

CABINET

Wednesday, 15th January, 2014

Present:- Councillor Gareth Snell – in the Chair

Councillors Mrs Bates, Mrs Beech, Kearon, Turner, Stubbs and Williams

13. **APOLOGIES**

No apologies were received.

14. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Mrs Beech and Cllr Williams declared that as members of the Aspire Housing Board they would refrain from voting in relation to item 7 on the agenda.

15. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 11th December be agreed as a correct record.

16. **MINUTES FROM THE REVENUE INVESTMENT AND BUDGET SUPPORT CABINET PANEL**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources outlined the role of the Cabinet Panel and confirmed that the minutes would continue to come to Cabinet meetings for information only.

17. **COMMUNITY CENTRE REVIEW**

The Chair welcomed Cllr Mrs Shenton and Cllr Loades to the meeting as lead members from the Community Centre Review working group.

The Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities thanked members and officers of the Working Group and praised the production of a good in depth report. It was also confirmed that a handbook would be distributed to all community centres to help with the administration and to enable good governance.

It was also confirmed that the report had been to the Co-ordinating Scrutiny Committee which had endorsed the recommendations.

Resolved:

- a) That Cabinet approve the Joint Officer and Member Task and Finish Group proposals set out in this report.
- b) That the proposals are communicated to each community centre management committee jointly by officers and members of the Task and Finish Group in January 2014.

- c) That a further report be submitted to Cabinet by the autumn of 2014 providing a progress update in relation to the proposals set out in this report.

18. AMENDMENTS TO COUNCIL REPRESENTATION ON THE ASPIRE HOUSING BOARD

A report was submitted outlining proposals to reduce the number of Council representatives nominated to the Aspire Housing Board and to seek members' approval of the same.

Resolved: That subject to the Council retaining its 33% vote on key issues at the AGM the principle of the alteration to the composition to the Aspire Housing Board (including the reduction in the number of Council representatives) be approved.

19. AWARD OF THE NEWCASTLE HOUSING ADVICE CONTRACT

A report was submitted regarding the delivery of a housing advice, homelessness and housing register. This service was a statutory function, which meant the Council had to provide assistance to assist individuals and families who were homeless or threatened with homelessness who applied for help. The report outlined the outcome from the tendering exercise for the NHA – Homelessness, Housing Advice and Housing Register Contract and made recommendations to Cabinet to seek approval in the award of the NHA contract.

Members thanked the Officer involved for her work and thanked Aspire for its work under the previous contract including the additional support that had been provided to residents.

Resolved:

- a) That the Homelessness, Housing Advice and Housing Register contract be awarded to Midland Heart for the period 1st April 2014 – 31st March 2017, with the option to extend for a further three years on satisfactory performance.
- b) That the Executive Director for Regeneration and Development be authorised in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Town Centres, to finalise negotiations with Midland Heart on the precise details within the service specification to ensure that the contract offers maximum value for money.
- c) That once the contract is formally up and running the Council engages with Members to ensure that they are aware of the service and that appropriate training be provided to members regarding the new provisions.

20. HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2014/15

A report was submitted to seek Cabinet approval of the proposed 2013/14 Housing Capital Programme taking into account the views of the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved:

That the Housing Capital Programme be approved on the basis set out in the report and funded from the allocation of £515,000 of New Homes Bonus funding and a land disposal to the value of about £100,000, with provision for the virement of funding, subject to agreement with the relevant Portfolio Holder(s), between schemes to maximise the benefits of external funding opportunities to help more vulnerable residents

21. CHARGING FOR THE CONTROL OF RATS AT RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

A report was submitted to seek approval to charge for the treatment of rats at residential properties.

Resolved:

- a) That a subsidised fixed charge of £30 for up to 4 visits should be applied for the treatment of rats at residential properties, subject to a fee wavier being available to applicants who can demonstrate their eligibility of the range of benefit entitlements listed in the report.
- b) That the final value of the charge be approved through the fees and charges approval process.
- c) That officers monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of the charging regime and report back to Cabinet any need for modification or refinement.

22. CALCULATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE

A report was submitted requesting approval of the Council Tax Base to be used to calculate the 2014/15 levies for the Borough Council, the County Council, the Office of the Police Crime Commissioner, the Fire 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 2014/15 shall be as follows:-

	Band D equivalent properties
Newcastle Borough Council	34,890
Kidsgrove Town Council	6,349
Audley	2,437
Loggerheads	1,845
Balterley, Betley and Wrinehill	564
Chapel and Hill Chorlton	186
Keele	330
Madeley	1,416
Maer	244
Silverdale	1,348

23. ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2014-2017

The Council's Capital Strategy and Asset Management Strategy were key documents evidencing the Council's approach to its Use of Resources. This Strategy provided a clear framework for understanding the value and condition of property owned by the Council so that, in turn, investment decisions could be taken to optimise the use of the said land/property to meet the needs of the Borough's residents, businesses and visitors. This Strategy along with the Council's Capital Strategy sought to demonstrate alignment with, and delivery of, the Council's ambitions as set out in the Council Plan.

The Strategy had already been considered by the Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the comments from the Committee were read out.

The Chair welcomed Cllr Simon Tagg to the meeting. Cllr Tagg stated that in general he considered large parts of the plan to be sound but that he had concerns regarding an apparent lack of public consultation to date.

The portfolio Holder stated that the consultation had not yet started and that any proposals for development would have to be to a very high standard and that all the comments from Cllr Tagg would be taken into consideration.

Members discussed the issue of borrowing should the sale of assets not be agreed. The executive Director outlined the costs associated with borrowing. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and resources stated that he would also explore the possibility of the creation of sink funds.

Resolved:

That Members approve the Asset Management Strategy (2014- 2017).

24. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2014/15

A report was submitted requesting cabinet to consider the Capital Strategy 2014 to 2017.

Resolved:

That the Capital Strategy be agreed and forwarded to Council with a recommendation for approval.

25. SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES 2014/15

A report was submitted to obtain approval for the proposed scale of fees and charges to apply from 1 April 2014.

Resolved:

That the fees and charges proposed to apply from 1 April 2014, as set out in Appendix 1 and 4 be approved and be submitted to the Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee for comment.

26. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS 2014/15

A report was submitted requesting the Cabinet to review progress on the completion of the revenue and capital budgets for 2014/15 following agreement of the 5 year Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Executive Director for Resources and Support Services thanked everyone who had worked on the budgets especially members of the Finance Team and the Working Group.

Resolved:

- a) That the assumptions set out in the report be approved.
- b) That the Cabinet confirm that no Council Tax increase is proposed in 2014/15.
- c) That the Transformation and Resources Overview and 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 2014.

27. CREATING A LOCAL AUTHORITY OWNED TRADING COMPANY

A report was submitted to ask Cabinet to agree in principle to the creation of a local authority company to allow commercial trading in communications activities.

Resolved:

- a) Cabinet agrees in principle to the establishment of a company which would be limited by shares and owned wholly by the council.
- b) Cabinet notes that a further report will be brought forward at the earliest opportunity outlining governance and board membership arrangements as well as a business case for the company before any trading activity commences.

28. STAFFORDSHIRE WIDE WASTE STRATEGY

A report was submitted to:

- Highlight the requirements for a Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.
- Provide a draft copy of the refreshed Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.
- Seek approval for adoption of the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.

Members expressed their thanks to Andrew Bird, Kate Fox and Cllr Beech for their work on the strategy

Resolved:

That the attached '2013 Refresh of the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (2007 – 2020)' to be adopted, and the Portfolio Holder of the Environment and Recycling agree that this document is approved by the Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Joint Waste Management Board.

29. KEELE GOLF CENTRE

An urgent report was submitted to Cabinet to advise members of the current position regarding the grant of a new lease of the Keele Golf Centre to RMW Golf Limited and to obtain decisions on the immediate steps to be taken.

Resolved:

- a) That Members note the withdrawal of interest from RMW Golf Ltd on the grounds that the company is unable to progress with the opportunity on the basis of their tender submission.
- b) That Members note that the decision of RMW Golf Ltd to not proceed with their scheme brings the tendering process to an end.
- c) That officers be authorised to take the necessary steps to formally close the Golf Centre until further notice and to advise the interested parties of this decision.
- d) That officers be authorised to take the necessary steps to secure the site to minimise the risk of trespass onto, or vandalism of, the land/buildings.
- e) That officers be requested to report back to the earliest available Cabinet meeting with advice and information about the medium to long term options for the site.
- f) That this report be taken to the next meeting of the Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

COUNCILLOR GARETH SNELL
Chair