

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Wednesday, 7 December 2016

PRESENT: Councillor Nunn (Chair); Councillor Larratt (Deputy Chair); Councillors Eldred, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert and King

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 16th November 2016 were agreed and signed by the Leader.

3. INTENTION TO HOLD PART OF THE MEETING IN PRIVATE

There were no items to be heard in private.

4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Mr Huffadine-Smith addressed Cabinet on Item 9 – Delivery of New Social Housing and stated that the report looked at ‘shelving’ 100 new homes, when there was a real need to increase the amount of social housing available to cost of building the proposed social houses was similar in amount of money that had been loaned to the Football Club and suggested that there was a correlation between the two.

In response to questions asked, Mr Huffadine-Smith commented that he would like to see the proposed houses being built at Dallington Heath and emphasised the need for the infrastructure to be considered prior to any houses being built.

The Leader stated that the houses were nothing to do with the Football Club and that, as the developer was yet to progress with the overall development, the social houses were unlikely to be built at Dallington within the timescales of the Government funding. The Dallington houses were not being ruled out, but in the meantime the council would be actively seeking alternative sites. The Deputy Leader stated that if the new homes were not constructed in the timeframe stated, they would lose funding which could potentially prevent any social house from being built.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hadland declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in Item 8 - as a Trustee of Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust

6. ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

6.A RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ON THE CALL-IN OF CABINET DECISION OF 16 NOVEMBER - ITEM 11 - RE-PROVISION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES CONTRACT.

Councillor Stone commented that she did not believe that she had called in the report partly due to some of the information within the report not having been made public and stated that it was a mistake to not have had a service plan in place. She questioned whether or not, as written in the original report, that risk would be minimised should the Council choose to enter into an agreement with a private contractor. She expressed disappointment that areas of

methodology used were flawed and commented that an in house bid team should have examined the possibility of the service coming back in house.

In response to questions asked by the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Stone stated that she was concerned not only with some of the data being private but also a that there was insufficient and inadequate information.

The Cabinet Member commented that some of the information had been in private but that upon requesting it from the Monitoring Officer, Councillors would have had access to it and that the members of the Cabinet Advisory Group, of which she was one, should have reported that back to each of the groups. He also commented that there had been extensive consultations with all residents associations, parish councils and a MORI poll undertaken which involved surveying over a 1000 residents.

Councillor Smith reported that in her ward of Abington, they had experienced severe difficulties with waste collection with the current contractors and noted the need for flexibility in any future contract was need. She also commented that she did not consider a survey of 1000 residents sufficient and noted that it would have been more beneficial to look at the service provision first and for there to have been more accessibility to information relating to it, rather than it being a private document.

Councillor Hallam asked why she had not requested private information, as it was available to Councillors on request. In response to questions asked, Councillor Smith stated that it was not advertised that the information was accessible and it had not been made clear that Councillors could request the restricted documents. She further reported that there was confusion amongst Members on what information could be shared from the meetings of the Cabinet Advisory Group. She continued to comment that the report was flawed and that her main concern was the lack of engagement with residents.

Councillor Lane as the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny submitted his report and commented that the Committee did feel as though there was a lack of consultation and that there could have been more transparency.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet noted the recommendations within the report.

7. CABINET RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ON THE CALL-IN OF CABINET DECISION OF 16 NOVEMBER - ITEM 11 - RE-PROVISION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES CONTRACT.

Councillor Stone criticised the lack of openness and transparency and asked that Cabinet accept the recommendations and advice given by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and asked that they be involved in selecting a contractor and requested that an inside bid team be appointed to look at bringing the service back in house.

Councillor Birch commented that it was clear that there was a lot of concern about the contract and stated that everyone was concerned about the delivery and receipt of the contract and concurred with Councillor Stone and Smith that she did not believe the consultation to be wide enough and stated that it needed to be properly scrutinised.

Councillor Hallam introduced the Mr Pietropaoli, (Eunomia) who had conducted the Environmental Services Re-provision project. In response to concerns voiced, he reported that the main reasons for some of the information being confidential was that they did not want to reveal information relating to the contractor, publication of the model could have

posed copyright issues and financial and risks need to be restricted to protect the councils position. He reported that stage 1 of the report was information gathering from officers and this had been benchmarked against other neighbouring councils. A number of assumptions around corporate overheads and cost options were applied and pension costs considered and consulted on. He reported that Eunomia had advised many other Councils on similar contracts and had applied a similar methodology which had been used for numerous years. It was noted that Eunomia was one of the market leaders around waste collections and waste disposal services.

Councillor Hallam introduced Mr Nick Lane (PwC – Internal Auditors) and he elaborated that they had been asked to conduct a short, sharp review of the governance and procedure of the contract. It was noted that he was from a dedicated team who looked exclusively at waste contracts and he noted that there was strong governance and that the project went through due process.

Councillor Hallam stated that the decision had been checked thoroughly and by experts and noted the input of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was valued. He commented that with regards to consultation, the Cabinet were just at the beginning of the process. He commented that he would like Overview and Scrutiny input and noted that a scoping session had been established and that a panel would be chaired by Councillor Meredith to examine the project.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet agreed to uphold their original decision.

