

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 22nd January, 2018.

Present:- Councillors Swindlehurst (Chair), Hussain (Vice-Chair), Anderson (until 7.33pm), Carter, Mann, Nazir, Pantelic and Sadiq

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Strutton and Wright

Apologies for Absence:- None.

PART 1

78. Declarations of Interest

Item 9: Private Street Works Whittle Parkway Highway Improvement Works – Councillor Anderson declared that some family members worked in businesses located in the roadway. He withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the item.

79. Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th December 2017

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 18th December 2017 be approved as a correct record.

Cabinet, 6th October 2017: Strategic Acquisition of Town Centre Site

The Cabinet was informed that it had been decided under the authority delegated to the Interim Director of Place & Development to proceed with the proposal to take over the company which owned the freehold of Nova House, Slough to ensure the protection of residents by carrying out the necessary fire safety works. The decision followed detailed due diligence and was subject to the resolution of any final legal matters.

80. 2018-19 Housing Rents and Service Charges

The Head of Finance (Transformation) introduced a report that presented the changes in housing rents and service charges for 2018/19 for social housing and asked that they be recommended to full Council on 30th January 2018.

It was proposed that Council house dwelling rents would decrease by 1% from Monday 2nd April 2018 and that garage rents, heat, utility, ancillary charges and service charges rise by 3% based on the September CPI inflation figure. The Cabinet noted that the decrease was in line with the legislative requirement that social rents be reduced by 1% less than the amount payable by the tenant in the preceding 12 months each year until 2019-20. The Government had indicated that from 2020 a greater degree of discretion would be given back to Council's which would help to invest in repairs and stabilise the decline in rental income.

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After due consideration, the Cabinet agreed to recommend the proposed rent and service charges to full Council.

Recommended –

- (a) That Council house dwelling rents for 2018/19 decrease by 1% over the 2017/18 rent with effect from Monday 2nd April 2018. This was in line with current government guidelines and legislation.
- (b) That Garage rents, heating, utility and ancillary charges increase by 3.0% with effect from Monday 2nd April 2018. This was based upon the September CPI figure.
- (c) That Service charges increase by 3.0% with effect from Monday 2nd April 2018. This was based upon the September CPI figure.
- (d) That 'Other committee' property rents increase by an average of 3.0% from Monday 2nd April 2018 in line with the September CPI figure.

81. Heart of Slough North West Quadrant Update

The Leader of the Council introduced a report that updated that Cabinet on negotiations with Slough Urban Renewal (SUR) on the granting of an option to redevelop the North West Quadrant site.

Following the acquisition of the land by the Council in April 2017, detailed work had been undertaken with SUR to determine whether it could satisfy the Council's requirements in relation to the quality and design mix; programme and deliverability; economic development outcomes; profit distribution and risk profile. The recommendation was that SUR be granted an option for the redevelopment and the Cabinet was asked to consider and note the Appendices 1, 2 and 3, which contained exempt information, setting out the draft vision statement, legal issues and report of the external development consultant.

The Cabinet emphasised the strategic importance of the site and the wider opportunities to contribute to the major regeneration of the town centre. It was agreed that the work undertaken since the acquisition had demonstrated that SUR was the best option to deliver the regeneration of the site. Further reports would come back to Cabinet to approve the masterplan prior to the submission of the planning application. A range of other issues were raised including the short term actions to improve the appearance of the site. A proposal was made to amend recommendation (g) to clarify that Cabinet's approval would be required before the plans for the site were submitted and that the determination of SURs application would be a matter for the formal planning process. All of the recommendations, including the amended recommendation (g), were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the granting be agreed of an option to SUR to redevelop the site referred to as the North West Quadrant and to agree that Council officers should proceed on the basis that the site will be disposed of to, and developed by, SUR, subject to Cabinet approval of the final sum for each phase, which for the Council, will represent no less than the best consideration reasonably obtained (i.e. best value); and
- (b) That Subject to (a) above, delegated authority be given to the Director of Finance & Resources (Section 151 Officer), following consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree:
 - i) The final terms of the option in line with the agreed Heads of Terms; and
 - ii) Expenditure of up to £150,000 of reasonable development costs at NWQ, including the replacement of hoarding, the cost of which is to be recoverable from the regeneration project through the minimum land value payable by SUR.
- (c) That the content of Appendix One, which illustrates the vision, track record and expertise of SUR to deliver the NWQ site on behalf of the Council be noted.
- (d) That the content of Appendix Two be noted, which confirms the Council's ability to use SUR to procure the development, and sets out how the standard option agreement has been amended to consider: additional governance, the phased and extended nature of the scheme, economic development, and the additional development management expertise required.
- (e) That the content of Appendix Three, prepared by an independent firm of Chartered Surveyors specialising in development consultancy, which supports the conditional disposal to SUR as a reasonable and effective route offering best value to the Council be noted.
- (f) That it be agreed that the redevelopment of the NWQ should, where possible, facilitate and maximise development opportunities emerging in the town centre where these opportunities deliver wider social and regenerative benefits for Slough.
- (g) That it be noted that further reports would be made to Cabinet on (i) the Masterplan for the development of the NWQ site to update SUR's current indicative Masterplan document; and (ii) the planning application for outline planning consent for the whole of the NWQ site and full planning consent for Phase 1; to seek Cabinet's approval that SUR submit the planning application prior to it being taken through the planning process for determination.

