

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 27th November, 2013

Present:- Cllr Edward Boden – in the Chair

Councillors Miss Walklate, Mrs Heames, Mrs Cornes, Welsh, Mrs Johnson, Studd, Mrs Burnett, Clarke, Cooper, Mrs Beech, Hambleton, Howells, Cairns, Boden, Matthews, Olszewski, Mrs Hambleton, Wemyss, Wilkes, Mrs Williams, Williams, Mrs Astle, Fear, Allport, Eagles, Kearon, Taylor.J, Waring, Miss Olszewski, Loades, Holland, Bailey, Miss Cooper, Jones, Miss Reddish, Robinson, Mrs Shenton, Mrs Simpson, Mrs Heesom, Snell, Sweeney, Tagg, Mrs Bates, White, Miss Mancey, Mrs Burgess, Eastwood, Miss Baker, Plant, Stringer, Stubbs, Taylor.M, Turner, Mrs Winfield and Mrs Rout

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs Peers, Cllr Bannister, Cllr Becket, Cllr Mrs Hailstones and Cllr Mrs Hailstones.

2. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor awarded Cllr Michael Clarke with a long service medal in recognition of him achieving 21 years as an elected member of the Council.

An invitation was extended to members to attend the Mayor's Carol Service at Sacred Heart RC Church in Silverdale on Sunday 22 December 2013 at 6.30pm.

The Charity Ball would be held in the Ballroom of Keele Hall on Friday 28th March 2014. Tickets for the Ball were priced at £35 and would be available from Peter Whalan from 2nd January 2014.

Members considered a report regarding the appointment of a town Crier for Newcastle under Lyme Town.

Resolved: That the Council appoint Gordon Brayford as the Town Crier for Newcastle under Lyme Town on a voluntary basis on the terms contained in the report.

3. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th September 2013 be agreed as a correct record.

4. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN PM TRAINING AND THE COUNCIL

The Mayor welcomed Mr Brian Tomkins to the Council meeting. Mr Tomkins was the Chair of the Aspire Group. The Council Leader and Mr Tomkins formally signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and PM Training.

5. PROPOSED RETAIL-LED REDEVELOPMENT OF LAND AT RYECROFT

A report was submitted to update Members on actions and next steps required to secure a retail-led regeneration and redevelopment of land in the Ryecroft area of the town centre and to seek approval for key actions required to enable progress to be made on the redevelopment plans.

An amendment to the report was submitted and it was agreed that the amendment be included as recommendation 3b on the report. The amendment stated:

That the Civic Offices will not be relocated unless and until there is a clear business case for a new location and there is a firm contract in place to redevelop the whole of the Ryecroft Site.

A debate was held on the amended report. A guarantee was sought from members that any borrowing be short term and of a bridging nature only, that any new development be of a modern design and if appropriate a greater degree of housing be provided on the site.

The Leader drew Members attention to paragraph 4.3 of the report and stated that all outcomes would be brought back to Full Council and be subjected to the fullest scrutiny.

Some concerns were raised regarding whether the library and guildhall would be included in the mix and whether this would result in less space for books and learning. At present there was no desire to include the Guildhall in the mix but the library situation could not be guaranteed.

Members also requested that any plans regarding demolition works be made public as soon as possible to avoid public disturbance and that a timeline for the entire project was essential.

Resolved:

1. That officers be authorised in liaison with its Joint Venture partner, Staffordshire County Council to commission the demolition of the former Sainsbury's store on the basis set out in the report, including the seeking of necessary consents.
2. Subject to in-principle approval being given to relocate from the Civic offices, officers be authorised to proceed with the formal marketing of the Ryecroft redevelopment opportunity, with the aim of securing a preferred developer/investor.
3. That approval is given, in principle, for officers to work with key partners in the preparation of a full business case for the relocation of the Civic Offices based upon the broad principles set out in the report in order to facilitate the comprehensive retail-led redevelopment of the Ryecroft area and to contribute towards broader regeneration objectives for the town centre.

