

Minutes

Cabinet

Date: 4 February 2019

Venue: Mezzanine Rooms 1 & 2, County Hall, Aylesbury

Time: 10.30 am to 11.05 am

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr M Tett (in the Chair).

Mr M Appleyard, Mr N Brown, Mr W Chapple OBE, Mr J Chilver, Lin Hazell, Mr M Shaw and Mr W Whyte

OTHER MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr C Harriss and Mrs A Cranmer

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Ms R Bennett, Mr R Ambrose, Mrs S Ashmead, Ms R Shimmin, Ms G Quinton, Ms J Hancox and Mr R Smith

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

Cabinet Members in attendance were Ms J Teesdale, Deputy Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Public Health and Mr C Harriss, Deputy Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2019 were **AGREED** as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2019 were **AGREED** as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

4 HOT TOPICS

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment highlighted recent media coverage in the national press on the way Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) dealt with flytipping. BCC were highlighted as a leading authority due to its zero tolerance policy and prosecutions. It was also raised that there needed to be more of a national deterrent with higher penalties to pay if prosecuted.

The Cabinet Member for Transportation thanked all the teams and those who had undertaken extensive gritting which kept roads open in the recent adverse weather which was echoed by all Cabinet Members. Mr Tett also urged residents to stagger journeys in adverse weather to allow room for gritting vehicles to make their way through the traffic.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services highlighted foster and adoption events soon to take place in Bucks with an adoption event in Chesham on 5 February and a fostering event in Aylesbury on 20 February.

5 QUESTION TIME

There were none

6 FORWARD PLAN FOR CABINET AND CABINET MEMBERS

RESOLVED: Cabinet **NOTED** the report.

7 CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

RESOLVED: Cabinet **NOTED** the report.

8 SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME & INQUIRY WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: Cabinet **NOTED** the report.

9 UNITARY UPDATE

Mr Tett gave background to the unitary decision and updated that the Secretary of State had now announced how the implementation of the new authority would be managed as follows:

- A Shadow Executive would consist of 17 county and district members.
- It would include the Leader of the County Council, eight members nominated by the County Council and two members nominated by each of the four district councils. The chair of the Shadow Executive would be the Leader of the County Council.
- The Leader had appointed the following nominees to the Shadow Executive:
 - Cllr Bill Chapple
 - Cllr John Chilver
 - Cllr Anita Cranmer
 - Cllr Clive Harriss
 - Cllr David Martin
 - Cllr Mark Shaw
 - Cllr Warren Whyte
 - Cllr Gareth Williams

Mr Tett reminded colleagues that there must still be a focus on business as usual so not all of the current Cabinet Members were on the Shadow Executive. He also stated that a number of those on the Shadow Executive were also district councillors.

Cabinet raised and discussed the following points:

- There had been public concerns about the high number of councillors in the new authority. Mr Tett stated that he had previously expressed his disappointment in the decision to increase the number of councillors to 147. This was increased from 98 as set out in the business case following lobbying from other organisation to increase the number, although 98 had been supported by businesses representatives. Mr Tett highlighted that the increase in councillors would be an additional budget pressure of £3m over 5 years.
- Mr Whyte said that he was looking forward to working on the shadow executive and hoped that district colleagues would join the executive as quickly as possible to allow work to start. Mr Tett urged for colleagues not to wait for the outcome of legal proceedings but to work together now in the interest of residents.

RESOLVED: Cabinet NOTED nominations chosen by the Leader for the Shadow Executive.

10 DIRECT CARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Lin Hazel, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing introduced the report and highlighted the following:

- Thrift farm had been running since the 1980s and currently faced a number of challenges which included financial, accessibility and health and safety risks.
- The report set out a number of proposals which included to do nothing, identify an alternative provider or to decommission the service.

- The decision to put forward alternative proposals had not been taken lightly and she understood the concerns of service users.
- A number of organisations had already been approached to take on the site on but no official business plans had been received to date.
- Cabinet were being asked to approve a six-week consultation on the future of Thrift Farm, and to note approval of the final decision to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing.

Mr Tett highlighted that a large number of representations had been received in objection to the closure of the service which had all been considered by Cabinet Members. Mr Tett highlighted the difficult financial position of the County Council having lost all revenue support grants from central government, one of only two county councils in the country to have done so. This had resulted in the council making difficult decisions in order to balance the budget going forward.

Mr Tett stated that a number of valuable points had been made by service users and that he would be very supportive in keeping the service running if able to do so. Mr Tett reiterated that the report included in the pack asked for Cabinet to agree the start of a six week consultation and that no decision had yet been made on the future of the facility. Feedback had suggested that six weeks was not long enough, therefore Mr Tett proposed that the consultation be extended to eight weeks with the option of extending further if further work was required on potential options. Mr Tett also proposed that the final decision was to be taken by Cabinet. Mr Tett also asked that as much financial information to be shared, within confidential remit.

Mr Tett stated his disappointment in the response from Milton Keynes senior leadership. He said that comments made in the press attributed to the Deputy Leader of Milton Keynes council were inappropriate, inaccurate and irresponsible. Mr Tett urged the leadership at Milton Keynes Council to disassociate itself with those comments.

