

CABINET

10.00 A.M.

6TH DECEMBER 2011

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

Officers in attendance:-

Mark Cullinan	Chief Executive
Heather McManus	Deputy Chief Executive
Nadine Muschamp	Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Mark Davies	Head of Environmental Services (Minute 66)
Suzanne Lodge	Head of Health and Housing (Minutes 66 & 67)
Liz Bateson	Principal Democratic Support Officer

62 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 8 November 2011 were approved as a correct record.

63 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE LEADER

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

64 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made at this point.

65 PUBLIC SPEAKING

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

The Chairman advised the meeting of a revision to the order of the agenda and item 9 Council Housing Planned Maintenance Partnering Arrangement would be considered first.

66 COUNCIL HOUSING PLANNED MAINTENANCE PARTNERING ARRANGEMENT

(Cabinet Members with Special Responsibility Councillors Leytham and Smith)

The Head of Environmental Services presented a report which provided information on the Council Housing Planned Maintenance Partnering arrangement as requested by a Cabinet Member.

The report was for noting and comment and provided information on:-

- Experience of partnering to date
- Hala rendering project
- Leaseholder issues

Members asked a number of questions and it was noted that the internal audit report was due to be considered by the Audit Committee in Jan 2012.

Councillor Barry proposed, seconded by Councillor Leytham:-

“That Cabinet notes the report and requests that the Audit Committee look more closely at the Hala project specifically and this may entail the need for expert independent advice with regard to the pricing of the Hala project.”

Councillors then voted:-

Resolved unanimously:

- (1) That Cabinet notes the report and requests that the Audit Committee look more closely at the Hala project specifically and this may entail the need for expert independent advice with regard to the pricing of the Hala project.

Officers responsible for effecting the decision:

Head of Environmental Services
Head of Financial Services

Reasons for making the decision:

Whilst Cabinet recognises that the Audit Committee will be addressing this issue in detail at its meeting in January, Cabinet considers that it has a duty to oversee services and therefore such issues and if necessary, provide a steer.

67 CONSULTATION ON DOG CONTROL ORDERS

(Cabinet Member with Special Responsibility Councillor Leytham)

Cabinet received a report from the Head of Health and Housing Services to seek approval to go out to consultation on Dog Control Orders.

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

	Option 1: Commence consultation as outlined in the report.	Option 2: Commence consultation on a different basis.	Option 3: Not commencing consultation
Advantages	Proceeding as recommended will lead to rapid implementation of the proposed DCOs	Reviewing the scope and content of proposed DCOs would enable more detailed member involvement at this stage <i>(NB: there will be scope for Members to influence final decisions at a later date).</i>	There would be no consultation costs incurred

Disadvantages	Cost of consultation. No other disadvantages have been identified	Based on their operational experience and engagement with communities, officers have carefully considered the DCOs on which it is recommended the Council consults. Changing the options to be consulted may go against lessons learned from operational experience and previous public consultation.	DCOs cannot be created without public consultation, in which case dog control services would have to continue with the current enforcement methods – this might delay enforcement, narrow the geographical areas in which it is possible, and be less cost effective than enforcement under new DCOs.
Risks	There are no risks from carrying out the consultation process. It is a necessary part of the process before finally approving DCOs.	Increasing the scope of consultation would complicate matters and might increase the cost of consultation.	Dog Control Services would not be able to enforce dog control in all areas in the district and enforcement would be less efficient or cost effective. The current enforcement system is inconsistent and confusing for the public.

Option 1, to commence consultation on the Dog Control Orders described in the Proposal Details was the officer preferred option.

Councillor Leytham proposed, seconded by Councillor Hanson:-

“That the commencement of the public consultation process be approved.”

Councillors then voted:-

Resolved:

(7 Members (Councillors Blamire, Bryning, Hamilton-Cox, Hanson, Leytham, Sands and Smith) voted in favour, and 1 Member (Councillor Barry) abstained.)

- (1) That the commencement of the public consultation process be approved.

Officers responsible for effecting the decision:

Head of Health and Housing

Reasons for making the decision:

Dog Control Orders are an important component of maintaining the statutory minimum level of dog-related enforcement in future. Implementing DCOs is a key activity in the Health & Housing Business Plan 2011-12. It is necessary to initiate the public consultation process to enable the introduction of Dog Control Orders. At present dog control is enforced under a range of Byelaws and Acts of Parliament, which leads to inconsistency and confusion. This is difficult for both dog owners and enforcement officers to understand. The four proposed DCOs would rectify the situation.

68 HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION CONTRACT

(Cabinet Member with Special Responsibility Councillor Leytham)

Cabinet received a report from the Head of Health and Housing to inform members of the options available for the future delivery of the Homelessness Prevention Contract, which is due to expire on 31 March 2012.

