

## CABINET

Wednesday, 14th January, 2015

**Present:-** Councillor Mike Stubbs – in the Chair  
Councillors Mrs Beech, Kearon, Turner, Mrs Shenton and Hambleton

### 1. MINUTES

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. REVIEW OF CONCURRENT FUNDING AND FUNDING FOR TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

Cllr Stringer introduced the report and thanked those who had been involved in the process including Members of the Parish and Town Councils.

The aim of the review had been to examine the existing process of funding by the Borough Council to parish/town councils to avoid the prospect of 'double taxation' (where a service which could be provided by either the Borough Council or a parish/town council was financed from the parish precept in a parished area and by the Borough Council in non-parished areas with no corresponding reduction in Council Tax for the parished areas) and also to examine the levels of funding in light of the financial pressures faced by the Borough Council.

Cllr Stringer outlined the reasons for the recommendations contained within the report.

The Leader thanked Cllr Stringer and all parties that had been involved in the work carried out by the Task and Finish Group.

#### **Resolved:**

a) That Cabinet notes the contents of this report and, in particular, the findings and recommendations from the Town/Parish Councils – Review of Concurrent Funding Task and Finish Group (see Appendix A) established by the Finance, Resources and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee (FRAPS) in June 2014 to review concurrent funding of parish and town councils in the Borough by NULBC

b) That Cabinet decides whether it wishes to support the all or some of the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group (as endorsed by FRAPS in November 2014) namely:

- To establish a cross-party monitoring group by NULBC
- To require all parish and town councils to provide proof to the above monitoring group of use and purpose of their grant from 2015/16 before receiving any further grant for 2016/17

- Further to the above recommendation from the Task and Finish Group, that any town/parish council not spending their NULBC grant in full will have any identified underspend from 2015/16 removed from their grant for 2016/17
- c) That Cabinet remove 25% of the section 136 funding made available to Parish Councils in the next financial year.

**4. MIDWAY MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK**

Cllr Kyle Robinson presented a question to Cabinet in relation to the item regarding the reasons why there was a significant increase in suicide rates across the West Midlands in relation to other parts of the United Kingdom.

The Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities agreed that the most effective way to help solve the current problems relating to suicide rates was to tackle the underlying problems. These underlying problems were varied and people using the Midway car park to attempt or commit suicide were known not just to come from the local area. The Portfolio Holder agreed that he would liaise with the LAPs regarding the issue.

Concerns were raised by Members regarding the publicity given to the Midway car park by the press and it was agreed that this could be detrimental to the current situation.

The report provided an overview of suicide attempts at the Council owned/managed Midway multi storey car park over the last four years and sought Cabinet approval for actions identified to implement further suicide prevention measures at this location.

**Resolved:**

- a) That officers be authorised to take all necessary actions to proceed with proposals for the installation of physical control measures on the building at the earliest opportunity.
- b) That officers be authorised to identify key non-health agency partners with a view to jointly procuring appropriate training, the details of which shall be approved by the relevant officer and Portfolio Holder.

**5. CAPITAL STRATEGY**

A report was submitted requesting Cabinet to consider the Capital Strategy 2015 to 2019. The Capital Strategy set out how the Council proposed to deploy its capital resources in order to assist it to achieve its corporate and service objectives.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the Capital Strategy be agreed and forwarded to Council with a recommendation for approval.
- b) That in the future the Capital Strategy be agreed by Cabinet in line with other relevant strategies.

**6. ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The chair invited a question from a member of the public who had submitted the question in line with the Council's constitution.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Business, Town Centres and Customer Services outlined the processes that the Council was currently undertaking. At the moment the Council was calling for all sites to be included in the final strategy and that the land mentioned in the submitted question would be included. If, following this process the land was identified for development that the planning process would commence and residents would have the opportunity to engage with the process then. Nothing would be able to happen to the land in question until at least 2019 and were it to be reclassified then this would again lengthen the process.

The Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities requested clarification regarding where and what obliged us to hold a list and whether being included on the list automatically meant that it would be made available for housing in the future. The Executive Director confirmed that some of the land listed in the site would have to be categorised as open space and that the list had to be maintained to show that the Council had a robust development plan which identified all available sites in order for the Council to then identify and use the best sites for the right purposes and to their full potential.

The Leader further clarified that there were only four remaining brownfield sites in the Borough that were owned by the Council and that these had all been earmarked for development. The Leader stated that a housing and employment housing supply had to be met alongside green and open spaces for residents. The Council had no power to compel other land owners to provide their brown field sites for development.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Business, Town Centres and Customer Services outlined the information detailed within the report. The Portfolio Holder drew Members attention to the questions submitted by the Joint Scrutiny Committee listed on page 71 of the agenda and outlined his response.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources outlined the financial implications that were

**Resolved:**

- (a) That Members approve the Asset Management Strategy (2015/16 – 2017/2018).
- (b) That Officers take the necessary steps to explore the development potential of the sites listed in Appendices 2 and 3 at the earliest opportunity.
- (c) That Officers report back the outcome of recommendation (b) to Cabinet at the earliest appropriate time.
- d) That the NDP seven sites are not brought back into the strategy.

**7. CALCULATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE**

A report was submitted requesting Cabinet to approve the Council Tax Base to be used to calculate the 2015/16 levies for the Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority and each Town and Parish Council.

