

Minutes of the meeting of the **Cabinet** held in Committee Room One, East Pallant House, Chichester, West Sussex on Tuesday 3 June 2014 at 9.30 am

## **Members (7)**

Mrs H P Caird (Chairman)

Mr J C P Connor	Mrs E P Lintill
Mr M A Cullen	Mrs L C Purnell
Mr A P Dignum	

were present (6)

## **Apologies for absence**

Mr J J L T Ransley

## **Officers Present for All Agenda Items**

Mrs D Shepherd – Chief Executive  
Mr S Carvell – Executive Director  
Mr P E Over – Executive Director  
Mr J Ward – Head of Finance and Governance Services  
Mr P Coleman – Member Services Manager

## **592 Minutes**

That the minutes of the meeting of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 6 May 2014 be signed as a correct record.

## **593 Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items for consideration at this meeting.

## **594 Declarations of Interests**

No interests were declared at this meeting.

## **595 Public Question Time**

No public questions had been submitted.

## **596 Recommendations from Development Plan Panel**

The Cabinet considered the report and appendices circulated with the agenda (copy attached to the official minutes). Mrs Flitcroft (Principal Planning Officer) introduced the recommendations of the Panel, made at its meeting on 15 May 2014, in relation to the Kirdford and Loxwood Neighbourhood Development Plans.

The Cabinet congratulated Kirdford Parish Council and Mr Ransley on a very successful exercise, sealed by a good turnout in the referendum, in preparing the first neighbourhood plan to be completed in the district.

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

That the Kirdford neighbourhood development plan be made part of the development plan for Chichester District (excluding the South Downs National Park).

**RESOLVED**

- (1) That the Loxwood neighbourhood development plan proceeds to a referendum subject to (a) the modifications set out in the draft decision statement and (b) the further amendments thereto.
- (2) That the Loxwood neighbourhood development plan referendum area shall have the same boundary as the Loxwood designated neighbourhood area.

**597 Council Tax Empty Homes Premium and local discount for empty and unfurnished properties**

Referring to minute 514 of 3 December 2013, the Cabinet considered the report circulated with the agenda (copies attached to the official minutes). Mr Dignum introduced the report. He reminded the Cabinet that, from 2013/14, the Council had been given discretions to apply Council Tax discounts and premiums (which applied to properties) and Council Tax support (which applied to individuals). The Council had chosen to maintain Council Tax Support at the previous level for most beneficiaries. It had been the case so far that these discretions were in balance in terms of cost to the Council, even taking into account the 10% reduction in Government grant for the Council Tax reduction scheme. However, the Council would need to keep these under review in view of annual uncertainties about the level of Government grant.

The Council had discretion to impose an Empty Homes Premium of 50% on properties that had been vacant for two years or more. This had not been imposed by the Council so far, but now that some initial uncertainties about exemptions had been resolved, he proposed that, subject to consultation, it should be applied from 2015/16. This would have financial benefits to the Council in terms of additional Council Tax income or, if the property was brought back into use, receipt of New Homes Bonus, and would provide an incentive to bring homes into use, which aligned with the Council's housing policy.

He also reminded the Cabinet that, at the Council meeting on 4 March 2014, a private landlord had asked the Council to change its decision to apply a nil discount for unoccupied and unfurnished properties and instigate an exemption period between property lettings. At that time the taxbase for 2014-15 had already been set, but he had agreed to consider introducing a one month grace period for 2015-16. On further consideration, he proposed that the full charge should be retained. He explained the financial consequences and also described the situation in other councils in West Sussex.

In answer to a question, the Revenues and Performance Manager confirmed that there were a number of exemptions for unoccupied properties, including properties in probate.

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

- (1) That a consultation should be undertaken for the charging of an Empty Homes Premium with effect from 1 April 2015.
- (2) That for the 2015-16 financial year a zero discount shall apply for unoccupied and unfurnished properties.

**598 Local Government Pension Scheme & Early Termination of Employment Discretions Policy: Personnel Policy Report**

The Cabinet considered the report and appendix circulated with the agenda (copy attached to the official minutes). In the absence of Mr Ransley, Mr Radcliffe (Senior Personnel Manager) introduced the report. He explained that a new pension scheme had come into being on 1 April 2014, and the Council needed to decide whether to apply a number of discretions. Mr Radcliffe described the discretions available, and made recommendations as which should be applied, none of which would add to the costs to the Council.

