

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

CABINET

**Minutes from the Meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday, 27th June, 2017
at 5.30 pm in the Card Room - Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's
Lynn PE30 5DQ**

PRESENT: Councillor B Long (Chairman)
Councillors A Beales, R Blunt, I Devereux, P Hodson, Mrs K Mellish and
Mrs E Nockolds

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A Lawrence

CAB12 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 May 2017 were signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

CAB13 **URGENT BUSINESS**

None

CAB14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

CAB15 **CHAIRMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE**

None

CAB16 **MEMBERS PRESENT UNDER STANDING ORDER 34**

Councillor P Kunes attended for King's Lynn Strategic Land Acquisition
Councillor Pope attended for the whole agenda

CAB17 **CALLED IN MATTERS**

None

CAB18 **FORWARD DECISIONS**

The Forward Decisions List was noted.

CAB19 **MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET FROM OTHER BODIES**

None

CAB20 **LONG TERM EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY**

Cabinet considered a report which reminded Members that the Council adopted a Long Term Empty Homes Strategy in 2013 which now needed to be reviewed and updated.

The report brought forward an updated Strategy which reviewed progress in the last 3 years and set out the Council's approach in the future. Most empty homes were short term and part of the normal housing market e.g. whilst being renovated, sold or relet. The Council's focus was on homes empty for more than 6 months, and it was noted that the average number of empty home was 850 at any time.

The Housing Services Operations Manager responded to questions explaining that the data was compiled using the Council Tax register and confirmed that the public could report empty homes. She explained the scheme which had been run working with Freebridge to bring empty homes back into use, along with the options available for officers to do so which included enforcement as an end resort.

Under Standing Order 34, Councillor Pope drew attention to the number of the empty properties belonging to Freebridge, and other Housing Associations. He drew attention to empty Freebridge properties within his ward which had been empty for years. The Housing Services Operations Manager explained that very few Housing Association properties were empty for more than 6 months, it was usually when they were awaiting redevelopment or work to them. It was also pointed out that the Borough's figures were higher because it had more properties overall.

Cabinet endorsed the fact that ward Councillors played an important part in reporting empty homes and continuing to do so if no feedback was given.

RECOMMENDED: 1) That the Long Term Empty Homes Strategy as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved.

2) That delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Strategy be awarded to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder responsible for housing

Reason for Decision

To ensure that appropriate advice, assistance and action is taken in relation to long term empty homes

CAB21 **WEST WINCH/NORTH RUNCTON STRATEGIC GROWTH AREA - DESIGN OF / PROVISION OF RELIEF ROAD TO OPEN UP THE AREA**

Councillor Blunt presented a report which outlined the need for, and mechanisms to procure, a design for a West Winch relief road which would enable access to the wider Growth Area and mitigate adverse impacts. It also requested funding of £125K which was matched to money allocated from the Business Rates Pool, and an anticipated similar contribution from Norfolk County Council.

Under Standing Order 34, Councillor Pope acknowledged that he felt it was right for the Borough to take the lead, but it was important that all the developers made contributions towards it. The Local Plan Manager confirmed that all landowners were aware that the developments couldn't commence unless the guarantee of the infrastructure was in place, and all developers would be bound into an Infrastructure Delivery Plan which it was hoped would be in place in July.

RESOLVED: That the Council agrees to make up to £125K available from Reserves towards initial design work for the West Winch relief road.

Reason for Decision

To support the development of 3 – 3500 houses provided for in the Local Plan allocation.

CAB22 **REVENUE OUTTURN 2016/17**

The Principal Accountant presented a report which set out in summary the revenue outturn of 2016/2017 for the General Fund (council tax accounts). The report showed details of the major differences between actual costs/income and the revised estimates for 2016/2017 reported in February 2017 monitoring.

The accounts showed actual Borough spend of £18,252,580, which was £237,990 less than the February Revised Estimate for 2016/2017. This additional saving would be held within the General Fund balance that was carried forward to 2017/2018.

The Council's continuing strategy was to identify budget savings in year, as part of the monitoring process and at year end. These savings were then transferred to the General Fund Balance for use in future years.

Under Standing Order 34 Councillor D Pope asked what the £57,000 VAT refund was for. The Principal Accountant agreed to look into the detail and forward it onto Councillor Pope and Cabinet.

- RESOLVED:** 1) That the revenue outturn and proposed transfers to reserves for 2016/2017 be agreed.
2) That the amendments to the Earmarked Reserves policy be approved.

Reason for Decision

To approve the revenue outturn for 2016/2017 of the Council.

