

Cabinet

Tuesday, 17th July, 2012
6.00 - 6.50 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Steve Jordan (Leader of the Council), John Rawson (Cabinet Member Finance), Rowena Hay (Cabinet Member Sport and Culture), Peter Jeffries (Cabinet Member Housing and Safety), Andrew McKinlay (Cabinet Member Built Environment), Jon Walklett (Cabinet Member Corporate Services) and Roger Whyborn (Cabinet Member Sustainability)

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 June be approved and signed as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

No public questions or petitions had been received.

5. HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member Housing and Community Safety introduced the report and explained that a Housing Review Group had been set up to consider the potential local impact arising from the implementation of some key national priorities, such as the Welfare Reform and the Localism Act. A Housing and Homelessness Strategy had been drafted bringing together a number of other strategies including the Homelessness Strategy and Benefit Take-Up Strategy and the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy and Empty Homes Strategy. It was an extensive document with a concrete action plan detailing activities to be undertaken in order to meet priorities and outcomes. The action plan would be reviewed after 3 years and six monthly updates would be provided to Cabinet. The Cabinet Member also highlighted that the universal credit scheme was likely to be piloted in 2013.

The Leader of the Council explained that this was a crucial policy for the Council, six monthly reviews were vital and frequent updates to Cabinet would be welcomed.

Resolved

That the Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2012-2017 be adopted.

6. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL BUDGET

The Cabinet Member Housing and Safety introduced the report and explained that the remaining Private Sector Renewal Funding of £303 600, which had been allocated by central government for housing renewal purposes, needed to be allocated. It was proposed that funding continued to be allocated to the Housing Health and Safety loan and to help finance compulsory purchase action to bring long term vacant property back into use.

In response to a question the Cabinet Member explained that 144 long-term empty properties had now been brought back into use and the current number of empty properties stood at 382.

Resolved

That capital continues to be made available from the remaining PSR funding for the Housing Health and Safety loan / grant schemes contained in Appendix 5, sub appendix 1 and 2, of the Housing Strategy and that capital be available from remaining PSR funding to help finance compulsory purchase (CPO) action to bring long term vacant property back into use.

7. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF CHELTENHAM BOROUGH HOMES

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and said that Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) had been doing an excellent job on behalf of the Council in managing its housing stock, in bringing on new sites for development and undertaking activities in the community. It was now important to ensure that the organisation was fit for purpose for the future as more challenges lay ahead.

He reported that the Council had appointed 5 members to the Board of CBH and the skills set of these members together with the areas they represented had been considered when making these appointments. In terms of tenants and leaseholder representation on the Board their appointment would be subject to an assessment process to ensure their contributions were effective.

In terms of constitutional changes the Leader confirmed that the roles and responsibilities of the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member had now been clearly defined with the Leader representing the authority as shareholder of the company and the Cabinet Member having the service level agreement monitoring role.

With regard to communications about senior staffing the Leader reported that this would be formalised in the management agreement with the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council now having regular meetings with the Chair of the Board.

Members welcomed the report which in their view positively addressed the issues. The leaseholder representative on the Board was also a positive step as previously leaseholders did not have a voice at Board level.

Resolved that:

- **Board membership of 15 members be approved with effect from October 2012 to be comprised of 4 tenants and 1 leaseholder (appointed by a panel), 5 independents (appointed by a panel) and 5 Councillors (appointed by the Council).**
- **Cabinet Members are not eligible to be a board member of CBH**
- **The changes to the articles of association as set out in appendix 2 be approved.**
- **Authority be delegated to the Director Commissioning in consultation with the Borough Solicitor to amend the provisions of the Management Agreement to include the requirement for CBC to be consulted upon any proposals to alter the structure of CBH's senior leadership team.**

8. PROMOTING CHELTENHAM FUND

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and thanked the grant assessment panel which had discussed the bids in detail. He explained that this was the second year of the scheme and due to overwhelming interest this was now a one stage process. He emphasised that not all projects approved under the scheme would be fully funded but a contribution would be made to ensure the project could still go ahead. The panel felt that where a project was bidding for the second year in a row, this should contain new elements in order to attract funding and to make the project more sustainable in the longer term.