82. Update on Tower & Ashbourne Houses

The Service Lead Neighbourhoods introduced an update on the rehousing of tenants and buyback of leasehold properties of Tower and Ashbourne Houses and the future redevelopment of the site.

It had previously been agreed that due to a range of compliance and anti-social behaviour issues, tenants would be decanted from the two blocks and the options be explored for redevelopment. An Initial Demolition Notice had been issued in 2015 and the Cabinet was asked to confirm that both blocks be demolished. All tenants had been successfully rehoused and all but two leaseholders had accepted offers and moved out. If negotiations with them broke down, the option of applying for Compulsory Purchase Orders would need to be considered. A detailed option appraisal for affordable housing had been carried out and a proposal of 195 units had been developed to replace the existing 104 social units.

The Cabinet welcomed the progress that had been made and asked a number of questions about the state of the negotiations with the remaining two leaseholders and the impact on the timetable for the redevelopment. A firm timescale could not be confirmed until negotiations, or any possible CPO action, were concluded and it was therefore agreed that the Cabinet receive an update report on the work programme and designs prior to the submission of a planning application. Members agreed that the necessary action be taken to move forward with the demolition and redevelopment and all of the recommendations were approved.

Resolved –

- (a) That Tower House and Ashbourne Houses be demolished;
- (b) That the allocation of funds of £1.57m in the 2018/19 HRA capital programme to this project be approved in addition to the underspend (estimated £2.68m) to be carried forward from 2017/18 to complete the emptying of the blocks, including the potential requirement to take CPO action;
- (c) That the allocation of funds of £1.57m in the 2018/19 HRA capital programme be recommended to full Council;
- (d) That officers proceed with submitting a planning application for a new scheme; and
- (e) That the Director for Finance & Resources, Neighbourhood Services Lead and Cabinet Member for Corporate Finance & Housing, in conjunction with the recommendations of the Housing Option Appraisal, determine the funding for the remodelling of the site.

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- (f) That an update report be provided to the Cabinet on the indicative work programme and design prior to the submission of a planning application.

83. Update on Housing Option Appraisal

The Lead Member for Corporate Finance & Housing and the Service Lead Neighbourhoods introduced an update report on the Housing Option Appraisal. The Cabinet had previously agreed that the option of stock transfer had been discounted and the report set out other options to improve and invest in social housing in the medium and long term.

The options included exploring shared ownership schemes, specific mechanisms to raise private finance or institutional investment, maximising the potential of the Council owned housing companies and continuing discussions with housing associations. The Cabinet agreed that the options proposed all provided opportunities to contribute to the Council's commitment to providing social and affordable housing and they should be taken forward in the next phase of the options appraisal.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton asked about the progress of plans for modular housing. An update was provided and it was noted that whilst the Council would always seek to provide permanent housing where possible, there were some former garage sites which may be suitable for modular housing and detailed plans were being developed.

Resolved –

- (a) That following the Budget announcement, the Council reviews whether to apply for additional funding from the Government/Homes and Communities Agency . This could focus on a bid for additional borrowing headroom and/or loan funding for remodelling;
- (b) That the Council pursues an option to raise private finance through pension fund or institutional investment to deliver new affordable rented housing in the borough, and specifically for the proposed remodelling of the Tower and Ashbourne site (subject to planning permission);
- (c) That the Council develop a bespoke model for Shared Ownership in Slough, offered initially on a limited basis to test demand;
- (d) That the Council keep open the option to discuss partnerships with housing associations;
- (e) That the Council continue to pursue opportunities for new delivery through Herschel Homes and James Elliman Homes recognising that the objectives set for these companies primarily relate to the acquisition of market rented housing for use as temporary

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accommodation, and accommodation for key workers and vulnerable groups such as care leavers;

- (f) That the Council continue to investigate options for the optimal reinvestment of One-for-One retained Right to Buy receipts into social housing in the borough, in the light of the establishment of the establishment of the Council's Partnership Venture with Osborne's, and the opportunity that DISH may present, for the benefit of the Council's social housing objectives;
- (g) That the Council develop an Active Asset Management Strategy based on the analysis within the Asset Performance Evaluation - to be updated annually;
- (h) That within the Asset Management Strategy, the Council appraise the options for those assets which are under-performing relative to the rest of the stock with a view to remodelling, redeveloping or re-providing in the context of increasing supply.

84. Care Leavers Council Tax Exemption Policy

The Director of Finance & Resources introduced a report on the proposal to introduce a policy to provide an exemption from Council Tax for care leavers.

