

CABINET 8 July 2015

Present:- Councillor Smith (Chairman)
Councillors Bourne, Cory, Feltham, Frame, Graham, B. Oxford and T. Young

Also in attendance: - Councillors Bentley, Havis, Hayes, Hazell, G. Oxford, Scott, Willetts

10. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 27 May 2015 and 3 June 2015 be approved as a correct record.

11. Have Your Say!

Mark Goacher addressed the Cabinet pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) to ask what the Council could do to mitigate the impact of the Budget Statement on vulnerable people. He noted the reduction of the benefit cap and the impact this would have on vulnerable families, the difficulties under 25s would now face in securing housing benefit, which increased the risk of homelessness, and the numbers of people relying on foodbanks. He asked what action the Council would take to address these issues. He also asked how the Council would prevent the changes to the planning system becoming a charter for developers.

In response, Councillor Smith, Leader of the Council and Portfolio for Strategy, explained that the Council had done all it could to mitigate the impact of austerity measures. It had provided advice and support to families affected by the benefit cap. This had resulted in many families being exempted from the cap. The Council had built the first new Council houses for a generation, it had increased the amount of social housing and supported foodbanks. Councillor Bourne, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Public Protection, stressed that the Council was proactive in the face of welfare changes and would work with partners to minimise the impact on the most vulnerable. The Council would look carefully at the ramifications of the budget and ensure where necessary its processes were amended. Councillor Frame, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Planning stressed that the Council helped ensure opportunities for all through stimulating economic growth and noted that unemployment in Colchester was falling.

Councillor Scott attended and with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Cabinet to express her concern about the impact of cuts imposed by the government. As a

consequence, scarcity was causing intolerable stress to the vulnerable. She believed that the Council had a moral duty to ensure that it used its abundance for the good of all and expressed her pride that the Council had set a budget to protect services despite cuts in funding. The Council should continue to pay the living wage and ensure it was paid by contractors used by the Council. The Council should also support the local economy by using local companies and businesses.

Councillor Smith, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy explained that the Council had already introduced a requirement for contractors to pay the living wage.

12. Appointment of Contractors for the Refurbishment of the Enoch House Sheltered Housing Scheme

The Head of Commercial Services submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member. Karen Loweman, Director of Housing, Colchester Borough Homes, made a presentation to Cabinet highlighting the success of the transformation of Worsnop House and the difference it had made to residents' lives. A similar approach would be taken to the refurbishment of Enoch House to ensure it was an exemplar sheltered housing scheme. Colchester Borough Homes had already begun to engage with residents about the refurbishment and it aimed to complete the work by autumn 2017.

Councillor Bourne, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Public Protection, thanked Karen Loweman for her presentation and stressed that the refurbishment would be a major overhaul. It would change the accommodation provided from bedsits to modern en-suite apartments, fit for the 21st century. The scheme would have the feel of a hotel and would include innovative, energy efficient technology.

Councillor T. Young, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Licensing and Culture, Councillor Frame, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Planning, Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Councillor B. Oxford, Portfolio Holder for Customers, all expressed their support for the work on Worsnop House and the proposals for Enoch House. The liaison with residents and the energy efficient technology were highlighted as particular strengths of the project. Improving sheltered accommodation would release some larger units for other residents in need of housing in more suitable accommodation. Cabinet thanked Colchester Borough Homes and Council officers for the high quality of work that had gone into both schemes.

RESOLVED that:-

(a) The successful outcomes of the Worsnop House Sheltered Housing refurbishment project be noted, including:-

- High levels of customer satisfaction
- The release of under-occupied family-sized accommodation, now being utilised by local families
- Improved standards of accommodation for older residents in line with the agreed Colchester Standard

(b) N D Smith be appointed to deliver the Building Works involved in refurbishing Enoch House.

(c) C.J Electrical be appointed to deliver the Electrical Works involved in refurbishing Enoch House.

(d) Cooper & Brome be appointed to deliver the Mechanical Works involved in refurbishing Enoch House

(e) The Council enter with into the latest version Joint Contract Tribunal (JCT) 2011 Intermediate Form of Contract with the successful individual contractors to deliver the works.

REASONS

This is the second major refurbishment project of the Council's Sheltered Housing Programme and is presented to address the September 2011 Cabinet decision to make improvements to four of the Councils sheltered schemes so that in future no tenant would need to share facilities and would have their own kitchen and bathroom.

The procurement approach agreed by Cabinet on 1st December 2010 as part of the Asset Management Strategy is to let a JCT Form of Contract for this and similar types of work.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Not to accept the tenders of one or more of the proposed contractors. This would impede the delivery of previous Cabinet decisions and may not deliver best value which the Council has a duty to seek.

Not to continue with the programme but again this would be at odds with the previous Cabinet decisions.

13. Future of South East Local Enterprise Partnership

The Strategic Director, Commercial and Place, submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor Bentley, in his capacity as Deputy Leader of Essex County Council, attended and with the consent of the Chairman addressed the Cabinet. He explained the background to the current situation, which had resulted from a proposal by Kent and Medway to put forward proposals to government for a Local Economic Partnership (LEP) based on that region alone. Therefore Essex authorities and business leaders had been looking at alternative arrangements for a LEP to cover Essex. If no other structure was put in place, investment in the region could be jeopardised. Proposals had been brought forward by the Greater Essex Business Board which were supported by district councils and business leaders across Essex.

Councillor Smith, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, stressed that the SELEP was too large and not a convenient or logical business area. There were advantages to membership of a LEP and it was acknowledged that SELEP had delivered

some important investment for Colchester, particularly for the Northern Gateway and in developing broadband infrastructure. However, a more local structure would be more suitable.

Councillor Frame, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Planning, Councillor T. Young, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Licensing and Culture, Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Councillor Graham, Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services, all expressed their support for the proposals contained in the report. The need for a more local LEP was acknowledged and the proposals from the Greater Essex Business Board would be studied. The need to ensure that the timing of any new arrangements dovetailed with the dissolution of the existing LEP so that Colchester did not lose funding was stressed.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) The proposal to dissolve the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) be supported provided there is an appropriate alternative LEP for Colchester to be part of.
- (b) Further consideration be given to what arrangements or structure for a LEP would best secure Colchester's interests, such consideration to include further consultation with Colchester business groups.

REASONS

Cabinet needed to decide if it wishes to support the proposal by the Deputy Leader of Essex County Council and the Chairman of Haven Gateway Partnership that in the light of proposals to dissolve the South East LEP that a new LEP is formed based on the area of Greater Essex, which is the boundaries of the County Council and the two Unitaries of Southend and Thurrock.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

To support those wishing the SE LEP to remain (the status quo) or suggest a new LEP based on the wider Haven Gateway area. In practice all options require willing partners if Government is going to be persuaded to support any specific proposal.

14. 2016-17 Budget Strategy, Medium Term Financial Forecast and Budget Timetable

The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor Willetts attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Cabinet. He noted that the government's Budget Statement would have a considerable impact on the assumptions in the report. For example the proposals on public sector pay, the national living wage and changes to welfare would all have an impact on the Council's budget and Medium Term Financial Forecast. The aim for a 0% increase in Council Tax was welcomed, but this should be formalised now rather than being an objective. He also expressed concern at the levels of balances and reserves which were too high. Cuts to services could not be justified given the levels of reserves. The administration should only

spend the revenue it generated within that financial year.

Councillor Smith, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy responded and explained that there was only £507,000 of unallocated balances.

Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources presented the report and explained that Colchester was in safe hands. There was a prudent level of reserves and balances, which were largely allocated. The unallocated funding would help the Council protect residents from cuts in funding resulting from the Budget Statement and would be used to deliver Borough Investment for All. This would deliver and support a range of actions around a number of priorities, which were aimed at benefitting all residents in the Borough.

Councillor Frame, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Planning, Councillor Feltham, Portfolio for Communities and Leisure, Councillor B. Oxford, Portfolio Holder for Customers and Councillor T. Young, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Licensing and Culture expressed their support for the proposals and in particular stressed the need for a long term approach to budget planning, rather than working on a short term year to year approach. The reintroduction of community budgets for all Councillors was also particularly welcomed.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) The pre-audit outturn position for the financial year 2014/15 be noted.
- (b) Funding from balances be released for projects set out at paragraph 3.4 of the Assistant Chief Executive's report.
- (c) Funding for the Borough Investment for All (BIFA) of £470k be agreed as set out at paragraph 3.5 of the Assistant Chief Executive's report.
- (d) The budget forecast, approach and timetable for the preparation of the 2016/17 budget and updated position in respect of balances be noted.
- (e) The updated Medium Term Financial Forecast as set out at Appendix A of the Assistant Chief Executive's report be noted.
- (f) The latest position in respect of the Capital Programme be noted.

REASONS

The Council is required to approve a financial strategy and timetable in respect of the financial year 2016/17, and a Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF) for the two subsequent financial years

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

No alternative options were proposed.

15. Revisions to Colchester and Ipswich Joint Museums Service Joint Committee Agreement

The Chief Operating Officer submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor T. Young, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Licensing and Culture, explained that since the Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service (CIMS) had been formed in 2007 it had developed into a strong and successful partnership. It was sensible to extend the Agreement and to take the opportunity to update it. In particular the revised Agreement would address the different approaches to charging in Colchester and Ipswich. The Agreement would cap the income guaranteed to CIMS and allow Colchester to retain additional income generated through charging.

RESOLVED that the revisions to the Colchester and Ipswich Museums (CIMS) Joint Committee Agreement be agreed.

REASONS

The Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service (CIMS) was formed in 2007 via a Joint Committee Agreement for 2007-2018. The agreement designates Colchester Borough Council as the employing authority for CIMS and empowers CIMS to operate the museums service on Ipswich Borough Council's behalf. The Joint Museums Committee (JMC) is the main governance mechanism for the service.

CIMS has been established for eight years and has brought about considerable improvements and efficiencies in service delivery. It has coped with significant changes in external funding regimes without having a detrimental impact on service delivery and been successful in attracting national and international interest in the venues and collections which form the Ipswich component of the Service. CIMS officers are playing a key role in the Ipswich Arts and Museums Project and have strong links across the Arts and Heritage sector in the town and more widely.

With eight years experience in delivering the Joint Museums Committee Agreement and with the current agreement having less than three years to run, it is felt that the time is right to consider the effectiveness of the Agreement and whether it should be extended. The conclusion reached in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders was that the agreement should be revised and extended.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The agreement could be left as it is but it is now reaching the end of its life and the changes reflect the changing nature of the partnership.

16. Progress of Responses to the Public

The Assistant Chief Executive submitted a progress sheet a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Progress Sheet be noted.

REASONS

The progress sheet was a mechanism by which the Cabinet could ensure that public statements and questions were responded to appropriately and promptly.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

No alternative options were presented to the Cabinet.

The Cabinet resolved under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Meetings and Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012 to exclude the public from the meeting for the following item as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

17. Appointment of Contractors for the Refurbishment of the Enoch House Sheltered Housing Scheme

The Head of Commercial Services submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

RESOLVED that:-

(a) The successful outcomes of the Worsnop House Sheltered Housing refurbishment project be noted, including:-

- High levels of customer satisfaction
- The release of under-occupied family-sized accommodation, now being utilised by local families
- Improved standards of accommodation for older residents in line with the agreed Colchester Standard

(b) N D Smith be appointed to deliver the Building Works involved in refurbishing Enoch House.

(c) C.J Electrical be appointed to deliver the Electrical Works involved in refurbishing Enoch House.

(d) Cooper & Brome be appointed to deliver the Mechanical Works involved in refurbishing Enoch House

(e) The Council enter with into the latest version Joint Contract Tribunal (JCT) 2011 Intermediate Form of Contract with the successful individual contractors to deliver the works.

REASONS

As set out in minute 12.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

As set out in minute 12.

The Cabinet resolved under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Meetings and Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012 to exclude the public from the meeting for the following item as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

18. Essex Building Control Shared Service Business Plan

This minute is not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information.)