

CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2019

DECISIONS

Set out below is a summary of the decisions taken at the meeting of the Cabinet held on Wednesday, 6 February 2019. Decisions made by the Cabinet will be subject to call-in. Recommendations made to the Council are not subject to call-in. The wording used does not necessarily reflect the actual wording that will appear in the minutes.

If you have any queries about any matters referred to in this decision sheet please contact Ian Senior.

1. WATERBEACH SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS ADOPTION

Cabinet

1. noted the main issues raised in recent correspondence with the three statutory bodies (Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) and in their responses to the SPD consultation in respect of sustainability appraisal and habitats regulations and the considerations as set out in the supplementary report from the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development (see Appendices A and B);
2. agreed responses to the representations received, and agreed the consequential changes to the draft SPD approved by Cabinet for consultation on 5 September 2018, as set out in the Consultation Statement;
3. adopted the Waterbeach New Town SPD, agreed by Cabinet on 5 September 2018 and as amended (see Appendices B and C); and
4. delegated to the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, the authority to make any editing changes prior to publication. Including to the figures and spatial framework diagram, to ensure consistency with the agreed text of the SPD.

Other Options Considered:

1. Members may decide to:
 - Approve the Consultation Statement including the proposed modifications to the SPD;
 - Approve the Consultation Statement including the proposed modifications to the SPD with amendments;
 - Not approve the Consultation Statement including the proposed modifications to the SPD;
 - Not delegate to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development in liaison with the Deputy Leader, the authority to make any editing changes prior to publication including to the figures and spatial framework diagram to ensure consistency with the agreed text of the SPD;
 - Defer making a decision about the SPD and ask officers to give further consideration to the matters raised by the Environment

Agency, Natural England and Historic England.

Reason For Decision: To ensure that the SPD is modified to take account of the outcome of the recent consultation as appropriate, to reflect the specific comments made by the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England, and to ensure that the adopted SPD is available to assist the determination of planning applications for the site.

2. **COUNCIL TAX EMPTY HOMES PREMIUM** **Not for call-in**

Cabinet recommended that Council increases the empty homes premium on properties left empty for more than two years, as permitted in law, namely

- 1 April 2019 – 100% premium on properties left empty for two years or more
- 1 April 2020 - 200% premium on properties left empty for five years or more
- 1 April 2021 - 300% premium on properties left empty for ten years or more

Options Considered:

- Option 1: Increase the empty homes premium as permitted in law and outlined at point 9 of the report
- Option 2: Retain the empty homes premium at the rate of 50%
- Option 3: Remove the empty homes premium

Option 1 would act as an incentive for homeowners to take action to bring their property back into use, especially where homes have been empty for more than five years. Whilst there may be some dissatisfaction from those currently paying the 50% premium, when the views of all residents that participated in the consultation are combined, nearly 59% were in favour of increasing the premium. APPENDIX B contains the full details.

Option 2 would see the premium retained at the rate of 50% additional charge. Whilst this should still act as an incentive for some, there currently remains 80 properties where the charge has been imposed since 2013 that are still empty, 39 for more than 10 years now. Retaining the charge at the current level is unlikely to result in a reduction in the number of homes empty for more than 5 years.

Option 3 would see the empty homes premium being removed in its entirety, also removing the incentive for homeowners to take action to get their properties back into use. This option could lead to an increase in the number of long-term empty homes in the district.

Reason For Decision: If members decide to recommend option 15A then charging the additional premium would further incentivise owners of empty properties to take steps to get their properties back into use. Homes that are empty for long periods are more likely to fall into disrepair and can attract anti-social behaviour.

3. **BUSINESS PLAN 2019-2024** **Not for call-in**

Cabinet:

- (a) Considered the proposed Business Plan at Appendix A to the report from the Chief Executive, and recommended it for approval by Council.

- (b) Reviewed feedback from Scrutiny and Overview Committee in relation to the Business Plan public consultation.
- (c) Authorised the Chief Executive to make any minor wording changes required to the final drafts, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

Options Considered: Cabinet could recommend that Council approves the Business Plan for 2019-24 (recommended); or

Cabinet could instead request further amendments prior to submission to Council for determination.

Reason For Decision: The Business Plan sets out the overarching priorities for the Council and details the actions that are currently planned to be carried out up until 2024. The plan will be updated each year. The Business Plan is used to ensure officer and financial resources are allocated appropriately to achieve the actions and objectives detailed within it. The Business Plan informs the subsequent agreement of annual service plans, prepared by the Council's directorates, setting out service, team and individual objectives, aligned to the vision and aims that have been set.

