

SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING – 23 July 2014

REPORT OF THE CABINET

The Cabinet met on the evening of Wednesday 11 June 2014.

On that occasion, the Cabinet considered the matters set out below. Decisions shown in boxed areas are subject to Council confirmation; the reports considered by the Cabinet were available to all members in advance of the Cabinet meeting.

1. Welfare Reform

The Cabinet member for Shared Services & Corporate Support introduced the report which gave an update on central government's Welfare Reform agenda, including the number of residents affected so far. Also the planned introduction of Universal Credit (UC) which would probably have the largest direct impact on the council, replacing a number of means tested benefits (such as Housing Benefit).

The borough was scheduled to pilot UC in June/July 2014. However, the council had highlighted some concerns such as applicants had to access UC online. As a result the council had closely liaised with the Department of Works & Pensions (DWP). The report included a proposed contract with DWP until March 2015 to enable applicants to continue to be helped through the council including budgetary guidance. Claimants would continue to receive a face to face service but at no cost to the council as this would be recovered from DWP on a monthly basis. It was hoped there would be a new similar contract from April 2015.

Councillor Hamman was sure that if the council had not made this arrangement with the DWP, claimants would still have contacted the council. Councillor Mrs Smith agreed and was confident this would be well received and felt that the inclusion of budgetary advice to claimants was a bonus as in future they would need to budget on a monthly.

It was decided to:-

1. Enter into a contract with DWP (to run until the end of March 2015) to provide a Local Support Service designed to assist claimants access Universal Credit;
2. Provide access to Budgeting Services (including pre-Court advice) as part of the agreed contract; and
3. Provide all necessary Management Information Data to central government's Universal Credit Programme Team through the Benefits Services (and other associated services such as Gateway).

2. Worden Park - Overflow Car Park

Further to min. no. 62(1), 2 April 2014, Councillor Mullineaux reported the details of the tender process for the proposed improvements works to the overflow car park on Worden Park. It was recommended that Tender No.6 listed in Table 1 in the report be accepted as the most economically advantageous for those works. This would provide all year round an additional 160 vehicle spaces, addressing both parking issues in the park and in the locality.

As a ward member Councillor Hamman supported the proposal. He commented that there had been occasions when the current overflow car park was unusable. Councillor Hamman felt this scheme would also enhance the park. Councillor P Smith was also in favour commenting that local parks needed to be both protected and used. He commented that it appeared from Table 1 that some tenderers wanted this work whilst others had not.

In the audience, Councillor Titherington, whilst accepting earlier comments hoped the proposal would not attract too many vehicles so that in future the council was faced with similar car parking problems on and around the park. He was concerned that the evaluation criteria weighting 70% (cost) and 30% (quality) could have been more balanced. Councillor Titherington also hoped the council was confident, that the contractors had appropriate experience with examples of work to a suitable quality, paid the living wage and was not involved in employee blacklisting.

Councillor M Green did not share the concern, the case for the proposal was well made and easier access would be a great benefit to users of the park. The proposal had a sustainable approach protecting the green nature of the park and Tender No.6 had the second highest quality score (26/30).

In the audience, Councillor W Bennett had no concerns, to what was a balanced approach, and highlighted the council's investment into parks.

It was decided to recommend Council that Tender No.6 in Table 1 for the construction of the overflow car park on Worden Park be approved.

3. Longton Village Improvement Scheme

Councillor Martin declared a personal interest in this item as an employee of Lancashire County Council.

Councillor P Smith presented the report which sought approval of the Longton Village Improvement Scheme and in doing so recommendations 1-5. He indicated there had been an amendment to the financial aspect of the report which was reflected in the circulated new pages 5/6.

The council had worked on the scheme for the last 12 months and was a public/private partnership, enhancing the village and at the same time providing economic benefit/regeneration and improved streetscene. There had been a lot of consultation of both public and businesses which had led to changes along the way. The scheme included forecourt improvements, car parking arrangements, wider pavements (café culture), traffic management (ongoing discussions with the county council).

In respect of the appearance of the village, Councillor Mrs M Smith added that whilst attending Longton Live, it was apparent BT had started to refurbish its exchange building which had for years been a village eyesore. She subsequently received a mini-tour of the building.

Councillor Mullineaux commented that this scheme was very good for Longton and South Ribble and thanked those involved.

In the audience, Councillor Martin welcomed and supported the scheme, in particular in respect of traffic management and the fact that BT was now attending to its building.

In the audience, Councillor W Bennett complimented the report, commenting that the increased accessibility to the shops would be welcomed by people in the wider Western Parishes not just Longton. It was also good to see investment outside the large urban areas of the borough.

It was decided to:-

1. Approve the Longton Village Improvement Scheme;
2. Approve the allocation of capital funds to create the Longton Village Improvement Scheme described in the report;
3. Grant authority under Section 3.4 of the Financial Regulations to incur additional capital expenditure of £62,000 to carry out capital works;
4. Authorise the Director of Regeneration, Leisure and Healthy Communities, in consultation with the portfolio holder for Regeneration, Leisure and Healthy Communities to finalise details on the scheme going forward and award; and
5. Grant delegated authority to the Director of Regeneration, Leisure and Healthy Communities, in consultation with the portfolio holder for Regeneration, Leisure and Healthy Communities to award the groundwork contract following the completion of the higher value procurement exercise.

4. The Cabinet's Forward Plan

It was decided to approve the Forward Plan submitted under section 22 of the Local Government Act 2000.

I hereby commend the report of the Cabinet to the Council.

COUNCILLOR MRS MARGARET SMITH

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL