

MINUTES OF CABINET

MEETING DATE Wednesday, 16 October 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Paul Foster (Chair), Michael Titherington (Vice-Chair), Aniela Bylinski Gelder, Bill Evans, Susan Jones and Matthew Tomlinson

OFFICERS: Gary Hall (Interim Chief Executive), Jane Blundell (Interim Section 151 Officer), Dave Whelan (Legal Services Manager/Interim Monitoring Officer), Paul Hussey (Director of Customer and Digital), Jennifer Mullin (Director of Neighbourhoods and Development), Jonathan Noad (Director of Planning and Property), Peter McHugh (Assistant Director of Property and Housing) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Team Leader)

OTHER MEMBERS AND OFFICERS: Councillor Jacky Alty (Member Champion (Social Justice and Equality)), Councillor Jane Bell (Deputy Mayor, Member Champion (Older People) and (Safeguarding)), Councillor Renee Blow, Councillor Damian Bretherton, Councillor Matt Campbell, Councillor Colin Clark, Councillor Derek Forrest (Member Champion (Armed Forces)), Councillor Mary Green, Councillor Michael Green, Councillor David Howarth (Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group), Councillor Chris Lomax, Councillor Keith Martin, Councillor Christine Melia, Councillor Caroline Moon (Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group), Councillor Jacqueline Mort (Member Champion (Member Development)), Councillor Alan Ogilvie, Councillor Margaret Smith (Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Conservative Group), Councillor Phil Smith, Councillor Stephen Thurlbourn, Councillor Matthew Trafford (Member Champion (Youth)) and Councillor Karen Walton

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38 Apologies for Absence

None.

39 Statement by Councillor Colin Clark

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Foster informed Members that Councillor Colin Clark wished to address the meeting.

Councillor Colin Clark addressed the meeting as follows:

I would like to make a statement regarding a report that was considered by Cabinet on the 20 March 2019 concerning Worden Hall. I presented the report at Cabinet and subsequently voted on the recommendations.

The report concerned the securing of potential investors and/or occupiers to enable the Main Hall in Worden Park to be brought back into use. Cabinet decided to grant approval to permit officers to enter into negotiations with a company referred to only as Bidder A. Following on from the council elections in May it became a matter of public knowledge that Bidder A was Leyland Masonic Properties.

For some years I have been a member of a Masonic Lodge, which is based at Chorley Masonic Hall, and I have always openly declared my membership of a Masonic Lodge on my Register of Interests form. I accept that it is desirable for me to explain in public my dealings in this matter.

Shortly after I became the Cabinet Member for Corporate Support and Assets in November 2018 I was approached by a representative from Leyland Masonic Properties. He informed me that they were looking at a number of possible locations in the Leyland area to use as their meeting venue and these included Worden Hall. I agreed to arrange an introductory meeting with officers and I took no part in negotiations after that point.

I was subsequently informed by officers that six initial expressions of interests had been received by the council for the use of Worden Hall and I was informed that one of these was from Leyland Masonic Properties.

The list of six initial expressions of interest subsequently became two bidders.

I did not know that Leyland Masonic Properties were Bidder A when I presented the report to Cabinet in March. However, I now recognise that, whilst I had no direct relationship with Leyland Masonic Properties, from a public perception point of view some people may think that I had an interest in the decision being made.

In hindsight, given my earlier involvement in the matter, I now accept that it would have been sensible for me to have taken advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer at the time, which regrettably I failed to do.

40 Minutes of the Last Meeting

Decision made (Unanimously):

That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday 11 September 2019 be approved as a correct record for signing by the Leader of the Council.

41 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of any interest.

42 Cabinet Forward Plan

Decision made (Unanimously):

That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.

43 Recommendations from Scrutiny Committee

Decision made (Unanimously):

That the Cabinet accept and will action all the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee held on 2 September 2019 and the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel held on 9 September 2019.

