



**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET
TUESDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 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 and Mrs D J Mason

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors C J Evans, R M Jones and A MacInnes

OFFICERS PRESENT:

C Bullett	Deputy Chief Executive (CB)
S Griffiths	Deputy Chief Executive (SG)
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

20. **Declarations of Interest**

There were none declared.

21. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 13 July 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

22. **Fresh Approach to Housing Growth**

Councillor Bell presented the report of the Deputy Chief Executive (PR) which explained that the new Coalition Government had acted swiftly to revoke the Regional Strategy's housing targets that were being imposed on the Borough. Commenting further he went on to explain that the 'Fresh Approach to Housing Growth' leaflet as attached to the report had been produced following the revocation of these targets but prior to receipt of a new Government guidance. It was intended that the leaflet would assist the Council in taking the initiative on the issue of housing growth and being proactive in its attempt to influence Government thinking.

Councillor Bell stated that the report indicated that the Government had now confirmed there was still a requirement to produce a Local Development Framework (LDF) but local authorities were required to determine their own housing targets having regard to national planning policy and the wishes of their communities. The report also indicated that due to the major change of Government policy the current timescale for approving the LDF could not now

be met. Commenting further on this Councillor Bell indicated that in the absence of an approved Development Plan the Local Development Framework Group had recommended that the 'Fresh Approach' document be approved by the Council as a Planning Statement. It was intended that this would, during the time it takes to develop the LDF formally, help to discourage unwanted development, particularly in the green belt and help to inform developers bringing forward proposed developments. Furthermore it would illustrate that the Council recognised some development was required in future and also how over the next few years there was sufficient potential supply from sites with unimplemented planning permission across the Borough. The document also recognised that there may be other potential sites that have some local support that maybe worthy of further consideration.

Councillor Mason welcomed the report and the attached document stating that she believed it evidenced clearly how the Council had taken on board the views of its residents when considering future development across the borough and as such she supported its referral to Council.

Councillor Cranswick stated that the document evidenced a progressive approach incorporating the views of residents without committing the Council to unwanted and unnecessary development forced upon it through excessive and unrealistic housing targets.

Councillor Clarke welcomed the document and stated that he believed it provided clarity for residents and prospective developers. He added that it also demonstrated the Council's commitment to protecting the environment and the unique character of Rushcliffe as an area.

In response to a question from Councillor Hetherington the Deputy Chief Executive (PR) clarified the considerations in relation to the three sites identified at paragraph nine of the report in relation to land classification.

It was AGREED that Cabinet recommend to Council that -

- a) the document 'Housing Growth in Rushcliffe – A Fresh Approach' be approved as a Planning Statement, and
- b) the housing targets for Rushcliffe contained in the recently revoked East Midlands Regional Strategy be reviewed.

23. **Initial Budget Report 2011/12**

Councillor Clarke presented the report of the Chief Executive setting out proposals for a structured approach to reacting to the likely economic and financial challenges faced by the Council and its partners over the next four years. He explained the report aimed to set the scene in which the Council could properly deal with the considerable pressures and constraints it was likely to face in future.

Commenting further Councillor Clarke stated that the report indicated that following the formation of the Coalition Government and the delivery of the emergency budget announcement it was clear that the public sector would face significant funding reductions over the next four years. Therefore it was

important that the Council gave detailed consideration to how it would approach and deal with these potential reductions to ensure it remained a highly efficient and effective organisation delivering high quality services.

Councillor Clarke went on to explain how the report indicated that, based upon known information, it was likely that Local Government would be required to contribute a significant amount towards the average national savings target of 25%. Therefore it was clear that the cuts in the public sector were likely to be significant which raised serious questions as to how Local Government, and District Councils in particular, would continue to deliver services within the current environment. On this basis it was certain that hard, but informed choices would need to be made to ensure those excellent services that mattered were sustained.

Councillor Cranswick explained that paragraph 3 of the report set out a number of Appendices providing a structured approach to reacting to the likely economic and financial challenges faced by the Council over the next four years. Appendix 1 of the report provided a suggested policy framework setting the context to focus the Council's budget and service planning for the period 2011 to 2015. Appendix 2 set out the financial projections for the revenue budget and capital programme and an assessment of the risks for the next four years based upon the latest information available together. He emphasised that the projections were only indicative and that the true position would not become clear until the draft Formula Grant settlement was announced. Appendix 3 set out a proposed budget timetable for 2011/12 which recommended the use of Member workshops, community consultation and the scrutiny process to make recommendations.

Commenting further Councillor Cranswick stated that the report made reference to the Local Government Association (LGA) publication 'Place-based budgets: The future governance of local public services'. He explained that this policy document had been produced by the LGA to inform the Government's spending review. The policy document outlined a proposal based upon fundamentally changing the system of public finance and continuing to pursue the task of eliminating waste and red tape in the system whilst pioneering new ways of working.

The report advised Cabinet that the LGA policy document needed more detailed consideration and as such it recommended that a Member Group be established to undertake this piece of work. The Member Group would help to ensure wider understanding of its impact and implications for the Council. Proposed terms of reference for the Member Group were set out at appendix 4 of the report which also indicated how it was intended that the Group's work would help to recommend any subsequent necessary changes in the development of the policy framework.

