

CABINET

10.00 A.M.

8TH OCTOBER 2013

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

Apologies for Absence:-

Councillor Ron Sands

Officers in attendance:-

Mark Cullinan	Chief Executive
Nadine Muschamp	Chief Officer (Resources) and Section 151 Officer
Suzanne Lodge	Chief Officer (Health and Housing)
Andrew Dobson	Chief Officer (Regeneration and Planning)
Liz Bateson	Principal Democratic Support Officer, Democratic Services

37 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 3 September 2013 were approved as a correct record.

38 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE LEADER

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

39 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made at this point.

40 PUBLIC SPEAKING

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

41 FUNDING AND PROVISION OF COMMUNITY ALARM AND TELECARE SERVICES

(Cabinet Member with Special Responsibility Councillor Leytham)

Cabinet received a report from the Chief Officer (Health & Housing) to outline the impact of changes to Lancashire County Council's funding and provision of community alarm and telecare services on the services provided by Lancaster City Council.

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

	Option 1: The council seeks to maintain an emergency call centre to provide the services that remain following the loss of the Lancashire Telecare and Supporting People contacts	Option 2: The council reviews the services provided by the emergency call centre and considers how they could be provided in the future; including the consideration of alternative providers for the services and functions that would remain following the loss of the Lancashire Telecare and Supporting People contacts
Advantages	Local, flexible, responsive service delivered through a valued local knowledge base	Services provided to a specified standard, and achieves value for money Reduction in costs.
Disadvantages	Service would be provided at a loss and the council would have to fund any deficit - expectation that financial costs of running the emergency call centre would not meet value for money principles. Does not provide for considering a wider range of options.	Potential loss of flexibility and knowledge
Risks	The volume of work would not be sufficient to warrant maintaining the emergency call centre, and its infrastructure. The loss of income from the contacts could not be replaced, and equivalent cost reduction could not be achieved. The overall financial costs of running the emergency call centre would not meet value for money principles, and so would not be in the best interests of housing rent payers in particular. Ultimately, risk of failure in the Council's fiduciary duties, leading to challenge.	Control of future quality and cost of services. The contractual arrangements will need to be robust and clear to ensure that future costs are controlled

The officer preferred option was option 2 to ensure that an appropriate service provision was maintained to the standard the Council required, achieving value for money and that future costs were controlled. The loss of the Lancashire Telecare and Supporting People contacts would leave the Council's emergency call centre in an unsustainable position, and maintaining the centre would not represent value for money. For this reason it was necessary to consider alternative provision for the service areas and work that would remain.

Councillor Leytham proposed, seconded by Councillor Smith:-

“That the recommendations as set out in the report, be approved.”

Councillors then voted:-

Resolved unanimously:

- (1) That the impact of the announcements of the County Council regarding the provision of telecare and community alarm services on the future viability on maintaining the emergency call centre be noted.
- (2) That the services provided by the emergency call centre be reviewed and consideration given as to how they could be provided in the future.
- (3) That officers be authorised to take action to ensure appropriate arrangements were in place to ensure business continuity was maintained pending the outcome of the review.

Officer responsible for effecting the decision:

Chief Officer (Health & Housing)

Reasons for making the decision:

The decision was consistent with two key themes that underpin the Council's stated priorities: Working Together in Partnership and Managing the Council's Resources. Taking a proactive approach enabled officers to continue in discussions with the County Council and provider of the emergency call centre's disaster recovery and business continuity services and report further on the options for future service provision, reducing the likelihood of service disruption.

42 BUDGET UPDATE – FUNDING PROSPECTS 2014/15 ONWARDS

(Cabinet Member with Special Responsibility Councillor Bryning)

Cabinet received a report from the Chief Officer (Resources) to provide an outline update on future funding prospects for General Fund services, in light of the recent Government consultation.

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

Chief Officers were in the process of identifying many potential areas for saving and these would be reported to Members in due course.

Whilst it was considered likely that some could be implemented without having significant impact on services to the public, in total they would not address the Council's budget deficit. In order to balance the Council's books, there would need to be reductions and other changes in services that would have direct, adverse impact on the district and its residents and visitors. For such areas, therefore, Member prioritisation and direction was required – decisions would not be easy.

For these reasons, the following approach was proposed:

- Management Team be tasked with an initial target of £1M recurring savings, from service restructuring, streamlining and any efficiency related proposals – i.e. those that would not have a marked bearing on front line or other service delivery standards. At this stage, it was considered unfeasible to increase this target any further. Furthermore, it should be recognised that even these measures would result in some delays in dealing with various work requests, and might well give rise to more complaints. Whilst the risks attached could be managed to some degree, they could not be avoided entirely.
- Cabinet be tasked with prioritising service reductions and other similar annual savings in the order of at least £2.5M. Members were encouraged to identify key areas for saving early on, to give more time to plan and develop options for service withdrawal.

Regarding income generation, the introduction of new charges was one area that Members might wish to consider. Alongside this, reviews of existing charges would be undertaken by Officers in the normal way, where there was expected to be continuity of service. The Officers' aim would be to achieve (at least) a break-even position where there was discretion to do so, or review the service provision further. Overall however, the scope for increasing income generation was thought to have only limited impact on addressing the budget deficit.

For invest to save ideas, with the exception of renewable energy, this needed no other specific consideration as inevitably, many savings options would involve up front costs anyway.

Arrangements were in hand to ensure that all associated budget proposals were developed and appraised in a robust manner, drawing on management and other information as appropriate.