44 South Ribble Council Branding

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Foster presented a report of the Interim Chief Executive that outlined options for new or updated South Ribble Borough Council branding.

The Council's brand and logo had been in place for a number of years and was originally created in partnership with Runshaw College. The logo, colours and associated branding are used both internally and externally across the Borough. Limited versions of the logo are available which can cause design challenges and brand inconsistencies.

The Leader explained that a brand is the way that our customers perceive us and encompasses the entire experience. The vision for the Council is to be modern and accessible for all; an organisation that listens to their stakeholders and encourages co-design and consultation, and he considered it appropriate for any new branding to reflect this.

Consultation on the current branding and options on how it could be improved would be sought from residents via a new Citizens survey that was planned to be undertaken shortly and the Leader also commented that it had been several years since a Citizens Survey had been carried out across the Borough.

Councillor David Howarth spoke against the proposals asking if this change was actually a priority for the Council. The logo is on many fixtures across the Borough, including our rubbish containers and it would take some time and considerable cost to change everything. Councillors Michael Green, Colin Clark and Alan Ogilvie shared the same opinion.

The Leader noted Members concerns and promised that if the results of the survey indicated an agreement to change, it would be a light touch approach. Councillor Foster also stated that he would be happy for Scrutiny Committee to view the final proposals before it comes back to Cabinet for decision.

Decision made (unanimously):

1. That Cabinet agree to the wider South Ribble Borough Council brand perception to form part of the up-coming citizen survey.
2. That Cabinet considers the options for brand update/change and commits to making the minimum change necessary following the Citizen Survey feedback.
3. That Scrutiny Committee will consider the results of the Citizen Survey feedback in relation to the branding options before coming back to Cabinet for decision.

Reason(s) for the decision:

1. The current brand provision is very dated and very few design elements are available for use by the Communications Team and across the organisation.

2. The Council has a new administration and priorities and a piece of work needs to be in place to determine public perception of current brand.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

1. The option to do nothing was considered and determined unviable as current brand is dated and limited design elements are available.

45 South Ribble Borough Council Website Refresh

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Assets presented a report of the Director of Customer and Digital that outlined option for a refresh of the South Ribble Borough Council website (www.southribble.gov.uk).

The report outlined the proposal to refresh the South Ribble Borough Council website by way of replacing the current Content Management System (CMS) and to re-design the website with self-service and accessibility as its focus.

Chorley Council are also looking to embark on a similar project and with both scopes being similar, a joint procurement approach seemed viable. The approach will see budgetary and operational efficiencies and the proposal was for South Ribble Borough Council to lead on the project.

Each Council had conducted soft market testing with a number of suppliers individually and as a joint project. The proposal was for Cabinet to approve the joint procurement method and to waive Contract Procedure Rules, in particular paragraph 11 (High Value Procurement), to allow a direct award to the provider offering the most advantageous solution.

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Margaret Smith objected to waiving the contract procedure rules, considering that the reasons for the departure were not exceptional circumstances. However, the Leader, supported by the Council's Monitoring Officer were satisfied that exceptional circumstances could be demonstrated in this case.

Councillors David Howarth and Phil Smith supported the proposals along with a member of the public who commented that he had made a request for an improved website some time ago.

In response to a request made by Councillor Thurlbourn, the Interim Chief Executive agreed to circulate the list of companies to Members when the award had been made.

In response to a query by Councillor Michael Green, the Leader of the Council explained that in his opinion it was appropriate for the funding to be taken from the Place Promotion budget as the new website would promote the Borough.

Decision made (unanimously):

1. That Cabinet approves to fund the 2019/20 costs from the £20,000 allocated in the Place Promotion budget and the remainder from 2019/20 underspends.
2. That Cabinet approves an annual increase in the revenue budget from 2020/21 onwards to fund the annual licence and maintenance costs.
3. That Cabinet agrees to a joint procurement process with Chorley Council in which South Ribble Borough Council will take the lead.

