

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 9 January 2012 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman)

Councillor Ken Atack, Lead Member for Financial Management
Councillor Norman Bolster, Lead Member for Estates
Councillor John Donaldson, Lead Member for Banbury Brighter Futures
Councillor Michael Gibbard, Lead Member for Planning
Councillor James Macnamara, Lead Member for the Environment
Councillor Nigel Morris, Lead Member for Change
Councillor D M Pickford, Lead Member for Housing
Councillor Nicholas Turner, Lead Member for Customer Services

Also Present: Councillor Leslie F Sibley, Leader of the Labour Group
Councillor Tim Emptage, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

Apologies for absence: Councillor G A Reynolds, Deputy Leader

Officers: Sue Smith, Chief Executive
Calvin Bell, Director of Development
Martin Henry, Director of Resources / Section 151 Officer
Ian Davies, Director of Community and Environment
Kevin Lane, Head of Law and Governance / Monitoring Officer
Martyn Swann, Strategic Housing Manager
Helen Town, Strategic Housing Officer
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections

69 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

70 Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

71 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

72 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

73 **Health Sector Reforms and Emerging New Local Arrangements**

The Director of Environment and Community submitted a report which sought consideration of the changes to the local health sector as a consequence of the health sector reforms and the resultant new structures and functions.

In introducing the report, the Lead Member for the Environment explained that whilst Cherwell District Council does not provide the main health services, it was important for the Council to be involved as the proposals provided many opportunities for the Council and its partners to make a contribution to and influence what, and how, health services were provided in Cherwell.

In response to a request from Councillor Tim Emptage, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, regarding the role of district councillors in the reforms, the Leader agreed that it would be important to consider a suitable feedback structure to all Members.

Resolved

- (1) That the new Oxfordshire and local arrangements for the Health and Wellbeing Functions, Healthwatch and Clinical Commissioning. Be noted
- (2) That the District Council's involvement in the appropriate parts of the Health & Wellbeing partnerships structure be supported and promoted.
- (3) That the Community Partnership Network continue to be supported as a means of ensuring that local issues are adequately addressed in all parts of the health and social care sector.

Reasons

The changes to the local health and social care sector are very significant and provide a range of opportunities for the Council and its partners to influence what and how services are provided to meet local needs in a much more coherent and joined up way.

Options

Option One To fully engage with this change process and with partners, to influence future service provision as much as possible. This option is the basis of the report recommendations.

Option Two To withdraw from health and social care sector matters and not become involved. Given the good work associated with the Horton Hospital, this option is not

proposed.

Option Three To engage only on an invited basis. Again, a passive approach such as this is not recommended as it is likely to result in only limited benefit.

74

Council Tax Base for 2012/13

The Head of Finance and Procurement submitted a report which sought consideration of the calculation of the council tax base for 2012/13.

Resolved

- (1) That the report of the Head of Finance and Procurement, made pursuant to the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as amended, and the calculations referred to therein for the purposes of the Regulations be approved.
- (2) That, in accordance with the Regulations, as amended, the amount calculated by the Cherwell District Council as its council tax base for the year 2012/2013 shall be 50,615.
- (3) That the tax base for parts of the area be in accordance with the figures shown in column 13 of Appendix 1b (as set out as an annex to the Minutes in the Minute Book).
- (4) That it be agreed to continue with the discretionary awards that it resolved to give on December 1 2009.

Reasons

The Collection Rate to be used in the tax base calculation is a best estimate of the percentage of the total amount due for 2012/2013 that will be collected. It is based on the level of in-year collection achieved in previous years. Over recent years the in-year collection rate has increased each year, from 95.75% in 2000/01 to 98.38% last year. The Collection Rate was last increased, from 97 to 98%, in the tax base calculation for 2007/08. Actual in-year collection for 2010/11 was 98.38% and it is on target to achieve the same for 2011/12 financial year.

The issues that affect the collection rate estimate centre around the ability to pay. With a recession beginning there will be a number of local residents whose ability to pay their council tax will be affected over the next year and these residents may not qualify for help through council tax benefits, in which case they may find it difficult to maintain their outgoings.

Given the unknown factors that will arise from the current economic situation in the next year it is to be recommended that the collection rate used in the tax base calculation remain at 98%.

The estimate of adjustments applied to take account of new properties likely to become available during the next year could also be varied. The adjustments made, on the basis of the information obtained by the Service Assurance team take into account known planning applications and the progress that is to be made on them during the remainder of this year and next.

Options

Option One

The majority of figures used in the calculation are obtained from the billing system for council tax and as such are a matter of fact. The Executive could vary the estimated figures of adjustments for changes in property information during the year e.g. new properties or discount changes as well as the collection rate used in this report.

