

CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 DECEMBER 2013

AT 4.30 PM

IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WILLITON

Present:

Councillor C Morgan.....In the Chair

Councillor K M Mills
Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew
Councillor D J Westcott

Councillor S J Pugsley
Councillor K H Turner

Members in Attendance:

Councillor G S Dowding
Councillor E May
Councillor M A Smith

Councillor A P Hadley
Councillor I R Melhuish

Officers in Attendance:

Corporate Director (B Lang)
Interim Executive Director (A Dyer)
Section 151 Officer (S Campbell)
Planning Manager (A Goodchild)
Economic Regeneration Manager (C Matthews)
Principal Accountant (S Plenty)
Scrutiny and Performance Officer (S Rawle)
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

CAB69 Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor C Morgan be elected Chairman for the meeting.

CAB70 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K V Kravis and T Taylor.

CAB71 Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 November 2013

(Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 6 November 2013 - circulated with the Agenda.)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 6 November 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

CAB72 **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 K H Turner	All	Brompton Ralph	Spoke and voted
Councillor D J Westcott	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted

CAB73 **Public Participation**

No member of the public had requested to speak.

CAB74 **Forward Plan**

(Copy of latest Forward Plan published 22 November 2013 – circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of this item was to approve the latest Forward Plan published 22 November 2013.

RESOLVED that, subject to adding ‘Tobacco Declaration’ in January 2014 and deferring the reports relating to ‘Fees and Charges’ and ‘Draft Capital Programme’ to February 2014, the latest Forward Plan published 22 November 2013 be approved.

CAB75 **Cabinet Action Plan**

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

RESOLVED (1) that CAB67 – Request for Allocation of Section 106 Funding – Fit to Work Hinkley be deleted as actioned.

RESOLVED (2) that CAB68 – Council Tax Rebate Scheme be deleted as actioned.

CAB76 **Review of Financial Regulations**

(Report No. WSC 159/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was for Cabinet to recommend to Council the changes to the Financial Regulations.

In the absence of the Lead Member for Resources and Central Support, the Lead Member for Community and Customer introduced the item and the Section 151 Officer presented the report and advised that the changes brought the Financial Regulations in line with the new management structure which would be in place from 1 January 2014, for example, amendments to job titles and management team names. The Section 151 Officer confirmed that the appendix presented to Council would incorporate the tracked changes.

The Lead Member for Community and Customer proposed the recommendation which was duly seconded by Councillor S J Pugsley.

RESOLVED that the proposed changes to the Financial Regulations, attached at Appendix A to the report, be recommended to Council.

CAB77 **Corporate Performance April – September 2013/14**

(Report No. WSC 164/13, 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 covering the period from 1 April 2013 to 30 September 2013.

In the absence of the Leader, the Lead Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing presented this item 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 18 November 2013.

The Lead Member for Housing, Health & Wellbeing proposed the recommendations contained in the report which were seconded by Councillor D J Westcott.

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

RESOLVED (2) that the performance against the measures of success and key service indicators be noted.

CAB78 **Financial Monitoring April – September 2013/14**

(Report No. WSC 165/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to provide updated in year financial information on a range of issues including budgetary monitoring and business rate retention together with an updated Medium Term Financial Plan.

In the absence of the Lead Member for Resources and Central Support, the Lead Member for Executive Support and Democracy introduced the item and drew Members' attention to the performance against the budget, the major estimated budget variances and corrected paragraph 5.7.2 of the report advising it should read '... the gross yield had increased by ...'.

The Lead Member for Executive Support and Democracy proposed the recommendation in the report which was seconded by Councillor K H Turner.

In response to a question as to whether money had been spent on the East Wharf Warehouse, it was advised that the figure in table 5.4 of the report related to the predicted spend until the end of the year and in the event that no satisfactory agreement with the Marine Operator could be reached, the Council would have to spend money to make the building safe or commence with the demolition.

Members requested clarification regarding the budget levels set for staffing, Clanville housing and the disposal of leisure land.

RESOLVED that the current financial standing of the Council together with the estimated position at the end of the financial year be noted.

CAB79 Review of the Pre-Application Planning Advice Charging Scheme

(Report No. WSC 160/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The report was a review of the pre-application planning advice charging scheme which was introduced in April 2013. The review was a requirement of the formal resolution at the Council meeting in March 2013. The intention of the review is to ensure that any changes to the scheme can be introduced and factored into the budget for 2014/15 and particularly the fees and charges setting process to be introduced in April 2015.

The Lead Member for Environment – General presented the item and reported on the following: the income to date was £17,250 after the deduction of VAT, the majority of pre-application requests had been from minor applications, and the percentage of applications refused had gone down.

He proposed the recommendation in the report, with an amendment to be made to (i) to read 'To reflect the fact that the provision of advice is VAT rated the fees be increased by the current rate of VAT'. The recommendation, as amended, was seconded by Councillor S J Pugsley.

There was an in-depth discussion on whether the revised charging schedule should detail the price inclusive or exclusive of VAT and the Planning Manager explained the reasoning for producing a charging schedule in Appendix B which detailed the prices inclusive of VAT. The Section 151 Officer advised that the schedule on the Council's website would show the charge exclusive of VAT and it would be incorporated into the Fees and Charges Cabinet report in February 2014.

It was noted that it was good to see people using the pre-application planning advice which was a credit to the exemplary work of the planning team.

RESOLVED that in order to inform the budget setting process for 2014/15 and particularly the fees and charges setting process for April 2014 onwards, the following be agreed:

- (i) To reflect the fact that the provision of advice is VAT rated the fees be increased by the current rate of VAT.
- (ii) That increasing the fee for Type 2 Minor Developments and above which will be paid to the County Council to enable the provision of timely and effective Highways advice in accordance with an agreed countywide approach be positively considered.
- (iii) That Town and Parish Councils contemplating development to provide community related facilities be given a 50% fee reduction.
- (iv) That the fee schedule be amended to remove the option to seek pre-application advice without a site visit.
- (v) That the Major development categories (Types 1, 2 and 3) be amended to include the provision of written advice and two meetings within the initial fee.
- (vi) That where work is proposed which falls into two categories on the same site the fee payable is the higher of the two categories and not the combined fee for the two categories.
- (vii) That accompanying information makes it clearer that the initial fee is payable on submission and will not be invoiced upon the provision of the advice.

CAB80 Somerset Growth Plan Framework

(Report No. 161/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to advise Cabinet of work to produce the Somerset Growth Plan and to seek endorsement for the framework.

The report was presented by the Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Growth who drew Members' attention to Appendix A of the report which detailed Somerset's plans to promote growth and the purpose of the Growth Plan which was to attract and guide investment, to overcome barriers and maximise sustainable growth from local opportunities, benefiting Somerset's communities, businesses and residents, advising that the Economic Regeneration Manager was involved in the project. The Lead Member also advised that the Council had very little control of the top slicing of the New Homes Bonus.

She proposed the recommendations in the report which were duly seconded by Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew.

The point was raised that one of the major barriers to growth in Somerset were lifestyle businesses.

The Economic Regeneration Manager advised that West Somerset could feel marginalised within the Growth Strategy and the aim was to try to influence and ensure the district had better business support to help the micro/small businesses to thrive and become more resilient in West Somerset, and to put more support in and around Market Towns.

In response to a query as to whether Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) would have access to funding if they did not get a share of the New Homes Bonus, the Economic Regeneration Manager stated that the

government would flex existing budgets which would devolve to the LEPs for them to use as they saw fit in their areas.

Concern was raised regarding the existing infrastructure in West Somerset and the urgent need to improve the road network.

RESOLVED (1) that the strategic framework for the Somerset Growth Plan be endorsed.

RESOLVED (2) that the work undertaken to date to produce the document and the further work that will be undertaken to produce more detailed investment packages of work to address the priorities be noted.

The meeting closed at 5.43 pm