

## CABINET

10.00 A.M.

8TH NOVEMBER 2011

**PRESENT:-** Councillors Eileen Blamire (Chairman), Janice Hanson (Vice-Chairman), Jon Barry, Abbott Bryning, Tim Hamilton-Cox, Ron Sands and David Smith

Apologies for Absence:-

Councillor Karen Leytham

Officers in attendance:-

Mark Cullinan	Chief Executive
Heather McManus	Deputy Chief Executive
Nadine Muschamp	Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Richard Tulej	Head of Community Engagement Service (Minute 57 & 58)
Graham Cox	Head of Property Services (Minute 61)
Andrew Dobson	Head of Regeneration & Policy Service (Minute 61)
Liz Bateson	Principal Democratic Support Officer

### 53 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 5 October 2011 were approved as a correct record.

### 54 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE LEADER

The Chairman advised that there were no items of urgent business.

### 55 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Barry declared a personal interest with regard to the Allotment Provision report in view of his membership of an Allotment Association. (Minute 58 refers).

### 56 PUBLIC SPEAKING

Members were advised that there had been no requests to speak at the meeting in accordance with Cabinet's agreed procedure.

### 57 PARTNERSHIPS

#### **(Cabinet Member with Special Responsibility Councillor Blamire)**

Cabinet received a report from the Head of Community Engagement to provide members with the background to and recommendations for the Council's future approach to working in partnership in the district, including the use of uncommitted Performance Reward Grant funds.

The options, options analysis, including risk assessment and officer preferred option,

were set out in the report as follows:

	<b>Option 1:</b> Continue support for key partnerships within a streamlined and more informal structure	<b>Option 2:</b> Do Nothing - Retain the council's existing LSP structures
Advantages	<p>Ability to be more focused on areas of partnership working that are a priority.</p> <p>Clearer added value from working in partnership where this brings additional benefits.</p> <p>More flexible model with the ability to adapt to new requirements in the new future.</p> <p>Reduced administrative burden.</p> <p>Opportunity to free officer and partner time to deal with outcome focused work.</p>	<p>Current structures are inclusive and offer the opportunity to engage with a broad range of partners regularly.</p>
Disadvantages	<p>Council will need to take on a stronger central co-ordinating and enabling role, which is currently undertaken by the LSP.</p>	<p>A number of meetings are considered to be overly bureaucratic.</p> <p>Future funding to LSP's is uncertain and means that longer term planning is not possible.</p> <p>The requirement for governance at the strategic partnership level is no longer necessary.</p>
Risks	<p>Managing the recommended changes whilst maintaining positive relationships with partners.</p> <p>Possible impact on level of communications between partners if requirement for regular scheduled meetings is reduced.</p>	<p>Partners are affected by resource pressures and it is possible that attendance and participation in routine LSP meetings and events may drop considerably, undermining possible achievements.</p>

Option 1 was the officer preferred option. Whilst the time for the formal LSP had now passed the need for strong partnership working was more important than ever. Focusing on a number of key partnerships would allow the Council and its partners to fulfil their responsibilities and deliver their priorities efficiently and effectively.

Councillor Barry proposed, seconded by Councillor Hanson:-

“(1) That Cabinet approve the new partnership arrangements proposed in the report.

- (2) That the uncommitted Performance Reward Grant funding of £27,535 revenue and £89,910 capital revert back to the city council.”

Councillors then voted:-

**Resolved unanimously:**

- (1) That Cabinet approve the new partnership arrangements proposed in the report.
- (2) That the uncommitted Performance Reward Grant funding of £27,535 revenue and £89,910 capital revert back to the city council.

**Officers responsible for effecting the decision:**

Head of Community Engagement

**Reasons for making the decision:**

Partnership working forms one of the Council’s current Corporate Plan priorities. The decision supports the refocusing of efforts on a number of key partnerships that are likely to add significant value in the district in the future and will allow the council and its partners to fulfil their responsibilities and deliver their priorities efficiently and effectively.

**58 ALLOTMENT PROVISION**

**(Cabinet Member with Special Responsibility Councillor Barry)**

Cabinet received a report from the Head of Community Engagement regarding the current provision for allotments in the district.