**Resolved:**

That, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amounts calculated as the Council Tax Base for 2015/16 shall be as follows:-

	<u>Band D equivalent properties</u>
Newcastle Borough Council	35,242
Kidsgrove Town Council	6,387
Audley	2,450
Loggerheads	1,849
Balterley, Betley and Wrinehill	564
Chapel and Hill Chorlton	194
Keele	331
Madeley	1,413
Maer	253
Silverdale	1,410
Whitmore	803

## **8. SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES**

A report was submitted to obtain approval for the proposed scale of fees and charges to apply from 1 April 2015.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report and highlighted the fact that some fees and charges (including those for taxi licensing) were currently out for consultation as they were required to be advertised and that an update on these would be brought back to the next meeting following consideration by the appropriate Committee.

### **Resolved:**

(a) That the fees and charges proposed to apply from 1 April 2015, as set out in Appendix 1 be approved and be submitted to the Finance, Resources and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee for comment.

## **9. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS**

A question had been submitted by Cllr Wallace requesting clarification on the supply of new bins, specifically who and under what processes the decision had been made, scrutinised and ratified.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the replacement of the larger bins by the smaller bins had always been part of the Waste and Recycling Policy and that should any resident feel they had exceptional circumstances that meant they required a larger bin then they could put a request to the Council. Eventually all bins would be replaced as they became damaged.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report and highlighted the actions that had been taken to publicise the budget including an offer by the portfolio holder to address each political group in relation to the budget.

The Leader thanked everyone who had been involved in the preparation of the budget, with specific thanks going to the finance team.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the assumptions set out in the report be approved.
- b) That the Council Tax levy for 2015/2016 be frozen at the current level.
- c) That the Finance, Resources and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee be asked to consider what comments it wishes to make on the draft Budget and Council Tax proposals before the final proposals are considered at Cabinet in February 2015.

**10. CONTRACT AWARD FOR THE SUPPLY AND MANAGEMENT OF VEHICLE TYRES**

A report was submitted to inform Cabinet of the outcome of the tendering process for the supply and management of vehicles tyres and to seek a decision from Cabinet regarding the award of the contract jointly with Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the joint contract for the supply of vehicle tyres be awarded to the preferred bidder for two years with a one year review. Details of the preferred bidder provided in the confidential appendix.
- b) That delegated authority for any review to the contract to be made to the Executive Director – Operational Services and Portfolio Holder for Environment and Recycling.

**11. POLICY FOR UNSUPERVISED CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUNDS**

A report was submitted to update Cabinet on the current position in relation to the Policy for Unsupervised Children's Playgrounds and to seek Cabinet approval for a programme of repairs and replacement of play equipment and associated items identified in the annual independent inspection report for 2014.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the programme of works as detailed in the 2014 inspection report is approved.
- b) That the Executive Director - Operational Services be authorised to seek and accept the lowest suitable quotations for the works in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Recycling.
- c) That authority is granted to expend £31,042 from the existing approved provision in the General Fund Capital Programme for play equipment repair and replacement in 2014/2015.

**12. ICT STRATEGY**

The Leader introduced a report seeking Cabinet approval for the ICT Strategy.

The current ICT Strategy had been in place since 2008. Following the significant changes that had taken place within the ICT Service and the business as a whole since that time, the Strategy had been reviewed and updated to reflect this. The Strategy provided high level guidance in describing how ICT would continue to support the needs of the Council in delivering its Council Plan and aimed to build on some of the themes identified in the previous Strategy.

**Resolved:**

That Cabinet approves the ICT Strategy.

**13. MEMBERS' ICT AND OUTCOMES OF THE MEMBERS DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY (TABLET) TRIAL**

The Leader introduced a report requesting Members to consider methods of delivering information to Members more effectively and efficiently, in light of the findings of the recent Members Digital Technology (Tablet) Trial and to present a set of recommendations based on those findings and other analysis.

The Leader thanked the Member Development Panel and those involved in the tablet trial for the work undertaken. The Leader also outlined some additional comments that had been fed back to him by the Chair of the Member Development Panel and highlighted that full, comprehensive training and support would be provided to all elected members should the recommendations be agreed.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources outlined the final implications detailed in the report.

**Resolved:**

That Cabinet approves the following recommendations:

(i) That a similar policy to that currently applied to officers be implemented to also cover Member email accounts and that the use of Borough Council email by all elected Borough Council Members for council business be made mandatory

(ii) That the practice of printing off and sending on elected Members' emails cease

(iii) That the Members' weekly courier service be ceased. Instead, Members will be required to use either electronic means to access committee papers in future, or will be required to visit the Civic Offices to pick up their printed papers. The Council will continue to encourage all Members to use appropriate available technology and will offer the necessary training for Members to use this technology.

(iv) That, following the May 2015 Borough Council elections, all newly elected Members are issued with a tablet device to receive their minutes, agendas and emails to replace the current printed pack service

(v) That those Members due for re-election post May 2015 be given the option of using a tablet device instead of the current printed pack system until the end of their current term.

**14. NEWCASTLES OF THE WORLD ALLIANCE**

A report was submitted requesting Cabinet to consider the future membership of the Newcastle of the World Alliance in light of Scrutiny recommendations.

The Council had been asked to confirm the medium term commitment to financially contribute to the Newcastle of the World Alliance paid Secretariat. The Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the benefits of membership in light of the Council's broad financial position. Scrutiny recommended that the Council withdraws from the Alliance to enable resources to be directed to activities which deliver priority local outcomes.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the Council maintain a limited membership of the Newcastle of the World Alliance but does not allocate any funding to support local business development initiatives.
- b) That this membership be carried out through the office of the Mayor.

**COUNCILLOR MIKE STUBBS**  
**Chair**