

Cabinet

Thursday, 29 September 2016, County Hall, Worcester, 10.00 a.m.

Present:

Minutes

Mr S E Geraghty (Chairman), Mr A N Blagg, Mrs S L Blagg, Mr M J Hart, Mrs L C Hodgson, Dr K A Pollock, Mr A C Roberts and Mr J H Smith

Also attended:

Mr P M McDonald and Mr A P Miller

Available papers

The Members had before them:

- A. The Agenda Papers (previously circulated); and
- B. The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21 July 2016 (previously circulated).

A copy of document A will be attached to the signed Minutes.

1740 Apologies and Declarations of Interest (Agenda item 1)

Apologies were received from Mr M L Bayliss.

1741 Public Participation (Agenda item 2)

There was no public participation.

1742 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting (Agenda item 3)

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

1743 West Midlands Rail Devolution (Agenda item 4)

The Cabinet considered the proposed governance arrangements for the development and oversight of the West Midlands Rail franchise through West Midlands Rail Limited. The details were set out in the report and its Appendix.

In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made:

- (a) the Cabinet Member with Responsibility introduced

the report by explaining that the proposals for rail devolution were a good example of partnerships with other local authorities for the benefit of local people. He referred also to the economic benefits for the area, local control of local resources and the hoped for improvements to rail services as a result. This was a good move for the County Council and a good move for the people of Worcestershire.

- (b) this was an eminently sensible partnership arrangement which would yield a great deal of influence on local rail services with little or no cost to the County Council and no risk.
- (c) a view from outside the Cabinet was that the only way for the rail industry to make real improvements was through re-nationalisation.

RESOLVED: that

- (a) the implications for Worcestershire County Council of West Midlands Rail entering a Partnership Agreement with the Department for Transport be noted; and**
- (b) it be agreed that West Midlands Rail should enter a Partnership Agreement with the Department for Transport and that authority be delegated to the Director of Economy & Infrastructure in consultation with the Director of Commercial & Change to finalise the details of the Partnership Agreement.**

**1744 Worcestershire
Local
Aggregates
Assessment
(Agenda item 5)**

The Cabinet considered the Worcestershire Local Aggregates Assessment including arrangements for its annual update. The details were set out in the report and its Appendix.

In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made:

- (a) the Cabinet Member with Responsibility introduced the report referring to the National Planning Policy Framework and explained the need for aggregates planning to sustain the building industry and the local economy into the future.
- (b) particular attention was drawn to the fact that whilst the County Council may not be particularly rich in some mineral assets it was one of the major proponents of recycled aggregates and their

benefits.

- (c) this was an important document and an important process and it was sensible to delegate authority to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Skills and Infrastructure to agree and adopt the Local Aggregates Assessment annually.

RESOLVED: that

- (a) the annual Worcestershire Local Aggregate Assessment to facilitate planning for a steady and adequate supply of aggregates be approved;**
- (b) the preparation of updates of the Local Aggregate Assessment on an annual basis in accordance with extant guidance and having regard to the advice of the West Midlands Aggregate Working Party be approved; and**
- (c) authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Skills and Infrastructure to agree and adopt the Local Aggregates Assessment annually.**

1745 Resources Report (Agenda item 6)

The Cabinet considered a Resources Report. The details were set out in the report.

In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made:

- (a) the Leader of the Council introduced the report and explained the current revenue budget position. He outlined some of the achievements and challenges within the FutureFit Programme and the details of proposed additions to the Capital Programme namely the Energy Efficiency "Spend to Save" Fund and Phase 2 of the development of in-house Post-16 Supported Living Accommodation and residential facilities within Children's Services.
- (b) in response to a question from outside the Cabinet about the Council's use of solar panels at County Hall, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment answered the specific question and also alluded to the background of energy prices and how these affected the viability of particular energy saving schemes.
- (c) the use of more LED lanterns for street lighting and

low energy schemes at major road junctions to reduce costs to allow for further investment.

- (d) in relation to Phase 2 of the Supported Living Accommodation a comment was made about a particular scheme in Evesham, how successful it had been and the benefit to the County Council and the young people involved.
- (e) it as also noted that the Council promoted the extension of in-house provision where this was appropriate.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Cabinet Member's conclusions concerning revenue budget monitoring up to 30 July 2016 be endorsed;**
- (b) the current progress regarding the FutureFit programme be noted;**
- (c) to recommend Council to approve the Energy Efficiency Spend to Save Fund increase to the Capital Programme and that the capital budget cash limits be updated accordingly;**
- (d) to recommend Council to approve the addition of £2 million to the Capital Programme for Phase 2 of the development of in-house Post-16 Supported Living Accommodation and residential facilities within Children's Services to be funded by revenue savings from the projects;**
- (e) that the Cabinet Member's conclusions concerning capital budget monitoring up to 30 July 2016 be endorsed; and**
- (f) the current position of the annual statutory accounts process be noted.**

1746 Acquisition of Wildwood Office, Worcester (Agenda item 7)

The Cabinet considered the acquisition in principle of the freehold of Wildwood Office, Worcester. The details were set out in the report. Commercially confidential details were set out in the exempt report for Cabinet Members.

In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made:

- (a) the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning introduced the report by reference to the extent of the current lease on Wildwood, the projected costs of that lease and the restriction it placed on use of the building, the potential projected benefits of acquisition to the Council and the limited nature of the proposals before the Cabinet. He emphasised that Cabinet were only agreeing to our commercial position not to the fine details of the negotiation which would be conducted by professional officers. Details were available in the exempt part of the agenda papers.
- (b) a view from outside the Cabinet suggested this would improve the Council's property portfolio but caution would be needed to ensure the best deal for Council Tax payers and to avoid unnecessary expenditure.
- (c) other speakers emphasised that value for money would be at the heart of any negotiations which would be conducted within the envelope set out in the exempt part of the agenda papers and the deal would not proceed if it were not affordable and value for the Council
- (d) this was a sensible and prudent proposal and would allow officers to undertake detailed negotiations. The Council was trying to be as democratically transparent as possible by having an open report and discussion, whilst keeping the commercial detail confidential.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that it be agreed in principle to seek to acquire the freehold of Wildwood Office, Worcester;**
- (b) that the maximum financial limit as set out in the exempt finance report at Appendix 1 be approved, within which negotiations over the purchase price for the freehold interest will be conducted;**
- (c) to recommend Council to approve the addition to the Capital Programme set out in the exempt finance report at Appendix 1 and that the capital cash limits are updated accordingly in due course to reflect the actual cost of acquisition; and**

- (d) that the Interim Director of Commercial and Change in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning, and in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, be delegated authority to negotiate the final contract and the subsequent purchase within the limits set by the report.

The meeting ended at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman