

At a meeting of the CABINET held in the CIVIC CENTRE (COMMITTEE ROOM NO. 2) on Wednesday 17 July 2013 at 2.00pm.

Present:-

Councillor Speding in the Chair

Councillors Blackburn, Kelly, G. Miller and P. Smith

Also in attendance:-

Councillors Bonallie, Oliver, Price and Tate

Part I

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 24 June 2013 Part I (copy circulated) were submitted.

(For copy report - see original minutes).

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Receipt of Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Watson Trueman and Gofton.

Scrutiny Committee – Policy Review Final Reports

The Scrutiny Committee, the Deputy Chief Executive and the Executive Director for Health Housing and Adult Services submitted a joint report (copy circulated) to set out the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee following its scrutiny policy reviews into Empty Properties in Sunderland and Waste and Recycling in Sunderland: Approach to Resident Engagement.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Tate, highlighted that the report included the outcomes and recommendations of two of the policy reviews undertaken by Scrutiny Panels during the second half of the 2012/13 municipal year. He introduced Councillor Bonallie who led on the City Services Panel review and who would briefly introduce his report.

Councillor Tate reported that he would be presenting the Health, Housing and Adult Services Panel review into Empty Properties on behalf of Councillor Shattock who was unwell at the moment. He wished her a full and speedy recovery on behalf of everyone present.

Councillor Tate advised that the Policy Report from the Health, Housing and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel looks at the issue of empty properties in Sunderland. He added that the recommendations arising from this review would be the responsibility of the Health, Housing and Adult Services Directorate and the attached action plan would monitor progress on the recommendations.

Cabinet Members were advised that the Review sought evidence from a variety of stakeholders including private sector landlords and the Council's empty property team. The review recommendations looked to further enhance the work of the Council in tackling empty properties in the private sector to ensure a good variety of housing options across the city.

Councillor Tate invited Cabinet Members to agree the Panel's findings and to endorse this piece of work. In conclusion he thanked the Scrutiny Lead Member and all the Panel Members, officers and key stakeholders who had taken part in the Review.

Councillor Bonallie then presented the Scrutiny Panel's review into the Council's approach to resident engagement for waste and recycling services in Sunderland. He highlighted that the purpose of the review was to consider the factors shaping the Council's approach to refuse collection and recycling and also to look at the range of options available to increase participation rates.

Cabinet Members were advised that the review had been based on lengthy discussion with Council officers and partner organisations. In addition the Panel also took the opportunity to view the operation of the Beach Street Household Waste and Recycling Centre and visit the new Energy from Waste Facility being constructed at Teesside.

Councillor Bonallie reported that the Panel had found that sustainable waste management required a partnership between Government, local authorities, residents, businesses and other stakeholders. He added that the Panel had felt that promoting awareness was central to the future development of waste services by providing the general public with a better understanding of the issues involved in waste minimisation and the recycling of waste and that future promotional campaigns should be based on a detailed understanding of why people do participate or do not recycle correctly.

The review recommended to Cabinet that there should be regular monitoring on the findings of the Customer Insight Survey which would be used as the basis to inform a communications campaign for waste and recycling. In addition, the delivery of the new communications campaign should be monitored which should include activities on promoting awareness and involvement in recycling and on tackling inappropriate waste presentation and fly tipping.

Councillor Bonallie then thanked the members of the Panel, officers and partner organisations for their involvement in the review and their vital contribution.

In response to the Policy Review into Empty Properties in Sunderland, Councillor Miller welcomed the report and expressed his appreciation for the work of Councillor Shattock. He outlined that this underlined the excellent work the Empty Homes Team carried out to tackle empty properties in the City which could be a blight on the city and the efforts to bring those properties back into use.

In response to the presentation by Scrutiny Members, the Chairman also thanked Councillor Shattock on behalf of all the Cabinet Members and wished her a speedy recovery.

In relation to the Waste and Recycling Policy Review, Councillor Blackburn welcomed the report which underlined the good work the waste and recycling team carried out to help deliver the Municipal Waste Management Strategy in the city. He reported that the review had helped raise awareness in the challenges faced in continually seeking improvement in the services including recycling performance, and it was important that the progress made to date through development of the recommendations in the report action plan was built upon.

