

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET
TUESDAY 12 OCTOBER 2010**

Held At 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Pavilion Road, West Bridgford

PRESENT:

Councillors J N Clarke (Chairman), D G Bell, J A Cranswick, R Hetherington, Mrs D J Mason

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors D M Boote, S J Boote, C J Evans, G R Mallender and B Venes.

OFFICERS PRESENT:

C Bullett	Deputy Chief Executive (CB)
K Marriot	Acting Head of Community Shaping
D Mitchell	Head of Partnerships and Performance
N Morton	Head of Financial Services
P Randle	Deputy Chief Executive (PR)
D Swaine	Head of Corporate Services

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE:

Councillor J E Fearon

26. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

27. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 7 September 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28. Local Investment Plan

Councillor Bell presented the report of the Deputy Chief Executive (PR) detailing the form and content of the Nottingham Housing Market Area (HMA) Local Investment Plan (LIP). The report explained that officers from the local authorities that comprised the Nottingham Housing Market Area (Ashfield, Broxtowe, Erewash, Gedling, Nottingham City and Rushcliffe) had been working closely with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to draft the LIP.

Councillor Bell went on to explain that the plan was a 10-15 year framework setting out priority projects and initiatives for HCA investment. The plan aimed to set out investment aspirations, but it was not a formal funding arrangement. However, it did provide an understanding of the key priorities and acted as a guide to assist in directing future resources.

Commenting further Councillor Bell indicated that the LIP for Nottingham HMA was attached as an appendix to the report which set out at paragraph 9 the implications for the Borough.

In response to a question from Councillor Cranswick the Deputy Chief Executive (PR) indicated that a key factor to consider was the level of anticipated funding given to the HCA by Government and the effect of this in terms of meeting aspirations within the plan. He explained that this uncertainty made it difficult to predict the funding allocation however the plan aimed to set out areas for investment based on evidence and sound reasoning. However, it had to be recognised that changes in Government policy could well affect how well the plan could be delivered.

RESOLVED that Cabinet endorse the Local Investment Plan.

29. **Proposals For Dealing With The Collection Of Cash By The Council**

Councillor Cranswick presented the report of the Head of Partnerships and Performance setting out proposals for dealing with the collection of cash by the Council. The report stated that the Council was committed to providing high quality customer service to all of its residents, however there were a number of areas within the payments process where it was felt that the customer experience could be improved.

The report highlighted that the closure of the customer cash office in the Civic Centre presented opportunities to significantly increase customers' access to numerous payment outlets across the whole of the Borough. This would have a positive impact on residents in more rural communities, as well as providing extended opening hours for all residents to make payments. Alongside this, there are opportunities to reduce internal duplication of processes and to support local business, such as Post Offices throughout the Borough.

Councillor Cranswick stated that the report set out three options for Cabinet to consider when determining the way forward. In summary these options were:

Option 1: Do nothing

Option 2: Close the Cash Office and outsource all current Cash Office payments to an external company.

Option 3: Close the Cash Office and outsource all receipt of payments across the Council to an external company, but retain one central back office function for processing cheques.

Commenting further Councillor Cranswick indicated that the report outlined the potential risks associated with options 1 and 2 and also highlighted the trend in an overall reduction of transactions since 2007/08 and the need to maintain a back office function for processing cheques. He went on to explain that how the report outlined the potential benefits of option 3, which also recognised the need to maintain a cheque processing facility. Furthermore option 3 was supported by Members at the Customer Services Centre Partnership Working Group, who had noted the potential of the project to help support rural post offices.

Councillor Mrs Mason welcomed the proposal within the report and confirmed that the Customer Services Centre Partnership Working Group had recognised the benefits of the proposed way forward. She explained that the proposal would increase customer choice and as such help to improve their experiences. Following this Councillor Clarke stated he supported the proposal as there were three main benefits; a saving being made through efficiency, an improved service for the customer through more choice and a small contribution in helping the rural economy.

Councillor Cranswick explained that the report set out the background to the options presented to Cabinet particularly in relation to the existing level of service provision, the trends and changes to the ways the Council received payments, and the benefits. He also explained that more detail in relation to the 3 options was set out within the report specifically in relation to associated costs and benefits. In conclusion the report indicated that Option 3 presented the most viable option in terms of benefits realised and on going revenue savings and therefore this was recommended to Cabinet for approval.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve Option 3 – close the cash office and outsource all receipt of payments across the Council to an external company, but retain one central back office function for cheques.