4. That Cabinet agrees to waive all relevant Contract Procedure Rules (in particular paragraph 11 (High Value Procurement)) to allow Council to award the contract to one of the shortlisted providers rather than go through a procurement exercise through the Chest.
5. That Cabinet grants delegated authority to the Director of Customer and Digital in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Assets to allow a direct award to the provider offering the most advantageous solution following completion of market engagement.

Reason(s) for the decision:

1. The Digital to Improve Programme sets out the way we will advance our digital capability over the next three years, ultimately enabling us to better serve our borough, while improving the day-to-day experience for those working within the bounds of the organisation.
2. The Programme identifies that the most significant and needed incentive of all identified within the strategy is concerning the website and self-service. A refreshed website will also act as an enabler for other key projects within the strategy and provide a basis to build on the council's shift ambitions.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

1. Do nothing. The option to leave the website as it is was rejected as it offers poor usability and discourages self-service for customers.
2. Procuring the project as a lone authority. This was considered, however it became clear that the project timeline and scope from both South Ribble and Chorley Councils were similar and that a joint approach could provide significant budgetary savings and operational efficiency gains.

46 Worden Hall Update

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Assets, Councillor Matthew Tomlinson presented a report of the Assistant Director of Property and Housing that updated on the outcome of the consultation exercise with residents on three viable options for investment into Worden Hall.

The consultation exercise witnessed very high levels of interest and engagement and feedback proved to be both detailed and complex. The report aimed to provide clarity in relation to the qualitative as well as quantitative data that was identified through the consultation process and recommends the next steps in order to take this project forward.

Councillor Alan Ogilvie commented as to why the offer from the Leyland Masonic Properties could not have been included in the list of options consulted upon by the public. The Cabinet Member, Councillor Matthew Tomlinson, responded by explaining that they were acting on the advice received by the professional consultants that had been commissioned by the previous administration on the viability of the Hall and that option had not been a recommendation.

Councillor Caroline Moon commented that whilst she supported the investment into the Hall, she wanted the Council to be realistic about what could actually be achieved. For a number of years, the Council had exhausted efforts into trying to get people involved in the running of the Hall and also felt that that the Council should make attempts to further explore the option of working with Leyland Masonic

Properties if still able to. Councillor Moon urged the administration to keep their minds open as there may have to be compromises made along the way.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Foster commented that Worden Hall was a public asset that will stay in the ownership of the Council for the benefit of the community and provided assurances to Councillor Karen Walton that any financial issues that may arise would be brought to Scrutiny Committee for consideration before coming back to Cabinet for decision.

Decision made (unanimously):

1. That Cabinet commits to undertake further detailed modelling and appraisal of Option 1 (Community Use) and Option 2 (small weddings/events venue) with a finalised recommendation and implementation plan back to Cabinet in January 2020.

Reason(s) for the decision:

1. An extensive consultation exercise was undertaken from 19 August to 13 September 2019, which resulted in over 500 responses to the consultation survey. Feedback was received online, through telephone contact and across four drop-in sessions which were run at Worden Hall between 2pm to 7pm each Thursday during the consultation period in order to enable the public to discuss the options directly with South Ribble Council staff. On 5 and 12 of September, Architectural consultants Purcell, who draft the initial options appraisal report were also in attendance to deal with any questions or queries.
2. The survey provided a description of each of the three options and associated costs. Respondents were given the opportunity to make comments in relation to each option and finally were asked to rank each option in order of preference, with 1 as most preferred and 3 as least.
3. The questionnaire resulted in a majority of respondent's option for Option 1 – Community Use as their most preferred option, with Option 2 – small weddings/Events Venue as the second preference. Option 3 – Large weddings/Events Venue was a distant third.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

1. The Council could choose not to redevelop Worden Hall. This is not recommended as the feedback from the public consultation exercise strongly supported the Council investing in the Hall and bringing it back into use.
2. The Purcell and Amion report summarised a long list of options as part of a market review undertaken by Cushman and Wakefield on behalf of the Council in 2016 in order to select the three viable options for the financial appraisal. They discounted other options e.g. residential conversion, hotel, cultural attraction or an independent retail space as being unviable.

47 Garden Waste Charging Policy and Container Charging

The Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Susan Jones presented a report of the Director of Neighbourhoods and Development that sought approval on the proposed reduction in charge for the provision of the garden waste collection service and changes in policy relating to charges for the replacement of waste containers.

Councillor David Howarth fully welcomed the reduction and hoped that it would be the first stage, requesting that Cabinet look at further reductions for those people in

receipt of Pension Credit or on low incomes. Councillor Howarth also asked for the Council to look into the provision of composting facilities, especially to benefit residents who didn't have a big enough garden to warrant paying for a service to dispose of their garden waste.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Foster agreed to the suggestions, also adding a review of the Christmas tree disposal service to the recommendations.

In response to a member of the public, The Cabinet Member for the Environment explained that when people don't renew their subscriptions, the bins are collected by the Council and reused.

Decision made (unanimously):

1. That Cabinet recommends Council to reduce the charge for the provision of the garden waste collection service from £30 per annum to £25 per annum from April 2020. This being a 17% tax reduction in the Garden Waste collection charge.
2. That Cabinet approves the changes in policy relating to the charges for the replacement of damaged waste containers.
3. That a review of the Garden Waste Charging Policy be undertaken, that will look at further reductions or removal of charges for those on pension credit or low incomes, composting and Christmas tree disposal.

Reason(s) for the decision:

1. To support Our People and Communities to seek innovative ways to ease the financial burden on residents of the borough in line with the commitment of the Council identified within the revised Corporate Plan for 2019-23.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

1. To continue with the current level of charging for both services.

48 110,000 Trees a Global Legacy

The Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Susan Jones presented a report of the Director of Neighbourhoods and Development that detailed the environmental benefits of planting 110,00 trees, one tree for each of our residents and how we are proposing to achieve this. The report also sought views on the proposed programme of delivery.

The Council already has in place a two for one replacement policy if trees are lost as part of development schemes, along with a scheme that encourages residents to purchase trees in the arboretum at Worden Park.

All trees would be planted between November and March and Members were provided with a four year planting programme that outlines where and how many trees would be planted.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Caroline Moon, assurances were provided that maintenance of the trees would form part of the Council's ongoing maintenance programme with the cost being met from existing revenue budgets. The annual maintenance budget would however be reviewed periodically to assess if the additional maintenance requirements of the initiative causes any budget pressures.

Although there was general support from all Councillors across the Chamber, with thanks being given to Councillors Ken and Susan Jones, some Members asked the Council to be mindful as to where the trees would be planted so as not to dramatically change a place or a landscape.

Councillor David Howarth also requested that plans be drawn up for residents of the Borough.

Decision made (Unanimously):

1. That Cabinet approves the tree planting plan detailed in the report and will provide on-going support, feedback and suggestions that can help shape/inform the ongoing process.
2. That Cabinet authorises capital expenditure on this scheme over a four year period up to the overall budget of £160,000 to be allocated from the approved Green Links capital budgets.

Reason(s) for the decision:

1. The reason for the report is to provide Cabinet with the proposals to plant 110,000 trees, one tree for each of our residents as part of a key part of the plan to combat climate change. The Council is focused on the environment, improving the air we breathe and having the right plans in place to safeguard and protect our natural environment.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

1. An alternative to whip planting is standard tree planting. A standard is a single stemmed tree with multiple branches. Larger trees are heavy standards and extra-heavy standards.
The lowest price of a small standard tree can be £10-15 dependent upon numbers purchased. Ten times the cost of a whip. Based on this figure the lowest budget cost for planting standards could be as high as £1.1m, making the project financially unviable.
There would also be significant labour costs involved in planting 110,000 standard trees.