4. **BUDGET REPORT** **Not for call-in**

- (1) Cabinet recommended that Council :-

Revenue and capital – GF

- (a) Approve the revenue estimates for 2019-20 as shown in the **GF BSR Section 5 at Appendix 1** to this report.
- (b) Approve the precautionary items for the GF, **GF BSR Appendix B, Appendix 1** to this report.
- (c) Approve the GF revenue forecasts as set out in **GF BSR Section 6, Appendix 1** to this report.
- (d) Instruct the Executive Management Team to identify additional income / cumulative savings of £3 million for the five years from 2019-2024.
- (e) Delegate the use of the Earmarked reserve for Business Efficiency initiatives to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance, and that £1m is transferred into this reserve from the General Fund reserve. As at the end of 2017-18 financial year, the General Fund reserve stood at £7,751,000.
- (f) Authorise £500,000 of Planning Earmarked Reserves, budgeted to support the shortfall in income in the year 2018-19, but not required due to sufficient over budget income levels being achieved, to be budgeted to use towards Business Transformation programmes in Planning in 2019-20.
- (g) Approve the GF capital programme and associated funding up to the year ended 31 March 2024, as set out in **GF BSR Section 7, at Appendix 1** to this report.

- (h) Set the Council Tax Requirement for 2019-20 at £9,092,962.
- (i) Set the amount of Council Tax for each of the relevant categories of dwelling in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 on the basis of the District Council Tax for general expenses on a Band D property of £145.31 plus the relevant amounts required by the precepts of the Parish Councils, Cambridgeshire County Council, the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner and the Cambridgeshire Fire Authority, details of those precepts and their effect to be circulated with the formal resolution required at the Council meeting.

Revenue – HRA

- (j) Approve the HRA savings, increased income, unavoidable revenue pressures, bids and reduced income items, as summarised in Section 4, and detailed in **Appendix G (1) of the HRA Budget Setting Report at Appendix 2** to this report.
- (k) Approve the non-cash limit adjustments, as summarised in Section 4, and detailed in **Appendix G (1) of the HRA Budget Setting Report at Appendix 2** to this report.
- (l) Approve the resulting HRA revenue budget as shown in the HRA Summary Forecast 2018-19 to 2023-24 in **Appendix I of the HRA Budget Setting Report at Appendix 2** to this report.
- (m) Approve the retention of the balance of the 4-year efficiency savings target of £95,000 per annum from 2020-21 included as part of the 2018-19 HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy, and the corresponding Strategic Investment Fund for the same value.

Review of Rents and Charges

- (n) Approve that council dwelling rents for all social rented properties be reduced by 1% for the final year, in line with legislative requirements introduced as part of the Welfare Reform and Work Act, with effect from 1st April 2019.
- (o) Approve that affordable rents are reviewed in line with rent legislation, to ensure that rents charged are no more than 80% of market rent, with this figure then reduced by 1% as with social housing. Local policy is to cap affordable rents at the lower level of Local Housing Allowance, which will result in rent variations in line with any changes notified to the authority in this level, effective from 1st April 2019.
- (p) Approve inflationary increases of 2.2% in garage rents for 2019-20, in line with the base rate of inflation for the year assumed in the HRA Budget Setting Report.
- (q) Approve the proposed service charges for HRA services and facilities provided to both tenants and leaseholders, as shown in **Appendix B of the HRA Budget Setting Report, at Appendix 2** to this report.

Housing Capital

- (r) Approve the latest budget, spend profile and funding mix for each of the schemes in the new build programme, as detailed in **Section 5 and Appendix E of the HRA Budget Setting Report at Appendix 2** to this report, recognising the most up to date information available as each scheme progresses through the design, planning, build contract and completion process.
- (s) Approve earmarking of the required level of additional funding for new build investment between 2019-20 and 2023-24 to ensure that commitments can be met in respect of the investment of all right to buy receipts currently retained or anticipated to be received by the authority for this period. This expenditure will either take the form of HRA new build, with the 70% top up met by other HRA resources, acquisition of homes on the open market, or could alternatively be a grant made to a registered provider, where the registered provider will provide the 70% top up to build new homes.
- (t) Approve the capital budget proposals, detailed in **Appendix G (2) of the HRA Budget Setting Report at Appendix 2** to this report.
- (u) Approve the capital amendments, detailed in **Appendix H of the HRA Budget Setting Report**, which include the capital proposals in **Appendix G (2) of the HRA Budget Setting Report, at Appendix 2** to this report, along-side re-profiling of investment, increase and re-allocation of resource for new build schemes.
- (v) Approve the revised Housing Capital Investment Plan as shown in **Appendix J of the HRA Budget Setting Report at Appendix 2** to this report.