8. DELAPRE ABBEY

Councillor Davenport commented that the Abbey was very popular and everyone would like to see it up and running but commented that people were questioning the increased costs. She questioned why there was no contingency plan and why had it not been properly costed in the first place. She further questioned why alternative means of raising money had not been explored such as fundraising.

Councillor Hadland as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted a report and elaborated thereon. In response to concerns raised by Councillor Davenport it was explained that the scheme had been undertaken with the support of Heritage Lottery Fund. He noted that things had changed along the way and the work carried out proved to be slightly problematic, specifically with regards to the cross over agreement of utility companies which was being resolved.

RESOLVED:

1. That the delay in the completion of the restoration project due to the delayed connection of utilities into the Abbey be noted.
2. That the delay in completion of the project had led to increased costs that would represent an overspend against the approved capital budget be recognised.
3. That it be agreed that a detailed financial assessment of the project including resultant implications of the delay would need to be completed.
4. That an increase to the capital budget of £65,000 authorised by the Chief Executive to enable the urgent procurement of a servery for the café/restaurant area of the Abbey by the way of a virement of available funds within the existing capital programme be noted.

9. DELIVERY OF NEW SOCIAL HOUSING

Councillor Ashraf addressed Cabinet and stated that the Conservative Group Manifesto had promised 100 new homes and an expanded museum. She commented that there was a housing crisis in Northampton and there were too many families housed in Bed and Breakfasts and expressed the need for secure housing for those who needed it.

Councillor King responded to concerns with regards to the museum by reporting that the expansion was still going ahead and work would commence in April 2017. Councillor Eldred also noted that the budget Cabinet papers showed the financial figures for the museum. It was noted that it would be preferable to have the 100 new homes in Dallington but that it would not be possible as they potentially could lose the funding from Government.

Councillor B Markham commented that he was pleased to see the proposed new development of 100 new Council house but questioned whether the infrastructure had been properly considered. He urged the Cabinet to retain the Government money and asked that they build as many social houses as possible, in particular family homes.

Councillor Hibbert, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted a report and commented that the Cabinet were just as frustrated as the speakers that they were not able to build the new homes in Dallington Grange, but that it would be an area that could be considered in the future; all other potential sites to be developed on would be reported to Cabinet for further discussion.

RESOLVED:

1. That, subject to DCLG consent, and the successful conclusion of negotiations with developers and owners, approved the reallocation of the funding allocated for the 100 homes at Dallington to alternative sites
2. That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, Director of Enterprise Regeneration and Planning and Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing to negotiate terms and conditions for that reallocation with DCLG and Treasury subject to the submission of the proposed reallocation to Cabinet for approval.
3. That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, Director of Enterprise Regeneration and Planning and Chief Finance Officer to negotiate the detail for each scheme including contractual agreements for construction and any consequential legal agreements necessary to bring each scheme forward. This would be subject in each case to the scheme remaining within approved budgets and the submission of individual schemes to cabinet for approval once full terms are confirmed.
4. That authorised be given to the acquisition by the Council of the leasehold interest in the Tanners public house in Thorplands in accordance with paragraph 3.4 of this report.
5. That, in principle the transfer of the Tanners public house site from the General Fund into the Housing Revenue Fund at market value for housing development land be approved.

10. REVENUES AND BENEFITS DELIVERY OPTIONS

Councillor Eldred as the relevant Cabinet Member submitted a report and commented that there had been 4 options to examine and noted that option 4 was the preferred option. He stated that this would include wide partnership working with Milton Keynes Council to provide an improved standard of service.

Councillor Nunn stated that he supported the pursued option and asked that the recommendation reflect the inclusion of the Deputy Leader in having delegated authority, alongside the Leader, to agree to the terms of and completion of the new agreement.

RESOLVED:

1. That it be agreed that the Council pursue Option 4 to enter into a new 5 year Partnership and Delegation Agreement (PDA) with LGSS (to include a wider partnership with Milton Keynes Council) and delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Leader, to agree the terms of and complete the new agreement.
2. That a further report is brought back to Cabinet outlining the exact terms agreed, be approved.

11. GROWING TOGETHER NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (GTNP) EXAMINERS REPORT AND REFERENDUM

Councillor J Hill commented that he supported the report and the recommendations and praised the work of the local residents.

Councillor Duffy concurred with the comments of Councillor J Hill and stated that that the report reflected the wishes of the people and that the only complaint she had heard was that the area it covered was not large enough and expressed her gratitude to residents and officers for their hard work on the project.

Councillor Hadland as the relevant Cabinet Member elaborated on his report and commented that the beginning of the process had started in 2012 and noted that it had taken a long time to ensure that there had been extensive consultation with residents including the Growing Together Neighbourhood Forum, whom he thanked for their hard work and commitment. He noted that a public referendum was still needed which was planning to be held on the 23rd February 2017 in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That the recommendations set out in the Examiner's Report into the Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan (Appendix 1 of the report) and agreed the proposed modifications to the Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan be noted
- 2.2 That the Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan Decision Statement (Appendix 2) be published along with the Examiner's Report in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 be agreed.
- 2.3 That the Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan, as modified, proceed to Referendum on 23 February 2017 in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 be agreed.

The meeting concluded at 7.29pm