- 3b. That the Civic Offices will not be relocated unless and until there is a clear business case for a new location and there is a firm contract in place to redevelop the whole of the Ryecroft Site.
4. That officers be authorised in liaison with its Joint Venture partner, Staffordshire County Council to commission the demolition of the former Sainsbury's store on the basis set out in the report, including the seeking of necessary consents.
5. That provision of up to £75,000 revenue funding be made available from the Revenue Investment Fund and up to £50,000 of funding be allocated from the Capital Programme to support the actions set out in the report.
6. That officers report back to Members the outcomes of items 1 and 2 at the earliest available opportunity in order that the next key decision can be made.

6. MOTIONS OF MEMBERS

A motion had been submitted by Cllr Kyle Robinson and Seconded by Cllr Terry Turner regarding Kidsgrove Railway Station.

Resolved: 1. That this Council support the campaign efforts by Joan Walley MP, Kidsgrove Town Council and all others involved to secure funding to provide accessibility improvements for Kidsgrove Railway Station.

2. That the Leader of the Council write to the Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin MP, to ask that Kidsgrove Railway Station is made a priority for funding in the Access for All scheme this year.

7. REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

A report was submitted by the Leader of the Council regarding items that had been considered by Cabinet. Since the last meeting of the Full Council on the 11th September 2013, the Cabinet had met twice on the 18th September 2013 and the 16th October 2013.

Decisions sheets for those meeting could be found online using the links below or paper copies being made available upon request.

<http://moderngov.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=118&MIId=1893&Ver=4>

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Notable decisions included:

- a. The Corporate Cleaning contract to save the authority money on servicing the cleaning requirement of our building.
- b. The appointment of Cllr Bates as the Council's director on the Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership.
- c. Extension of the Multi-functional device contract to save around £50,000 over the next two years.

The Leader stated that the lease for Keele Golf Course was 25 years not 50 years as had been stated in the report.

Resolved: That the report be received.

8. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Verbal and written updates were received from the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees on work undertaken since the last meeting of the Council.

Health Scrutiny Committee:

Report on University Hospital of North Staffordshire (UHNS) and the Future of the Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust

This matter had been discussed at the Health Scrutiny Committee on 20th November 2013. At this meeting, the Committee made a number of points including: -

- There was support, as expressed by the Committee, for focusing further scrutiny on the impact on residents of the changes being proposed and also the process of transition and how that was to take place
- The Committee felt that scrutiny of the financial issues relating to this matter and the impact on other NHS services were not of the same priority as the impact on residents and the transition process in terms of further scrutiny by this Council
- The proposals around developing a joint committee were supported by the Committee, but – in providing recommendations to Council – the Committee felt that this was detail to be worked out in conjunction with other relevant organisations as a follow up to agreement by Council on the principle of undertaking further scrutiny work as a Council into this issue
- The Committee also focused on examples of how any changes could impact on UHNS – including waiting lists and areas such as elective surgery

The Committee agreed these points as recommendations to Council unanimously.

Council discussed the recommendations and there was unanimous support regarding the fact that the Council should act for the residents of the Borough in this matter. It was however also noted that there would be accountability sessions with UHNS organised by the County Council and that the Borough Council currently had a code of joint working with the County and that care should be taken to avoid any duplication of work.

Resolved:

- a) That the updates be received and the work undertaken noted
- b) That Council note the contents of the scrutiny briefing note (attached at appendix A).
- c) That Council support the recommendations from the Health Scrutiny Committee meeting of 20th November 2013 that any impact on the residents of the Borough of Newcastle under Lyme of the transfer of services from Stafford hospital to UHNS should be the subject of detailed scrutiny by this local authority

- d) That Council further supports the recommendation that this council should consult with other organisations potentially affected by these changes in order to ensure that any scrutiny reflects, as far as possible, the catchment area of UHNS

9. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE STATUTORY COMMITTEES

Verbal updates were received from the Chairs of the Statutory Committees on work undertaken since the last meeting of the Council.

Resolved: That the updates be received and the work undertaken noted.

10. QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Question 1 submitted by Cllr Howells:

Given the facts that:

Britain is now the fastest growing Economy in the developed world (OECD Monday 18 November 2013) 1.4 million more private sector jobs have been created since the last General Election Britain now has record levels in employment and in view of the recent revelations surrounding the Rev Paul Flowers (former Chairman of the Cooperative Bank, formal Labour District Councillor and former adviser to the Labour Party), do you agree that it would be wise for the Council to clearly distance itself, for the avoidance of any doubt, from the Cooperative Movement by deleting the reference to "...a co-operative council ..." in its Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council Plan 2013/13 – 2015/16 (page 21 where it reads "Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council is working towards being a co-operative council ...") and instead insert "...a partnership council encouraging enterprise"?