Cabinet recognised that the report set out further details in relation to the initiatives taken by the Council to make savings particularly with regard to Business Cost Reduction, Service and Structure Redesign and Income Maximisation. Additionally appendix 1 of the report set out a suggested Policy Framework to be adopted as an interim measure to guide the immediate and ongoing decisions which would be required during the forthcoming budget round.

In response to a question from Councillor Mason the Deputy Chief Executive (CB) set out the latest position in relation to discussions with Parkwood Leisure and the establishment of a trust arrangement. He explained the background to the issue and indicated that it was intended that the Council's Chief Executive would be meeting with representatives of Parkwood Leisure to see if and how this matter could be taken forward and progressed.

In conclusion Councillor Clarke indicated that it was clear since the formation of the Coalition Government that Local Government would be expected to make a significant contribution to reducing the national deficit. Recent announcements suggested that there would be radical reform of the way public services operate and therefore it was expected that a significant reduction or change in the way budgets are allocated would be experienced by District Councils. In view of this it was important that a structured approach was agreed to ensure the Council was able to maintain its momentum of providing high quality value for money services. He added that he believed the report suggested an approach which would provide a framework to assist Members in maintaining focus upon the Council's priorities whilst meeting the national agenda of producing further efficiencies.

It was AGREED that Cabinet

- a) endorsed the policy framework detailed at **Appendix 1**;
- b) noted the financial projections in **Appendix 2**;
- c) endorsed the proposed budget timetable in **Appendix 3** and requested that it be forwarded to the Corporate Governance Group for comments, and
- d)
 - (i) requests that a Member Group be established to consider the Local Government Association policy document 'Place based budgets: The future governance of public services' in order to ensure a wider understanding of its impact and the implications for the Council, and
 - (ii) agreed the draft terms of reference for the Group as set out at **Appendix 4**.

24. **East Leake Leisure Centre Independent Review**

Councillor Cranswick presented the report of the Chief Executive relating to the East Leake Leisure Centre Independent Review. He explained that following the recommendations previously made by Cabinet work was commissioned to establish the financial and contractual options in respect of continuing the leisure provision of East Leake Leisure Centre. These options had been considered by Cabinet in late September 2009 and the second part of Cabinet's recommendation, at that point, had been to request an independent review of the decision making process to enter the private finance arrangement (PFI) and to establish if there were any relevant learning points for the Council.

The report set out to inform Cabinet of the outcome of the independent review together with the recommendations made by the cross-party Member Group following their consideration of it. The report also set out the Member Group's terms of reference as previously agreed by Cabinet as follows:

“To review the Council’s decision making process which resulted in the Council entering into a partnership relating to East Leake Leisure Centre and, in light of this review, to identify any relevant learning points for the Council.”

The report indicated that as part of a decisions made previously by the Cabinet, the Chief Executive had commissioned the independent review with the findings of this review being reported to the cross-party Member Group. Mr Stewart Dobson, former Chief Executive of Birmingham City Council, was commissioned to undertake the independent review based upon the following methods.

- An examination of files and reports presented to various Member bodies between February 1998 and May 2002, and
- Meetings with certain senior council officers who worked for the Authority at that time who were still in the employment of the Authority.

The Member Group had considered the written report received from Mr Dobson on 13 July 2010 which indicated the main issues regarding the Council’s decision making process under five headings. The report set out these headings and the key points in detail at paragraph 5. It also outlined other matters and gave key learning points as a result of the issues identified by the independent review.

Councillor Cranswick stated that in its conclusion the report indicated it was clear to the Member Panel that the reviews findings provided clarity regarding how the five year opt out clause was not known more widely. The Group also concluded that upon considering further verbal evidence and explanations obtained from discussions with previous postholders that the intention of the five year clause had been inserted in an attempt to protect the Council’s interests and those of its residents. However in hindsight it was clear that the focus had become about providing a pool for East Leake which had resulted in a lack of challenge and scrutiny regarding the associated risks of the initiative. The Member Group had also concluded that the officers at the time had worked diligently to protect the best interests of the Council and its residents whilst achieving the full Council’s desire to deliver a pool.

Commenting further Councillor Cranswick stated that the Member Group had concluded that the independent review report had been extremely helpful in identifying the lessons that should be learnt and it was acknowledged that these had been incorporated into existing working practices for some time now at the Council. In view of this the Member Group had recommended that Cabinet be requested to acknowledge and accept the issues highlighted regarding the decision making process and make sure these were constantly reviewed to ensure current standards are maintained. Furthermore, in view of the fact that the work of the Member Group was concluded Cabinet were advised that it would be wound up.

It was AGREED that Cabinet:

- a) acknowledges and accepts the
 - (i) issues regarding the decision making process and
 - (ii) the key learning points and urges that these be constantly reviewed to ensure current standards are maintained, and
- b) recognises the valuable work of the cross party Member Group in its consideration of the independent review's findings and notes that the Group be wound up as its business is concluded.

25. Conservation Area Boundary Changes – Wysall and West Leake

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 Wysall and West Leake 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.

It was AGREED that pursuant to Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, changes to the boundaries of the West Leake and Wysall 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 7.30 p.m.

CHAIRMAN