The options, options analysis, including risk assessment and officer preferred option, were set out in the report as follows:

	<b>Option 1: Maintain the status quo i.e support self management of allotments, continue with the existing capital upgrade programme, support local community led initiatives for additional allotment sites</b>	<b>Option 2: Maintain the status quo but use Planning Policy and guidance as the means to which additional allotment development sites can be identified</b>
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No additional cost.</li> <li>• Still allocates minimal resources to support self management of allotment sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help achieve more of the PPG17 recommended actions.</li> <li>• Improved resources for the community.</li> </ul>
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand for allotment sites cannot be met.</li> <li>• The Council will not be fulfilling all of the PPG17 recommended actions.</li> <li>• Costs to the Council of in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will divert planning officers away from other tasks.</li> </ul> <p>No resources available to develop identified sites</p>

	terms of officer resources and potential liabilities re the tenancy issues at Scotforth allotments	
Risks	The limited resources available to the council, is at times having difficulty maintaining the status quo.	Increased expectations that the demand for allotment sites can be met

Option 2 was the officer preferred option –it recommended that Planning policy be the vehicle by which allocations should be made and supported and recommended that development of new sites be community led and supported by the Council as and when they arrive. This option also recognised the limitations in terms of resources that the Council currently had in taking any further work forward.

Currently demand for allotments far outstripped supply and this trend was likely to continue. There was a need to consider whether, in the current financial climate, the establishment of new allotments was affordable and a priority. There would be significant resource implications connected with attempting to meet the current demand for allotments.

Councillor Barry proposed, seconded by Councillor Hamilton-Cox:-

- “(1) That Cabinet note the current position regarding the provision of allotments in the district.
- (2) That officers continue to work with Lancashire County Council to support the proposed ‘Greenfingers’ project at Heysham.
- (3) That Cabinet supports extension of the allotment site at Scotforth and agrees that the land is designated in the Local Development Framework for allotment use. Cabinet asks officers to sort out details of the agricultural tenancy and how the extended site will be managed. Cabinet asks that a potential growth item of £60K is earmarked for possible inclusion in the 2012/13 capital programme. Cabinet also asks that officers work with the Scotforth Allotment Association in order to raise the money through funding bids independent of the council.
- (4) That the Regeneration and Policy Service use the opportunities in the preparation of the Local Development Framework land allocations document to identify and subsequently protect sites for new allotments to be created.
- (5) The Regeneration and Policy Service prepare a short piece of supplementary planning guidance on the criteria to be met to obtain planning permission for allotments proposed on unallocated land.
- (6) That officers consider ways in which allotment provision can be included in major new developments as part of the planning process.”

Cabinet Members then voted on each recommendation as follows:-

***Resolved unanimously:***

- (1) That Cabinet note the current position regarding the provision of allotments in the district.
- (2) That officers continue to work with Lancashire County Council to support the proposed 'Greenfingers' project at Heysham.

***Resolved:***

***(5 Members (Councillors Barry, Bryning, Hamilton-Cox, Sands and Smith) voted in favour, 2 Members (Councillors Blamire and Hanson) voted against***

- (3) That Cabinet supports extension of the allotment site at Scotforth and agrees that the land is designated in the Local Development Framework for allotment use. Cabinet asks officers to sort out details of the agricultural tenancy and how the extended site will be managed. Cabinet asks that a potential growth item of £60K is earmarked for possible inclusion in the 2012/13 capital programme. Cabinet also asks that officers work with the Scotforth Allotment Association in order to raise the money through funding bids independent of the council.

***Resolved unanimously:***

- (4) That the Regeneration and Policy Service use the opportunities in the preparation of the Local Development Framework land allocations document to identify and subsequently protect sites for new allotments to be created.
- (5) The Regeneration and Policy Service prepare a short piece of supplementary planning guidance on the criteria to be met to obtain planning permission for allotments proposed on unallocated land.
- (6) That officers consider ways in which allotment provision can be included in major new developments as part of the planning process.

**Officers responsible for effecting the decision:**

Head of Community Engagement  
Head of Regeneration and Policy

**Reasons for making the decision:**

The decision recognises the importance of allotments not just because the city council has a statutory duty to provide them but because it considers them to be a valued community resource. In addition the decision supports the concept of partnership working through the existing self-management arrangements.

**59 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE****(Cabinet Member with Special Responsibility Councillor Bryning)**

Cabinet received a report from the Head of Financial Services which updated members on the Council's financial prospects for future years in order to help inform development of its budget strategy.

The options, options analysis, including risk assessment and officer preferred option, were set out in the report as follows:

The report was primarily for information and for seeking direction from Cabinet and other than for council tax, no specific options were put forward at this time.

The options regarding council tax targets were basically to either:

- retain the existing council tax target of no more than 2% for future years; or
- recommend alternative council tax target increases for future years; or
- delay making recommendations at this stage, until later in the budget process.

The level of any net savings requirement (and the associated risks) would depend on the tax level proposed. Clearly the compensation arrangements in support of a council tax freeze required specific consideration. For information, a 1% change in council tax amounted to about £84K.

