Customer requested that officers prepare a future report to Cabinet to address any issues, taking into account the notion of future borrowing with more details of what could be done. The report should be brought back to Cabinet before provision is made in future revenue budgets.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That Cabinet reaffirms its decision taken in October 2014 that the Council, as a first resort, will seek to fund its future known capital programme needs through the annual asset management process by the identification of land or property in its ownership that is capable of, and appropriate for, disposal.
 - (ii) That, before recommendation (iii) below is implemented, there be a future report to Cabinet addressing any issues and providing more details.
 - (iii) That provision is made in future revenue budgets for prudential borrowing.

7. **ASSET STRATEGY**

A report was submitted to Cabinet to consider the recommendations of full Council following its consideration of the report of the Assets Policy Committee.

The Chair thanked the Assets Policy Committee for their work on this project.

A number of resolutions had been passed at the meeting of the Council. The resolutions were attached to this report.

Members were advised that, in recommendations c and e, the land at Pennyfields Road/ Newchapel Road would not be promoted as a suitable site for disposal.

Recommendation f suggested a comprehensive area review. There was no need to complete a review at this time.

Recommendation g referred to Keele Golf Course being regarded as surplus and therefore suitable for disposal. The site is contained within the Green Belt and if parts of the site were considered for disposal they would need to be taken out.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That it be noted that the Council is not proposing any substantive changes to the Asset Management Strategy.
 - (ii) That it be agreed to make two minor amendments to the existing Asset Management Strategy to:
 - (a) Extend the consultation period with local members to three weeks.
 - (b) Establish the general principle that no more

than three large sites should be marketed by the Council at any one time.

- (iii) That the recommendations of the Council, in relation to the prioritisation of sites for disposal over the next two financial years be noted and that it be agreed to take these into account where such recommended sites are listed in the approved Asset Management Strategy.
- (iv) That, further to recommendation (ii)(a) above, officers be asked to ensure that appropriate briefing and publicity material is made available to support elected Members in their consultation with local residents in accordance with the process set out in the approved Asset Management Strategy.
- (v) That it be agreed that further work be undertaken on developing an Asset Disposal Policy within the context provided by the approved Asset Management Strategy.

8. LAND AT SHELDON GROVE, CHESTERTON

A report was submitted to Cabinet regarding the parcel of land at Sheldon Grove (The Grumbles).

Councillor Mrs Snell addressed the Committee stating that the land was the last green space in the area and was a vital community space. The site has a known fault and therefore, it was suggested, not suitable for any development.

Cushman Wakefield, who had been commissioned to look at each of the sites, had provided feedback stating that a geological fault ran through the site that could affect the financial viability of the site. Furthermore, there was a risk of subsidence.

Resolved: (i) That this site be retained within the Council's operational portfolio and continue to be maintained in the current manner and kept under review as part of the cyclical asset management review process.

9. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS

A report was submitted to Cabinet regarding the 2016/17 General Fund Revenue Budget and the 2016/17 Capital Programme for their recommendation to Full Council.

Members attention was drawn to a Supplementary agenda containing a list of amendments to the main agenda report. The significant change being an increase in the Council Tax referendum limit for all district councils to the higher of 2% or £5 (whichever is the greater). For Newcastle Borough Council, the £5 figure would signify a 2.8% increase in Council Tax. Therefore the Cabinet had the option to stick with the 1.99% increase previously agreed or to increase it to 2.8%.

The Cabinet would be recommending to Full Council that the increase remain at 1.99% as previously agreed.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the 2016/17 General Fund Revenue Budget as detailed in the report to Cabinet dated 20 January 2016 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
 - (ii) That the Capital Programme 2016/17 as detailed in the report to Cabinet dated 20 January 2016 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
 - (iii) That an additional contribution of £50,000 be made to the Renewals and Repairs Fund and a contribution of £69,560 be made to the Insurance Provision, to be funded from the estimated Council Tax Surplus of £119,560 which will be transferred to the revenue account in 2016/17.
 - (iv) That, in respect of the decision required on the Supplementary agenda, the Council Tax increase for 2016/17 be kept at 1.99%.

10. BUDGET PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER THREE

A report was submitted to Cabinet regarding the Financial and Performance Review report for the third Quarter.

The report provided information on how the Council had performed during the third quarter.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the contents of the attached report be noted and the recommendation that the Council continues to monitor and scrutinise performance alongside the latest financial information for the same period be agreed.
 - (ii) That the comments made through the Scrutiny process and the responses from officers and others to these comments be noted.

11. PETITION OBJECTING TO THE PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF THE FORMER ST GILES AND ST GEORGE'S SCHOOL, BARRACKS ROAD, NEWCASTLE

A report was presented to Cabinet informing Members about the receipt of a petition objecting to the proposed demolition of the former St Giles and St George's school. The petition had been presented to Council on 27 January, 2016.

A new occupant for the building had been sought but there had been no interest.

The Hub was vital to the town centre economy as it would bring £40 million worth of investment into the heart of Newcastle.

Concerns had been raised about the Queens Gardens but assurance was given that the Gardens would be enhanced and would 'flow' into the new Hub.

The design of the new building would include a storey being set back so as to not overshadow the Gardens.

English Heritage had been consulted prior to the application for demolition and they had concluded that the development would result in a medium level of harm to the town centre. Furthermore, removing the school would not harm the Newcastle Town Centre Conservation Area.

Members could understand the concerns of the public but stated that the Council were in a difficult position and that this was the least worst option. In addition, it would create jobs in both the public and private sectors.

There had been concerns that the public had not been addressed during the debate. However, they would be able to be more involved with the Planning application for the new Hub.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the petitioners concerns and objections be received and noted.
 - (ii) That having reviewed and carefully considered the issues raised by the petitioners, the decision to dispose of this property to Staffordshire County Council (by way of grant of long leasehold) in order for it to implement proposals for a new Public Sector Hub be reaffirmed.

12. CORPORATE COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY

A report was submitted to Cabinet, seeking approval to incorporate the amendments, as listed in the agenda report, to specific sections of the existing Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy.

- Resolved:** That the amendments to the Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy (3Cs Policy), as detailed in Appendix A of the report, be approved.

13. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Business.

14. ATTENDANCE AT CABINET MEETINGS

COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH SHENTON
Chair