The Leader referred to Appendix 2 of the report which detailed the Panel's Red, Amber or Green assessment. He made reference to the bid by Cheltenham Festivals (CF) and informed Members that discussions would take place with CF in due course to ensure there was no overlap with what was already being undertaken.

Members praised the work of the panel and hoped that those projects which had been awarded funding would deliver good value in promoting the economy of the town. They also highlighted two specific bids which had been received and redirected to the Environmental Improvement Fund.

Resolved that

- 1. £96,350 from the Promoting Cheltenham Fund be allocated to those projects identified as "green" in appendix 2 – "List of projects and recommendations."**
- 2. The Leader of the Council allocate the remaining funds to those projects identified as "amber" in appendix 2 – "List of projects and recommendations", subject to seeking recommendations from the assessment panel.**

9. CORPORATE ADVERTISING & SPONSORSHIP

The Cabinet Member Built Environment introduced the report and explained that to date the Council had only an ad hoc approach to corporate sponsorship and advertising. He stated that a more structured, committed and commercial approach would provide the Council with a means to raise revenue and ensure the maximum use of its assets. He made reference to appendix 2 which detailed the current advertising and sponsorship

arrangements across the Council. The proposal now was to appoint a specialist marketing company to assist the council in maximising its revenue which could result in the council generating extra funds to provide a better service and contribute to its overall financial position. This would be a 3-5 year agreement with ongoing monitoring of the contract.

The Cabinet Member Sustainability referred to the current roundabout sponsorship where the funds raised only covered roundabout maintenance but contributed to enhancing the town. He urged for caution in categorising things to much in future. In response the Cabinet Member Built Environment explained that existing arrangements would be maintained but the policy was to maximise income, generate greater sums for those assets and expand the assets involved.

Members welcomed the proposal.

Resolved that

- 1. The introduction of the proposed Advertising & Sponsorship policy and procedure be approved. All sponsorship and advertising must fall within the policy.**
- 2. At the next budget setting meeting, full Council resolves that additional funding from advertising and sponsorship opportunities, over and above existing arrangements currently in place within service areas, will have a maximum of 50% of the funds reinvested into the assets being used with the balance held for central distribution through the budget setting process to reduce the council's net cost of service, unless a specific corporate decision is made to reinvest a higher percentage. Funding already received from current advertising and sponsorship arrangements will remain within service areas.**
- 3. A list of council assets that are appropriate for advertising and sponsorship opportunities be developed by the Advertising & Sponsorship Task Group and presented to the Cabinet Member for Built Environment for approval.**
- 4. Authority be delegated to the Director of Resources to tender for and select a specialist marketing agency to source and generate sponsorship opportunities for the council for a period of three to five years, to include options for review should there be under-performance in terms of delivery of the contract.**

10. INNOVATION FUND - BUSINESS RATE REDUCTION SCHEME

The Cabinet Member Finance introduced the report and explained that the Council had been awarded a grant of £100 000 from the High Street Innovation Fund. He reported that £65 000 had been allocated to bringing empty shops back into use by providing business rate relief to businesses occupying an empty shop in designated areas of the town centre of up to 100 % depending on the rateable value of the property. The funds were targeted on the town centre but it was proposed to extend the scheme to include Montpellier Street,

Coronation Square and Edinburgh Place. He thanked officers for working expeditiously in drawing up a policy for this purpose which had the potential to boost the local economy.

Members welcomed the scheme which would be assessed in due course.

