

MINUTES

CABINET

19 SEPTEMBER 2017

Councillors: Williams (Leader)
Griffiths (Deputy
Leader)
Harden
Marshall
G Sutton

Officers:	Mark Brookes	Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer
	David Barrett	Group Manager – Housing Development
	Elliott Brooks	Assistant Director - Housing
	James Deane	Corporate Director - Finance and Operations
	James Doe	Assistant Director - Planning, Development and Regeneration
	Mark Gaynor	Corporate Director - Housing & Regeneration
	Sally Marshall	Chief Executive
	Katie Mogan	Member Support Officer
	Matt Rawdon	Group Manager - People
	David Skinner	Assistant Director - Finance & Resources
	Robert Smyth	Assistant Director - Performance, People and Innovation

Also in attendance:

Councillor Terry Douris
Councillor Adrian England
Councillor Ron Tindall

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

CA/81/17 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th July 2017 were agreed by the members present and signed by the Chairman.

CA/82/17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Elliot

CA/83/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received

CA/84/17 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Councillor Williams made a statement regarding Item 11:

This item will be deferred until the next meeting of cabinet at the earliest.

Last week (on Thursday 14 September 2017), the Department for Communities and Local Government published its consultation on “Planning for the right homes in the right places”. As part of this, the Government proposes to introduce a new and standard methodology for assessing housing need and as a result it is possible the number of new homes the Council needs to plan for may change. Although we will in due course be consulting on a range of development levels and locations within Dacorum, it is important that this is broadly with compliant with emerging Government policy.

As such Officers will now review the proposed Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document and bring it back to Cabinet for consideration with any necessary changes.

The new Local Plan is of great importance to the Borough Council and we intend to progress with our plans for a full consultation with residents and stakeholders as soon as possible.

Mr Harbridge made a statement on behalf of the Berkhamsted Residents Action Group who welcomed the deferral of this item.

CA/85/17 REFERRALS TO CABINET

None received

CA/86/17 CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Decision

That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted with the following changes:

- Brownfield Land Registry – move to October
- Local Plan Review – move to October
- Strategic Risk Register – add to October
- Award of Parking contract – add to October

CA/87/17 Q1 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Decision

1. Consider the budget monitoring position for each of the above accounts;

Resolved to recommend:

- 2. the approval of the revised capital programme to move slippage identified at Quarter 1 into financial year 2018/19 as detailed in Appendix C of the report to Cabinet.**
- 3. the approval of the supplementary budgets.. Details for these supplementary budgets are set out in the body of the report to Cabinet and have a net nil impact on the General Fund Working Balance:**
 - Increase the Strategic Planning & Regeneration Employees budget by £60k**
 - Increase use of the Dacorum Development reserve by £60k**
 - Increase the Regulatory Services legal budget by £95k**
 - Increase use of the Litigation reserve by £95k**
- 4. the supplementary Capital budget funded by grant for the Disabled Facilities Grants budget of £66k as per paragraph 9.3 of the report to Cabinet.**

Reason for decision

To provide details of the projected outturn for 2017/18 as at Quarter 1 for the:

- General Fund
- Housing Revenue Account
- Capital Programme

Corporate objectives

Delivering an efficient and modern council

Monitoring Officer/Deputy S.151 Officer Comments

Monitoring Officer: No further comments to add

Deputy S.151 Officer: This is a Deputy Section 151 Officer report.

Advice

D Skinner introduced the report and explained it was a continuation of the good news story from 2016/17. There has been a focus on in-year and future savings. The key item in the report is Appendix D on page 34 – this monitors the future year savings. £1 million of savings have been identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and 80% of these savings are on track to be achieved and there is action in place for those savings that are not on track. Additional savings of £141k have been identified by service managers for delivery during 2018/19 and will be monitored to assess their deliverability. Furthermore, there has been a good continuation in income streams from investment, property and the Alternative Financial Model.

