

# Cabinet Minutes

Date: 12 March 2018

Time: 7.00 - 8.00 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillor D H G Barnes (in the Chair)

|                            |  |
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| Councillor Mrs J A Adey    | - Cabinet Member for Environment                           |
| Councillor S Broadbent     | - Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration |
| Councillor D J Carroll     | - Cabinet Member for Youth and External Partnerships       |
| Councillor D A Johncock    | - Cabinet Member for Planning                              |
| Councillor Mrs J D Langley | - Cabinet Member for Housing                               |
| Councillor G Peart         | - Cabinet Member for Community                             |
| Councillor D M Watson      | - Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources                 |

## By Invitation

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Cllr Shade Adoh         | - Deputy Cabinet Member for Housing                               |
| Cllr Zia Ahmed          | - Deputy Cabinet Member for Strategy and Communications           |
| Cllr Ron Gaffney        | - Chairman of the Improvement & Review Commission                 |
| Cllr Gary Hall          | - Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment                           |
| Cllr Mark Harris        | - Deputy Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration |
| Cllr Matt Knight        | - Leader of the East Wycombe Independent Party                    |
| Cllr Rafiq Raja         | - Leader of the Labour Group                                      |
| Cllr Sarfaraz Khan Raja | - Deputy Cabinet Member for Community                             |
| Cllr Saeed Saddique     | - Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources                 |
| Cllr Alan Turner        | - Deputy Cabinet Member for Planning                              |

## **Also Present**

Councillors M Clarke, M Davy, T Green, T Lee & P Turner

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms K S Wood (Executive Leader of the Council) and L Wood (Cabinet Member for Digital Development & Customer Services)

## **71 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman for the Meeting Councillor D Barnes (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Engagement & Strategy) deputising for Councillor Ms Wood (Leader of the Council) referred to the joint statement of Wycombe, Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils which expressed their extreme disappointment in the Secretary of State's 'minded to' decision in respect of the formation of one unitary authority for Buckinghamshire.

The District Councils did not believe that this decision was in the best interests of local residents, businesses, community groups, parish councils and various other stakeholders across the county, based on engagement carried out, it was not believed that it had strong local support.

The Chairman indicated that given his declared interest in item 8 (minute 79) – Handy Cross Hub – Proposed Disposal of Site – he would re-order the agenda taking item 9 (minute 78) – DesBox & HQube Funding first to be followed by Handy Cross Hub for which he would leave the chamber.

## **72 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 5 February 2018 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

## **73 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor D Barnes declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 8 (minute 79) Handy Cross Hub – Proposed Disposal of Hotel Site, and withdrew from the chair and chamber during the consideration of this item.

## **74 SLATE MEADOW DEVELOPMENT BRIEF**

Councillor D Johncock (Cabinet Member for Planning) presented this report which represented the Development Brief for Slate Meadow, one of the five sites reserved in the Council's Core Strategy 2008 as a location for future development (Policy CS8).

The Development brief featured a considerable number of amendments effected as a result of comments received during the extensive public consultation and liaison group meetings. Where changes had not been made in response to public suggestions, explanations 'why not' were featured.

Members made a number of points and received clarification on a number of queries as follows:

- The Development Brief was being put in place now so that the Council had robust guidance in place before developer applications were received;
- In respect of the Transport Measures 4.7 featured in the Brief and specifically in regards to the Stratford Drive / Brookbank T junction this was currently in fact NOT working over capacity and could cover the traffic movements from up to 200 more housing units;
- The mention of 200 units in respect of this junction did not mean that figure would necessarily be delivered at the site, the Brief (as with all such briefs) did not indicate specific numbers;

- Members expressed concern regards the possible flooding of developed units despite the considerable Environment Agency input to the Brief's development; and
- The fact that precise infrastructure could not be outlined at this stage without the developer contributions being assessed, which would not occur until applications were received and processed.

The Cabinet Member for Planning asked that the amendments in respect of 4.7 be noted and that delegated authority be given to the Head of Planning to proof read the Development Brief before final publication in respect of minor editorial changes and corrections.

The Cabinet Member also placed on record his thanks for the work of officers and the Liaison Group members in delivering this important document.

The following decision was made as land at Slate Meadow was reserved for future development under the Council's Core Strategy. Cabinet has previously agreed that the reserve sites need to be released for development to meet the current development needs of the District, particularly for housing.

The development brief contained detailed planning guidance that would be a material consideration when planning decisions were made on planning applications in this area. The guidance was site specific and therefore more detailed than the current policy framework in the Development Plan. The brief would help co-ordinate future development and the provision of infrastructure. It was therefore important to the quality of the final development to have an up-to-date development brief.