Councillor Blackburn advised that the recommendations in the action plan sought to gather new customer insight about our waste services and find out what would work best for the citizens of Sunderland, so that the Council could encourage smart communications with its residents to help deliver better services and a sustainable city.

In conclusion, Councillor Blackburn thanked the Members of the Scrutiny Panel for their work and commended the report and attached action plan.

The Chairman on behalf of Cabinet Members thanked Councillor Tate and Councillor Bonallie for their very detailed examinations of the Policy Reviews.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee and the proposed Action Plans for their implementation be approved.

Hetton Downs Housing Delivery Plan

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval to the adoption of the Hetton Downs Housing Delivery Plan which sets out a strategy and timetable for the implementation of new housing development in the Hetton Downs Renewal Area.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Miller highlighted that following a Housing Condition Survey and Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment Area Hetton Downs had been designated as a Housing Renewal Area. He reported that the Area Action Plan confirmed that the regeneration would primarily be housing led and a number of sites in the Renewal Area had been identified for the development of new family housing.

Cabinet Members were advised that the acquisition and clearance programme was now reaching a conclusion and a Hetton Downs Housing Delivery Plan had been produced setting out a strategy and timetable for the implementation of new housing development together with the provision of a strategic new link road.

Councillor Miller reported that there remained sufficient funds in the budget, provided by Homes and Community Agency, to acquire further land to facilitate more comprehensive development sites. He added that the Council, working with the Homes and Community Agency, proposed to complete the site assembly exercise and advertise the sites for sale over a phased programme.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the proposed Hetton Downs Housing Delivery Plan be approved;
- (ii) the Deputy Chief Executive be authorised to acquire property as appropriate within the Delivery Plan area upon terms to be agreed by the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Secretary
- (iii) the Deputy Chief Executive be authorised to dispose of development land within the Delivery Plan area on a best consideration basis upon terms to be agreed by the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Secretary; and
- (iv) the Deputy Chief Executive be authorised to take all other necessary actions required for the procurement and delivery of the Delivery Plan in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Secretary.

Procurement of Materials Recovery Facility Contract

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to outline the current contractual arrangements in place for the acceptance and sorting of collected materials from the Council's blue bin scheme and to seek approval to jointly procure a new service for the operation of a materials recovery facility (MRF) with the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership (comprising Sunderland City, South Tyneside and Gateshead Councils), to ensure continued service provision once the current MRF contract expires in March 2015.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In highlighting the report, Councillor Blackburn reported that the Council had a contract in place for the operation of a MRF contract which commenced in April 2010 following which a delegated decision was taken in May 2012 to change the existing contract period to secure efficiencies of £75,000 per year until it expired in March 2015.

Councillor Blackburn advised that the Council's partners in the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership would procure a new MRF contract arrangement this year to commence in April 2014. He added that this provided an opportunity to participate in a joint procurement to explore if further efficiencies could be achieved and if this proved to be the case the Council could opt to take advantage of the new MRF contract when its existing contract expired in March 2015. The duration of the new MRF contract for the Council would be 3 years with options to extend for three single year periods.

Cabinet Members were advised that the alternative option would be to not participate in the joint South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership procurement and procure a separate MRF contract to commence in April 2015, thereby missing the potential opportunity of securing more advantageous rates afforded by economies of scale.

Councillor Blackburn drew attention to the impact assessments for Equalities, Privacy and Sustainability which had been carried out and reported that there were no negative impacts associated with the proposal.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that approval be given to participate in the procurement process for the operation of a materials recovery facility (MRF) in partnership with the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership (STWWMP) to ensure continued service provision once the current MRF contract expires in March 2015.

Alternative Delivery for Beach Street Household Waste and Recycling Centre and Associated Waste Transport

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek approval to procure a contract for the operation of the Council's Beach Street Household Waste and Recycling Centre and associated waste transport, as an alternative to the current in house service arrangements.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Blackburn highlighted the report and advised that approval was also sought to authorise the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Commercial and Corporate Services, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for City Services to award a contract to the successful bidder. He explained that the award of a contract would be subject to the bidder demonstrating the anticipated efficiencies for the Council.

