



Cabinet (Resources) Panel

Minutes – 11 February 2014

Attendance

Members of the Cabinet (Resources) Panel

Cllr Andrew Johnson (Chair)
Cllr Roger Lawrence
Cllr Peter Bilson
Cllr Steve Evans
Cllr Phillip Page
Cllr John Reynolds
Cllr Paul Sweet

Employees

Keith Ireland	Strategic Director - Delivery
Mark Taylor	Assistant Director Finance - Delivery
Nick Edwards	Assistant Director Regeneration – Education and Enterprise
Martyn Sargeant	Head of Democratic Services - Delivery
Wendy Trainor	Head of Service Legal - Delivery
Cheryl Powell	Project Manager - Delivery
Sam Axtell	Communication Involvement Officer – Office of the Chief Executive
Matthew Vins	Graduate Management Trainee - Delivery

There were no apologies for absence.

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. Title

MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

- 2. Declarations of interests**
There were no declarations of interest.
- 3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (28 January 2014)**
Resolved:
That the minutes of the meetings held on 28 January 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
- 4. Matters Arising**
There were no matters arising.

DECISION ITEMS (Amber – delegated to the Cabinet (Resources) Panel)

5. Budget Consultation

Cllr Johnson presented the report about the Budget Consultation, and apologised for its late circulation. He explained the report contained the initial response of the Cabinet to the views of those consulted during the process. He referred to paragraph 2, and noted the very detailed consultations which took place. He highlighted that the key findings were presented in paragraph 4. He expressed his gratitude towards the people who offered to help in their communities and explained that some very interesting ways to save money were put forward. He confirmed that the Cabinet would explore in depth certain issues such as the neighbourhood wardens and the accessibility of the new youth zone.

Cllr Johnson indicated that there was widespread support for the approach to economic regeneration, improving housing opportunities and exploring business revenue. He indicated the Council was working with partners to explore ways to make Central Baths more commercially viable, and suggested this approach would be taken across the cities leisure and cultural services. He noted that helpful comments had been voiced around prevention of issues, such as Looked After Children. He advised the group that overall it had been a good consultation process in difficult circumstances, and he paid tribute to the people who came to protest in a measured way at the consultations.

Resolved:

1. That the responses to the consultation undertaken for the Five Year Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014/15 to 2018/19 as detailed in the report be received.
2. To agree that the initial response of Cabinet to the consultation, taking into account the final budget Cabinet will recommend to Council for approval on 5 March 2014.
3. To note that the final response be fed back to those that participated in the consultation.

6. Quarter Three Treasury Management Activity Monitoring

Cllr Johnson presented the report. He indicated that the actual projected savings for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account were up from the previous quarter's report by £200,000. He explained that the Council was exploring a fundamental review of its treasury management.

Resolved:

To note the contents of the report and in particular that the Council is continuing to operate within the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators approved by Council, and also within the requirements set out in the Council's approved Treasury Management Policy Statement.

7. National Empty Homes Loan Fund

Cllr Bilson presented the report which looked at Wolverhampton City Council joining the National Empty Homes Loan Fund. He explained that quite a number of authorities in the country were joining the scheme, and it complimented the Council's

aim of getting empty houses back into use. He indicated that the terms of the scheme were listed in paragraph 2.4, and highlighted that the maximum loan term would be five years, with a drawdown of between £5000 and £15,000. He advised that the scheme assisted owners to secure and advance resources to allow them to rent property, and the scheme provided a good opportunity to enhance the Council's already good performance in this area with no major financial risk.

Resolved:

To approve that Wolverhampton City Council join the National Empty Homes Loan Fund scheme.

8. **City centre Transport and Movement Project**

Cllr Bilson presented the report and noted that the proposal addressed the significant financial challenges the authority faced due to cuts from Central Government, but also would help stimulate the local economy and encourage growth and investment in the city centre. He highlighted the successful bid by the Council for £600,000 of funding for the scheme, but indicated that the plan for larger scale refurbishment of the public realm would take time due to Government cuts, and the change in funding from £5 million to £1.6 million reflected this.

