

THE CABINET
28th March, 2012

Present:- Councillor Stone (in the Chair); Councillors Akhtar, Doyle, Hussain, Rushforth, R. S. Russell, Smith and Wyatt.

Also in attendance Councillor Whelbourn (Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lakin and McNeely.

C174 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A member of the public asked if the Council was to take any action to prevent dog walkers letting loose their dogs on areas around Boston Castle now the restoration works were nearing completion as six children each year on average were killed by dangerous dogs?

The Leader reported that there was little action that could be taken other than to erect signage and to be vigilant about dog fouling.

The Strategic Director of Environment and Development Services reiterated the comments of the Leader and pointed out that members of the public would be encouraged to use open spaces, exercise and very often this involved dog walking. The Council could erect signage encouraging the public to act responsibly and would provide dog fouling bins which would be emptied by Streetpride.

C175 SCRUTINY REVIEW REGENERATION FUNDING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL

Consideration of this item was deferred pending further information.

C176 SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

Further to Minute No. 131 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 18th January, 2012, Councillor Akhtar, Deputy Leader, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Adult Services, which outlined the proposed response by the Strategic Leadership Team to the Scrutiny Review of the Private Rented Sector, with proposals for dealing with each of the recommendations of the review.

The recommendations made by Members of the former Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel were accepted. However, due to the demise of the Housing Market Renewal and Regional Housing Board funding programmes, initiatives previously reliant upon external funding have been deferred whilst a cost benefit analysis was undertaken to establish whether there were sufficient resources to enable them to continue.

Additional work would need to be undertaken to identify alternative sources of funding to deliver any schemes identified as providing value to the Council.

Continued support would be offered to local agencies that assisted vulnerable adults to access private rented accommodation through the provision of

affordable loans, guarantee bond schemes, assistance and advice.

Progress was already being made towards responding to the findings of the review and activity to date included:-

- The Community Protection Unit (CPU) now charges for enforcement notices served. All formal enforcement actions were resolved within three months. Over 800 private sector properties have been inspected and were found to be free from Category 1 hazards.
- Targeted proactive work, focusing on the vulnerable and improving the physical condition of housing stock and management within the private rented sector had been undertaken in some of Rotherham's most deprived areas i.e. Eastwood, Canklow, Dinnington, Maltby and Ferham.
- Over 700 clients have been assisted with a rent in advance loan, to help to prevent homelessness and provide access to private rented accommodation, since its introduction in 2007. In this current year, through the provision of loans and bonds, 260 clients have accessed private rented accommodation free from Category 1 hazards.
- A Carbon Reduction Programme (CESP) was underway in Ferham and this scheme would contribute towards bringing approximately thirty properties back into use and tackle the excessive cold Category 1 hazard present in over 300 private sector properties.
- Key Choices Property Management managed 160 private rented sector properties on behalf of landlords who required assistance, ensuring an improved quality of accommodation for those accessing the Property Shop requiring housing.

The majority of funding associated with current and future private rented sector activity was concentrated on officer time to enable, inform and assist those providing and accessing private rented sector accommodation. However, since the demise of the Housing Market Renewal and Regional Housing Board funding programmes, there was reliance upon homelessness grant and recycled regional housing board monies to fund loans and support the provision of paper bond guarantees.

There was a risk that insufficient resources, for continued and future activity, needed to meet the recommendations of the review, were unavailable.

Resolved:- That the response to the Scrutiny Review of the Private Rented Sector be approved.

C177

ROTHERHAM'S OLYMPIC LEGACY PROJECT

The Leader introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Resources, which detailed how the 2012 London Olympic Games would create an enthusiasm never seen before across the United Kingdom, bringing excitement and a reason for celebration. The Council, therefore, wanted the people of the borough to be part of this and recognise that the games could influence their lives for years to come.

Work with Members and partners would deliver a programme of Olympic associated events and activities that would encourage people to live healthier lives, would lead to more residents joining clubs, volunteering and learning to coach and becoming more involved in social and cultural events.