It was recognised that young adults transitioning from care to independent accommodation often struggled to manage their finances and a Council Tax exemption would provide them with greater financial stability. The Council had an ongoing role as a Corporate Parent and the policy would provide an exemption for care leavers up to the age of 25. There were 42 Care Leavers living in Slough with a Council Tax liability currently and a further 13 living outside of the borough who would be eligible for support.

The Cabinet strongly supported the proposal and asked how eligible care leavers would be made aware of and provided with support. A proactive approach would be taken and practical support on the process would be available if required.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton welcomed the policy and highlighted that the Health Scrutiny Panel had recently discussed the further support that could be provided to care leavers such as access to the cycle hire scheme. Any recommendations from the Panel would be considered by Cabinet at a future meeting.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Cabinet agreed the policy.

Resolved –

- (a) That the policy for Care Leavers exemption from Council Tax as set out in Appendix A be approved.

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- (b) That the policy be monitored throughout the year and a report to Cabinet on the outcomes of the policy and the implications including successes to be delivered within the year.

85. Local Welfare Provision Policy

The Lead Member for Corporate Finance & Housing introduced a report that sought approval for the revised Council policy for 2018-19 in respect of Local Welfare Provision.

The policy was broadly unchanged from the current year however the Cabinet expressed concern about the potential additional demand for support arising from the roll out Universal Credit in April 2018. It was noted that the funding had been profiled to take account of this and it was agreed that the Cabinet would consider a progress report in six months to determine whether any additional resources or actions were needed. In response to a question it was confirmed that the Council was seeking to raise awareness that Universal Credit would be introduced to help people manage their finances accordingly.

At the conclusion of the discussion the policy was approved.

Resolved –

- (a) That the policy for Local Welfare Provision 2018-19 as set out in Appendix C to the report be approved.
- (b) That Cabinet receive a report on the first half year spend and the reasons for the spend including the impact of Universal Credit as soon as this was available.

86. References from Overview & Scrutiny

There were no references from Overview & Scrutiny.

87. Notification of Forthcoming Decisions

The Cabinet considered and endorsed the Notification of Key Decisions published on 22nd December 2017 which set out the decisions expected to be taken by the Cabinet over the next three months.

Resolved – That the published Notification of Decisions be endorsed.

(Having declared an interest in the following item, Councillor Anderson withdrew from the meeting)

88. Private Street Works – Whittle Parkway Highway Improvement Works

The Cabinet considered a report that sought resolution to take the necessary action to undertake highway improvement works to Whittle Parkway, Slough.

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The background to the issue was summarised and it was recognised that Whittle Parkway was unadopted and required highway works to address a number of safety concerns and bring it up to standard. Funding for the works was available as set out in the Section 106 Agreement for 1 Whittle Parkway, however, the landowner had not given consent for the works and adoption was required to carry out the necessary improvement to lighting and pavements etc. It was also recommended that the Council investigate measures to improve road safety and ease congestion between Walpole Road and Whittle Parkway.

Councillors Strutton and Wright addressed the Cabinet under Rule 30 and highlighted that there were a number of access and safety issues that needed to be addressed in the vicinity beyond the proposed works to Whittle Parkway. They stated a wider approach was needed to address congestion and safety issues including more proactive enforcement action.

The Cabinet noted the concerns and agreed that officers should explore the wider options to address the traffic problems in the locality. A report back to the Cabinet, and if appropriate involving scrutiny, should be made at a future date if significant works or actions were identified. It was proposed and agreed that recommendation (e) be amended to make clear that investigations to improve road safety and ease congestion between Walpole Road and Whittle Parkway section should be followed by the necessary works should be carried out arising from the investigations. The Cabinet recognised that this had been a difficult issue with no agreement between the parties involved, however, in the absence of consent from the landowner to carry out the important safety and improvement works it would be necessary to adopt the section of highway set out. The recommendations were therefore approved.

Resolved –

- (a) That Whittle Parkway was not paved, metalled, flagged, made good and lighted to the satisfaction of the Council as the street works authority in accordance with Section 205 (1) of the Highways Act 1980.
- (b) That the Transport and Highways Team apply the strict criteria for a private street works scheme as set out in part of XI of the Highways Act 1980 and Sections 205 to 218 (The Private Street works code) on Whittle Parkway.
- (c) That the specification of the highways works shown in 290-SBC-GEN-WP-100DR D 0002 for the estimate of £86,572.42 which was the probable expenses of the works and provisional apportionment of the probable expenses to 'The Trust' be approved.
- (d) That the Council adopt the section of the highway as set out in drawing 290-SBC-GEN-WP-100DR D 0002 pursuant to Section 228 of the Highways Act 1980.

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- (e) That the Council investigate measures to improve road safety and ease congestion between Walpole Road and Whittle Parkway section and undertake any work arising from these investigations as required.
- (f) That officers consider further measures to address wider road safety, transport and highway issues in the vicinity of the Huntercombe Spur.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.32 pm and closed at 7.51 pm)