Dacorum Delivers - Optimising investment income for General Fund and Housing Revenue budgets whilst managing investment risk is fundamental to achieving the corporate objectives.

Deputy Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments

Deputy Monitoring Officer: No comments to add to this report.

S.151 Officer: This is a S.151 officer report.

Advice

J Deane introduced the report and explained that this report had been delayed. The quarter 1 risk management report will be presented to the Audit committee on 20th September and then at the October Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Williams asked the members if they were content with the risks within their portfolio.

The members said they were.

Voting

None.

CA/90/17 CIVIC CENTRE DEMOLITION

Decision

That the award of the contract for the demolition of the Civic Centre to the contractor named in paragraph 6 of Appendix 1 Tender Report for the contract sum as set out in paragraph 5 of the Cabinet report be approved.

Reason for decision

For Cabinet to review and approve the award of the contract for the demolition of the former Civic Centre to enable redevelopment of the site.

Corporate objectives

Affordable Housing: to enable the development of the site including an element of affordable housing.

Regeneration: drive value from Council-owned assets.

Safe and Clean Environment: maintain a clean and safe environment.

Dacorum Delivers: to use DBC assets more effectively and to generate financial efficiency by removing the liability for business rates.

Monitoring Officer/Deputy S.151 Officer comments

Monitoring Officer: The award of contract follows a procurement process carried out in accordance with the Council's Commissioning and Procurement Standing Orders. Officers must ensure that an appropriate works contract is completed prior to commencement of demolition.

Deputy S.151 Officer: The award of the contract can be met from within existing approved budgets.

Advice

D Skinner introduced the report and explained that this report was to award the contract for the demolition of the Civic Centre building. Additional surveys have been carried out due to the large amount of asbestos present in the building. The nature and scale of the project is quite complex due to the sub stations and the bore holes around the building but specialists have been involved in the whole process. There have been a lot of bids from companies and the procurement report sets out the recommended company.

Councillor Tindall asked what would be happening to the Health Centre.

Councillor Williams said the Health Centre and the Court are on a different plot of land which has been sold for the purchaser to demolish.

Councillor Williams said he was surprised to see so many bids and asked what the time scale was for the demolition company to be on site.

D Skinner said this would need to be clarified but the company have indicated that they could be on site within four weeks.

Councillor G Sutton asked why it was necessary to keep the lights on.

D Skinner said it was to act as a deterrent.

Councillor Williams mentioned that the back of the building was damaged – are there issues with people staying in there?

D Skinner confirmed there was.

Councillor Douris queried if there would be attempts to locate the time capsule that was buried under the site.

D Skinner said there had been numerous attempts to try and locate it.

Councillor Williams suggested it might be an idea to speak to the demolition company and see if they could be gentler in turning over those areas the time capsule could be to see if it can be retrieved.

Voting

None.

CA/91/17 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

This item was deferred. See minute CA/084/17 for further details.

CA/92/17 AUTHORISATION OF VIREMENTS

Decision

That the virements as detailed on Form A of the report to Cabinet be approved.

Reason for decision

To seek Cabinet approval for the proposed virements for the purpose of:

- 1) moving Business Systems Developer salary budgets into the ICT Service following a minor restructure of ICT posts
- 2) moving budgets to appropriate account codes following transfer of CSU back in-house

Corporate objectives

To standardise documentation and authorisation requirements for all virements.

Monitoring Officer/Deputy S.151 Officer Comments

Monitoring Officer: No comments to add to the report.

Deputy S.151 Officer: This is a Deputy S151 Officer report.

Advice

D Skinner introduced the report and said it was a straight forward report and related to the movement of posts in ICT and the in-sourcing of the Customer Service Unit.

Voting

None.

CA/93/17 STAFF TERMS AND CONDITIONS**Decision****Resolved to recommend:**

- **the approval of the changes to staff terms and conditions detailed in section 3 of the report to Cabinet and these changes be implemented subject to 30 days' written notice.**

Reason for decision

For Cabinet to approve the changes to staff terms and conditions and recommend to Council that these are implemented.

