

CABINET

Wednesday, 17th October, 2012

Present:- Cllr Snell – in the Chair

Councillors Mrs Bates, Mrs Beech, Boden, Snell, Stubbs and Williams

15. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Kearon.

16. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

17. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 2012.**

That the minutes be agreed as a correct record.

18. **PROPOSED REFURBISHMENT AND RE-USE OF THE FORMER ST GILES AND ST GEORGES SCHOOL, NEWCASTLE TOWN CENTRE.**

A report was submitted requesting Cabinet to consider the options available to the Council to bring forward the refurbishment and re-use of the former St Giles & St Georges School building in Newcastle Town Centre.

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Town Centres stated that the issue had been debated by the Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Chair of that Committee confirmed that a good discussion had taken place of all the available options and that the main consensus of the Committee was that the building should not be demolished but that it was understood that this could be a last resort should all other options fail.

Members considered that the building would be ideally suited to apartments and agreed that demolition was not desirable option.

The Portfolio Holder Recommended that Option (a) be agreed but that Officers continue to keep an eye on the housing market with a view to marketing the building for apartments in the future. .

Resolved: (a) That Option (a) be adopted:

Market the building again in its current condition – i.e. without Council money being expended on it, but without any requirement for community use or public access. However, it should be noted that Newcastle Town Centre has plenty of available buildings that organisations and businesses could lease/buy, most of which do not have such a large upfront refurbishment cost attached to them. That said the building is inherently attractive and distinctive, occupying a prominent position, with direct access onto the ring road and with on-site car parking.

(b) That Officers continue to at other available options including housing.

19. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Members received a report to provide the background on the financial strategy for the Council over the next five years in the light of the national and local financial situation and taking account of the Council's priorities.

A Budget Review Group had been established, chaired by the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Budget Management. The remit of the group was to oversee all aspects of the budget process, including service review and challenge, longer term planning, development of budget options, agreeing consultation arrangements and consideration of feedback and seeking to deliver service models that drove improvement to front-line services whilst offering value for money. At the present time the budgetary shortfalls for upcoming years were as follows:

2013/14 £1.627m
2014/15 £0.810m
2015/16 £0.797m
2016/17 £0.655m
2017/18 £0.657m

These were however only estimates and procedural and legislative changes were expected in the future

Resolved: (a) That the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2013/14 to 2017/18 be agreed.
(b) That the report be referred to the Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee for comment.

20. BUSINESS RATES RETENTION AND POOLING

A report was presented outlining the new arrangements for business rates retention, which would replace the current National Non domestic Rates (NNDR) grant element of formula grant, and a proposal to form a business rates pool for Staffordshire.

It was stated that the process was not intended to leave any authority worse off than at present and that it was hoped that any concerns would be mitigated through the pooling of risk. The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Town Centres and negotiated a good deal for Newcastle Borough Council and investment plans had been signed off by the Council Leader.

Resolved: (a) That the proposed new arrangements be noted.
(b) That Newcastle Borough Council participates in the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire business rates pool.
(c) That the final version of the Memorandum of Understanding be agreed by the Council Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Budget Management in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Executive Director (Resources and Support Services).

21. REVIEW OF COMMUNITY CENTRE PROVISION

A report was submitted to seek authority to commence a review of Community Centres provided by the Council and to establish a project group to undertake this work.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Officer team and cross party scrutiny working party had now been constituted and that the first meeting of the Scrutiny Group would be on 31st October.

The Portfolio Holder for Stronger and Active Communities stated that there would be a press release (which would also be circulated to all Community Centres) to state that the Council was no intending to close any community Centres.

Resolved: (a) That the brief of the Community Centre review be agreed.

(b) That the Council Leader, Portfolio Holder for Stronger and Active Neighbourhoods, the Executive Director for Operations and Head of Communications approve the consultation programme.

(c) That a future report in relation to the modernisation of Community Centre Provision within the Borough be brought to Cabinet.

22. BATESWOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE - OUTCOME OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Cabinet received a report detailing the Active and Cohesive Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendations regarding requests from the community for additional bridle route provision and use of part of the main pool for fishing in Bateswood Local Nature Reserve.

The Chair of the Active and Cohesive Overview and Scrutiny Committee highlighted the findings of the Committee including the recommendation that fishing be allowed in a designated area but that it be managed by an experienced fishing club. The Leader thanked the Scrutiny Committee for the hard work undertaken regarding the review. The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee agreed that the working group had done well and thanked Louise Stevenson, Scrutiny Officer for her hard work.