Cllr Johnson agreed with the approach, and noted that the £600,000 from the Department for Transport.

Resolved:

1. That the revised delivery strategy for the City Centre Transport and Movement Project be approved.
2. That the funding of £1.6 million, provided by £600,000 of Department for Transport grant and £1 million from the Capital Programme Allocation be approved.

9. **Revision to the Private Sector Housing Policy**

Cllr Bilson presented the report which looked at offering small grants of up to £500 for vulnerable people within Wolverhampton. He explained that the Council would not necessarily insist on repayment, and the financial implications would be modest. He highlighted that this would help ensure that vulnerable people could continue to live in their homes and not worry about not being able to afford to carry out work on their property. He indicated this would mean the authority would not have to rehouse people or deal with property challenges.

Cllr Johnson suggested that the report did not need to be brought back to the panel if the cost to the housing capital budget reached £4,000. This was agreed.

Resolved

1. To approve the amendments to the existing Private Sector Housing, Small Works Assistance Grants policy under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistant) (England and Wales) Order 2002 to remove the repayment requirements for grants up to a value of £500.

10. **Discretionary Rate Relief – Amendments to Local Scheme**

Cllr Johnson presented the report. He explained that a temporary Government grant for the next 18 months would provide a discount of £1,000 per year, which could positively affect 1,200 businesses in Wolverhampton. He highlighted the potential boost to the local economy could be over £1 million. He indicated the other aspects of the grant were not as easily quantifiable, but noted the business rate relief for 18 months and that the scheme was fully Government funded.

Resolved:

1. To approve the following additions to the local scheme for Business Rate Discretionary Relief:
 - a. A discount of up to £1,000 per year in 2014/15 and 2015/16 for any occupied retail premises with a rateable value below £50,000.
 - b. A 50 per cent business rates relief for 18 months, between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2016, for businesses that move into retail premises which have been empty for a year or more.
 - c. An exemption for newly built commercial property completed between 1 October 2013 and 30 September 2016 from empty property rates for the first 18 months.
2. To approve delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Resources, in consultation with the Strategic Director, Delivery, to finalise the policy detail on receipt of Government Guidance.
3. To approve delegated authority to the Head of Revenues and Benefits to award of relief in respect of these new additions to the scheme, and to note that updates on the number and value of such awards will be reported to the Cabinet (Resources) Panel for information on a quarterly basis.

INFORMATION ITEMS

11 **Changes to Employee Establishment**

Resolved:

That the employee establishment changes be noted.

12. **Schedule of Green Decisions**

Resolved:

That the summary of open and exempt green decisions approved by Cabinet Members, following consultation with the appropriate employee, be noted.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

13. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

Resolved:

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within the paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Act set out below:

<i>Item No.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Applicable paragraph</i>
14	Corporate procurement - award of	3

	contracts for works, goods and services	
15	Revenues and Ratings Matters	3
16	Surplus Properties and Disposal Methods	3
17	Low Hill Pods	3
18	Consideration of a request for a discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant	3
19	Wolverhampton Youth Zone	3
20	Civic Halls	3
21	Changes to Employee Establishment	1

Part 2 – exempt items, closed to the press and public

14. **Corporate Procurement Award of Contracts for Works, Goods and Services**

Cllr Johnson presented the report and suggested that delegated authority be given to the Cabinet Members for Resources and Economic Regeneration and Prosperity with regard to the supply, installation and fully comprehensive maintenance of the CCTV site based systems contract.

Resolved:

1. To authorise the award of a contract for the supply and delivery of office supplies to Staples advantage of Birmingham.
2. To authorise the award of a contract for the accommodation and floating support to ex-offenders to Home Group Ltd. of Birmingham.
3. To authorise the award of the contract for urgent remedial repairs to Spring Valley Flat to Metric Building Services Ltd. of Tipton.
4. To authorise a contract for supply of pre-prepared sandwiches, rolls and salad packs to Tasties of Chester.
5. To authorise the extension of the existing Supported Living Accredited framework.
6. To authorise delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for City Services, in consultation with the Strategic Director, Education and Enterprise, to award the contract for the supply of Dog Collection and Kennelling services.
7. To authorise the delegation of authority to the Cabinet Member for City Services, in consultation with the Strategic Director, Delivery, to use Birmingham City Council's framework agreement for the supply of cleaning materials, catering disposables and polythene sacks.

8. That the contract for the supply, installation and maintenance of the CCTV site based systems be delegated to the Cabinet Members for Resources and Economic Regeneration and Prosperity, in consultation with the Strategic Director, Delivery.

15. **Revenues and Ratings Matters**

Resolved:

That the recommendations for discretionary rate relief applications be approved.

16. **Surplus Properties and Disposal Methods**

Resolved:

1. To approve the grant of Leases, to declare land and property surplus to requirements and to agree the freehold disposal of these assets in accordance with the strategy set out in the report, specifically:
 - a. That the recommendations for the disposal of properties on the open market by auction, tender or private treaty for an appropriate use be approved.
 - b. That the recommendations to grant leases of land and buildings be approved, and also that the surrender of those leases detailed in the recommendations be approved.
 - c. To approve the inclusion of conditional options to purchase within the Lease agreements on terms to be agreed with regard to the properties listed in recommendation three of the report.
 - d. To approve the recommendation outlining the disposal of the relevant offices at the point that the service vacates and the premises become surplus to requirements and to enter into early negotiations with interested parties.
 - e. To approve any agreed terms for the disposal and/or leasing of the sites identified in recommendations 1-4 of the report, through an independent decision delegated to the Cabinet Member Economic Regeneration and Prosperity, in consultation with the Strategic Director, Education and Enterprise.

17. **Low Hill Pods**

Resolved:

1. To approve the proposed options for consultation with private owners of properties conjoined to Council pod properties, supported by existing Housing budgets within General Fund capital, to support for the delivery of this programme.
2. That the recommendation with regards to the pods works be agreed.
3. That the recommendation with regards to the use of the existing Housing Revenue Account pods programme budget, to assist in the delivery of the overall project as detailed, be agreed.
4. That the recommendation with regard to the proposed approach to void Council properties, be agreed.

5. To agree to receive a further report on the details and costs of the proposed programme, after an initial consultation on the options has been undertaken with owners.
6. That the recommendation with regard to properties unaffected by the Council's work be agreed.

18. **Consideration of a request for a discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant**
Cllr Evans presented a report and referred to paragraph 2.3 which set out plans for an all-encompassing policy to deal with a wider range of discretionary grants.

Resolved:

1. To approve the request of Mr and Mrs R for a discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant to top up expenditure in excess of the maximum mandatory grant of £30,000, in order to provide suitable facilities for their daughter to remain safe in the family home.
2. To determine that the full amount of any discretionary grant paid will become repayable to the Council if the property is sold within 10 years of the completion of the work.
3. That an all-encompassing policy report to deal with a range of discretionary grant issues be presented to the Cabinet (Resources) Panel in due course.

19. **Wolverhampton Youth Zone**
Cllr Johnson recommended that decision on this item be deferred to the Cabinet Members for Resources, Economic Regeneration and Prosperity and Children and Families, in consultation with the Strategic Director, Education and Enterprise and the Assistant Director, Finance.

Resolved:

1. That decision with regard to the Wolverhampton Youth Zone report be deferred to the Cabinet Members for Resources, Economic Regeneration and Prosperity and Children and Families, in consultation with the Strategic Director, Education and Enterprise and the Assistant Director, Finance.

20. **Civic Halls**
Cllr Johnson presented the report and noted that the figures had improved since the report was published.

Resolved:

That the update to the Civic Halls Box Office Provision originally approved on 12 February 2013 be noted.

21. **Changes to Employee Establishment**

Resolved:

That the employee establishment changes be noted.