

CABINET**17:30 to 19:10****4 February 2015**

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

Also present: Councillors Boswell and Wright

1. PUBLIC QUESTIONS / PETITIONS

There were no public questions or petitions.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Waters, Driver and Harris declared a pecuniary interest in item 6, (below) Housing rents and budgets, as council tenants.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2015.

4. DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2015-2020

Councillor Arthur, chair and leader of the council, presented the report, and said that she accepted the recommendations of the scrutiny committee made at its meeting on 29 January 2015.

The executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods referred to the scrutiny committee's recommendations for the corporate plan, as set out in the summary of recommendations circulated at the meeting and explained how recommendations (2) and (4) to (6) would be incorporated into the plan. He explained that recommendation (3) To amend the performance measure for 'number of empty homes brought back into use' to a percentage of the total brought back into use, could not be implemented as this was a measure of a targeted approach by the private sector housing team to bring long term empty homes into use and a percentage figure would not reflect that.

The chair congratulated the chief executive and the executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods and teams for their contribution to the production of an ambitious and well considered plan. She specifically thanked the policy, performance and partnerships manager and team for their hard work on the performance indicators and targets.

Councillor Wright, as chair of scrutiny committee, said that the inclusion of action plans on the scrutiny committee's work programme was a decision for the committee. Councillor Boswell considered that the workshops to develop the plan had worked well and that early cross-party involvement was important.

In reply to a question, the chair referred to council's resolution on council housing stock at its meeting on 27 January 2015 and confirmed that a statement would be included in the foreword and introduction to the corporate plan presented to council for adoption.

The chair thanked the scrutiny committee for its pre-scrutiny of the corporate plan and everyone who had attended the workshops.

RESOLVED to recommend the draft corporate plan 2015-2020 to council for approval, subject to incorporating the following recommendations from the scrutiny committee:

- (1) To ask officers to investigate an appropriate performance measure regarding listed buildings;
- (2) To ask officers to investigate an appropriate performance measure regarding listed buildings;
- (3) To include the delivery of regeneration action plans as a performance measure under prosperous and vibrant city;
- (4) To amend the performance measure for 'those who feel that the work of the home improvement agency has enabled them to maintain independent living' to a percentage of those who have been assisted.
- (5) Where the corporate plan refers to the high level of inward travel to Norwich, to acknowledge the positive effects on the city this has.

5. GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET AND NON-HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2015-2016

Councillor Waters, deputy leader and cabinet member for resources, presented the report. An additional table showing the non-housing detailed capital plan 2015-2016, over a five year period, was circulated at the meeting and would be incorporated into the report to council. He thanked the chief finance officer and the chief accountant (LGSS) and their teams for providing clear sets of papers which had helped the cabinet make informed decisions.

In reply to a question from Councillor Boswell, the chief executive said that the council would investigate whether there was external funding for its share of the secretariat costs for the Greater Norwich Growth Board.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) recommend to council:
 - (a) that the council's budgetary requirement for the 2015/16 financial year be set to £17,056m (paragraph 6.1 of the report);
 - (b) that the proposed general fund budgets for 2015/16 be approved, taking into account the savings, income and other budget movements set out in the report. (paragraph 6.3);
 - (c) that the council's council tax requirement for 2015/16 be set at £8.315m and that council tax be set at £239.34 for Band D, which is an increase of 1.95% (paragraph 7.1), the impact of the increase for all bands is shown in table 7.2;
 - (d) that the precept on the council tax collection fund for 2015/16 be set at £8.081m calculated in accordance with Sections 32-36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Localism Act 2011 (paragraph 7.1);
 - (e) that a new general fund earmarked reserve be set up into which all Section 31 Business Rates Relief grant monies are transferred until applied to offset related business rates deficits as they arise (paragraph 8.2);
 - (f) that the prudent level of reserves for the council be set at £4.474m in accordance with the recommendation of the chief finance officer (paragraph 8.5);
 - (g) that the proposed non-housing capital plan 2015-16 to 2019-20 (paragraph 9.8 of the report) and the non-housing capital programme 2015/16 (paragraph 10.3) be approved;
- (2) delegate to the executive head of regeneration and development and the chief finance officer, in consultation with the deputy leader and cabinet member for resources, the authority to agree the asset maintenance programme and the final scheme details, including any adjustment to the financial allocations of the Section 106 works, provided that this investment is contained within the total budgetary provision shown in table 10.3.

6. HOUSING RENTS AND BUDGETS

(Councillors Waters, Driver and Harris, having declared an interest, left the meeting at this point and did not take part in the determination of this item.)

Councillor Bremner, cabinet member for housing, presented the report.