Corporate objectives

Delivering a modern and efficient Council – To ensure our existing terms and conditions are modern and attractive for staff whilst also offering value for residents.

Monitoring Officer/Deputy S.151 Officer comments

Monitoring Officer: Appropriate consultation has been carried out on the proposed changes and responses have been considered before finalising this report. As noted in the report the trade union do not support the proposed change to redundancy rates and therefore there is a risk, which members will note, relating to possible industrial action in relation to this change.

Deputy S.151 Officer: The increased deficit contribution of £50k per annum would need to be built into the Medium Term Financial Strategy to ensure that the deficit can be recovered.

Advice

Councillor Harden introduced the report and explained the change in terms and conditions was to ensure they are modern and good value for money for both employees and residents. He ran through the changes and said this has been communicated to staff via staff briefings and written communication. The trade unions have also been consulted.

Councillor Williams said any changes to terms and conditions have an effect on staff. He asked if the consultation with the trade unions had highlighted any areas of concern.

M Rawdon said they had formally met with both Unison and Unite. They have agreed to all the changes except the reduction in redundancy pay. The current position is that the trade unions have told the council that they will be in formal dispute unless this is changed and will be balloting their members regarding this issue in the future.

Councillor Marshall understood the concerns raised regarding the reduction in redundancy pay but said the current package is out of kilter with what is offered elsewhere and it would be inappropriate to not change it. Councillor Marshall questioned the lease car changes and asked what the consequences were of a consolidated payment.

R Smyth said the car allowance would be consolidated into the salary so it will be subject to tax and pension.

Councillor Marshall asked if this would result in uneven salaries paid for similar graded posts.

J Deane said the car allowance is only paid at Band 11 and above. The car allowance scheme was non pensionable so by consolidating it into the salary, it becomes pensionable. There will be a net nil impact for the Council.

Councillor Marshall referred to page 334 and asked if officers could provide examples of how the Council is promoting staff health and well-being.

R Smyth said there are a number of initiatives. One is to produce a series of posters to encourage staff to use the stairs not the lifts etc. The Herts Workplace Challenge is online to support and encourage staff. Also, the benefits of flexible working will be further promoted and there will be a series of staff conferences to highlight these initiatives.

Councillor Marshall asked if there was a staff call centre in place.

M Rawdon said there was and this was accessible 24/7. They can help and advise with financial, mental and physically problems.

Councillor Marshall asked what the take up was.

M Rawdon said he didn't have any statistics but believed it is well used. He said he was happy to provide this information.

Councillor Marshall said she was pleased to see it was well used but on the other hand, it was concerning it was well used and there must be underlying issues.

R Smyth said they see it is as a positive as staff are accessing help and advice. He said the Council assess and provide assistance to staff at work as part of an all-round package.

Councillor Tindall said there has been a demographic change with an increase in the older population. He asked if there was a record of staff that are carers and do the Council provide any special arrangements to help them.

M Rawdon said this information was available. Support is offered to staff and said he would be happy to take this point away and see how further help can be provided. Time off for carer responsibilities is built into the flexible working policy.

S Marshall said the Council do have a Carers policy.

Councillor Williams said this change was not designed to make the Council massive savings. There are currently 11 different mileage rates and this change strikes a fair balance. He said he recognised that the trade unions agreed the majority of changes and the one change that has failed to reach an agreement is not hugely different to the norm across the public sector. The Council have not been in the position of making large scale redundancies but the reduced rate allows for a better value for money for the tax payers.

Voting

None.