The main risks attached to any option followed on from the information in the report and the ability of the Council to take decisions on matching service levels with the money available to fund them. The impact on Council Tax payers was key, the reputation and public perception of the Council might well be affected. The key risks were summarised as follows:

- Actual savings targets prove to be substantially different from those shown, due to changes in financial projections.
- Required savings targets can't be met, without having an unacceptable impact on service delivery – either from the Council's own viewpoint or from public perception.
- Government / the public perceive council tax levels to be too high, resulting in capping action being taken against the Council and/or a negative impact on public relations and the Council's reputation.
- Council tax targets are too low, resulting in them being unsustainable in the longer term, without having adverse effects on future service delivery and/or the Council's financial standing and reputation.

To counter these risks, there would be further opportunities to review target increases during the forthcoming budget as more definite information became available on forecast spending.

Although some progress had been made towards improving the Council's financial outlook, unfortunately additional cost pressures had arisen and therefore, overall, its prospects were broadly the same as they were at the start of the year. It is clear, however, that Cabinet was ambitious and wished to pursue growth in some service

areas but to make this possible, the focus must now be on how and where to make savings. In terms of council tax, targets for next year were expected to have implications for subsequent years and this needed to be factored into Members' decision-making. It was impossible to get away from the fact that lower government funding and lower council tax increases ultimately meant more savings being needed – with more pressure therefore to reduce service provision.

Councillor Bryning proposed, seconded by Councillor Barry:-

- “(1) That Cabinet notes the current position regarding current spending and forecasts for future years, together with associated risks and uncertainties.
- (2) That Cabinet reconsiders whether it wishes to recommend any changes to Council Tax targets in December when more comprehensive information should be available.
- (3) That the key issues arising from this review be reported to Council for information.”

Councillors then voted:-

***Resolved unanimously:***

- (1) That Cabinet notes the current position regarding current spending and forecasts for future years, together with associated risks and uncertainties.
- (2) That Cabinet reconsiders whether it wishes to recommend any changes to Council Tax targets in December when more comprehensive information should be available.
- (3) That the key issues arising from this review be reported to Council for information.

**Officers responsible for effecting the decision:**

Head of Financial Services

**Reasons for making the decision:**

The report was primarily for information and for seeking direction from Cabinet and other than for council tax, no specific options were put forward at this time. The decision deferred the consideration of council tax targets until more comprehensive information became available.

**60 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chairman asked for any further declarations of interest from Cabinet Members regarding the exempt report.

It was moved by Councillor Bryning and seconded by Councillor Hamilton-Cox:-

“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 of business, on the grounds that it could involve the possible disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of that Act.”

Members then voted as follows:-

***Resolved unanimously:***

- (1) 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 of business, on the grounds that it could involve the possible disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

**61 LAND AT ASHBOURNE ROAD / REAR OF TAN HILL DRIVE, LANCASTER**

**(Cabinet Members with Special Responsibility Councillors Hamilton-Cox and Leytham)**

Cabinet received a report from the Heads of Property Services and Regeneration and Policy which was exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 to obtain approval to the transfer of land to facilitate the development of affordable housing on Council owned land at Ashbourne Road, Lancaster.

The options, options analysis, including risk assessment and officer preferred option, were set out in the exempt report.

Following advice from officers Councillor Hamilton-Cox proposed, seconded by Councillor Bryning:

- “(1) That Cabinet agree to transfer the freehold interest in the land at Ashbourne Road, Lancaster to a registered housing provider as set out in the exempt report.
- (2) That Cabinet receive a further report in due course in relation to the funding mechanism.”

Councillors then voted:-

***Resolved unanimously:***

- (1) That Cabinet agree to transfer the freehold interest in the land at Ashbourne Road, Lancaster to a registered housing provider as set out in the exempt report.
- (2) That Cabinet receive a further report in due course in relation to the funding mechanism.

**Officers responsible for effecting the decision:**

Head of Regeneration and Policy



Head of Property Services

**Reasons for making the decision:**

The Council's Corporate Plan includes Housing Regeneration as a priority as well as seeking new opportunities to include affordable housing within schemes. At its October meeting (minute 48 refers) Cabinet agreed their strategic housing regeneration priorities for the foreseeable future and one of these priorities was: "to increase the supply and delivery of affordable housing schemes." The decision directly supports this priority. In addition the decision indicates to the developer that the principle of disposal is acceptable thereby enabling the scheme to progress whilst the funding mechanism can be considered by Cabinet at a later date.

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Chairman

(The meeting ended at 11.15 a.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Liz Bateson, Democratic Services - telephone (01524) 582047, or email  
ebateson@lancaster.gov.uk**

**MINUTES PUBLISHED ON FRIDAY 11 NOVEMBER, 2011.  
EFFECTIVE DATE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE DECISIONS CONTAINED IN THESE MINUTES:  
MONDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2011.**

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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