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

That the revised Local Government Pension Scheme & Early Termination of Employment Discretions Policy be approved.

**599 Pool Play Features for Westgate Leisure Chichester**

The Cabinet considered the report and appendix circulated with the agenda (copy attached to the official minutes). Mrs Lintill introduced the report. She reminded the Cabinet that, by minute 472 of 3 September 2013, the Cabinet had agreed that three options for additional income generation at Westgate Leisure Centre be developed further and brought back to Cabinet for approval. The development of soft play facilities had proved more costly than expected and had been put aside, but the proposed pool play features scheme offered a return on investment within three years and would encourage family use of the pool.

**RESOLVED**

That £33,000 be allocated from capital reserves for the provision of water play features at Westgate Leisure Chichester.

**600 Business Rate Reliefs**

The Cabinet considered the report circulated with the agenda (copy attached to the official minutes). Mr Dignum introduced the report, explaining that the Government was concerned about empty shops in town centres, and proposed a reoccupation relief scheme for such premises that had been empty for a year or more. Although this was not a major problem in Chichester, some properties could benefit under the scheme. The Government had provided detailed guidance on the application of the scheme, the cost of which would be re-imbursed to councils. The recommendation, however, went beyond this particular scheme to include delegation of decision-making on any discretionary relief scheme under the relevant legislation where this accorded with Government guidance and the cost to the Council was re-imbursed.

The Revenues and Performance Manager added that, under the Business Rate Retention Scheme, local authorities retained a proportion of growth in business rates. The Government had introduced a number of schemes to stimulate the business economy using local authorities' discretionary powers and re-imbursing them for the

adverse effect on business rates income. This was the fourth such scheme in the last 18 months.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the Head of Finance and Governance Services be authorised to make decisions, and to set local policy reliefs, using the Council's discretionary powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended, where this accords with government guidance and the cost is reimbursed to the Council.

### **601 Chichester in Partnership – Choose Work Project**

The Cabinet considered the report and appendix circulated with the agenda (copy attached to the official minutes). Mr Cullen introduced the report and reminded the Cabinet of the 'Getting People into Work' strategy that had been approved by Chichester in Partnership and adopted by the Cabinet. The 'Choose Work' project was one element of this strategy, with financial support from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). A co-ordinator had been employed since January 2013, and was exceeding the targets set for the project. The DWP was pleased with success of the project so far and the University of Chichester had carried out an evaluation of the scheme with extremely positive results.

The project was due to end in January 2015, but it was proposed to submit a bid to the DWP for an extension and enhancement of the project for a further three years. The total cost of the project over that period would be £80,000, and was dependent on a successful application to the DWP for £50,000, the balance of up to £30,000 being met by the Council. Other public sector partners would also be asked to contribute. This would enable the employment of a second part-time co-ordinator who would extend the project to rural areas, leaving the existing co-ordinator to focus on groups facing social injustice that were especially the target of the DWP in the City of Chichester and the 'Think Family' Neighbourhoods.

The Cabinet welcomed the progress of the project and commended the co-ordinator, Steve Hill, on his achievements. They supported the extension of the project as proposed. Mr Dignum (Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance) confirmed that the proposed allocation of up to £30,000 from the New Homes Bonus would not impact on the allocation of £400,000 a year to parish councils for community projects.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (1) That funding of up to £30,000 be allocated from the unallocated New Homes Bonus for extension of the Choose Work project.
- (2) That the Executive Director for Support Services and the Economy, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services, be authorised to finalise the scheme based on partner contributions, including the Department for Work and Pensions, up to a total of £80,000.

### **602 Community Forums**

The Cabinet considered the report circulated with the agenda (copy attached to the official minutes). Mrs Lintill introduced the report. She reminded the Cabinet of the changes to the community forums as a result of the work of a members' task and finish group in October 2012. Now that these changes had been in place for over a year, a further review had been carried out. All community forums wished to continue in a format that they were comfortable with. They did not necessarily see the production of an action

plan as a priority, but all valued the opportunities to receive and exchange information. She drew attention to paragraph 6 of the report, which described the alternatives that had been considered but rejected.

The Cabinet expressed their appreciation of the work of officers who supported the community forums.

**RESOLVED**

That the suggested changes to the Community Forums as set out in Section 5 of the report be approved, namely:-

(1) Their functions to be as follows:-

- (a) The principal means for Chichester District Council and other partner organisations to engage with local communities on local issues.
- (b) A place for parishes to share good practice and gather information.
- (c) A place for parishes to jointly take action on issues agreed by the forum.