Discussion ensued on the scrutiny committee's recommendation (29 January 2015), that the council undertook wider consultation on the housing revenue account (HRA) budget and the potential for joint scrutiny by the committee with the tenant involvement panels. Councillor Wright said that there would only be joint scrutiny of the HRA if the tenant involvement panels agreed to it. The executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods said that the cabinet member for housing had agreed that there would be wider consultation on the HRA next year.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) recommend council to approve for :
 - (a) the proposed council housing rent increase of 2.2% (paragraph 6.7 of the report);
 - (b) the proposed housing revenue account budgets (paragraph 3.1);
 - (c) the prudent minimum level of housing reserves (paragraph 7.11);
 - (d) the housing capital plan 2015/16-2019/20 (paragraph 8.6), and the housing capital programme 2015/16 (paragraph 9.1);
- (2) note that service charges will be determined under delegated powers in compliance with the constitution (paragraph 6.14).

(Councillors Waters, Driver and Harris were readmitted to the meeting at this point.)

7. TREASURY MANGEMENT STRATEGY 2015-2016

Councillor Waters, deputy leader and cabinet member for resources, presented the report.

The chief finance officer provided clarification on the increase in debt due to presumed borrowing for building properties within the HRA and general fund.

RESOLVED to recommend council to approve:

- (1) the capital prudential indicators and limits for 2015-16 through to 2017-18 (paragraphs 10 - 15 of the report);
- (2) the borrowing strategy 2015/16 through to 2017/18 (paragraphs 24 – 28)
- (3) the treasury prudential indicators (paragraphs 29 - 32), including the authorised limit (paragraph 30);
- (4) the minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy statement (paragraph 16)
- (5) the investment strategy 2015/16 (paragraphs 33 – 57) and the detailed criteria (Appendix 3)

8. DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY 2015-2019

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for environment, development and transport, presented the report and referred to the response he had made to a members' question at council on 27 January 2015. He confirmed acceptance of the recommendations of the sustainable development panel (28 January 2015) and the scrutiny committee (29 January 2015).

The executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods said the strategy was challenging, ambitious and deliverable. He referred to the scrutiny committee recommendations and said that the measures for air quality were currently met but the targets were subject to change nationally and would need to be reviewed. Members were also advised that biodiversity in the built environment was currently measured as part of the building for life strategy. He also pointed out that the scrutiny committee had also requested that consideration be given to the inclusion of a suite of measures within the environmental strategy relating to cycling within the city and could be incorporated.

The cabinet member for environment, development and transport said that cabinet had agreed to make the environmental strategy more challenging and had raised the target for priority 1 from 2% to 2.4%. This would be amended in the strategy presented to council.

RESOLVED to approve the draft environmental strategy 2015-2019 and note that the recommendations from the scrutiny committee and the sustainable development have been accepted.

9. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2014-2015 – PERIOD 09

Councillor Waters, deputy leader and cabinet member for resources, presented the report.

RESOLVED to note the financial position as at 30 December 2014 and the forecast outturn for 2014-15.

10. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING 2014-2015 – QUARTER 3

Councillor Waters, deputy leader and cabinet member for resources, presented the report.

RESOLVED to note the position of the housing and non-housing capital programmes as at 31 December 2014.

11. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) – COMMUNITY ELEMENT OF CIL 2015-2016

Councillor Arthur, leader of the council, presented the report. She said that she considered that all reports on CIL and related matters should be referred to full council and that consultation should be more robust and widened to involve ward councillors and the local community as proportionate to the project.

The city growth and development manager explained that a prudent approach had been made for the first year, based on an understanding of funding coming forward in 2015-2016, and other projects had been identified should further funding become available.

Councillor Harris, cabinet member for customer services, said that consultation was important, but as she had said at full council, it was a matter of proportion.

RESOLVED:

- (1) to recommend to council that it approves the projects to be funded from the neighbourhood element of the CIL 2015-2016 (as part of the capital plan);
- (2) that subject to the rules on CIL expenditure, to review the arrangements for expenditure of the community element of CIL within the neighbourhoods and widen consultation to involve ward councillors and the local community as proportionate to the project.

12. RESPONSE TO THE EAST ANGLIA RAIL FRANCHISE CONSULTATION

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for environment, development and transport, introduced the report.

During discussion members commented on the response. Councillor Boswell commented that it would be appropriate to refer consultations on rail services to the sustainable development panel in future where there could be more detailed discussion. Councillor Wright commented on the response and said that an early morning service from Norwich to Stansted would be useful.

RESOLVED to agree the council's response to the East Anglia rail franchise consultation as set out in the report and amended to incorporate the request for an early morning service from Norwich to Stansted.

13. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration items *14 to *15 (below) on the grounds contained in the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

14. GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET AND NON-HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2015-2016, APPENDIX 5 (PARAGRAPH 3)

RESOLVED to note appendix 5, transformation programme savings and new income streams for 2015-2016 (exempt items.)

15. REVIEW OF THE NORWICH COMMUNITY ALARM SERVICE (PARAGRAPH 3)

Councillor Bremner presented the report.

The executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods and the tenancy support manager answered members' questions.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) agree the proposed approach for consultation;
- (2) delegate authority to the executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods to agree the final structure for the service, post consultation, in liaison with the cabinet member for housing;
- (3) agree that further work is carried out on future options.

CHAIR