Response from Cllr Snell:

No

Supplementary question from Cllr Howells:

Does any Newcastle under Lyme or Kidsgrove Councillors receive any co-op funding?

Response from Cllr Snell:

This is all on public record

Question 2 submitted by Cllr Sweeney:

What is the Leader's view on zero hour contracts?

Response from Cllr Snell:

Zero hour contracts can be unjust when they are used inappropriately but there are some people who have requested to remain on such contracts.

Supplementary questions from Cllr Sweeney:

Are there staff at the Council employed on zero contract hours and does the Leader except that there is little difference between zero hour and casual contracts?

Response from Cllr Snell:

There are 83 people employed on such hours, generally in the sports departments, many of whom are students whom such an arrangement suits. Talks were currently underway with staff on zero hour contracts, the trade unions and managers regarding the future of such contracts.

Question 3 submitted by Cllr Holland:

Last week, Newcastle's MP Paul Farrelly visited Chesterton, to learn about the excellent work that the Salvation Army is doing there, to help the unemployed into work. Does the Leader welcome the Government's efforts to tackle unemployment, which have seen the creation of 1.4 million new jobs since 2010, meaning more people in this country are now in work than ever before, and what is his administration doing to help people into employment in our community?

Response from Cllr Snell:

If new jobs are being created then this is a good thing. The Council is working closely with aspire to open up supply chain contracts, using its commissioning powers and working with Newcastle College to help young people into work and to ensure that they have the right skill set for the job market.

Question 4 from Cllr Fear:

Does the Leader endorse plans to charge the Borough's residents for the Council's rat catching service?

Response from Cllr Snell:

Cross party consensus regarding this had been reached and the Public Protection Committee where the issue had been recently discussed. Care however had to be taken to ensure that the service was not cost prohibitive.

11. REPORT FROM THE HS2 WORKING GROUP

The HS2 Working Group was set up to explore the arguments for and against the proposed High Speed Rail link between the North of England and London. The preliminary report of the working group was attached as appendix 1.

Cllr Stringer thanked the working group for its hard work and highlighted the real cross party working that had been achieved. A particular achievement had been the attendance at a meeting of representatives from HS2 which highlighted the high esteem within which the Group was held. It was expected that the scheme would go ahead in some form and this had been taken into account by the Group. It was however also seen as a great opportunity to work with other authorities to help create a fully integrated transport system.

Other Members thanked the Group for its hard work and conclusions that were based on facts, evidence, common sense and consultation.

Resolved:

That the Council oppose the HS2 proposals. In so doing, it should join forces with Staffordshire County and the other Councils within Staffordshire to establish a joint policy of opposition but not necessarily link in with any national protest movement. However in the event that the scheme is given assent in Parliament the following recommendations are made:

1. That the Council should work with the relevant parties to ensure that the environmental impact is kept to a minimum. Wherever possible land should be restored to its original condition after the completion of construction
2. That the Council should work with the relevant parties to ensure that compensation is full and fair with particular reference to those who live outside the area where compensation is automatic and those who are owners of agricultural land
3. That the Council should work with Network Rail to ensure that the provision of train services to London from Stoke are as frequent as possible. Also that quality commuter services are initiated at the earliest possible opportunity.
4. That the Council should continue to seek opportunities to enhance the development of business and employment that may arise from the rail network.

12. LOCALISED COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

A report was submitted to approve a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the borough area for the financial year 2014/15.

Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, substituted by section 10 of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 required each billing authority in England to make a Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme, specifying the reductions which are to apply to amounts of Council Tax payable by persons or classes of person whom the authority consider are in financial need.

Any scheme needed to be approved by the 31 January before the start of a new financial year or a default scheme prescribed by regulations will be imposed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. A default scheme would involve expenditure at a higher level than the available central government funding.

Resolved: That the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council area as detailed is adopted for the financial year 2014/15.

Chair