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

	Option 1: Deliver the Homeless Prevention service in house as part of the "Enhanced Housing Options" service at a reduced cost	Option 2: Re-tender a revised Homeless Prevention Contract on the same basis as if the Council would deliver the service in house.	Option 3: Discontinue the Homelessness Prevention Service Contract and deliver its statutory homelessness function only.
Advantages	Staff expertise and established links with agencies. Cost efficiencies with joined up delivery with Housing Options service. Homeless Prevention initiatives would be embedded within Homelessness service. Maintain the current levels of homelessness presentations and continue to reduce use of temporary accommodation. Added value to incorporate outcomes for training, volunteering and employment.	Allows some funding to go to third sector. Contractor would be responsible for admin/staffing issues.	An initial financial saving of £88,500.

	(worklessness).		
	Option 1: Deliver the Homeless Prevention service in house as part of the "Enhanced Housing Options" service at a reduced cost	Option 2: Re-tender a revised Homeless Prevention Contract on the same basis as if the Council would deliver the service in house.	Option 3: Discontinue the Homelessness contract and prevention service and resume the delivery of its statutory homelessness function only.
Disadvantages	Possible delays with recruitment of staff – possible gap in service delivery.	May not achieve efficiencies linked with housing options team. May not have skills/capacity to deal with worklessness issues. Further cost of tendering exercise.	Increase in statutory homelessness presentations and placements in to temporary accommodation. Vulnerable households will experience more disruption and poorer service.
Risks	Voluntary sector signposting all housing/homelessness enquiries to the City Council.	May not be an attractive contract and contract value so may be few suitable tenders.	This option would have long term budget implications and increased administration.

Option 1 was the officer preferred Option. This would enable the Council to build on the housing options model and achieve efficiencies. If Members decided to continue to make available the resources to continue the prevention of homelessness as a strategic priority as outlined in the district's Homelessness Strategy 2008-13, this would help ensure that the current levels of statutory homeless presentations were maintained. It would also continue to improve the housing outcomes of the most vulnerable citizens and facilitate an integrated partnership approach to homeless prevention.

Councillor Leytham proposed, seconded by Councillor Hanson:-

- (1) That Cabinet agree to the continuation of the homeless prevention contract activity
- (2) That it is delivered in house at a reduced cost as part of an enhanced housing options service, as outlined in the report.
- (3) That the recurring saving of approximately £35K be considered for use to create apprenticeships within the council to help towards reducing homelessness through worklessness working in partnership with Lancaster and Morecambe College and that a report be produced to see how this could be realised."

Councillors then voted:-

Resolved unanimously:

- (1) That Cabinet agree to the continuation of the homeless prevention contract activity
- (2) That it is delivered in house at a reduced cost as part of an enhanced housing options service, as outlined in the report.
- (3) That the recurring saving of approximately £35K be considered for use to create apprenticeships within the council to help towards reducing homelessness through worklessness working in partnership with Lancaster and Morecambe College and that a report be produced to see how this could be realised.

Officers responsible for effecting the decision:

Head of Health and Housing
Head of Governance

Reasons for making the decision:

The Homeless Prevention Contract contributes towards meeting the identified priorities within the Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013, namely the Prevention of Homelessness Through, Timely Advice, Intervention and Support. The decision fits with the Corporate Plan Priorities – Economic Regeneration (housing regeneration) statutory responsibilities and also supports the intention to protect the most vulnerable which underpins all the City Council's priorities. The Homeless Prevention Contract has assisted those who are most vulnerable by providing timely advice, intervention and support by assisting single households and families retain their existing accommodation or by sourcing suitable alternative accommodation. Homeless Prevention is targeted at those who are both vulnerable and socially excluded. Homeless prevention also contributes to social cohesion and sustainable communities. Apprenticeships for people in worklessness is a priority for consideration by Cabinet.

69 BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK 2012/13 - REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE**(Cabinet Member with Special Responsibility Councillor Bryning)**

Cabinet received a report from the Head of Financial Services which provided an update on the draft revenue budget and capital programme to inform development of Cabinet's budget proposals.

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

In terms of the budget generally, Cabinet was requested to note the budgetary position but more importantly, take forward a number of actions to help develop a balanced set of budget proposals. In particular, direction was sought for areas in which savings options should be developed.

Depending on the timing of the Settlement, Cabinet might be requested to review council tax targets for future years.

