



Cabinet Meeting

Minutes – 23 April 2014

Attendance

Members of the Cabinet

Cllr Roger Lawrence (chair)
Cllr Peter Bilson
Cllr Steve Evans
Cllr Val Gibson
Cllr Andrew Johnson
Cllr Elias Mattu
Cllr Philip Page
Cllr John Reynolds
Cllr Paul Sweet

Employees

Keith Ireland	Strategic Director - Delivery
Emma Bennett	Assistant Director Children Young People and Families
Wendy Trainor	Interim Chief Legal Officer
Dereck Francis	Democratic Support Officer

Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Sandra Samuels.

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item Title
No.

MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

2. **Declarations of interests**
No declarations of interests were made.
3. **Minutes of the previous meeting (26 March 2014)**
Resolved:
That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 March 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
4. **Matters arising**
There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

DECISION ITEMS (Red – for decision by the Council)

5. Deprived Area Fund Community Enterprise and Corporate Social Responsibility Grant

Cllr Peter Bilson presented the report on a proposal to issue grants to third parties to deliver a Community Enterprise Development Support project and Corporate Social Responsibility strategy.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet recommends that Council, pursuant to the Financial Procedure Rules, approves a grant of £70,000 per annum (total value (£140,000) from Deprived Area Fund (DAF) resources to Access to Business to fund the Community Enterprise Development Support project.
2. That a grant of £5,000 to GTG Training to deliver a Corporate Social Responsibility strategy be approved.
3. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Prosperity in consultation with the Strategic Director, Education and Enterprise, to agree seedcorn grants to third parties up to a maximum of £2,000 per enterprise as part of this project.
4. That a virement of the remaining £120,000 DAF revenue within the Economic Partnerships and Investment budget to the Neighbourhood Services budget for a Community Economic Development Officer and the seed corn/development grants be approved.
5. That the Chief Legal Officer be authorise to execute the contract.

DECISION ITEMS (Amber – delegated to the Cabinet)

6. Community Right to Bid/Assets of Community Value

Cllr Peter Bilson presented the report on a proposed decision making process for determining nominations made under the 'Community Right to Bid' powers in the Localism Act 2011. He emphasised that the 'right to bid' was not a right to purchase or manage assets. It provided for local groups to nominate buildings or land for listing by the Council as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). Once listed, communities have a right to bid for assets when they are put up for sale.

Cllr Roger Lawrence suggested that a guide be produced for voluntary/community groups with a local connection to explain the Right to Bid/Assets of Community Value provisions and the Council's arrangements for administering the process.

Resolved:

1. That the proposed processes to deal with nominations, appeals and compensation in respect to 'Community Right to Bid' be approved.

2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning to determine nominations for the listing of assets of community value, and to determine any claims for compensation arising from the listing of an asset.
3. That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Prosperity to determine any review against a decision to list an asset and any appeals against compensation claims.

7. **Consultation on Modifications to the Stafford Road / Bilston Corridor Area Action Plans**

Cllr Peter Bilson presented the report on the main modifications to the Stafford Road Corridor and the Bilston Corridor Area Action Plans (AAP) which are required following independent examination. A six weeks public consultation during May/June 2014 on the modifications was proposed.

Resolved:

1. That the modifications to the Stafford Road Corridor and Bilston Corridor Area Action Plans (AAPs) as summarised below and detailed in appendices 1 and 2 of the report be approved for public consultation:

Stafford Road Corridor AAP main modifications:

- Delete the Paget Arms site housing allocation (previously allocated for 10 dwellings) and re-allocate as a local quality employment investment area, following planning permission for office use;
- Reduce the housing target from 1250 to 1235 (to reflect re-allocation of the Paget Arms site and no longer rounding up housing figures);
- Update the employment land figures to reflect re-allocation of the Paget Arms site;
- Update the status of Promise House to a commitment as the site now has planning permission and is under construction;
- Allow viability and feasibility to be considered when requiring open space on high quality employment sites;
- Clarify that high end manufacturing is an aspiration and not a policy requirement on high quality employment land;
- Add primary policies to the tables in Part Three;
- Amend the context map to improve legibility.

Bilston Corridor AAP main modifications:

- Increase the housing capacity of Bilston Urban Village from 500 to 625 homes, following adoption of the Bilston Urban Village Supplementary Planning Document;
- Update the status of Thompson Avenue site to a commitment and increase capacity from 100 to 120, following grant of planning permission;

- Clarify that the former Bilston Leisure Centre site has housing potential for 33 homes;
- Clarify that part of the Land at Mount Pleasant site has planning permission for 64 homes.

2. That a further report on each AAP be submitted to Cabinet prior to submission to Full Council for adoption.

8. **South Staffordshire Site Allocations Document – Issues and Options Consultation**

Cllr Peter Bilson presented a proposed basis for the Council's response to consultation on the South Staffordshire Site Allocations Document – Issues and Options. The main issues raised by the consultation were the potential release of Green Belt sites for housing around Perton and the Council's view on major employment allocations close to Wolverhampton.

Resolved:

1. That the following be approved as the basis of the Council's response to the South Staffordshire Site Allocations Document (SAD) – Issues and Options consultation:
 - South Staffordshire covers large areas of Green Belt land, but those parts which are of most strategic importance are located around the urban area, as they stop settlements from merging and also support urban regeneration. Therefore it is of key importance to maintain the gap between the Black Country urban area and South Staffordshire villages.
 - In the case of Perton, only site 3(A) should be allocated for housing up to 2028 and any safeguarded land up to 2038, as this site makes the least contribution to Green Belt purposes and will not reduce the gap between Wolverhampton and Perton. If sites 1(D), 2(C) and 5(C), which would reduce this gap, are considered for housing allocations or safeguarding, this should be designed to: minimise any reduction of the gap; include appropriate landscaped buffers to reduce impact on Wolverhampton residents; have main road access from Perton; and maintain the existing no left turn / no right turn between Wrottesley Park Road and Pattingham Road.
 - In the case of Bilbrook, only site 1 (C) should be allocated for housing up to 2028 and safeguarded land up to 2038, as this would place less pressure on the Wolverhampton road network than alternative sites.
 - In the case of Codsall, only sites 1 (B) and 2 (B) should be allocated for housing up to 2028 and safeguarded land up to 2038, as these sites make a more limited contribution to Green Belt purposes and would place less pressure on the Wolverhampton road network than alternative sites.

- Any Perton and Codsall / Bilbrook housing allocations should be phased in the medium (5-10 years) or long (10-15 years) term, to minimise impacts on brownfield housing investment in Wolverhampton;
- Safeguarded land for housing up to 2038 should not be apportioned on the same basis as allocations up to 2028, as these reflect recent levels of development rather than the capacity of the settlement to absorb further development, suitability of available sites around each settlement or the ability of the road network to absorb residential traffic. The Green Belt review and effects on the road network should form the main basis for the apportionment, and therefore Perton, Codsall and Bilbrook should have a zero or low target up to 2038. In particular, in Perton this would reflect the fact that all available sites make a considerable contribution to Green Belt purposes.
- Support the allocation of sites E7 and E8 as a western extension to the i54 site, as and when required, as these sites will together provide a site with maximum accessibility and a strong long term boundary for i54 in the form of Pendeford Hall Lane.

The Council has committed funding for feasibility studies and has expended significant investment both in money and time with a view to building up a business case. This work is on-going and should be completed around summer 2014. This will give a more detailed understanding of the issues of developing the site and will allow a costed business plan to be developed. The proposal is also supported by Staffordshire County Council.

- The i54 western extension will help to meet Black Country high quality employment land needs, as only 10 ha of developable land remains at i54. The evidence for the extension will be provided by the South Staffordshire and Black Country Sub-regional High Quality Employment Land Study. The extension is projected to create 1000-1500 jobs in the priority sectors of aerospace, automotive, engineering, innovation and high end manufacturing together with a further 3000 as a result of supply chain and 'spin -off' generated from the inward investment.

Economic growth and targeted growth within the sectors prioritised by the Black Country Strategic Economic Plan over the next 20 years will generate demand for new development based on the evidence and strength of the clusters and their importance to the sub-regional and national economy. To meet that demand, particularly for high end manufacturing, there needs to be a ready supply of well-located, serviced sites capable of accommodating a variety of large floor plates and attractive to those who fund such schemes, as money will remain

in short supply well into the future and only the best sites will attract funding. It is the availability of the land which attracts demand from footloose operators and not vice versa.

- i54 has a strong international brand profile and major occupiers have approached the Council regarding the availability of additional land to support further expansion of the site. It is crucial to maximise the employment and regeneration opportunities created by the i54 brand, in particular to capture future investment associated with current occupiers, especially those linked to the JLR supply chain and which cannot be accommodated on other existing/potential sites within the Black Country.

Recent enquiries in the region show that there is activity within the market which would require a large site of over 10 ha. If the region hopes to land such an enquiry the availability of land in the short term is critical.

- Also support the allocation of Wobaston Road Playing Fields as an extension to the i54 site.

2. That further reports be submitted to Cabinet at the Preferred Options and Publication stages of the South Staffordshire SAD preparation process.

9. **An Affordable Rent Policy for Wolverhampton Council Housing**

Cllr Peter Bilson presented a report on policy options for setting Affordable Rents and recommended the introduction of an Affordable Rents Policy for council housing in Wolverhampton, where new build homes, property refurbishments and acquisitions are supported by Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) grant.

Resolved:

1. That the setting of Affordable Rents for new Homes and Communities grant funded council housing at 80% of the market rent level, limited by the Local Housing Allowance caps be approved.
2. That it be noted that the Council would not seek to apply Affordable Rents to existing council housing by the conversion of properties to Affordable Rent tenure when voids arise.

10. **Tenancy Agreement Review**

Cllr Peter Bilson submitted for adoption a revised Tenancy Agreement for secured tenancies. He reported that the revised Agreement had undergone extensive consultation with tenants and stakeholders and scrutiny by the Vibrant, Safe and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel.

Resolved:

1. That the new Tenancy Agreement be adopted.

2. That the results of the consultation on the new Tenancy Agreement with tenants and stakeholders and the subsequent amendments be noted.

11. **Statutory Food Service Plan 2014/15**

Cllr John Reynolds submitted for approval the draft Statutory Food Service Plan which set out the work program requirements for the forthcoming year for both the food hygiene and food standards services together with the resources available to deliver them.

Resolved:

1. That the draft 2014/15 Statutory Food Service Plan as summarised in Appendix A to the report be approved.
2. That the Cabinet Member for City Services, in consultation with the Assistant Director for Regeneration, be authorised to approve the final version of the Statutory Food Service Plan for 2014/15.
3. That a further report be submitted to Cabinet if the outcome of the current restructure of the Environmental Health (Commercial) service is such that it adversely impacts upon the ability to deliver the statutory requirements of the plan.
4. That the requirement to prepare a Food Service Plan be noted.
5. That the potential impact of the resource reductions arising from the ongoing restructuring of the service be noted.

12. **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>
13.	Customer Services Review	3
14.	Heath Town Estate Property Remodelling	3
15.	Black Country Re-investment Society Change in Contract Agreement	3

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

13. **Customer Services Review**

Cllr Andrew Johnson presented the report on the outcome from a review carried out on the Council's contact centre (City Direct) through PA Consulting and which included proposals to extend the contact centre to both improve customer service and deliver efficiencies. In doing so he reported that more work was needed on phone platforms, particularly the interactive voice response system for 'front of house calls' to ensure that the customer experience and satisfaction would be positive.

Resolved:

1. That the proposed migration of services currently in the Directorates to the contact centre after the proposed baseline exercises have been completed be approved.
2. That staff identified to transfer to the contact centre as part of the baseline exercises can be retained by Directorates if alternative financial resources can be identified and transferred (to the contact centre) by a Directorate to enable them to retain a post or posts.
3. That the proposed work programme and timeframe for the migration of services and the retention of specialist consultants to support (on a tapered basis) the implementation of the proposals be approved.
4. That the use of the £200,000 from the Efficiency Reserve to fund external programme support (internal project management and business process review work would be funded from existing resources) be approved.
5. That it be endorsed that a replacement Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system is required to underpin the delivery of the proposals and to remove the risk of the current system failing because of reduced support from the supplier of the system.
6. That the Customer Services Board (approved as part of the Council's Customer Services Strategy) oversee the delivery of this project.
7. That it be noted that there would be a capital investment requirement in relation to this programme and that this will be presented to Councillors in a separate report concerning customer relationship management software and associated ICT investment.
8. That further work be undertaken on phone platforms, particularly the interactive voice response system for 'front of house calls' to ensure that the customer experience and satisfaction would be positive.

14. **Heath Town Estate Property Remodelling**

Cllr Peter Bilson presented a report on a proposal to initiate a programme of remodelling of certain three bedroom maisonettes within the Heath Town estate by converting them to two bedroom maisonettes. The investment in the retained housing stock at Heath Town complemented proposals previously agreed by Cabinet within the Heath Town Masterplan for the wider regeneration of the Heath Town estate contributing to the long term sustainability of Heath Town.

Resolved:

1. That the conversion of 17 void three bedroom maisonettes into two bedroom properties at Heath Town be approved.
2. That a consultation exercise be undertaken with tenants of the further 34 three bedroom maisonettes of the same archetype to seek their agreement to convert their properties into two bedroom maisonettes.
3. That an ongoing programme of conversion of the remaining units of this archetype to two bedroom maisonettes as and when they become void be approved.
4. That a further report be submitted to Cabinet on the business case to consider introducing a localised incentive scheme for hard to let housing stock across the City.
5. That it be noted that as a result of Welfare Reform and in particular the removal of the "Spare Room Subsidy" – commonly known as the "bedroom tax" - three bedroom maisonettes at Heath Town have become increasingly difficult to let with void numbers rising.
6. That it be noted that the final year of Decent Homes backlog funding presents a unique opportunity to re-model some of the three bedroom maisonettes and the resulting reduction in rent charged will be offset against the rent loss from unlettable properties.

15. **Black Country Re-investment Society Change in Contract Agreement**

Cllr Peter Bilson presented the report that sought approval for a change in an element of the contract with BCRS (formally known as Black Country Re-investment Society).

Resolved:

1. That a change to the agreement with BCRS (formally known as Black Country Re-investment Society) allowing BCRS an extension of time to make the repayment of the sums provided to it by the Council be approved.
2. That authority be delegated to the Chief Legal Officer to enter into a Deed of Variation and execute the same in order to implement the above recommendation.