Resolved: (a) That the report detailing the recommendations of the Active and Cohesive Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee be received.

(b) That Cabinet support the use of part of the main pool for fishing in principle.

(c) That fishing be allowed in a designated area of the main pool but be managed by an experienced and responsible fishing club.

(d) That Cabinet decide not to support additional bridle route provision in principle on the routes which were subject to public consultation.

(e) That the proposed Management Plan for the site be approved

(f) That Cabinet endorses The Ethical Fishing Guidelines for angling facilities within the Council's control which had been implemented following consultation with appropriate stakeholders.

23. UNIVERSAL CREDIT

A report was received informing Cabinet Members of an intention to develop amended and updated working practices to assist with the implementation of Universal Credit and other welfare benefit changes. Members discussed the importance of the Council meeting this issue head on and commended how officers were already going out of their way to include partner organisations regarding the delivery of any scheme. Partners approached so far included the Job Centre Plus and Aspire Housing.

Resolved: That working practices to assist citizens with the introduction of Universal Credit and other welfare reform changes be explored and introduced where practicable.

24. REPLACEMENT OF CORPORATE ICT DATA STORAGE FACILITIES

Approval was sought for the procurement of replacement networked data storage devices within the ICT corporate infrastructure.

Cabinet considered the various options outlined in the report and it was confirmed that option 4 was now the preferred route and that money had already been set aside to provide for this.

Resolved: That ICT undertake a procurement exercise to source replacements for the existing end of life SANs to take advantage of the benefits detailed in the report.

25. OUTCOMES FOLLOWING THE COMMISSIONING PROCESS WITH THE THIRD SECTOR

A report was submitted on the outcome of the Council's Third Sector Commissioning Framework's process in June 2012.

The Commissioning process with the voluntary/community (third sector) for 2012/13 had now concluded after evaluation by the Commissioning Board, and the contracts for five services awarded. Returns for the sixth service 'Rough Sleepers Outreach Service' had also been received in June 2012 having been collaboratively commissioned with the City Council and duly awarded. The contracts commenced from 1 July, 2012 and 1 August 2012 respectively.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

26. **MADELEY CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

Cabinet considered the recommendations of the Planning Committee that Cabinet adopt a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) relating to the Madeley Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. The SPD was available for viewing upon request from Member Services.

Resolved: That the Supplementary Planning Document relating to Madeley Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, as submitted, be adopted.

27. **DEVELOPING WARMZONE TO MAXIMISE FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES**

A report was submitted which outlined the types of assistance that were planned and the mechanisms that the Council could consider to support local delivery regarding the development of WarmZone.

The Government was changing the way in which assistance was given to people to improve the energy efficiency of their home. In October the national Green Deal would be launched which was intended to assist home owners to improve their home through financial assistance in the form of a loan or grant. To complement Green Deal finance additional (ECO) grant funding could be targeted on five designated low income areas as well as low income households in rural settlements of fewer than 10,000 inhabitants.

Resolved: (a) That the Council continues to support North Staffordshire Warm Zone to enable it to maximise the uptake of funds which will be on offer from the national Green Deal and ECO energy efficiency programmes.

(b) That officers discuss the level of funding required with Warm Zone with a view to the funding being allocated as part of the Housing Capital Programme alongside the 2013/14 budget setting process.

28. **REVIEW OF INTEGRATED RECYCLING AND WASTE STRATEGY 2016**

Cabinet received a report to which highlighted the requirement to commence a review of the current Integrated Recycling and Waste Strategy, to agree an outline basic timetable for the review and subsequent procurement phases and to outline a proposal for a cross party Cabinet Panel to be established to review the current strategy, consider options and risks for future provision and develop a new Strategy to be recommended to Cabinet.

Clarity was sought regarding the cross party Cabinet Panel and it was confirmed that the Panel would be politically balanced and would not be replacing any scrutiny involvement in the process.

Resolved: (a) That Cabinet agree the outline and timetable for the review and subsequent procurement of the Integrated Recycling and Waste Strategy.

Cabinet - 17/10/12

(b) That Cabinet agree to form a representative cross party Cabinet Panel to review options for the future service provision and risks and develop the new Strategy.

29. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

Chair