

Minutes of a meeting of the **CABINET** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Tuesday, 4 June 2024 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

C N Worth (Leader)

P A Redgate (Deputy
Leader)
H J W Bingham
T A Carter

A Casson
E J Sneath
G J Taylor

J Tyrrell

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors J R Astill, B Alcock (Chairman, Performance Monitoring Panel), A Beal (Chairman, Governance and Audit Committee and A Woolf (Chairman, Policy Development Panel).

The Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate and Development (S151), the Assistant Director Housing, the Assistant Director – Economic Growth, the Democratic Services Manager and the Democratic Services Support Officer.

In Attendance: Councillor R A Gibson (Leader, Independent Group)

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 30 April 2024 were agreed and signed by the Leader.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were none.

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

There were none.

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

There were none.

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

There were none.

Action By

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6. SOUTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL PARTNERSHIP GROWTH AND PROSPERITY PLAN

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Economic Growth which requested support for the Growth and Prosperity Plan for the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership.

The Leader (Portfolio Holder – Partnerships) presented the report.

The Growth and Prosperity Plan reflected the vision and priorities of the sub-regional strategy for the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership.

It was the first partnership wide document that sought to capture in a single unifying document the partnership's key priorities around economic growth, the themes of intended focus and the principles that would underpin the approach.

Shaped through regular briefings with members across the SELCP, it set out 5 strategic priorities:

- Vibrant Town Centres and Regeneration
- Supporting Priority sectors and businesses
- Supporting skills, learning and employment opportunities
- Enabling growth and housing
- Attracting investment

A single Growth and Prosperity Plan for the Partnership would demonstrate to external partners the partnership's alignment and collective focus on a prosperous, productive and creative economy. It would be useful when liaising with government and other stakeholders, as a means of helping communicate priorities as a partnership. The Partnership had a track record of delivery and this would help when seeking funding and attracting investment on a partnership basis.

It helped provide a basis for the partnership to consider how and where to apply resources going forward. The Plan did not propose a 'one size fits all approach'; instead, it had an evidence-led foundation and was place-based – directly responding to the issues and challenges in each locality.

Member briefings had positively supported the Growth and Prosperity Plan.

DECISION:

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- 1) That the Growth and Prosperity Plan at Appendix A be approved and supported, and that the Plan be adopted subject to any final consultation feedback as agreed with the relevant portfolio holders; and
- 2) That the Growth and Prosperity Plan becomes a line of inquiry in the Partnership's Annual Scrutiny, complementing the sub-regional strategy process.

(Other options considered:

- *Do nothing. It has already been agreed by Councillors, through the priorities of the sub-regional strategy, that a Growth and Prosperity Plan should be developed. Therefore, this option was not recommended.*

Reasons for decision:

- *The Growth and Prosperity Plan will reflect the vision and priorities of the 24/25 – 28/29 Sub-Regional Strategy and align strategic priorities across the Councils to further support the benefits of collaborative working. A single Growth and Prosperity Plan for the Partnership will demonstrate to external partners our alignment and collective focus on a prosperous, productive and creative economy. This will be particularly helpful when engaging with partners and businesses, Government and funders, and leveraging further investment into the sub-region.)*

7. HRA STOCK CONDITION SURVEYS

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Housing which sought approval from Cabinet to amend the 2024/25 Housing Revenue Account, revenue budget to fund stock condition surveys.

The Portfolio Holder – Strategic and Operational Housing presented the report.

The Regulator of Social Housing had set out clear expectations to Registered Providers regarding stock condition data. Providers needed to evidence up to date knowledge of the condition and decency of their homes, in short, proving that their homes were good quality, well maintained and safe. Furthermore, compliance with the current decent homes' standard should be underpinned by robust evidence, such as up to date in depth physical property surveys.

The effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of the Council's Housing Repairs Service, maintenance and planned improvement programmes could only be truly effective when underpinned by up to date and reliable data. Therefore, undertaking comprehensive physical assessments to all the Council's housing stock would

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enable the Authority to improve the outcomes it delivered to its tenants. Building on the current data already held, refreshing and updating older data and closing data gaps would form the foundations of the recently commissioned strategic planning work to refresh the HRA Business Plan and Asset Management Strategy.

The comprehensive scope of the stock conditions work would ensure the Council had an accurate, up to date and evidenced understanding at an individual property level. Alongside stock condition assessments, assessments of health and safety and energy audit work would ensure the Authority held quality data, providing it with a rounded view of all its homes. As the Council continued to prepare for a future enhanced Decent Homes Standard, this data set would form a vital part of the Council's assessment of the cost of meeting any future requirements.

The following points were raised:

- What was the current status of the stock condition surveys, in relation to the data that the Authority held?
 - Data was held on an individual level for all of the Authority's properties. Some of this data was up to 8 years old and there was also information from surveys that had been carried out in recent years. Under the new requirements, the oldest data that could be held should be five years old meaning that around half of the data held by the Authority was approaching this limit. Traditionally, data had included elements such as kitchens, bathrooms, roofs etc where there was an age element attached - the new standard set out by the regulators now included elements such as health and safety and the energy audit works. Where properties had reported issues e.g. damp and mould, the Authority would have full information on them, but not on those that had not – these data gaps therefore required filling.

- Visits to tenants' homes would have to be undertaken – how would this be managed?
 - The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing stated that the same process for visits would be followed and that this was detailed within the scoping document. It would be challenging to undertake the surveys as some tenants may not see the benefits of it being undertaken – this challenge had already been raised between the Portfolio Holder and officers.
 - The Assistant Director – Housing clarified that the report under discussion dealt with ensuring that the

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budget elements were in place, and that a separate decision would be taken and published in due course, detailing the approach to be taken. A communication strategy would be agreed. Some preparatory work had already started as the potential for a significant number of enquiries was recognised. It was important that the approach taken was clear, that tenants understood what was being done and that this work was being undertaken on behalf of the Council.

DECISION:

To approve a transfer from HRA reserves of £276,500 (£251,300 + £25,200 as a 10% contingency) to fund stock condition survey work, subject to a formal contract being awarded.

(Other options considered:

- *Initially, consideration was given to commissioning a refreshed 'elements survey' to inform the continued investment the Council makes in maintaining the Decent Homes Standard. However, based on guidance from the Regulator of Social Housing which became available shortly before the Consumer Standards came into force this is considered ineffective to deliver against the outcomes of the consumer standards.*
- *Do nothing. The Council could opt to continue using its current stock condition data. However, this is considered insufficient to meet the new regulatory requirements.*

Reasons for decision:

- *The Regulator of Social Housing has mandated through the approved Consumer Standards that Registered Providers must have accurate, up to date and evidenced understanding of the condition of their homes that reliably informs their provision of good quality, well maintained and safe homes for tenants. To demonstrate outcomes to the Regulator of Social Housing, it is considered essential to commission a refreshed data set on all the Council's residential housing assets within the HRA.)*

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

There were none.

(The meeting ended at 6.42 pm)

(End of minutes)

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Any RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL detailed above will be submitted for consideration to the meeting of the full Council on **31 July 2024**.