Cabinet Members were advised that the Household Waste Recycling Centre required specialist management resource to maintain regulatory compliance, environmental performance and operate efficiently. The site was operating well but there was scope for improvement in these areas.

Councillor Blackburn reported that the procurement would give the opportunity to determine whether efficiencies and service improvement could be achieved through a joint procurement with the South of Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership and explore alternate service delivery to ensure the Council was providing the service in the most cost effective and sustainable manner. He assured Cabinet Members that the process would be carried out in accordance with the EU procurement rules and was intended to be completed in time for commencement in April 2014. The duration of the proposed contract would be three years with options to extend for a further three, single year periods.

Councillor Blackburn advised that the alternative option would be to not undertake a procurement process and retain the management of the Centre in house but this would not deliver the proposed efficiencies in operational costs or the potential improvements in recycling levels and the risks of regulatory compliance in respect of retaining a Technically Competent Manager would remain with the Council.

The attention of Cabinet Members was then drawn to the impact assessments for Equalities, Privacy and Sustainability which had been carried out and it was reported that there were no negative impacts associated with the proposal.

Councillor Blackburn assured Cabinet Members that there was existing budgetary provision for this contract which was expected to deliver efficiencies over the existing arrangements. He added that if the evaluation of the tenders failed to demonstrate that there would efficiencies for the Council, no contract would entered into.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) approval be given to undertake a procurement process for the operation of Beach Street Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) and associated waste transport, and
- (ii) the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Commercial and Corporate Services, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for City Services, be authorised to award a contract to the successful bidder demonstrating the anticipated efficiencies for the Council through the proposed contract.

Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor – New Wear Crossing

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report on the outcome of the current procurement process for the New Wear Crossing scheme (“the Scheme”) and to seek approval for the next steps for the delivery of the Scheme on the basis of simplifications to the bridge design.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman outlined that the report provided an update on the outcome of the procurement process to appoint a contractor to deliver the New Wear Crossing; and to make recommendations for the next steps. He reported that the evaluation of the tenders had concluded that the scheme was unaffordable in its current form and therefore Cabinet was being asked to agree to bring this procurement process to an end.

The Chairman advised that it was disappointing that the unique design could not be built with the budget available, however the Council must move forward towards its vision for a new Sunderland bridge by modifying its approach. He explained that discussions had continued about the proposals with the Department for Transport and as part of these the Council was urging them to continue their funding support.

Cabinet Members were advised that the Council remains committed to delivering a new bridge and the wider Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor programme. It would improve connectivity and unlock unused land; in turn attracting investment, creating growth and jobs. With the approval of Cabinet, work would begin immediately on preparations to procure a more simplified form of cable-stayed design.

The Chairman assured Cabinet Members that proposals for this simplified scheme would deliver the same strategic benefits, have similar quality thresholds, be built within the agreed timeframe and sit in the same location as the initial scheme. He added that the Council needed to continue to acquire the land required through the implementation of the confirmed Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) for the Scheme and this would ensure timely access to the site once a contractor was appointed.

Cabinet Members having been advised that a further report on the outcome of the new procurement process would be submitted to Cabinet for consideration in due course, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the current procurement process be brought to an end on the basis of unaffordability;

- (ii) a new procurement process for the design and construction of the Scheme on the basis of a simplified bridge design be commenced;
- (iii) a further report on the outcome of the new procurement process be submitted to Cabinet in due course;
- (iv) the Deputy Chief Executive, Executive Director of Commercial and Corporate Services and Head of Law and Governance continue to take all necessary action to implement the Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) for the Scheme and to acquire title and/or possession of the CPO land; and
- (iv) the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Commercial and Corporate Services in consultation with the Portfolio Member (City Services) be authorised to appoint all necessary external technical support and advisers for the continued delivery of the Scheme.

The Chairman noted that Keith Moore, the Executive Director of Children's Services, was attending his last Cabinet meeting as he would be retiring at the end of the month. He thanked him on behalf of the Cabinet for his years of valuable service with the Council.

Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

At the instance of the Chairman it was: -

7. RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during consideration of the remaining business as it was considered to involve a likely disclosure of information relating to an individual or the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) (Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

(Signed) M. SPEDING,
Chairman.

Note:-

The above minutes comprise only those relating to items during which the meeting was open to the public.

Additional minutes in respect of other items are included in Part II.