It was noted that Milton Keynes Council had been approached on a number of occasions and that they had commented on some aspects including purchase of the land, however it had been made clear that Buckinghamshire County Council did not have plans to sell the land.

Cabinet raised and discussed the following points:

- All Cabinet Members supported the proposal to extend the consultation to eight weeks to ensure appropriate consideration could be given to all options.
- Mr Chilver, Cabinet Member for Resources stated that he would be unable to support the recommendation to Cabinet and highlighted the following concerns:
 - Length of consultation.
 - He would want to be assured that all options had been objectively considered.
 - He would want income generation potential of the site to be explored.
 - The option of applying for Charity status and be open to more charitable funding.
 - Concerns about the distance to alternative placements should Thrift Farm close and the need to consider the quality and appropriateness of those placements.

- Mr Whyte, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, supported the concerns raised by Mr Chilver and supported the extension of the consultation period and supported the consultation findings to be reported back to Cabinet. Mr Whyte also stated that more needed to be done to engage with organisations that would potentially be interested in taking on the site.
- Mr Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills stated that the farm currently provided work experience for 69 people and that the report was not clear on how we would support those individuals going forward. Mr Appleyard also raised the additional pressure that could be put on carers if the facility were to close and stated that the report was vague on how their needs would be met.
- Mr Shaw, Cabinet Member for Transportation urged organisations that would be interested in taking the site on to get in contact with the County Council.

Ms G Quinton, Executive Director for Communities, Health and Adult Social Care attended the meeting to respond to Members questions and highlighted the following:

- The financial position of Thrift Farm was included in the report which included income. Ms Quinton stated that staff had been very proactive in exploring options to generate more income with the support of the County Council.
- Carter Jonas, external advisor, had completed an evaluation of the site and estimated between £500k and £2m depending on lease arrangements would be required to bring it back to and maintain at an appropriate quality.
- The council had been proactive in seeking alternative providers and the opportunity was on the South East Procurement Portal to invite more interested organisations to come forward. Ms Quinton had stated that recent publicity had created more interest in the farm which was welcomed.

Mr Tett stated that officers had done a great job and the focus now needed to be on what other opportunities could be explored to ensure the farm was kept open but relieve the financial pressure on the County Council.

Recommendation

Cabinet was asked to approve the six-week consultation on the future of Thrift Farm, and note approval of final decision by the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing.

The Leader put forward the following amendments to the recommendation:

- 1. The consultation should run for a minimum of eight weeks**
- 2. Approval for final decision to be brought back to Cabinet**

RESOLVED: Cabinet AGREED the above amendments, 7 in favour and 1 abstention.

11 HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND APPLICATION

Mr Tett, Leader, introduced the report and highlighted the following:

- Government had an aggressive housing agenda with the South East as an area of high demand.
- Colleagues in the districts were under immense pressure to build more houses around the county and that this had to be supported by adequate infrastructure which had not had much support from central government.
- In July 2017, The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) to support the implementation of physical infrastructure to support housing growth.
- The County Council's initial bid was for £204m to support the development of Aylesbury Garden Town which was successful in progressing to the development of a business case. The business case had since been refined to include only infrastructure which would enable or accelerate housing growth.
- Aylesbury also sat within the wider Oxford to Cambridge Growth corridor.

Mr R Smith, Director of Growth Strategy and Highways and Mrs J Hancox, Head of Transport Strategy, attended the meeting to answer any questions from Members and highlighted the following:

- The fund was a fantastic opportunity for Aylesbury with colleagues working with Homes England to ensure the bid was positioned well to give the council the best chance of success.
- Colleagues were working towards a deadline of 26 March 2019.
- The Cabinet report gave a good indication of the range of infrastructure, those essential and those to unlock further housing.

Cabinet raised and discussed the following points:

- The team were thanked for work in developing the bids to put forward.
- The Green Triangle, a triangle path that linked Aylesbury with Halton was raised and the need for this to be included in the bid. It was highlighted that the Garden Town programme was trying to redress the balance between car usage against cycle and pedestrian, whilst it was recognised all three were important there was a need to get a better balance. Appropriate infrastructure to give people an alternative to the car usage should be supported.
- For the link roads in the east and south of Aylesbury to be included.
- The need to support a growing town with infrastructure before expansion and for the Council to remain ambitious in their bid.
- The issue of developers being able to walk away without putting in sufficient infrastructure.
- Ensuring that travel is made convenient and safe.
- Mrs Hancox stated that they were currently testing the green infrastructure proposal and would feedback the results to Cabinet.

Recommendation

- 1. Cabinet APPROVES submission of a Housing Infrastructure Fund (Forward Funding) business case to the value of up to £200m to support the development of Aylesbury Garden Town.**
- 2. Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director TEE, the Executive Director Resources and the s151 Officer to agree composition of the HIF Business Case (in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and the Leader of the Council).**

RESOLVED: Cabinet APPROVED the recommendations.

12 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

11 February 2019

**MARTIN TETT
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

