

CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2013

AT 4.30 PM

IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WILLITON

Present:

Councillor T Taylor Leader

Councillor K V Kravis
Councillor C Morgan
Councillor K H Turner

Councillor K M Mills
Councillor S J Pugsley
Councillor D J Westcott

Members in Attendance:

Councillor H J W Davies
Councillor A P Hadley
Councillor A F Knight
Councillor D D Ross
Councillor D J Sanders

Councillor G S Dowding
Councillor B Heywood
Councillor E May
Councillor K J Ross
Councillor M A Smith

Officers in Attendance:

Chief Executive (A Dyer)
Corporate Director (B Lang)
Section 151 Officer (S Campbell)
Corporate Manager Housing, Welfare and Economy (I Timms)
Principal Benefits Officer (P Lamb) – Item 7
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

Also in Attendance:

Christian Trevelyan, Private Sector Housing Partnership Manager – Item 8

CAB34 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A Trollope-Bellew.

CAB35 Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 August 2013

(Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 7 August 2013 - circulated with the Agenda.)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 7 August 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

CAB36 Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a County, Parish or Town Council:

Name	Minute No.	Member of	Action Taken
Councillor D Westcott	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted
Councillor K H Turner	All	Brompton Ralph	Spoke and voted
Councillor H J W Davies	All	Somerset County Council	Spoke
Councillor K J Ross	All	Dulverton	Spoke

In addition, the following interests were declared

Name	Minute No.	Description of interest	Personal or Prejudicial	Action Taken
Councillor K V Kravis	CAB42	Landlord	Personal	Spoke and voted
Councillor S J Pugsley	CAB42	Landlord	Personal	Spoke and voted
Councillor K H Turner	CAB42	Landlord	Personal	Spoke and voted
Councillor D J Westcott	CAB42	Landlord	Personal	Spoke and voted
Councillor D D Ross	CAB42	Landlord	Personal	Spoke
Councillor K H Turner	CAB43	Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Welfare	Personal	Spoke and voted

CAB37 Public Participation

No member of the public had requested to speak.

CAB38 Forward Plan

(Copy of latest Forward Plan published 21 August 2013 – circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of this item was to approve the latest Forward Plan published 21 August 2013.

RESOLVED that, subject to adding Medium Term Financial Plan Update for October and deleting any reference to ‘Adrian Dyer, Chief Executive’ from November onwards, the latest Forward Plan published 21 August 2013 be approved.

CAB39 Cabinet Action Plan

(Copy of the Action Plan – circulated with the Agenda.)

RESOLVED that CAB21 – Business Case to contribute funding for Watchet CCTV would be considered at the Council meeting to be held on 18 September 2013.

CAB40 **Discretionary Housing Payments Use of Additional Funding**

(Report No. WSC 114/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to advise Cabinet of the receipt of additional funding from central government provided to mitigate the disproportionate impact on those affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy in remote and isolated communities and to propose a scheme for positive use of those funds for local residents.

The Lead Member for Community and Customer presented the report in detail explaining that this was a one-off payment which would be backdated to 1 April 2013. He advised that each parish had been scored according to its population density provided by the 2011 census, and that parishes had been ranked and placed into quartiles based on their scores, with each quartile having a different rate of award ranging from 80% for the least densely populated areas to 50% for the most densely populated. Any unspent money would not be carried forward and would be returned to central government.

During the discussion of this item the following points were raised:

- An explanation was provided on the calculation of the population density figure and that the size of the parish was a factor as the population was divided by hectares.
- Responding to a question regarding what arrangements had been made to notify claimants that the transitional assistance would only be provided in 2013/14, it was confirmed that people receiving additional money would be written to, making it very clear that this was a one-off situation. Housing Associations would also be notified.
- First quarter monitoring of the grant money indicated that spending was on target.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendation in the report which was seconded by Councillor K V Kravis.

RESOLVED that the proposed approach to the use of these additional funds be recommended to Council.

CAB41 **Empty Homes Enforcement Policy**

(Report No. WSC 112/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to consider the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership (partnership) Empty Homes Enforcement Policy and to agree an approach to provide funding for high level enforcement action on empty properties should it become a necessity.

The Lead Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing presented this item and outlined the details in the report, reporting that the objective of the new policy was to get as many long-term empty homes back into use as possible. The Council would be able to use appropriate enforcement powers to bring a property back into use; each empty property would be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and would be presented to full Council for ratification as there currently was no specific budget allocated.

The Lead Member then went on to propose the recommendation contained in the report which was duly seconded by Councillor S J Pugsley.

During the debate the following main points were raised:

- The cost implications of enforcement action were highlighted upon and it was confirmed that the supplementary estimate would be presented to Council on each occasion
- Before the principles of enforcement were carried out, a full investigation would be undertaken to establish property ownership etc.
- In reply to whether empty shops with empty accommodation above could be utilised more effectively, it was explained that every month the council tax database was merged with the empty property database and it was found that a lot of shops were incorrectly registered. The layout of some businesses presented a challenge and discussions would be had with the owner putting forward all the scenarios available to bring an empty property back into use.
- There were currently 250 empty properties in West Somerset and from the properties that contact was being made with the owner, it was hoped that 25% would be reclassified or be brought back into use.

RESOLVED that it be recommended to Council to approve the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership Empty Homes Enforcement Policy, attached at Appendix to the report.

CAB42

Unlawful Eviction Policy

(Report No. WSC 113/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to advise Cabinet of the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership (partnership) Unlawful Eviction Policy and the current issues around unlawful evictions.

The Corporate Manager – Housing, Welfare and Economy presented the report and advised that the incidences of unlawful evictions had increased over the last few years and was causing a concern and having an impact on the homelessness team. The intention of the bespoke policy was to raise the profile of illegal evictions and the Council's approach on dealing with the matter.

Councillor K V Kravis proposed the recommendation in the report which was seconded by Councillor C Morgan.

Members were informed that SWeLT (Somerset West Landlords and Tenants services) had undertaken a lot of prevention work with tenants to help them learn life skills, and with landlords, in conjunction with the Landlord Accreditation Scheme, to help improve their management standards by teaching the right practices to correctly serve notices.

RESOLVED that it be recommended to Council to adopt the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership Unlawful Eviction Policy, attached at Appendix A to the report.

CAB43 **Update on Health and Wellbeing Board and Representation on West Somerset Health Forum**

(Report No. WSC 118/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to update Cabinet on the current situation with regards to the Health and Wellbeing Board and progress to address the Health and Wellbeing Strategy objectives and to propose that Councillor K H Turner, as lead member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing, be the Council's official representative on the West Somerset Health Forum.

The report was presented by the Lead Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing who provided Members with background information and explained that it was proving difficult to communicate the role of the Health and Wellbeing Board to the community hence the need to have a Council representative on the Health Forum in order to improve synchronisation and strengthen links.

In response to queries raised about how should local community groups obtain support on health and wellbeing matters, the Corporate Manager Housing, Welfare and Economy reported that in order to formulate an action plan to join activities together to add value and work more effectively, the following was currently being investigated: the real issues in West Somerset, what support was already being provided, where the gaps were, and what potential funding might be needed.

Councillor D D Ross drew Cabinet's attention to the fact that West Somerset Council did not have its own representative on the Musgrove Park Hospital Board as it presently shared one with Sedgemoor District Council. The Corporate Manager Housing, Welfare and Economy advised that he would be attending the Health and Wellbeing Executive Team Meeting and agreed to look into how this could be achieved and report his findings to a future meeting of Cabinet. The Corporate Manager noted further points of concern raised by Members and advised that he would make enquiries and report back if necessary.

Councillor K H Turner proposed the recommendations in the report which were duly seconded by Councillor K M Mills.

RESOLVED (1) that the situation with regards to the Health and Wellbeing Board be noted and that any appropriate actions are factored into the service plans for 2014/15 and beyond.

RESOLVED (2) that the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Wellbeing, currently Councillor K H Turner, be appointed as the Council's official representative on the West Somerset Health Forum.

CAB44 **Corporate Performance and Budget Monitoring 2013/14 – Quarter 1**

(Report No. WSC 121/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with an update on progress in delivering the corporate priorities, performance of council services including budgetary information and customer satisfaction covering the period from 1 April 2013 and 30 June 2013.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the element of the report that related to the budgetary information, drawing Members' attention to the predicted expenditure for the end of the 2013/14 financial year, and took the opportunity to thank the Scrutiny Committee for their suggestion to improve the report by incorporating figures against any underspend or overspend. With regard to the capital position, the Lead Member advised that the predicted spend for Clanville Housing would need to be discounted from the figures shown in paragraph 5.4.4. It was also noted that for the first time figures relating to the impact that the Non-Domestic Rate Retention Scheme was having on the Council's finances had been incorporated into the report.

During the discussion of this item, the following information on forthcoming meetings was noted:

- The Corporate Policy Advisory Group on 11 September 2013 would give Members the opportunity to meet and greet Penny James, the Council's new Joint Chief Executive.
- On 3 October 2013 a Members Seminar would be held at 2pm for the purpose of introducing Members to the business case for the shared services project.

The Leader presented the part of the report that related to performance and advised that the report made due reference to the questions, comments and concerns raised by Scrutiny Committee when this matter was considered at its meeting held on 19 August 2013.

With reference to the possibility that the performance report might be reformatted, the Chief Executive explained that it was for both Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee to identify and be happy with the format in which they wished to receive performance information to enable the best way to analyse the data. Suggestions on how it could be simplified would be provided to Members accordingly.

During the discussion it was pointed out that on page 91 of the performance report the figure under Housing and Economy Key Action 1.4.20, Qtr 1 Update should be amended to read £28,000.

The Leader proposed the recommendations in the report which were seconded by Councillor K V Kravis.

RESOLVED (1) that the progress in delivering the corporate priorities for the first quarter of 2013/14 be noted.

RESOLVED (2) that the performance against Group and Service Indicators, including the budget monitoring indicators, be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.06 pm