

CABINET

Wednesday, 18th October, 2017
Time of Commencement: 6.00 pm

Present:- Councillor Elizabeth Shenton – in the Chair

Councillors Beech, Kearon, Turner, J Williams, Rout and Robinson

Officers Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) - Kelvin Turner,
Executive Director (Operational Services) - David Adams,
Executive Director (Regeneration and Development) - Neale Clifton,
Geoff Durham,
Chief Executive - John Sellgren and
Phil Jones - Head of Communications

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September, 2017 be agreed as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

4. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2018-19 TO 2022-23

A report was submitted to Cabinet updating Members on the financial strategy for the Council over the next five years.

Members' attention was brought to paragraph 2.9 of the report which identified the budgetary shortfalls over the five year period. These figures were shown in more detail in the appendix.

Resolved: That the update to the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2018/19 to 2022/23 be approved.

5. DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF SCHEME

A report was submitted to Cabinet seeking to approve the granting of Discretionary Rate Relief following the National Non Domestic Rates Revaluation.

Members were referred to the top of page 16 of the report which gave the amounts that had been allocated to this Council over a period of four years to assist smaller businesses. Details of the Scheme were appended to the report.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, IT and Customer thanked the Executive Director for Resource and Support Services and his team for the work that had been carried out.

The Leader advised Members that she had received a letter from Marcus Jones MP – Minister for Local Government which thanked the Council for its support to local businesses.

Resolved: That the Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme, as set out in Appendix A of the report, be approved and that the Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) be granted delegated powers to grant the relief to individual businesses.

6. BUSINESS RATES PILOT AND POOLING ARRANGEMENTS

A report was submitted to Cabinet providing Members with details of the potential for the Council to participate in a Business Rates Pilot in 2018/19.

The scheme would enable all future growth in Business Rates to be retained within Staffordshire and would generate additional resources for the Council during the next financial year.

Members were advised that successful pilot schemes would be announced in December.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Council participates in the Expression of Interest to form a Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Pool based upon piloting the 100% Business Rates Scheme.
- (ii) That the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer be authorised (in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance IT and Customer) to submit a firm Expression of Interest to be a member of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent pool based upon piloting the 100% Business Rates Scheme.

7. NEWCASTLE MARKET OPTIONS

A report was submitted to Cabinet advising Members of the outcome of a recent tendering exercise to enable necessary decisions to be made regarding the future operation and management of the Market.

Two options were put forward for consideration – to contract with Market Place Management (MPM) or to continue with the in-house delivery arrangement.

Members considered, on balance, that the awarding of a contract for MPM would represent the best outcome from a service delivery and value for money perspective.

The Portfolio Holder for Town Centres, Property and Business stated that the work put in by officers to manage and operate the market over the years should be acknowledged.

The Leader thanked the members of the Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee for their piece of work on the Markets and stated that it must be recognised that markets had changed and was very positive that the contract would be good for the future of the Market and the town's economy.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the offer from Market Place Management be accepted.
 - (ii) That officers be authorised to take all of the necessary steps, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder(s) to execute the new market management arrangements at the earliest opportunity.

8. HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT 2017

A report was submitted to Cabinet showing changes to the Homelessness legislation together with an overview of the implications and risks of the changes to the Council.

Members' attention was drawn to the new statutory duties at paragraph two of the report and the implications at paragraph three.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Social Cohesion stated that there would be a number of challenges and new obligations placed on the Council which could potentially double the caseload of the Newcastle Housing Advice Service.

The Council needs to ensure that it has a homelessness service that can rise to the challenges ahead.

Newcastle was being 'punished' for the good quality of its service as its workload was being increased with some people accessing the service from the City of Stoke on Trent. The Portfolio Holder requested that the Leader and Chief Executive meet with representatives of Stoke on Trent City Council with a view to achieving greater consistency and parity of service.

The Portfolio Holders for Communities and Social Cohesion and Planning and Housing had met with officers and it had been stated that demand, in some cases would double and it would affect the Council's services. Housing professionals had advised that the funding may not be enough and therefore it would need to be closely monitored so that vulnerable people in the Borough were supported.

The Leader acknowledged that a meeting with Stoke on Trent City Council was necessary and that some recognition of the apparent inconsistency of service delivery was required from them.

The Leader asked the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Social Cohesion if he was aware that some authorities were dealing with homelessness by giving out one way rail tickets and sought confirmation that this Council was not doing this.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Social Cohesion stated that whilst there was an awareness that some of the homeless did have links to other parts of the country, they would not be sent away, instead, the Council would do what it could to help.

Members were made aware of the funding available to tackle homelessness, one of which was Burdens Funding but as yet there was no clear indication of the actual amount.

Concerns were raised with regard to the number of rentable properties that were being sold which would only add to the problem and it was suggested that the only way to solve the problem would be to bring back some form of council housing.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) be noted and that the actions taken by officers to date and those proposed within the HRA Implementation Plan be endorsed.
 - (ii) That the allocation of the two sources of grant funding from the Government – provided to tackle homelessness for the next two years to enable the new legislation to be successfully implemented, be approved.
 - (iii) That the Executive Director for Regeneration and Development, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders, be authorised to consider and review any changes to the Implementation Plan and changes in processes at Newcastle Housing Advice as required to comply with the new Code of Guidance.

9. GOLD STANDARD FOR HOMELESSNESS

A report was submitted to Cabinet informing Members of the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Gold Standard Peer Review Assessment of the Council's Housing Options Service.

The Diagnostic Peer Review took place in February, 2017 and a number of recommendations were made. In addition, a number of areas highlighted good practice.

Members were asked to consider three options with option two being the preferred route.

The Executive Director for Regeneration and Development and his team were thanked for the work that had been carried out.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That any actions/recommendations from the Continuous Improvement Plan be considered prior to pursuing the challenges.
 - (ii) That the Executive Director for Regeneration and Development, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders, be authorised to consider and review the improvement plan as it is developed and implemented.

10. DELEGATION FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Resolved: That this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Cabinet to enable more information to be sought.

11. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Business.

COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH SHENTON
Chair

Meeting concluded at 7.00 pm