Resolved that

- 1. The High Street Innovation Fund Business Rate Relief Policy in Appendix 2 be approved**
- 2. Authority be delegated to the Director of Resources to consider applications and award relief in line with the conditions detailed in Appendix 2**
- 3. Authority be delegated to the Director of Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance to apply the scheme in 2013/2014, subject to funds being available**

11. LOCAL SUPPORT FOR COUNCIL TAX SCHEME

The Cabinet Member Finance introduced the report which sought approval for the principle that existing council tax benefit claimants would not be affected by the introduction of a local support scheme for council tax in 2013/14 and that consultation be undertaken with interested parties.

The Cabinet Member Finance explained that Cheltenham had been working jointly with all Gloucestershire councils with a view to taking a countywide approach in the design of a local scheme in response to the Government's 10 % cut in the current funding level. This was very much work in progress and alternative means were being sought to bridge the funding gap. This included reviewing council tax discounts on second homes and certain categories of empty properties which could potentially result in properties being brought back into use. It was hoped that a report would be brought to Cabinet in October 2012 outlining Council tax discounts. A careful approach would be adopted to ensure that the council was being fair, reasonable and compassionate. The Council would be consulting on the proposals prior to being introduced and this would form part of the budget process.

The Leader of the Council stated that this issue had been discussed at Leadership Gloucestershire and they deemed that the correct approach was to look at exemptions.

Resolved that

- 1. the principle that existing council tax benefit claimants will not be affected by the introduction of a local support scheme for council tax in 2013/14 be approved and**
- 2. that consultation is undertaken with interested parties as set out in the report.**

12. PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF DOWTY HOUSE

The Cabinet Member Finance introduced the report and explained that Dowty House was a well regarded residential home in the town. The Trustees were now wishing to acquire the freehold of the property from the Council in order to invest in the care of residents for the future. The Council's valuers had now negotiated a freehold disposal with the agent representing Dowty House and an overage clause had been included should the trustees dispose of part or the whole of the property for an alternative use. The proposed disposal would be beneficial to all parties involved.

Resolved

That the Head of Property and Asset Management be authorised to negotiate and conclude the disposal of Dowty House to the Coronation Old Peoples Housing Society (Cheltenham) Ltd for the sum set out in Appendix 3.

13. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet Member Sport and Culture reported that the Summerfield Trust had played a key part in facilitating the partnership proposal between the Art Gallery and Museum and the University by means of its grant of £60 000. This would facilitate the hosting and co-curating of three touring shows a year in the new galleries of the redevelopment at the Art Gallery and Museum. The first opening show of the new galleries during 2013 would be in collaboration with the University at the open west competition. She looked forward to further partnership working with the University.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services reminded Cabinet about Members' car parking arrangements. This should encourage car users to car share or seek alternative travel arrangements and would increase parking revenue for the council. To date there was a 20 % take up.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that Councillor Walklett had been appointed to Planning Committee and Councillor Flynn had been appointed as substitute.

The Leader informed members that the Council had been asked for a view on the national pension negotiations by the end of July. He briefed members on the proposed package and stated that he was inclined to support it.

14. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXEMPT BUSINESS

Resolved

That in accordance with Section 100A (4) Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining agenda item as it is likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, if members of the public are present there will be disclosed to them exempt information as defined in paragraph 3, Part (1) Schedule (12A) Local Government Act 1972, namely :

Paragraph 3 : Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

15. SALE OF MONTPELLIER LODGE

The Cabinet Member introduced the report concerning the sale of Montpellier Lodge. He reminded members of the background to the sale to the preferred purchasers in July 2011 and informed them of the subsequent refusal of planning permission by Planning Committee. The purchasers were proceeding with a planning appeal and were now also seeking a revised purchase price. This was still regarded as best consideration reasonably obtainable for the premises. Cabinet's approval was therefore sought to accept the revised purchase price.

Resolved

- 1. That Cabinet accepts the lower purchase price requested by the preferred purchasers.**
- 2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Property and Asset Management to place the premises back on the open market in the event of the sale not proceeding to the preferred purchasers.**

Chairman