



CABINET

17:30 to 18:45

10 September 2014

Present: Councillors Arthur (chair), Waters, Bremner, Harris and Stonard

Also present: Councillors Boswell and Wright

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Driver.

2. PUBLIC QUESTIONS / PETITIONS

There were no public questions. There was one petition containing 325 signatures, presented by Councillor Lucy Howard, as follows:

“We call on Norwich City Council to use its influence to ensure Keir Hardie Hall's historical context is not lost, whilst utilising the building to help meet the urgent need for decent, energy-efficient, genuinely affordable housing for all.”

The portfolio holder for resources responded to the petition as follows:

“In situations such as this, where the council is not the owner of the building, then it is only able to influence its future either through acquisition or through statutory planning responsibilities.

In terms of the possibility of acquisition, the council was aware that this locally listed building was likely to come up for sale on the open market and officers explored its suitability for acquisition to either rent out commercially or to develop for suitable housing. In acquiring land and property the council is only able to invest in property such as this where it is likely to yield a commercial return on the investment or meet the housing needs of Norwich. This property would be categorised as:

- Unlikely to attract tenants at commercial rents
- Would have very high repairing liabilities
- The council already holds considerable other property and land that would be more suitable for development for housing provision

On this basis the building and land was not a suitable investment opportunity. The council does not have any budget available to acquire buildings or land for any other reason.

In respect of statutory responsibilities, the council's property agents advise that the building was sold today at auction to a member of the public. We do not currently know the intention of the new owners, but should they seek to change the use of the building or to redevelop then a planning application would need to be submitted for the council and its planning committee to consider. The building is locally listed and located within a conservation area of the city and any future planning application would require interested members of the public to be consulted and their views sought as to any new proposals. Any material views/comments would be considered by planning officers/committee."

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held 16 July 2014.

5. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

The leader of the council presented the report.

RESOLVED to recommend that council agree the revised scheme of delegation to officers, change in one of the statutory posts and other changes to the constitution to take effect immediately.

6. QUARTER 1 2014-15 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The leader of the council presented the report.

The portfolio holder for environment, development and transport explained that with regards recycling rates, a new target will exist within the environmental strategy. This will measure the amount of waste heading to landfill with a view to reducing the amount of landfill as recycling rates fall. He also stressed that the new system of recycling to be introduced to the city during October should improve recycling performance measures.

The chair of the scrutiny committee explained that the committee would be examining the figure relating to deaths and serious injuries.

In response to a member's question, the executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods explained that work was being carried out by enforcement officers

and a proactive private-sector enforcement team and that whilst fluctuations in the figure at DHA7 often occur, a proactive approach was being taken to tackle empty homes within the city.

In clarifying the 5.38% reduction in carbon emissions the executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods explained that a range of work right across the council had contributed to this significant reduction. In response to a member's question, he agreed to provide further detail regarding the amount of refuse sent for incineration.

RESOLVED to note the report.

7(a). AND 7(b). REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2014-15 – PERIODS 3 AND 4

The portfolio holder for resources presented the reports and explained that the two reports Side by side illustrate the way in which figures shift and develop throughout the financial year.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the financial position as at 30 June 2014 and the forecast outturn 2014/15; and,
- (2) note the financial position as at 31 July 2014 and the forecast outturn 2014-15.

8. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING 2014 – 15 Q1

The portfolio holder for resources presented the report.

In response to a member expressing concern regarding the first table on page 92 of the report, the operations director (NPS Norwich Ltd) explained that further renewable projects beyond simply solar thermal would be incorporated within the project budget.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the current and forecast financial position on the housing and non-housing capital programmes and the risk management arrangements; and,
- (2) approve the proposed capital virements set out in paragraphs 16 to 18 of the report.

9. LOCAL GROWTH FUND – HRA BORROWING PROGRAMME 2015-18

The portfolio holder for resources presented the report.

The leader of the Council explained that she felt that submitting a bid to the local growth fund would not be in the best interests of the council at this time, particularly in view of the market rent comparison.

In response to a members question, the leader of the council agreed that different people access different aspects of the property market and that an appropriate range of properties would need to be available. She added that this did not mean avoiding building properties altogether, just that the offer available does not currently work in favour of potential homeowners and renters within Norwich.

RESOLVED to forgo the opportunity to submit a bid to the Local Growth Fund – HRA borrowing programme 2015-18.

10. POTENTIAL INVESTMENT IN THE UK MUNICIPAL BONDS AGENCY

The portfolio holder for resources presented the report.

RESOLVED to approve the investment of £50,000 in the mobilisation phase of the UK Municipal Bonds Agency, and up to a further £50,000 in the implementation phase.

11. GREATER NORWICH GROWTH BOARD

The leader of the council presented the report.

In response to a member's question, the city growth and development manager explained that the money being discussed within the report was to be allocated for a feasibility study. Such a study would include a public consultation, within which methods of tackling issues around public safety would be developed.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) recommend council to approve the Greater Norwich annual growth programme for 2014/5;
- (2) recommend to council the inclusion of £161,000 for the Norwich projects in the council's capital programme for 2014-5 (to be funded through income from the Community Infrastructure Levy);
- (3) recommend council to approve the draft Norwich annual business plan for 2015-16; and,
- (4) present the business plan for 2015-16 to the greater Norwich growth board to form the Norwich element of the greater Norwich annual growth programme.

12. AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR BILL PAYMENT SERVICES

The portfolio holder for resources presented the report.

RESOLVED to award the contract for the provision of bill payment services to Co-operative Bank Plc for a period of three years and 6 months to 31 January 2018.

13. BOWTHORPE THREEScore PHASE TWO

The leader of the council presented the report.

In response to a members question, the city growth and development manager explained that the tenure mix detailed in the report was drawn up from a combination of market research and the housing needs assessment. She added that biodiversity considerations should be taken as read as these form a condition of the planning consent. These conditions have been understood and taken on by the architects involved in the project.

In response to a concern raised by a member, the chief executive officer of the council explained, regarding the establishment of a local trust, that this represented an opportunity to develop a community. At this stage it was being flagged as a possibility and further exploration regarding methods of sustaining interest in and membership of the trust would be followed up in a further report.

RESOLVED to agree:

- (1) to proceed to Stage 2 of the development of phase 2 at Threescore;
- (2) to approve the concept plans to form the basis of pre-planning public consultation on the basis of the strategy outlined in para 13 and 14;
- (3) to agree to investigate further the option of a community trust to manage the open space and community facilities included on the Threescore development as a whole; and,
- (4) that further reports be presented to cabinet to seek approval to submit a planning application, to determine the precise mix of size type tenure and environmental standards of the housing and the procurement method for this phase of the development.

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the items *15 to *17 below on the grounds contained in the relevant paragraphs of schedule 12a of the local government act 1972 (as amended).

15. BOWTHORPE THREESCORE PHASE TWO - APPENDIX

The leader of the council presented the report.

RESOLVED to note the appendix in relation to item 13.

16. MANAGING ASSETS (HOUSING)

The portfolio holder for housing presented the report.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) approve the option to dispose of the freehold interest in the asset outlined in the report on the open market; and,
- (2) delegate the method of disposal to the head of city development services.

17. MANAGING ASSETS (GENERAL FUND)

The portfolio holder for resources presented the report.

RESOLVED to approve the disposal of land and property from the general fund account as described in the report.

CHAIR