(2) The progress of the forums will be evaluated on an annual basis by the members and officers group, and significant changes will be brought to Cabinet for approval.

(3) That the community forum terms of reference be changed to include the following:-

- (a) That the community forums hold a minimum of 2 meetings a year. If the forums wish to hold more they can. Chichester District Council will only resource (admin support) up to four meetings a year.
- (b) For community forums to develop an annual agenda plan of issues that are relevant for their area. The forums will not be required to develop and deliver a local action plans but if they want to this will be supported.
- (c) The "All Parishes" meeting to be the main means of collective communication between CDC and the parishes.

### **603 Appointments to Panels and Forums 2014-2015**

The Cabinet considered the report circulated with the agenda (copy attached to the official minutes). The Chairman introduced the report. The Cabinet noted that the Grants and Concessions Panel consisted of eight members, not six as shown in the appendix.

**RESOLVED**

That the membership of Panels and Forums for 2014/15 be as set out in the Appendix to the report.

### **604 Appointments to External Organisations**

The Cabinet considered the report circulated with the agenda (copy attached to the official minutes). The Chairman introduced the report.

**RESOLVED**

That representatives be appointed to serve on the external organisations for 2014-2015, as set out in the Appendix to the report, subject to Mr Mark Dunn, not Mr Roland O'Brien, being the deputy representative on the Standing Conference on Problems Associated with the Coastline (SCOPAC).

## **605 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

### **RESOLVED**

That in accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (the Act), the public and the press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items on the agenda for the reason that it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted that there would be disclosure to the public of 'exempt information' being information of the nature described in Paragraphs 3 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and 5 (legal professional privilege)) of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

## **606 Avenue De Chartres & Westgate Leisure Centre Pay on Foot Systems [Paragraph 3]**

Referring to minute 371 of 11 March 2013, the Cabinet considered the report circulated with the agenda. Mr Cullen introduced the report, and reminded the Cabinet of their previous decision to seek tenders for the introduction of a pay on foot system into the Avenue de Chartres and Westgate Leisure Centre car parks. Progress had been made but this had proved to be a more complicated project than expected, and it was now proposed to introduce the pay on foot system into the Avenue de Chartres car park initially, with consideration being given to other car parks afterwards.

The Parking Services Manager explained that the tender process had identified a preferred supplier, with whom discussions had taken place to seek solutions to a number of issues. These included the provision to be made for holders of blue badges and roving season tickets, entry and exit solutions, and call out arrangements including CCTV link. Some of these problems had resulted in increased costs, such as the cost of CCTV monitoring, and some needed further investigation to resolve. Some of these solutions could be extended later at no additional cost to enable pay on foot schemes at other car parks.

The Westgate Leisure Centre car park had been excluded from the initial project because of the complication of the free period for members of the Leisure Centre, which meant there was no payback for investment in the scheme there.

In answer to a question from the Chairman, she explained that the contractor's lead time for installing the scheme was 6 to 8 weeks, preceded by the Parking Order amendment. At the project initiation meeting a full programme would be discussed and circulated to members.

Mr Over expressed confidence that the problems would be overcome. He suggested that the Cabinet should regard the Avenue de Chartres car park as a pilot scheme, which could be extended to other car parks if successful.

### **RESOLVED**

- (1) That the capital allocation of £210,000, funded from capital reserves, for the installation of Pay on Foot at the Avenue De Chartres car park be reduced to £156,800, and the balance be returned to unallocated reserves.

- (2) That Metric be selected as contractor for the supply of a Pay on Foot system for this car park.
- (3) That the Executive Director be authorised to amend the current Chichester District Car Parks Parking Order to reflect the changes.

**607 Settlement of claim concerning trees at Kiln House, Greenfields Close, Nyewood, Petersfield [Paragraph 5]**

Referring to minute 80 of 4 October 2011, the Cabinet considered the report circulated with the agenda. Mrs Purnell introduced the report, explaining that a claim had arisen against the Council as a result of the cost of works to protect a property from damage by two oak trees that were protected by a Tree Preservation Order. The report proposed settlement of the claim on terms agreed with the claimants.

**RESOLVED**

That a payment of £57,600 from reserves be approved in settlement of the claim.

**[Note:** The meeting ended at 11.06 am]

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CHAIRMAN

Date \_\_\_\_\_