30. **Capital Budget Monitoring**

Councillor Cranswick presented the report of the Head of Financial Services which indicated that at its meeting on 9 September, the Corporate Governance Group had considered the detailed capital monitoring at Period Four. As a result of this the Group had recommended that the capital monitoring position be forwarded to Cabinet for review.

Commenting further Councillor Cranswick stated that at the end of August, after five months of the financial year, the difference between the gross Capital Budget and the expected final spend for the year equated to £531,660. He added that the monitoring process had estimated that projected gross expenditure would be 90% of this year's original budget with the majority of the under-spend within the high risk category. After five months, 22% of the budget had been spent or committed and this compares favourably with last year as at this same point in time last year, £742,000 (or 16% of the budget) had been spent. He added that plans were in place for the schemes to achieve the projected expenditure by the end of the year.

Councillor Cranswick explained that within the medium risk schemes, set out in the report, £61,000 of the difference between projected actual and budget related to phase two of the heating scheme at Rushcliffe Leisure Centre. He explained that the works undertaken in phase one needed to be tested in a cold climate and if successful, phase two would not be required and the £61,000 could be returned to contingency as a saving. However, this could not be returned at the moment until the first phase works have been reviewed during a cooler period of weather.

In conclusion Councillor Cranswick indicated that the report set out in detail the schemes for which a significant variance was anticipated at the end of the year, largely due to factors beyond the Council's control. For these schemes it was recommended that the Capital Programme be amended to reflect the anticipated outcome.

RESOLVED that

- a) a sum of £406,000 be rephased into future years in respect of the Support for Registered Social Landlords scheme;
- b) a capital contingency allocation of £140,000 be made in respect of the Disabled Facility Grants and Decent Homes Fund schemes;
- c) an amount of £122,200 be returned to capital contingency in respect of the Stable Block conversion scheme; and
- d) the gross cost and contribution for the Playbuilder scheme be reduced by £23,000.

31. Revenue Budget Monitoring

Councillor Cranswick presented the report of the Head of Financial Services which indicated that budget monitoring showed an overall underspend as at the end of August of £206,402. This included interest income which was showing a favourable variance of £39,323 and a current underspend on services of £167,079. The report included a table which summarised the direct actual net expenditure or income on services at the end of August 2010. The table also set out a comparison with the profiled budget which was a proportion of the annual estimate that was expected to have been incurred by that time.

The report indicated that the variance on profiled spends suggested that actual expenditure was in line with budgets and officers were ensuring budgets were managed ensuring total expenditure was contained within the overall budget. This was reflective of the increasing emphasis on managing the budgets following the significant budget savings incorporated in the budget this year.

With regard to budget savings and income generation, the report indicated that those highlighted and approved as part of the budget process were being specifically monitored by officers. Most of these savings and income streams had been realised, however the table at paragraph three of the report highlighted areas where the budget saving/income may not materialise. In total, there were £110,500 of savings that may not be obtained in the year.

Councillor Clarke sought clarification in relation to charging for pre-planning advice and in response Councillor Bell explained that this charge had not significantly affected the number of enquiries. Commenting further Councillor Bell explained that charging had been implemented as a pilot exercise and that it was not in place for private householders requiring advice on planning applications regarding their homes. He added that the introduction of the charge would be reviewed at an appropriate time in the future in order to determine the best way forward.

In conclusion Councillor Cranswick stated that during the budget setting process the revenue contingency had been increased to reflect the fact that the budget options held some risk. As a consequence the report recommended that an allocation of £110,500 be made from contingency to cover the risk of the underspend highlighted.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve an allocation of £110,500 from contingency to cover the risk of a reduction in savings highlighted in paragraph 3 of this report.

32. Conservation Area Boundary Changes – Scarrington and Keyworth

Councillor Bell presented the report of the Head of Planning and Place Shaping indicating that in line with Government requirements, appraisals and reviews of boundaries were undertaken for all Conservation Areas in the Borough. As part of this review process the Keyworth and Scarrington Areas had been appraised and their boundaries reviewed and the report recommended changes to the Conservation Area boundaries.

Commenting further Councillor Bell explained that the review proposed changes to the boundaries as set out in the plans at Appendices 2 and 4 of the report. He explained further that these Appendices set out the new areas to be included in the boundaries and clarified the proposed boundary changes. There followed a short discussion in which the area included within the Keyworth boundary was clarified.

RESOLVED that pursuant to Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, changes to the boundaries of the Keyworth and Scarrington Conservation Areas be designated as shown on the plans at Appendices 2 and 4 of this report and notice be given in accordance with the statutory requirements.

The meeting closed at 7.25 pm.

CHAIRMAN