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MINUTES OF A CABINET MEETING Council Chamber - Town Hall Wednesday, 16 October 2013 (7.30 - 8.35 pm)

Present:

Councillor Michael Armstrong

Transformation (Chairman)

Councillor Robert Benham

Councillor Andrew Curtin

Councillor Roger Ramsey

Councillor Paul Rochford

Councillor Geoffrey Starns

Councillor Barry Tebbutt

Councillor Lesley Kelly

Cabinet Member responsibility:

Community Empowerment

Culture, Towns & Communities

Value

Children & Learning

Community Safety

Environment

Housing & Public Protection

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors Michael White and Steven Kelly.

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Councillor Michael Armstrong chaired the meeting.

Councillors Clarence Barrett, Keith Darvill, David Durant, Linda Hawthorn, Paul McGeary, Pat Murray and Jeffrey Tucker were present for the meeting.

3 members of the public and a representative of the Press were also present.

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest.

Through the Chairman, an announcement was made advising those present of the emergency evacuation procedures.

84 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 25 September 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following minor amendment:

Minute 79. The minutes incorrectly refer to "Dorking Walk." This should be amended to read "Dorking Road."

85 **BUSINESS RATES RETENTION POOLING OPTION**

Councillor Roger Ramsey, Cabinet Member for Value, introduced the report.

It was reported that the 2013/14 Local Government Finance Settlement had seen the launch of the Business Rates Retention Scheme as the main form of Local Government funding. Under the Retention Scheme, Councils were to be funded through a mixture of the Revenue Support Grant and Business Rates that would make up a Settlement Funding Allocation. Under the scheme, local authorities would be able to retain 30% of their business rate yield (in London, the figure is 50% elsewhere) and would directly benefit from growth in their business rate base.

The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had encouraged local authorities to pool and had recently released a document called “pooling prospectus” which outlined the benefits and procedures of creating a pool. In May 2013, Thurrock Council commissioned LG Futures to review the potential benefit of pooling. From this exercise, a pool consisting of Thurrock unitary, Basildon district, the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and the London Borough of Havering had been identified as a viable option. It was explained that in order to join a pool, local authorities had to submit an expression of interest by the 31 October with any permanent arrangements being formally submitted by January 2014.

The report therefore sought authority from Cabinet for officers to enter into discussions with other authorities over a potential pool for financial year 2014/15.

Reasons for the decision:

In order to maximise the funding available for the council, it was necessary to explore options especially if there are financial impact to local communities. The option sought could potentially bring additional benefits and give financial stability as the risk of any major developments from within the pool could be shared thus minimising the impact to the local rates collected.

Other options considered:

None. Other options had been explored however the proposed pool would be the most financially viable, as well as being within a geographical area. The pool was a voluntary membership which could be reviewed at any time.

Cabinet:

1. Noted the potential benefits of entering a pooling arrangement and to grant formal authority for officers to enter into discussions in forming a pool and prepare draft documentation for governance of the pooling arrangement.
2. Delegated to the Group Director Resources, in consultation with the Leader, Cabinet Member for Value, and Chief Executive, authority to finalise details of any formal submission to DCLG.
3. Noted that a further report would be brought before Cabinet, should approval be given to the creation of a pool.

86 **HOUSING STRATEGY 2013-2016**

Councillor Lesley Kelly, Cabinet Member for Housing & Public Protection, introduced the report.

The report introduced the Council's draft Housing Strategy for 2013 – 2016 which comprehensively up-dated the previous Strategy. In particular, the new Housing Strategy had been drafted in the form a series of sub-strategies covering:

- homelessness
- affordable housing development
- older people's housing needs
- private sector housing
- supported housing.

Since the previous Strategy was published, there had been many changes in national policy and legislation regarding local authorities' housing powers, notably the reform of the Housing Revenue Account, new opportunities for local authorities to new build affordable homes, and welfare reform. In addition, locally, the Arm's Length Management Organisation, Homes in Havering, had been reintegrated into the Council and the provision of Decent Homes Grant had brought the completion of the Decent Homes Programme in sight.

The draft Housing Strategy built on the progress made over the past three years which would enable the Council to re-think the ways it can meet the on-going pressures of housing demand.

The Strategy had been informed by up-to-date information on the housing needs and aspirations of Havering's residents following the commissioning of an extensive Housing Needs Study in 2012, and on-going dialogue with colleagues across the Council and beyond.