Capital and Treasury Management

- (w) Approve the Capital and Investment Strategies 2018-19 to 2022-23, **Appendix 3 and 3A**
 - (x) Approve the borrowing and lending strategies for the year to March 2020, as included in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement in **Appendix 4**.
 - (y) Approve the prudential indicators required by the Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities for the year to 31 March 2020, included in **Appendix 4**.
 - (z) Approve any unspent New Homes Bonus money allocated to the Greater Cambridge Partnership to be rolled into 2019-20.
2. Cabinet agreed, subject to Council approval of the full budget to approve the pay award for 2019-20 based on 2% uplift on all spinal column points and payment of the Joseph Rowntree living wage foundation minimum pay of £9.00 with effect from April 2019.

3. Cabinet agreed to delegate the decision in respect of any variation in fees to be charged by the Home Improvement Agency (HIA), to the Director of Housing and Environmental Services, following agreement of the proposed level of charges by the Shared HIA Board.
4. Cabinet agreed that the Director of Housing & Environmental Services updates statutory fees as they are published by Government, GF BSR Appendix A, Appendix 1 to this report.
5. Cabinet Instructed the Head of Finance, on the basis of the proposals set out in the GF BSR, to prepare formal papers to set the council tax requirement and amount of council tax at the Council meeting on 21 February 2019.

Options Considered: The HRA Budget Setting Report identifies the financial impact of a few scenarios for the future of the business, modelling the impact of changes in key assumptions and presented as part of the sensitivity analysis at Appendix F of the report, appended at Appendix 2 to the report of the Interim Executive Director.

Reason For Decision: The various documents have been reviewed in the context of both internal and external factors affecting the Council's financial position.

5. ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Cabinet

- (a) Noted the report and the changes to the policy; and
- (b) Approved adoption of the policy.

Options Considered: The options available to Cabinet are to approve the Organisational Change Policy and Procedure, suggest amendments or reject the changes.

Reason For Decision: The Organisational Change policy and procedure was scheduled for review and subsequently has been updated in line with best practice, legislative updates, EELGA change guidance, the Council's strategic aims, in consultation with Trade Unions and feedback from employees.

6. DISABILITY CONFIDENT SCHEME

Cabinet:

- (a) Agreed that the Council should sign up to the Disability Confident scheme and commit to achieving level 1; and
- (b) Agreed to establish a Member Task and Finish group to take forward a programme of work to enable the Council to achieve the requirements of the Disability Confident scheme.

Options Considered: Option 1

The council could commit to signing up to the Disability Confident scheme which would provide a recognised framework in terms of meeting the council's ambition to make South Cambridgeshire District Council an Employer of Choice for people with disabilities. It is recommended that Cabinet endorse this approach. If Cabinet indicate that this is the preferred option, it is also recommended that a Member Task and Finish group is established to:

- Recognise the role of Members in terms of being community leaders for

- the scheme
- Consider the requirements of the Disability Confident Scheme in relation to the council
- Identify the current measures undertaken by the council in relation to disabled people and,
- Scope and take forward a work programme to meet the requirements of the scheme

Option 2

Alternatively, the council could propose a work programme which would be underpinned by the ambition and commitment made set out by Council in July. However this would not carry the national recognition. There are no other national schemes which recognise and support employer commitments for people with disabilities.

Reason For Decision:

The Council, at its meeting on 19 July 2018, considered a Motion from Councillor Peter McDonald which requested the Employment and Staffing Committee to review the Council's activity to promote equality and diversity amongst its workforce and in particular, actively seeks ways to make South Cambridgeshire District Council an Employer of Choice for people with disabilities. A commitment by the council to sign up to the Disability Confident scheme would result in agreeing a set of actions and activities which would ensure that the council meets the requirements of the scheme. It is recommended that a Member Task and Finish group, supported by officers, is established to consider and take forward a work programme.

7. CAMBOURNE HIGH STREET

Cabinet agreed not to progress the acquisition of the development outlined in the exempt report from the Interim Executive Director.

Other Options Considered: As set out in the exempt report.

Reason For Decision: As set out in the exempt report.