**RESOLVED** That (i) the Slate Meadow Development Brief be adopted as planning guidance for the area, with

(a) The first sentence of Paragraph 4.7 of the Site Development Brief be amended to read:

"The Stratford Drive/Brookbank T-junction currently operates within capacity." and the words "and is likely to require junction improvements" be deleted.

And (b) The second sentence of Paragraph 4.7 of the Site Development Brief be modified to read:

"an assessment in relation to the site access into the site from Stratford Drive was carried out by WYG Transport in 2015 and confirms that the T-junction is suitable to serve 150 units." and

(ii) delegated authority be given to the Head of Planning to tidy the Development Brief before final publication in respect of minor editorial changes and corrections.

It was requested by the Members concerned, that two of the Cabinet Members were to be noted as abstaining from voting in respect of this resolution.

## **75 TERRIERS FARM DEVELOPMENT BRIEF**

The report before Cabinet set out the consultation that has taken place in relation to the Terriers Farm Development Brief and provided an assessment of the consultation responses received during the most recent consultation period.

The development brief has been drawn up following extensive work analysing the planning issues and opportunities for future development in this area which was conditionally released as a housing site under policy H2 of the Wycombe District Local Plan to 2011 and was reserved for development within the Council's Core Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Planning wished to place on record the skilled chairing of the Liaison Group meetings by Councillor Matt Knight, whilst the options considered and chosen in respect of the two entrances / exits to the site onto the A404 were outlined.

Again Members received clarification on a number of issues:

- Amendments were to be made to the final brief in respect of the landscaping at the boundary of the Ladies Mile and the North / South corridor, establishing this layout of this important green infrastructure ahead of development;
- Strict implementation of the Council's policy in respect of affordable housing within the development would be carried out;
- The history of ownership of the cricket pitch / green space areas and the plans within the brief for these were outlined; and
- Acknowledgement that the Brief represented a balance between the development of much needed housing alongside equal emphasis on the protection of the green infrastructure so loved by residents.

The Cabinet Member for Planning asked that delegated authority again be given to the Head of Planning to proof read the Development Brief before final publication in respect of minor editorial changes and corrections.

Again the Cabinet Member placed on record his thanks for the work of officers and the Liaison Group members in delivering this important document.

The following decision was made as this land at Terriers Farm was reserved for future development under the Council's Core Strategy. Cabinet had previously agreed that the reserve sites needed to be released for development to meet the current development needs of the District, particularly for housing. In this case the Brief not only covered the released reserved site but also additional land considered necessary and appropriate to be included within the brief to secure an appropriate form of development.

The development brief contained detailed planning guidance that would be a material consideration when planning decisions were made on planning applications in this area. The guidance was site specific and therefore more detailed than the current policy framework in the Development Plan. The brief would help co-ordinate future development and the provision of infrastructure. It would therefore be important to the quality of the final development to have in place this up-to-date development brief.

**RESOLVED** That (i) the Terriers Farm Development Brief be adopted as planning guidance for the area with the 2 changes to the paragraphs on Green Infrastructure as presented by the Cabinet Member the precise wording to be delegated to the Head of Planning and Sustainability; and

(ii) delegated authority also be given to the Head of Planning to proof read and amend the Development Brief before final publication in respect of minor editorial changes and corrections.

## **76 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY**

The Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy had previously been developed and adopted by the Council, the policy statement in the Report aimed to update the policy and provide options available to assist residents in accordance with local health priorities.

The policy applied to all forms of mandatory and discretionary financial assistance provided by the Council for the purposes of private sector housing renewal. It had regard to the powers and duties set out in the Housing Act 2004, the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002, the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and Government guidance issued under this legislation.

The four district Councils in Buckinghamshire had consulted to broadly align discretionary assistance available across the county to reduce variations across Buckinghamshire, whilst maintaining the ability to adapt to local variations and individual cases where necessary.

The Cabinet Member for Housing presenting the Report also mentioned that Wycombe District Council was one of a small handful of councils nationwide flagged up recently by the NHS's Professor Keith Willett, one of England's top urgent care doctors, for introducing successful local initiatives.

Professor Willett used Wycombe District Council's Healthy Homes on Prescription initiative as a good example of a local authority helping frail residents and simultaneously reducing costs to the public purse.

Members were reassured that the scheme was well publicised and directed to would be patients / residents as a matter of course.

The following recommendation was made as Local Authorities had statutory duties to develop appropriate policies to deal with deficiencies in the condition of housing stock in the area. This policy sets out formally, in one policy document, how the Council would use the powers available to it in order to meet these duties.

The Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy had been refreshed following a collaborative project involving the four district Councils with the intention of aligning discretionary financial assistance available across Buckinghamshire

### **Recommendation to Council**

That (i) the Private Sector Housing Renewal policy covering all forms of mandatory and discretionary financial assistance, be adopted by the Council; and

(ii) delegated authority be given to the Head of Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to make minor amendments to the policy.

## **77 2017/18 SERVICE PERFORMANCE: Q3 (OCTOBER – DECEMBER)**

Cabinet received a summary of performance out-turns for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, noting amongst the statistics included the reduction in the number of measurements more than 5% away from target from 19% last year at this point to only 7% this year.

The proposed provision of additional resources by Northgate under their contract to resolve the key exceptions in respect of Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit claims and processing changes of circumstances during the next quarter, was noted.

The following decision was made in order to review performance as at 31 December 2017 to ensure that the Council is performing at the appropriate level.

**RESOLVED** that the summary of the year to date service performance out-turns (October – December 2017) be noted.

## **78 DESBOX & HQUBE FUNDING**

Members noted that DesBox was a proposed small studio workspace development, forming part of the Council's Baker Street area renewal initiative. DesBox was approved by Cabinet in July 2017, based on an initial estimate of its cost.

HQube was a proposed small workshop development, forming part of the Council's Hughenden Quarter regeneration scheme. HQube was approved by Cabinet in June 2017, based on a preliminary design and cost.

Detailed project work-up on both designs and their competitive tendering for contractors' prices had resulted in changes to the original appraisals, requiring fresh Cabinet decisions.

The aim was to minimise groundworks. However, building regulations had now caught up with this construction trend which were no longer recognised as 'temporary structures'. This meant that requirements for proper foundations, more insulation and the full impact of fire regulations have increased construction costs. It was also clear that both the DesBox and HQube schemes could not be split into two phases – all the groundworks would have to be constructed in one go (and subsequent stacking of containers onto a partially occupied site was not practical). The financial implications of this were set out in the Confidential Appendix.

The following decisions were made as the earlier assumption that DesBox could be phased had proved to be untenable, whilst the Upper Site residential disposal would be completed after HQube needed to start on site. The decisions maintained the development programme.

**RESOLVED** That (i) the release of the approved capital budget for Phase 1 DesBox and the supplementary estimate and virements as set out in para 3 in the Financial Implications section in the Confidential Appendix subject to the deliverability and confirmation that the value engineering proposed will be acceptable;

(ii) the use of monies already in the Capital Programme to provide interim development finance for HQube, pending cross-financing from the sale of the Upper Site, Bellfield Road for

residential development, as set out in para [ 4 ] in the Financial implications section in the in the Confidential Appendix; and

(iii) delegation be given to the Corporate Director, Head of Finance & Commercial Services and Major Projects Executive and the Cabinet Members for Finance and Economic Development & Regeneration, the authority to enter into construction contracts for DesBox and HQube, as set out in paras [1 & 3] Confidential Appendix.

**Councillor S Broadbent took the chair for this item**

**79 HANDY CROSS HUB - PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF HOTEL SITE**

Members noted that the consented masterplan for Handy X Hub included a 150 bed hotel on the motorway frontage (part of 'Phase 3'). There was currently strong investor/operator interest in the site. The recommendation in the report was in order to capitalise upon this, whilst the economy remained reasonably buoyant, by proceeding with a simple freehold sale.

The following decision was made as there was a need to break up the site ownership whilst the Scheme of Delegation limit was below the indicative level of capital receipt referred to in Para [2] in the Confidential Appendix to the report.

**RESOLVED;** That (i) the freehold interest in the hotel site at Handy X Hub be disposed; and

(ii) delegate authority be given to the Major Projects & Estates Executive, in consultation with the Head of Finance & Commercial Services and their respective Cabinet Members, to agree terms for the disposal and to complete the transaction.

**Councillor D Barnes returned to the chair for this item**

**80 FILE ON ACTION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

Cabinet received the following files on actions taken under delegated powers:

|                                     |                   |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Community                           | C/07/18 – C/09/18 |
| Economic Development & Regeneration | EDR/01/18         |
| Planning & Sustainability           | PS/03/18          |

**81 FILE ON ACTION TAKEN UNDER EXEMPT DELEGATED POWERS**

Cabinet received the following files on exempt actions taken under delegated powers:

Economic Development & Regeneration Sheet Nos: EDR/10/18 - EDR/14/18



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Chairman

**The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:**

- Susan Bolter - Corporate Director (Growth & Regeneration)
- Karen Satterford - Chief Executive
- Ian Hunt - Democratic Services Manager
- Peter Druce - Democratic Services
- Penelope Tollitt - Head of Planning & Sustainability