Cabinet noted that a full Equality Analysis had been carried out to inform the development and implementation of the overarching Strategy and Sub-strategies

Reasons for the decision:

The Council's previous Housing Strategy 2008/9 – 2011/12 was now out-of-date. In addition, there had been a number of significant changes to services locally, and policy changes at the local, regional and national levels since its publication affecting the borough's strategic direction and priorities.

Despite current legislation giving the Mayor of London the lead role in housing strategy-making in London, the Secretary of State retained a power to require local housing authorities to produce and keep up-to-date a housing strategy reflecting local needs and priorities. The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that its own housing strategy is in general conformity with the Mayor of London's housing strategy.

Thus, there was no alternative to reviewing and revising the Council's Housing Strategy.

Other options considered:

Develop bespoke approaches to housing issues as they arise rather than produce a detailed Housing Strategy – REJECTED. It was arguably self-

evident that without a strategic approach to major housing issues which typically required (a) cross-service working, (b) financial investment, and/or (c) relatively long development phases, poor decision-making can result, with resultant poor use of resources. If the Council faced housing and related challenges in the borough, such as caring for an aging population, while at the same time making efficiencies, strategic planning was essential.

Cabinet:

1. Approved the draft Housing Strategy and in particular the proposed key priorities for tackling homelessness, promoting new affordable housing development, meeting older people's housing needs, promoting quality in the private housing sector, and providing more supported housing to meet identified need – detailed in section 4 of this report –subject to further consultation within the Council, and with partner organisations and residents.
2. Delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Housing to consider all of the consultation responses and to make amendments to the key priorities and/or the content of the Housing Strategy, unless any amendment has financial implications in which case further recommendations will be made to Cabinet.

87 APPROVAL TO CONVERT 6000 SODIUM STREET LIGHTS IN RESIDENTIAL ROADS ACROSS THE BOROUGH TO MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT LED LIGHTS

Councillor Barry Tebbutt, Cabinet Member for the Environment, introduced the report.

The report before Cabinet set out a proposal to commence relevant processes in order to convert 30% (6000) of the Council's sodium street lights to modern Light Emitting Diode (LED) technology. The proposal would bring significant longer term savings in energy usage/costs, maintenance costs and reduction in carbon emissions.

Cabinet noted that the estimated cost of the project was £1.3 million with a resultant annual energy cost saving of £154k and £59k maintenance saving, at current prices, meaning a payback period of 6.1 years. An interest free loan should be available to the Council to fund 59% (£770k) of the total capital cost with the remaining funding coming from existing capital budgets and TfL Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funding.

Reasons for the decision:

The change of 6,000 sodium street lights across the borough to LED lighting would have a number of benefits including:

- Reduced annual energy costs
- Help future proof the street lighting electricity budget against inevitable future energy price increases

- The installation of the LED lanterns will enable the Head of StreetCare to renegotiate the current maintenance contract to reflect the lower requirement for maintenance of the new lanterns.
- Help residents feel safer safe and more secure. Through superior colour rendering and a higher perceived brightness, the white light of LED lighting makes it easier to distinguish objects, colours, shapes and other details. In particular, facial recognition is easier. White light also gives the most even illumination with fewer areas of intimidating shadow.
- Ensure the light is directed downwards instead of upwards into the night sky. In contrast to the old orange/yellow lighting this will dramatically reduce light pollution in the sky.

Other options considered:

1. Do nothing

Not implementing energy efficiency measure in the council's street lighting will leave the street lighting energy budget vulnerable to the inevitable future increases in UK electricity costs.

2. Turning off selected lights at night:

Where implemented by other local authorities this option had often resulted in significant social pressure from the communities affected and in a number of cases lights had been restored back into operational service.

3. Switching lights off completely during hours of low traffic and pedestrian movement:

This option would reduce energy costs considerably, but it would also place roads into darkness and was likely to meet with the same public resistance as the previous option.

Cabinet Agreed:

1. To proceed to tender for the purchase of 6,000 LED lanterns and the conversion of 6000 sodium street lights, in residential roads.
2. In principle, to apply for the maximum interest free loan available under the Salix Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme (SEELS) of £770,000 to part fund this project.
3. To add the funding of the scheme as set out in Appendix A to the Capital Budget 13/14, and to refer this recommendation to full Council.
4. To delegate award(s) of the contract(s) set out at (a) above to the Group Director of Culture, Community and Economic Development.

88 DEVELOPMENT OF NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Councillor Lesley Kelly, Cabinet Member for Housing & Public Protection, introduced the report.