CAB23 **CAPITAL OUTTURN 2016/17**

Executive Director L Gore presented the report which provided details of the outturn of the 2016/2017 capital programme and outlined amendments and rephrasing to the spending on schemes, revising the programme for 2017/2021. The capital programme outturn for 2016/2017 totalled £19,469,420 against an approved budget of £18,341,730. It had been necessary to rephase a total of £311,060 of scheme costs to future years. Useable capital receipts generated in the year totalled £1,939,602. The capital resources available to fund expenditure in 2016/2017 are detailed in section 3 of the report.

The Executive Director responded to questions from Cabinet confirming the adjustment for the cost of the Morston land, and the cost of the movement of the gas main.

An explanation of the risk analysis taken scheme by scheme and at trigger points, along with the monitoring of capital receipts was given in response to a question on the approach to risk analysis.

Cabinet's attention was drawn to the need for some speculative developments within the Enterprise Zone for rent or sale.

RESOLVED: 1) That the outturn of the capital programme for 2016/2017 of £19,469,420 be noted.

2) That the financing arrangements for the 2016/2017 capital programme be noted.

3) That the revised 2017/2021 capital programme and financing as detailed in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision

To report the outturn 2016/2017 for the Capital Programme and update Members on capital spending and resources for 2017-2021.

CAB24 **AMENDMENTS TO THE SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

The report recommended an updated scheme of delegation for approval. The Scheme had been amended to take account of the changes in Portfolio responsibilities which would come into effect once the new scheme was approved by Council.

RECOMMENDED: 1) That Council approve the amended Scheme of Delegation.
2) That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader be given delegated Authority to make minor amendments to the Scheme.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the Delegation Scheme mirrors the decision making structure

CAB25 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

CAB26 **REVISED GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR WEST NORFOLK HOUSING CO LTD AND THE TRANSFER OF HOUSING CAPITAL RESERVES**

The Strategic Housing Manager presented a report which set out some proposed changes to the Governance arrangements for the West Norfolk Housing Co. as previously agreed by Cabinet on 2nd August 2016. The report proposed 3 new Independent Directors, as requested by the HCA, and also the transfer of funds to the Company to enable it to operate.

Cabinet discussed the individuals put forward for the Independent positions and was reassured of their interest in the Company and their future role.

RESOLVED: 1) That in addition to the existing 5 Directors (3 members, Housing Services Manager, Chief Executive, and s151 officer as Company Secretary), 3 further Directors be appointed who are independent of the Council, one of whom will have the role of Independent Chair.

2) That funds from a reserve of affordable housing capital are transferred to the West Norfolk Housing Co. as detailed in the report.

Reason for Decision

An application has been made to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) for The Housing Co. to become a Registered Provider of social housing. As part of this process feedback from the HCA indicates the need for the current arrangement to be amended to provide a required

degree of independence on the board. The transfer of funds is required to ensure that the company has some capital to meet the regulatory standard relating to financial viability. The funds will be used in conjunction with borrowing for investment activities set out in the West Norfolk Housing co. Business Plan.

CAB27 **KING'S LYNN STRATEGIC LAND AND PROPERTY ACQUISITION**

The Property Services Manager presented a report which reminded Cabinet that it had previously considered a report recommending that the Council proceed to purchase the former Post Office building located at Blackfriars Street, King's Lynn. The Property Services Manager was authorised to make an offer following negotiations with the owner's agent.

The Council's offer was submitted to the board of directors of the owners however, the offer was rejected. Further negotiations and discussions had been held with the owner's agents and had reached a point whereby they were able to recommend a revised offer.

Under Standing Order 34, Councillor P Kunes spoke in support of the purchase and the proposals set out in the report.

Councillor Beales expressed his support for the proposal and drew attention to the fact that the building had been turned down for listing.

RESOLVED: 1) That delegated authority be given to the Property Services Manager to finalise negotiations in respect of the proposed acquisition outlined within the report in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Projects and Assets.

2) That delegated authority be granted to draft and finalise all necessary documentation, contractual or otherwise, associated with the proposed acquisition of this land and property asset.

3) That the Property Services Manager be authorised to commence a Compulsory Purchase Order in the event that the Council is unable to conclude the acquisition of this key site.

4) That the Property Services Manager be authorised to further negotiate with the site owners to acquire the land as a 'cleared site', with the Capital Programme being amended to accommodate this additional spend.

Reason for Decision

To deal with a large, semi derelict building situated at a key location within King's Lynn in order to facilitate its redevelopment to provide a new retail/food/leisure offer and hence add rather than detract to the

viability and vitality of the town centre. The decision was Resolved as Council was not being asked for the additional financing.

The meeting closed at 6.50 pm