With regard to the more specific recommendations, options were outlined below:

- For Treasury Management and land at Ashbourne Road / Tan Hill Drive, no alternative options were available. This was in view of formal reporting needs, or previous decisions of Cabinet.
- For Lancaster Market reserve, Cabinet could choose to either approve or reject the proposed amendments in the use of the Reserve. If the changes were rejected, this could have an adverse impact on progressing negotiations.
- For Ashton Memorial Steps, Cabinet could choose to support the allocation of funding, or defer a decision until later in the budget process. Given the nature of the memorial asset, works to rectify the steps must be undertaken at some point. For this reason, leaving the steps in their current condition for any length of time was advised against; there was no real benefit in delaying. The Council would be left with an asset that could not be used for its original purpose, together with all the difficulties and potential liabilities that such a situation gave rise to. Clearly this would go against sound asset management practice.
- For the Community Capital Fund, Cabinet could choose to confirm or reject the allocation of funding, or defer a decision until later in the budget process. Cabinet might wish to refer back to the Partnerships report on the November Cabinet agenda. This allocation would support purely discretionary spending. Members were advised to consider the LSP's recommendations and assumed commitments, against other potential uses for these funds.

The Officer preferred options were reflected in the recommendations as set out in the report. Whilst some key elements of budget setting remained uncertain and some good progress had been made by services in making efficiency savings overall, there was still much to be done in balancing the budget. Although Member focus had been on reviewing areas of activity, it was strongly advised that members now needed to balance these, against the existing priorities in the corporate plan. Savings will need to be made in future years, and members will need to address priorities, and options for savings. Although the Council's balances were substantially higher than originally forecast, any use of balances to create a balanced budget, could be used in the short term basis, officers advised that, even if this balances were to be used, they should only proceed, if ongoing savings proposals were being worked up. It is not considered sustainable to use balances in the medium to long term to address any structural imbalance between the Council's ongoing spending levels and its expected funding.

Councillor Bryning proposed, seconded by Councillor Smith:-

“That the recommendations, as set out in the report be approved, but that recommendation (5) be deferred until further information on the uses of the Community Capital Fund be obtained.”

Councillors then voted:-

Resolved unanimously:

- (1) That Cabinet notes the draft budgetary position for current and future years.
- (2) That the mid-year treasury management progress report set out at Appendix C to the report be noted and referred on to Council.
- (3) That Cabinet approves the allocation of up to £120K to fund the remedial works for Ashton Memorial Steps, and authorises the Head of Financial Services to update the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme once timing of the works is clear.
- (4) That the use of the Lancaster Market Reserve be amended to support incidental costs arising in progressing the decision of Council.
- (5) That Cabinet defers the decision regarding the allocation of £100K capital related Performance Reward Grant for a Community Capital Fund and requests further information on what the fund proposal was.
- (6) That further to the decision taken at November Cabinet regarding land at Ashbourne Road/Tan Hill Drive for affordable housing, Cabinet notes the s106 receipts position.
- (7) That in view of the budget savings needed in future years and Cabinet's aspirations for supporting growth, the following actions be undertaken:
 - in terms of efficiency, all Cabinet Members undertake detailed budget reviews of their portfolio areas to identify any further efficiencies for 2012/13;
 - in terms of income generation, Cabinet considers the draft Charging Policy as set out at Appendix E to the report and indicates any areas in which it wishes to consider additional or alternative income generation options;
 - in terms of service reduction, Cabinet identifies lower priority areas in which service reduction options should be developed.
- (8) That progress against the above actions be reported to the January Cabinet meeting.

Officers responsible for effecting the decision:

Head of Financial Services
Head of Community Engagement

Reasons for making the decision:

Under the Constitution Cabinet is required to put forward policy framework and budget proposals for Council's consideration in time for them to be referred back as appropriate. The decision will ensure that the policy and budget proposals are fed into the Council meeting prior to Budget Council in March.

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QUARTER 2 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

(Cabinet Member with Special Responsibility Councillor Blamire)

Cabinet received a joint report from the Leader and Cabinet Member with Special

Responsibility for Finance in respect of the corporate performance report for the 2nd Quarter of the Performance Review Team Cycle for 2011/12.

The report was for noting and comment.

Councillor Blamire proposed, seconded by Councillor Smith:-

“That the report be noted.”

Councillors then voted:-

Resolved unanimously:

(1) That the report be noted.

Officers responsible for effecting the decision:

Head of Community Engagement

Reasons for making the decision:

The Council's Performance Management Framework requires the regular reporting of operational and financial performance to Cabinet as part of the Performance Review Team cycle of meetings. The Corporate PRT report provides a summary of key matters and associated actions that have arisen in the quarter and have been escalated to the Leader of the Council and Finance Portfolio Holder for attention. The Corporate PRT report for this quarter and the analysis of delivery against the Corporate Plan demonstrates that positive action has/is being taken to manage corporate performance towards the achievement of stated outcomes and corporate priorities.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 11.10 a.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Liz Bateson, Democratic Services - telephone (01524) 582047, or email
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MINUTES PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY 8 DECEMBER, 2011.

**EFFECTIVE DATE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE DECISIONS CONTAINED IN THESE MINUTES:
FRIDAY 16 DECEMBER, 2011.**