In line with the Council's commitment to address the local need for good quality homes, a number of bids had been submitted to the Greater London Authority (GLA) to attract inward funding for new build housing schemes. Although the

bidding round was extremely competitive, the Council had successfully secured £2,076,000 inward investment from the GLA to fund development in the borough. Of this, approval had already been granted by Cabinet for a bungalow scheme at Garrick House which had attracted £256,500 GLA funding. The report before Cabinet covered seven further schemes consisting of 61 new homes supported by £1,819,500 of GLA grant.

The report sought authority to allocate match-funding from a number of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and general fund capital sources.

Reasons for the decision:

Development of the proposed schemes would meet well-documented housing need, especially the need for supported housing schemes and the need to provide high quality housing for older tenants to facilitate downsizing from under-occupied family housing. The schemes would also enable the Council to utilise its right-to-buy receipts in line with the agreement made with the Homes and Communities Agency for local determination of the use of such receipts by the Council for new affordable housing development in the borough.

Developing on Council-owned land and retaining control over the new dwellings would strengthen the Council's housing portfolio and future revenue sources.

Other options considered:

Disposal of the land for development by a housing association or private developer was REJECTED. Should the proposed schemes be delivered by housing associations there was significant likelihood that a proportion of the new homes would have to be offered up to the sub-regional pool giving other boroughs nomination rights. Furthermore, this would neither provide the mixed tenure bungalow scheme envisaged as key to encouraging downsizing nor meet housing demands from disable adults.

It was also important to note that should the Council not be able to spend its right-to-buy receipts within three years of their generation, they would need to be returned to the HCA/GLA with interest. These proposals would obviate the risk of this.

Cabinet Agreed:

1. That an allocation of £1,001,863 from the proceeds of right-to-buy council property sales accruing between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013 be agreed for this new build programme with onward referral to Council for approval.
2. That an allocation of £3,399,936 resources from the HRA Business Plan, including £353,000 already approved for Hidden Homes works, be agreed for this new build programme with onward referral to Council for approval.
3. That an allocation of £311,891 of section 106 commuted sums be agreed for this new build programme with onward referral to Council for approval.

4. That an allocation of £110,000 from the Adult Social Care capital budget, from Department of Health grant, to enable the addition of assistive technology to a scheme specifically for Adult Social Care clients be agreed for this new build programme with onward referral to Council for approval.
5. That a virement of £655,949 from unallocated capital resources held in the Housing General Fund previously earmarked to support vulnerable and/or disabled residents be agreed for this new build programme with onward referral to Council for approval.
6. That the specific financial allocations from all sources be applied to the constituent schemes as detailed in an exempt appendix to the report.
7. That authority to make variations to any of the schemes covered in this report deemed desirable following resident consultation and/or identified as a planning requirement is delegated to the Cabinet Member for Housing unless the variations would incur additional capital investment by the Council in which case Cabinet's approval would be sought.
8. That the estimated £1,300,000 proceeds from sale of the shared ownership element of this new build programme be earmarked for future shared ownership and/or affordable rented developments on sites such as the former Diana Princess of Wales hostel.
9. That approval be given to commence the process of procuring the main contractors to deliver the schemes.

89 OPEN GOVERNMENT MEMBER PROJECT

Councillor Paul Rochford, Cabinet Member for Children & Learning, introduced the report.

At the beginning of the current Council, ten Strategic Administration Projects were established to help deliver services more effectively and in new ways. The Projects were each to be driven by a Member of the Cabinet, working with a select team of officers, representing a diverse variety of disciplines within the Council.

The projects were:

Council Effectiveness
Think Family
Open Government
Community Action
Harold Hill Ambitions

Neighbourhood Responsibility
Civic Pride
Future Financing
Rainham Compass
Romford Regeneration

In the last year of the current Administration, each Project would report back to Cabinet, to note the achievements attained and the progress made.

The **Open Government** project had now been completed.

The project:

- Set out the Council's ambition to be an 'Open Council'

- Defined which datasets could be freely published via the website.
- Ensured that the Council was meeting statutory obligations to publish data, while looking for opportunities to go further
- Publicised information and opened the Council to public scrutiny in order to improve engagement with local people through more transparent government.

Reasons for the decision:

The report was brought to cabinet to provide Members with an overview of the Council Effectiveness Member project.

Other options considered:

N/A

Cabinet noted the outcomes delivered by the Open Government project.

Chairman