Option Two

The Council may vary the discounts for second homes and long-term empty dwellings this report proposes that the rates for 2012/13 continue unchanged from those approved for 2011/12 as approved by the Executive at its meeting on 1 December 2009

75

Resource Review

The Chief Executive submitted a report which sought support for the proposals to address the gaps in skills or capacity identified following the appointment to the posts in the new Joint Management Team.

In introducing the report, the Chief Executive explained that there were currently a large number of projects underway at Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire Council and a rigorous approach was required to manage them.

In considering the report, Members commented that elected Member could add value to project boards but any involvement should be relevant. In terms of the request for one-off funding, Members agreed that the proposals should be given further consideration by the Joint Arrangements Steering Group and authority delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and the Lead Member for Finance, to approve subject to this review.

Resolved

- (1) That the outcome of the resource review be noted.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and the Lead Member for Finance, to approve the proposals for the one-off funding requirement following further consideration of them by the Joint Arrangements Steering Group.

- (3) That it be noted that business cases for any further funding requirements were being developed for member consideration.
- (4) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to review the joint working arrangements during 2012/13.

Reasons

The joint management arrangements are still new and are being embedded in both organisations, whilst also delivering services. Each council also has a number of major projects and in addition there are many changes at national level that will have an impact on all councils, such as localism, the Local Government Resource Review and the changes to the planning regime. However, the implementation of the first phase of the business case for joint working has been delivered on time and within budget, but will be kept under review as future phases are delivered.

Options

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| Option One | To agree all or some of the recommendations as set out. |
| Option Two | To amend all or some the recommendations. |
| Option Three | Not to agree the recommendations. |

76 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that they could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

77 **Community Led Housing and Self Build Housing**

The Interim Head of Regeneration and Housing submitted an exempt report which updated Members on community led and self build housing development opportunities following the approach agreed in an exempt report to Executive on 23 May 2011.

Resolved

That recommendation 1 as set out in the exempt minute be agreed and:

- (2) That the progress to date in developing Build! ® as the Council's 'invest and develop' approach to the delivery of self build housing and renovation of empty homes, through the acquisition and development of land and premises be noted.

- (3) That the establishment by the Council of a District-Wide Community Land Trust in Cherwell be approved.
- (4) That it be agreed to appoint an Elected Member as a nominee to serve as a Custodian Board Member on the Community Land Trust and approve the involvement of Council Officers as required to provide specialist advice and input.
- (5) That officers be requested to submit a progress report on the Community Land Trust to the Executive in six months.

Reasons

At a time of national changes with welfare reform and reduced public spending the proposals in this report aim to ensure that Cherwell is in a strong position to access new forms of funding and provide innovative and entrepreneurial solutions to the delivery of affordable housing.

Options

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| Option One | To agree the recommendations as set out. |
| Option Two | To not accept any of the recommendations. |
| Option Three | To accept some of the recommendations. |

78

ICT Insource and Shared Service Business Case

The Head of Finance and Procurement submitted an exempt report which sought support for the business case to implement a shared ICT service across Cherwell District Council (CDC) and South Northamptonshire Council (SNC), and agreement to fund the set up costs of such a service.

Resolved

Subject to approval of the staffing implications by Personnel Committee and similar approval by the respective SNC decision making bodies:

- (1) That the business case for insourcing the ICT function at the end of the current SNC contract with Capita be endorsed.
- (2) That the ICT Programme Board be requested to progress the insource.
- (3) That the revised Terms of Reference for the ICT Programme Board as set out in the business case be approved and the authority to take all necessary non staffing decisions to implement it be delegated to the Director of Resources in consultation with the Board Chairman.
- (4) That the supplementary capital estimate to fund the investment required to develop a shared platform be approved and authority be

delegated to the Director of Resources in consultation with the Lead Member for Financial Management to fund the one off revenue costs from ICT earmarked reserves.

Reasons

There is a compelling business case to take forward the information services shared project with South Northamptonshire Council. In addition to the financial savings and contribution to funding reductions, the ICT shared service would enable other ICT projects to deliver further savings (from further rationalisation of systems) and enable the taking forward of wider transformation opportunities that would generate cashable savings and service improvements to both authorities.

Options

Option One The “insource alone” option for SNC would require greater investment by CDC as the necessary costs to refresh its infrastructure would not be shared. The potential for much greater savings in the future through rationalisation of the two councils’ applications would also be unavailable. This option also goes against the general principle of sharing, established in the shared management team business case.

Option Two The option for SNC to simply replace its total outsource with another, is also unattractive from CDC’s perspective as again, CDC would need to make greater investment in its own infrastructure without any benefits from future economies of scale. This option also goes against the general principle of sharing, established in the shared management team business case.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm

Chairman:

Date: