

Minutes of a meeting of the **CABINET** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Tuesday, 25 July 2017 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

G A Porter (Leader)
M G Chandler (Deputy Leader)

A Casson
P E Coupland

R Gambba-Jones
C J Lawton
S-A Slade

G J Taylor
C N Johnson

Cabinet Support Member: T A Carter

The Chief Executive, the Executive Director Commercialisation, the Executive Manager - People and Public Protection, the Place Manager, the Strategic Housing Manager, the Environmental Services Manager, the Head of Services Revenues and Benefits, Strategic Business Partner, Business Manager Revenues & Benefits, the Head of Finance, the Interim Project Consultant, the Legal Services Manager and the Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors C N Worth, together with Lincolnshire Community & Voluntary Service and the Director Strategy and Governance.

In Attendance: Councillor B Alcock (Chairman, Performance Monitoring Panel), Councillor G R Aley (Chairman, Governance and Audit Committee) and Councillor A M Newton (Independent Group Leader),

Community Representatives: Citizens Advice Bureau and Parish Councils

1. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2017 were signed by the Leader as a correct record.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

Councillor Alcock informed the meeting that in relation to agenda items 12 and 16, in the interests of transparency, he wished it to be recorded that, although he did not hold a financial interest, he was a Director of Welland Homes Ltd. He remained in the meeting during discussion of this item.

Councillor Coupland informed the meeting that in relation to agenda items 12 and 16, in the interests of transparency, he wished it to be recorded that, although he did not hold a financial interest, he was a Director of Welland Homes Ltd. He remained in the meeting during discussion of this item.

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3. QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE PUBLIC UNDER THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION (STANDING ORDERS).

No questions were raised under the Council's Constitution (Standing Orders).

4. TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS WHICH HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO CALL-IN.

There were no matters subject to call-in.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANELS

Final Report of the Re-Letting of Void Properties Task Group

Consideration was given to the final report of the Re-Letting of Void Properties Task Group containing recommendations which had been approved by the Performance Monitoring Panel.

The Chairman of the Task Group, Councillor G R Aley presented the report containing the Task Group's recommendations to the Cabinet.

The work undertaken by the Task Group was welcomed. Some improvements to the re-letting of void properties had already been seen although further improvements were required. Changes to the way in which voids were dealt with would be incorporated within the Place Review – this, and the Task Group's findings were mutually supportive pieces of work, and the Task Group's recommendations would be taken forward and fed into the service review.

<1>It was stated that the loss of revenue due to properties being unlet for 20-30 days and longer would be incorporated into targets set as part of the Place Review. Members were also advised that hard to let properties would be part of the review of the Council's housing stock, and information from this would be incorporated into the report (requested as a recommendation of the Task Group) due to be considered by the Performance Monitoring Panel in November.

DECISION:

<2>That the following recommendations of the Task Group be approved, and be taken forward and fed into the Place Review:

- a) That the voids process is amalgamated into one voids team and the process along with a number of actions within this are refined and/or removed. This is for all properties within the housing stock (sheltered or general needs housing). This may rely upon digital applications, key safes at properties to allow quicker access once vacated and automated communications with customers;
- b) That the management of tenancies is overhauled to ensure property standards are maintained and/or recharges for repairs are appropriately received. This includes procedures used at the commencement of any new tenancy to ensure

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the efficiency and effectiveness of tenancy management and to ensure everyone, including the tenant, is aware of their duties and responsibilities during their tenancy. This includes a need for clear communication of procedures to be followed during and at the end of the tenancies, such as the handing in of notice and the timescales/method to be followed for the return of keys. This way of working will ensure swift timescales at the start of the process and support subsequent actions in the process to meet turnaround times;

- c) That the marketing of properties is undertaken, with new methods actively sought. In the first instance it is recommended that the Council website and Facebook page is utilised to market properties, especially those where interest has been lacking. Other techniques such as choice based lettings should be investigated further and where appropriate put into action;
- d) That the current contracts are reviewed, that directly impact the voids timeline, potentially seeking to bring back in-house some services such as Energy Performance Certificate assessing;
- e) That the current allocations policy is reviewed for effectiveness alongside a strategic property review for hard to let properties within the housing stock;
- f) That the Housing Allocations policy is reviewed to ensure that waiting lists are appropriate for the housing need of South Holland;
- g) That the voids process provides high quality properties within a consistent turn around that meets the needs of our tenants; and
- h) That these recommendations are allocated to an identified officer to ensure their action and that an update is received by the Performance Monitoring Panel on actions against these at the 7 November 2017 meeting.

(Other options considered:

- *To not approve the Task Group's Final Report and/or suggest that some or all of the recommendations be amended; or*
- *Do nothing*

Reasons for Recommendation:

- *The review was conducted as a result of worsening performance data, and the recommendations outlined in the Task Group's report would ensure that the voids process was efficiently and effectively managed, and provided high quality houses to meet the needs of tenants.)*

6. PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORT QUARTER 4 2016/17

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Governance and Transformation and the Executive Director Strategy and Governance, which provided an update on Council performance for the period 1 January 2017 to 31 March 2017.

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The Quarter 4 Performance Report 2016/17, attached at Appendix A to the report, provided councillors and residents with information about how the Council was delivering its services and how it was progressing against its Corporate Priorities.

Quarter 4 saw a decrease in levels of performance in comparison to the performance seen in quarter 3. Four areas of concern were noted – Housing Void Figures; Average Wait Time in Seconds; Environmental Services; and Sickness.

<1>It was noted that the same report was presented to the Performance Monitoring Panel prior to consideration by the Cabinet, and that it would be useful for comments by the Panel to be fed into the Cabinet report.

<2>Concern was raised that sickness levels were again increasing. The Cabinet requested that all service areas review their own positions and feed back in the next report. It was also requested that there be a separation in the figures between long and short term sickness.

DECISION:

That the report be noted.

(Other options considered:

- *Do nothing;*

Reasons for decision:

- *No recommendations were made. The report was presented for consideration in order that members were aware of how the Council was delivering its services and how it was progressing against its Corporate Priorities.)*

7. APPOINTMENT OF PANELS AND WORKING PARTIES

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Manager Governance which sought the appointment of Panels and Working Parties for the period 2017 – 2019.

Cabinet was advised of a change to the proposed membership of the ICT Councillor Working Group, and that Councillor Slade would be replaced by Councillor Johnson.

DECISION:

- a) <1>That the Pre-Application Consultation Group be re-established for the period 2017-19 without amendment to its terms of reference; and substitutions be permitted where members formed part of a political group subject to (i) substitutions applying for individual meetings only and (ii) the group leader or nominated representative submitting details to the Executive Manager Governance by noon on the day of the meeting, or at least 3 hours before the meeting, whichever was the sooner;
- b) That the ICT Councillor Working Group be re-established for 2017-2019 without amendment to the terms of reference; and substitutions be permitted (including for the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for ICT) where members formed part of

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a political group subject to (i) substitutions applying for individual meetings only and (ii) the group leader or nominated representative submitting details to the Executive Manager Governance by noon on the day of the meeting, or at least 3 hours before the meeting, whichever was the sooner; and

c) That composition of both of these Groups be formed as follows:

Pre-Application Consultation Group

- Councillors B Alcock, G R Aley, F Biggadike, C J T H Brewis, A Casson, P E Coupland, H Drury, R Gambba-Jones, A Harrison, M D Seymour, E Sneath and P A Williams.

ICT Councillor Working Group

- Councillors G R Aley, J Astill, C J T H Brewis, M G Chandler, P C Foyster, A Harrison and C N Johnson.

(Other options considered:

- *Not to approve the recommendations; or*
- *To approve the recommendations with no amendments.*

Reasons for decision:

- *To enable delivery of the advisory/consultative support detailed in paragraph 2.3 of the report.)*

8. 2016-17 FINANCIAL OUTTURN

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Executive Director Commercialisation (S151) which sought approval of recommendations in respect of the outturn financial position of the Council, as at 31 March 2017. The Financial Report for the year ending 31 March 2017 was attached to the report as Appendix A.

<1>It was noted that some figures in Table 7 within Appendix A (in the Actual under/overspend column) were showing as overspends rather than underspends. It was requested that these figures be corrected prior to the report's submission to Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO FULL COUNCIL

- a) That the report and Appendix A be noted;
- b) That the contributions to and use of reserves be agreed in line with paragraph 5.1.6 and Appendix A, Table 4 and 5 of the report; and
- c) That the revised 2017-18 capital programme be approved, based on the carry forward and other budget adjustments noted at paragraph 5.1.6 and Appendix A Tables 9 and 10 of the report.

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(Other options considered:

- *To note the report and not approve the recommendations detailed in Appendix A; or*
- *To do nothing.*

Reasons for decision:

- *To provide members with information on the Council's overall financial performance in 2016-17 and to provide an updated financial position on reserves and the capital programme for 2017-18.)*

9. **BUSINESS RATES - LOCAL DISCRETIONARY RELIEF SCHEME**

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Executive Director Commercialisation (S151) which updated members on the introduction of schemes to support businesses following the national revaluation which came into place on 1 April 2017, and sought approval for the implementation of the government schemes and a Locally Administered Business Rate Relief Scheme to support businesses that faced increases in their business rates bills as a result of the revaluation.

Members were advised that the scheme would only run for three years, after which businesses would have to pay the full bill themselves. Funding for all authorities was front loaded with 50% of the funding to be used in year one with a steep decline in the amount available in the subsequent two years. There was currently no option to carry monies forward from one year to the next.

<1>It was also stated that national businesses were not excluded from the scheme however, some would naturally drop out of eligibility due to the State Aid Scheme. It was requested that the number of national businesses that did drop out of the scheme be monitored.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- a) That the Locally Administered Business Rates Relief scheme, which would limit the increase in 2017/18 business rates bills to £600 for businesses with a Rateable Value of less than or equal to £100,000 be approved;
- b) That delegated authority to the Section 151 Officer, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, to review and revise the scheme to ensure the Council maximises support to businesses to the extent of funding provided, including provision for exceptional hardship on individual cases, and to determine the level of relief for each year of the scheme, be approved.

DECISION

- c) That the supporting Small Business Relief (SSBR) scheme, to be operated under the Council's discretionary powers in line with government guidance be approved; and

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- d) The Support for Pubs scheme, to be operated under the Council's discretionary powers, in line with government guidance be approved.

(Other options considered:

- *Award rate relief to ratepayers in proportion to the % increase in the amount of rates payable in 2017/18, after all reliefs have been applied and where the Rateable Value is less than or equal to £100,000;*
- *Limit the increase after all other reliefs have been applied, and with a Rateable Value less than or equal to £100,000, to 4%*

Reasons for decision:

- *The funding provided allows South Holland to provide a simple to understand scheme that provides support to ratepayers in 2017/18 who are facing increases in their rates bills because of revaluation, at the same time providing for a contingency in the fund which could be used to extend or expand the scheme, including case by case applications from businesses who as a direct result of the revaluation are facing hardship*
- *The delegation of authority will provide for an efficient review and revision process against scheme expenditure, and to determine the level of relief for 2018/19 and future years subject to scheme funding in order to apply to annual bills;*
- *No business type or ratepayer will be excluded as it is recognised that both national and local businesses contribute to the prosperity and local employment within the district.)*

10. **DEBT MANAGEMENT AND WRITE OFF OPERATIONAL POLICIES**

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Portfolio Holder Finance and the Executive Director Commercialisation which sought approval for the Authority's approach to debt management and write off.

The Write Off Operational Policy was attached as item 15 within the agenda, which was not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)). Members did not discuss the content of the appendix within the meeting and it was not therefore necessary to consider this item in private session.

<1>The Cabinet was not in agreement with the second recommendation regarding delegation for the CPBS Head of Service, Revenues and Benefits to write off debt for an individual debtor below £5,000, as it was of the opinion that all write-offs should be considered by the Cabinet. It was pointed out that delegation to the S151 Officer was already in place and that the report was requesting that this be transferred to CPBS. Clarification of the current delegation detailed within the Constitution was sought on this point

Members were advised that the Debt Management and Debt Write Off Operational Policies had been requested by the Cabinet at its meeting in January 2017. The Debt Management Policy only included minor amendments from the previous version. The Debt Write-Off Operational Policy was a new policy which gave clear guidance to officers on pre-recovery and possible enforcement action. It was agreed

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that a mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of the processes detailed within the policy be devised, and that progress be reported in six months time.

DECISION:

- a) That the Debt Management and Debt Write Off Operational Policies be agreed;
- b) <2>That the effectiveness of the new Debt Write Off Operational Policies be monitored and results fed back in six months time; and
- c) That delegation for the CPBS Head of Service, Revenues and Benefits to authorise the write off of debt below £5,000 for an individual debtor not be agreed, and that clarification around the current delegation to the S151 Officer be sought.

(Other options considered:

- *Do nothing*

Reasons for Decision:

- *Greater efficiency, consistency and assurance around debt management, and the identification of irrecoverable debt recommended for write off.*
- *Officer time maximised on greatest returns, at the same time as ensuring robust procedures for debt management are in place across all revenue streams.)*

11. **WELLAND HOMES - UPDATE TO BUSINESS PLAN**

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Portfolio Holder Finance and the Executive Director Commercialisation (S151) which sought agreement to put in place financial arrangements to enable Welland Homes Limited to purchase residential property at London Road, Long Sutton and to update the Welland Homes Business Plan.

The London Road Financial Model and Scheme Evaluation (Appendix 1), Updated Welland Homes Limited Business Plan (Appendix 2) and Financial impact on the Council (Appendix 3) were attached as item 16 within the agenda, which was not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)). Members did not discuss the content of the appendices within the meeting and it was not therefore necessary to consider this item in private session.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- a) That the Capital Programme, approved by Council on 22 February 2017, be amended to reflect the amended programme set out in paragraph 5.2 of the report; and
- b) That this amendment to the Welland Homes Interim Business Case be approved.

(Other options considered:

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- *Do nothing – this would mean that the London Road scheme would not proceed which would limit the delivery of housing from Welland Homes under the existing business plan and leave the Company unable to deliver forecast returns.*

Reasons for decision:

- *Completion of the London Road Scheme was a key element of the Welland Homes Business Plan.)*

12. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE LEADER DECIDES ARE URGENT.

There were no urgent items.

13. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

DECISION:

That, under section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

14. ESTABLISHMENT OF A SHARED GROWTH & COMMERCIALISATION DELIVERY UNIT

Consideration was given to the report of the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Growth and Commercialisation, concerning the establishment of a Shared Growth and Commercialisation Delivery Unit to increase the delivery capacity of both Councils with regard to key strategic programmes of activity.

It was agreed that resources around project management was an important area moving forward, in order for the Authority to achieve its corporate growth programme. The process needed to be monitored closely over the forthcoming year, and the Performance Monitoring Panel would receive a report on the performance of the delivery unit once it had been set up.

Members also commented that it would be important to be aware of the different, newer ways of working by the new team, and existing officers of the Council, and that there were clearly defined protocols in this respect.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- a) <1>That the establishment of a new delivery unit, the proposed structure in respect of which was set out at section 1.5 and Appendix B, be approved; and
- b) That the use of the Investment and Growth Reserve to support the cost of this unit be approved.

(Other options considered:

- *To do nothing.*

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Reasons for decision:

- *To enable the Council to drive delivery forward on areas of priority and to have access to the necessary expertise to facilitate delivery of land and property based projects.)*

(The meeting ended at 11.06 am)

(End of minutes)

These minutes are published on Tuesday 25 July 2017. In accordance with the Council's Constitution the DECISIONS detailed above will, unless otherwise stated, come into force and may then be implemented on Wednesday 2 August 2017 (i.e. after the expiry of 5 working days from the date of publication of these minutes), unless during that period a notice which is signed by either a Ward Representative (in relation to a matter in their ward) or two members of the Performance Monitoring Panel or any three members, and complies with the requirements of the Council's Constitution is served on the Executive Manager Governance requesting that the decision be called-in and the Executive Manager Governance approves the request for call-in. Where a decision is called-in it will firstly be considered by the Performance Monitoring Panel on a date to be fixed.

Any FINAL DECISIONS and any URGENT DECISIONS take effect immediately.

Any RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL detailed above will be submitted for consideration to the meeting of the full Council on Wednesday 26 July 2017.