49 Central Lancashire Local Plan Issues and Options

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and City Deal, Councillor Bill Evans presented a report of the Director of Planning and Property that presented the Central Lancashire Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Paper, November 2019 for approval alongside details of the consultation, methods and programme. The Issues and Options Consultation paper has been endorsed by the Central Lancashire Joint Advisory Committee and therefore is a final version.

In response to queries from Members, Councillor Bill Evans explained that residents would be able to take part in the consultation by attending one of the organised drop-in sessions, if they did not have digital access and provided assurances that all the neighbourhood areas would be consulted upon.

In response to a comment made by Councillor Phil Smith on his disappointment in the process, the Interim Chief Executive explained that this was just the first stage of the process and that a lot more consultation would take place with Members ahead of its completion.

Decision made (Unanimously):

1. That Cabinet approves the Central Lancashire Issues and Options paper in Appendix One as the first stage in the preparation of the new Central Lancashire Local Plan, in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
2. That Cabinet approves the document as drafted, recognising that to make any changes at this stage would delay the subsequent approval of the final version as the same version must be approved by all three Councils.
3. That Cabinet approves the proposed methods of consultation including the online portal Citizenspace, and the programme for drop-in events and elected member learning sessions.
4. That Cabinet approves the key timetable for the consultation commencing on Monday 18 November 2019 at 12.01am and closing at 12.59pm on Friday 14 February 2020, making sure that all Neighbourhood Forums are consulted.
5. That Cabinet agree to the commencement of the consultation upon the approval by all three Central Lancashire councils (subject to any call-in periods).
6. That Cabinet grants delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Property in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and City Deal, to undertake any minor text, layout and formatting changes as necessary.

Reason(s) for the decision:

1. The preparation of a new Local (Development) Plan is now required across Central Lancashire as the existing Core Strategy adopted in 2012, is now more than five years out of date. The Issues and Options consultation is the first stage towards the preparation of the new Local Plan, which considers the challenges and opportunities arising from the evidence collected to inform the new Local Plan, whilst also taking account of wider national policy objectives, priorities and strategies.
2. This new Local Plan must be prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012 and the first stage is referred to as Regulation 18 under which, we will be preparing the Issues and Options Document, and the next planned consultation which will be the Preferred Options, expected in late 2020/21.
3. There is a strategic rationale for the three councils of Preston, Chorley and South Ribble working collaboratively to produce a single Local Plan, as a single housing market area, and functional economic market area with evidence to support high levels of spatial self-containment.
4. There are efficiencies to be gained by working collectively as plan-making is resource intensive and the Minister of Housing, Communities and Local Government have provided funding to Central Lancashire to work together in plan preparation.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None

50 Apprentice Factory Development Plan Update

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and City Deal, Councillor Bill Evans presented a report of the Director of Planning and Property that provided Members with background information, an updated position and future proposals for the

Apprentice Factory project and how this assists with implementation of Employment and Skills Plans coming forward through the planning process.

Members were also provided with a copy of the development programme, which sets out how Apprentice Factory supports economic growth and skills development within the Council and across the Borough.

Councillor Bill Evans congratulated the work of the team, as the authority are the highest performing Council in Lancashire.

It was also important to acknowledge that phase two of the project was around targeting those hard to reach people as there is currently a gap in this provision.

Assurances were also provided that all apprentices gain professional qualifications through the process and that the Council works hard with a number of outside organisations to ensure that a job is available upon completion of the programme.

Decision made (Unanimously):

1. That Cabinet notes the updated project plans contained within the report, which have an additional focus on assisting harder to reach people.
2. That Cabinet requests the use of the acronym NEET (not in Employment, Education or Training) is removed from any future documentation.

Reason(s) for the decision:

1. The Apprentice Factory project is included within the Corporate Plan 2018-23. The Cabinet are asked to note the updated project plans, which have an additional focus on harder to reach people, and for views on any additional actions to ensure that the Apprentice Factory project is aligned with the new Corporate Plan.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

1. The option to do nothing was considered. However when the existing skills provision and availability of careers advice was mapped, it became obvious that there are gaps in support for local people which needed to be addressed.