The following options were available to Cabinet:-

- (1) Approve the proposals set out above for identifying savings proposals.
- (2) Identify and adopt an alternative approach, with the aim of achieving the indicative savings targets as outlined in the report.

Option 1 to adopt the proposals as set out in section 3 (of the report) for identifying savings proposals was the officer preferred option. This would give initial structure to identifying reasonable savings from streamlining services, and also ensure that Members focused on prioritising where to remove or significantly reduce service provision and other Council activities.

Furthermore, it was emphasised during the meeting that under Option 1, the split of target savings could change as the budget develops. Clearly Member and Officer budget options would need be developed in tandem.

Councillor Bryning proposed, seconded by Councillor Leytham:-

“That the recommendations, as set out in the report, be approved.”

Councillors then voted:-

Resolved unanimously:

- (1) That the estimated budgetary implications (for General Fund services) arising from the latest Government consultation be noted.
- (2) That the approach set out in section 3 of the report be adopted for identifying budget savings and be kept under review as the budget develops.

Officers responsible for effecting the decision:

Chief Executive
Chief Officer (Resources)

Reasons for making the decision:

The proposals outlined in the report were consistent with reviewing and updating the Council's Budget and Policy Framework. The City Council was facing a bleak financial future with £3.5million in savings needed to be found over the next two years to balance its books. Cabinet agreed an approach to identify the savings needed and enable future budget plans to be put to determine how the required savings could be found. Although every effort would be made to deliver savings whilst protecting the frontline, it was inevitable that service reductions would be necessary as savings of the size we now face simply cannot be made through efficiencies.

43 WIND TURBINE DEVELOPMENTS AND SEPARATION DISTANCES**(Cabinet Member with Special Responsibility Councillor Hanson)**

Cabinet received a report from the Chief Officer (Regeneration & Planning) to enable Cabinet to consider the petition submitted to Annual Council asking that the City Council as Local Planning Authority introduce a revised Development Management policy relating to wind turbines which introduced a minimum safeguarding distance between turbines and dwellings.

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

Option 1 - Not to introduce an amended policy. This option might still be challenged by groups opposing wind turbine development through the examination of the Development Management Development Plan Document, but was more likely to be found as a favourable approach by the Secretary of State. The approach would be unpopular with some local communities including some Parish Councils as the view might be taken that the Council had declined to tighten the constraints imposed on wind farm developments. This option would however be expected to receive support from the Secretary of State and the Planning Inspectorate, and avoid costs awards against the Council at appeal if it ignored national policy guidance.

Option 2 - To undertake a revision to the existing Development Management policy, as advocated by the petitioners, (and not by officers) to aim to include a minimum separation distance. This option would in principle seek to satisfy the pressures being applied on the City Council to take this action, but would not be found acceptable by the Secretary of State. Equally, opposition groups to turbine

developments were not guaranteed to be satisfied if any spacing distances were not perceived by them to be adequate. The creation of an appropriate evidence base would take time and impose a further funding burden on the existing Local Plan budget. It would need a decision from Council to amend the policy and delay the progress of the Development Plan Document to adoption and place the Council at risk of costs awards against it at appeal for ignoring national policy guidance.

Following the publication of the most recent guidance from the Government on 29th July 2013 the Officer recommendation was Option 1.

Councillor Barry proposed, seconded by Councillor Hanson:-

“That the recommendation, as set out in the report, be approved.”

Councillors then voted:-

Resolved unanimously:

- (1) That Cabinet note the new guidance from DCLG on renewable and low carbon energy and that its revised policy in the publication version of the Development Management Development Plan Document complied with that guidance. Furthermore it did not take steps to introduce separation distances between wind turbines and residential properties as to do so would be to ignore published national planning guidance.

Officer responsible for effecting the decision:

Chief Officer (Regeneration & Planning)

Reasons for making the decision:

The development of renewable energy is supported in the Council’s Corporate Plan and the Local Development Framework Core Strategy. Wind turbine developments have significant impacts predominantly on rural communities and require careful balance between the national and local community interests as well as the impact on landscape and ecology in areas such as Lancaster District which have a significant number of areas of special environmental protection. The creation of an evidence base to support any change in policy would incur additional expenditure, which could not be justified following the publication of new national guidance.

44 URGENT BUSINESS REPORT

(Cabinet Member with Special Responsibility Councillor Blamire)

The Chief Officer (Governance) submitted a report informing Members of actions taken by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members in accordance with the scheme of delegation.

Councillor Leytham proposed, seconded by Councillor Hanson:-

“That the recommendation, as set out in the report, be approved.”

Councillors then voted:-

Resolved unanimously:

(1) That the actions taken by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, in respect of the following, be noted:-

1.1 Request for the City Council to give agreement for an application to be made to the DCLG to fund a project to tackle problematic houses in multiple occupation

(1) That the Chief Executive under urgent business agrees to Lancaster City Council submitting an application to the DCLG Rogue Landlords funding, subject to there being no additional cost implications for the City Council.

(2) That the General Fund Revenue Budget be updated accordingly, split across relevant financial years, in the event that the application was successful.

(3) That consultation be undertaken with a view to waiving call in, in accordance with Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rule 17, to enable the decision to be implemented immediately.

Officer responsible for effecting the decision:

Chief Officer (Governance)

Reasons for making the decision:

The decision fulfils the requirements of the City Council's Constitution in advising Cabinet of urgent decisions taken by the Chief Executive in accordance with the City Council's Scheme of Delegation.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 10.50 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 THURSDAY 10 OCTOBER, 2013.

**EFFECTIVE DATE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE DECISIONS CONTAINED IN THESE MINUTES:
FRIDAY 18 OCTOBER, 2013.**