CA/94/17 APPROVAL OF LAND PURCHASE & 'ONE FOR ONE' GRANT ALLOCATION FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Decision

That the following grant funding payments for affordable housing developments in the Borough be approved:

1. £812,233 to Watford Community Housing Trust for a development known as Goldcroft garage site, Hemel Hempstead.
2. £1,417,000 to Thrive Homes for a site known as land off Two Waters Road, Hemel Hempstead. (Old Hewden Hire site)
3. £133,168 to Hastoe Housing Association for a development known as garage site adjacent to 28 & 30 West Dene, Gaddesden Row, Great Gaddesden.
4. Approve the purchase of the site known as Garages to the South of 71 – 81 Burns Drive, Hemel Hempstead for a sum of £495,000. Agree an additional expenditure of £100,000 for consultant fees to deliver the scheme on this site.

Reason for decision

To seek approval for the payment of “one for one” grant funding to Housing Associations (Registered Providers) delivering affordable housing schemes in the Borough. To seek approval for the payment of “one for one” grant funding to Housing Associations (Registered Providers) delivering affordable housing schemes in the Borough.

In addition seek approval to purchase a site known as Garages to the South of 71 - 81 Burns Drive for the purposes of building Council homes and commit expenditure to developing the scheme to build out.

Corporate objectives

Delivering Affordable Housing.

Deputy Monitoring Officer/Deputy S.151 Officer Comments

Deputy Monitoring Officer: Under the scheme introduced in 2012 investment in new affordable housing can be made by the Council itself or through grant funding registered providers. This decision proposes funding developments by Watford Community Housing Trust, Thrive Homes and Hastoe Housing Association. Officers should ensure that each grant going forward is covered by the grant agreement (referred to in para 5 below) to ensure that the Council’s position is protected and enable it to meet audit requirements. In relation to the purchase of the garage site, the final terms of the purchase contract must be reviewed by the Legal Team prior to completion.

Deputy S.151 Officer: The award of these grants can be met from the 1-4-1 receipts and will be reported on the pooling return to CLG which is audited on an annual basis by DBC’s appointed external auditors. The grant agreement protects the Council from the payment of any interest penalties charged for late delivery of schemes. The purchase of the site identified can be met from within existing approved capital budgets.

Advice

Councillor Griffiths introduced the report. She explained this deal was to use receipts for further development instead of sending the money back to central government. 75% of subsequent lettings will be available for immediate rent from people on the registered housing list, have a local connection or have served in the armed forces. If they have not been let after four weeks, then they may be offered to others.

E Brooks introduced D Barrett who was the new group manager for Housing Development. He explained that there was an allocation of three grants and a purchase of a piece of land to develop new homes – a third of the purchase can be funded by one to one receipts.

Councillor Marshall asked what the Housing Associations got out of the deal.

E Brooks said they get a new development, a third of the total cost contributed to the cost of land and development and they receive more income due to an increased stock.

M Gaynor added that the HCA provide grants in certain circumstances but they are relatively low. The cost of borrowing is reduced for the Housing Associations. In the future, the Council are hoping to secure a further deal so that it also sees the benefits

of the deal. One area that the Council hopes to push is achieving social rents instead of affordable rents.

Councillor Williams said this would appeal to housing associations outside the borough as they might have limited development opportunities in their area.

Councillor Douris said as he was Chair of the Herts Armed Forces, he recognised the nomination rights they would receive.

Councillor Griffiths said this was already in the housing policy after signing the covenant

Councillor Williams referred to the nomination rights and said he couldn't see there being an issue with letting units within four weeks.

E Brooks said they are discussing in advance what is needed and the majority will be two bedroom houses.

Councillor Williams asked if the proposed properties will have disabled access.

E Brooks said there was currently a short supply of fully adapted properties. These properties are relatively easy to let but the affordable rents put people off. Further down the line, the next stage is to influence lower rents.

Councillor Williams said the next grant should ensure social rents.

M Gaynor said yes, they could and should and this should link with the commitments that they Housing Associations have made. The Council should get its objectives which could be achieved through higher grants – a reduction below 80% of market rent is a key priority.

The Meeting ended at 8.13 pm