51 Standard Financial Statement

The Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Social Justice and Wealth Building presented a report of the Director of Customer and Digital that informed Members of the current information from the debt advice sector on the Standard Financial Statement (SFS) and on the proposed use of SFS practices for Council Tax collection.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Foster proposed an additional recommendation for a review of the Council Tax Protocol which was appended to the report, to be reviewed and asked for this to be completed and included as part of the budget setting papers.

Members were advised that, with consent they could identify people that were in a vulnerable position and would benefit from the service.

Decision made (Unanimously):

1. That Cabinet notes the Standard Financial Statement guidelines as summarised within this report and appended to the report.
2. That Cabinet notes the proposals within the report including the current debt recovery procedures and the recommendation to undertake further work in relation to the Council signing up fully to the Standard Statement code of conduct appended to the report.
3. That Cabinet requests the Council Tax Protocol to be reviewed and brought back to Cabinet for approval.

Reason(s) for the decision:

As part of the council's commitment to reducing the tax burden and protecting the vulnerable it was agreed at Cabinet in July that the Council would review and explore opportunities associated with the collection of Council Tax.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Alternative options considered included no change to any current practices.

52 Council Tax Empty Properties and Second Homes Report

The Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Social Justice and Wealth Building presented a report of the Director of Customer and Digital that informed Members on the proposed changes to the Council Tax Second Home discount and the proposed changes to the Council Tax Long Term Empty Premium charge.

The report also outlined the proposals and sought approval for the removal of the Council Tax Second Home discount and increase the Council Tax Long Term Empty Premium charge as detailed in the report with effect from 1 April 2020 and sought approval for the new Council Tax Local Empty Discounts and Exemptions Policy appended to the report.

Councillor Bylinski Gelder also informed Members that following the Council Tax Support Scheme consultation that had recently been undertaken, 73% of people supported these recommendations.

In response to a question from Councillor Damian Bretherton, the Cabinet Member provided assurances that the Council would allow a period of six months for the full refurbishment of a home as long as the landlords engaged in the process. Councillor Bylinski Gelder also commented that this was not about punishing people in hardship situations and that people in extenuating circumstances would be considered by their own merits.

Decision made:

1. That Cabinet recommends Council to approve the proposed policy changes for the removal of the 10% discount applied for Council Tax Second Homes.
2. That Cabinet recommends Council to approve the proposed policy changes to increase the Council Tax Long Term Empty Premium charge from 1 April 2020 as shown:

Effective Date	Empty Period	Existing Premium	Proposed Premium
1 April 2020	2-5 years	50%	100%
	5 years +	50%	200%
1 April 2021	2-5 years	50%	100%

	5-10 years	50%	200%
	10 years+	50%	300%

3. That Cabinet recommends Council to approve the new Council Tax Local Empty Discounts and Exemptions Policy to reflect the changes above.

Reason(s) for the decision:

1. The Council implemented an Empty Home Policy in 2013. These changes are intended to complement and enhance this policy in returning long term empty properties back into use.
2. To make best use of the housing in the area by minimising the length of time it remains empty.
3. To raise additional Council Tax income that can be used to maintain services and help keep the overall level of Council Tax at an affordable level for all residents.
4. The proposed changes will maximise incentive for owners of long term empty homes to bring their properties back into use and support work already undertaken by the Council to reduce the number of long term properties and make better use of existing housing in the borough.
5. It was approved at Cabinet in July that due to the proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme (CTSS) for 2020/21, the Council would explore other income opportunities associated with the Council Tax second homes and empty homes premium charges.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

An alternative option would be to leave the current Council Tax discount on for second homes and the premium at 50% on for homes that have been empty and unfurnished for more than two years. This option would mean that the Council would not be using all available measures to incentivise long term empty property owners to bring their properties back into use or maximise any potential additional income.

Chair

Date