The project team co-ordinating Rotherham's approach to the Olympics 2012 was making encouraging progress and the report set out in more detail the progress so far.

Further information was provided on the partnership working with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, the friendship agreement that had now been signed and the Joint Events Calendar

The calendar of events was in the process of being finalised with named lead officers currently being identified to ensure the event was delivered on time and to budget.

Many of the events would offer Rotherham's residents the opportunity to get involved in either sports related or cultural events either in Rotherham or Barking and Dagenham.

Rotherham's leg of the "Torch Relay" would form a pivotal point in the events calendar. The Torch would pass through the borough on the morning of the 26th June, 2012 and be seen as a "celebratory" day with members of the public being encouraged to line the route in both the Town Centre and Clifton Park. Many events were currently being planned to celebrate this momentous day including a Mini Olympics at Clifton Park.

There were a number of projects/events that as yet have not been included in the calendar as they were being explored further or were in the early stages of planning.

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham were also exploring a number of events that may provide collaborative opportunities and attempts would be made to contact political counterparts in both Local Authorities.

As well as promoting new events and projects existing initiatives would also be promoted on Rotherham's Olympic Legacy webpages.

The Council's approach to the Olympics had been recognised by London 2012's Inspire programme and a revised application, which included the events programme, was submitted in mid-January. Confirmation that the Council had been awarded with the coveted Inspire Mark was received in late January and this could be used on marketing, subject to licence.

All events and projects where possible would be delivered within current budget capabilities, however, where funding was an issue external funding streams would be researched.

Promoting the Olympics and the associated projects/initiatives that the Council and partners were undertaking over the coming months was extremely important in encouraging healthy lifestyles and cultural experiences. Not taking advantage of this unique juncture in time would be a missed opportunity to

harness the enthusiasm the Olympics would inevitably create and the impact it could have on communities for years to come.

Resolved:- (1) That the progress made in forging a partnership with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham during the Olympic year and beyond be noted.

(2) That the progress made in planning and initiating a wide range of Olympic focused events during 2012 be noted.

(3) That the outline joint events calendar be approved.

(4) That the next steps in respect of Rotherham's Olympic Legacy Project be approved.

(5) That the sustainability of the Rotherham's Olympic Legacy Project be considered further.

C178 OVERVIEW OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 30 YEAR BUSINESS PLAN MODELLING

Councillor Akhtar, Deputy Leader, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Adult Services, which detailed how from 1st April, 2012 the current Housing Revenue Account (HRA) subsidy system would cease and a new self financing process commence, which over a thirty year period this new system may produce significant surpluses.

Based on assumptions the Council would be able to maintain its housing stock to the decent homes standard and also be able to invest in other priorities. Such a programme had the ability to deliver training and job opportunities which could have a significant effect on regeneration in the borough.

Initial financial modelling had taken place which indicated:-

- Current housing stock investment plans could be delivered.
- Debt can be serviced and/or repaid.
- Surplus resources could meet long term and wide ranging investment needs.

The report also demonstrated that whilst the surplus resources could be accessed, an alternative funding vehicle may be required to effectively "bring forward" or "smooth out" the projected surplus resources from the latter part of the Business Plan.

The report set out details relating to the background for the request, thirty year financial plan and its outcomes, the various options for consideration and financial plan modelling conclusions and next steps.

The intention behind the new arrangements was to give more resources, incentives and flexibility to manage housing stock in the long term.

The financial information and risks and uncertainties associated with this business plan modelling were set out in detail as part of the report.

Resolved:- (1) That work commence to facilitate the borrowing of up to £33 million (permissible against the debt cap ceiling), in order to address short to medium term housing related investment priorities.

(2) That a further report be submitted to the Cabinet identifying and costing these short to medium term priorities for consideration and approval.

(3) That external support be secured to assist officers in:-

- (a) Defining and modelling future Investment methods available across the term of the Business Plan and
- (b) Undertake an estates needs analysis and investment planning.

(4) That the injection of an additional £1 million p.a. into repairs be approved as detailed in the report.

C179 HEALTH INEQUALITIES SUMMIT

Councillor Wyatt, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, introduced a report by the Director of Public Health, which highlighted the outcomes of the Health Inequalities Summit and proposed future activity.

In preparation for the summit a comprehensive community consultation was completed in the Autumn of 2011 and the findings were presented at the event. The event generated discussions which resulted in a series of themes being developed. These were:-

- Look and Feel of Rotherham.
- Rotherham Communities.
- Skills for Life, Cost of Living.
- Health - supported by an overarching theme of Raising Aspiration.

There were ten actions developed covering all the themes developed from the community consultation and Summit event. The actions and information from the consultation and summit would be integrated into the community strategy, the development of the 2012 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy. The information would support the narrative provided by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and provided the qualitative assessment of Rotherham people's views on tackling health and wellbeing.

All activities to date have been undertaken within current resource. There may be resource implications to deliver the proposed action plan. Cabinet were asked to consider and prioritise the resources required through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

There was the risk that health inequalities continued to increase. Effective partnerships engagement and agreeing a set of effective action would mitigate against. The further development of two way communication with communities would improve the local relevance and acceptance of targeted activities.

Reference was made to the action plan and the actions developed from the

community consultation and the Summit Event and the links this may have with the Scrutiny Reviews that had recently been undertaken. It was suggested that consideration be given to the content of the Scrutiny Reviews and assurances given that this would be taken forward by the Health and Wellbeing Board to avoid any duplication.

Resolved:- (1) That ten high level actions developed from the community consultation and Summit Event be noted.

(2) That the framework for action (developed after the Rotherham Show survey and focus groups of Rotherham people expressing their views) be supported and form a key part of the Joint Service Needs Assessment and Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

(3) That the framework for action be considered, in conjunction with the Scrutiny Reviews, particularly Regeneration and Neighbourhood Renewal and the Private Rented Sector, to ensure common issues are addressed.

C180 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved, that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act (as amended March, 2006 (information relates to finance and business affairs).

C181 MAGNA TRUST LOAN REQUEST

Councillor Stone, Leader, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Resources, which sought approval for the Council to provide a further one year loan facility to the Magna Trust. This would replace the existing loan facility, which would be repaid before the new loan was taken out.

The financial information and risks and uncertainties associated with this loan request were set out in detail as part of the report.

Resolved:- (1) That a short term Council loan facility to the Magna Trust on terms specified be approved.

(2) That the securing of the loan against a facility called the 'Water Tower' on the Magna site be investigated.

(Councillor Akhtar declared a personal and prejudicial interest on the grounds that he was on the Magna Board and left the room whilst this item was discussed)

C182 OPTIONS APPRAISAL FOR THE INSTALLATION OF PHOTO VOLTAIC PANELS ON COUNCIL HOUSING

Further to Minute No. C91 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 31st October, 2011, Councillor Akhtar, Deputy Leader, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Adult Services and the Strategic Director of Resources, which considered the installation of Photo Voltaic panels on Council

homes.

The tendering and appraisal work had been carried out during a period of considerable uncertainty regarding the future of Feed in Tariff (FIT) schemes. This had led many local authorities and housing associations to abandon plans, due to schemes becoming too risky and no longer financially viable. The uncertainty caused by the Government announcing changes to the Feed in Tariff and the subsequent legal challenge and legislative changes had caused delays in inviting tenders and in the tender evaluation process.

Despite this uncertain financial environment four tenders were received.

The evaluation process of the tenders was set out in detail in part of the report and also compared alternative delivery models to demonstrate the Council had explored all possible avenues to establish how tenants might benefit from reduced rate electricity in this time of uncertainty about future Feed in Tariff rates.

A sophisticated financial modelling was used to evaluate the bids, which had been developed with expert advice from Sheffield Hallam University.

A financial evaluation and the risks and uncertainties of each option were set out in detail as part of the report.

Resolved:- (1) That a contract for the installation of photovoltaic solar panels should not be let in light of the conclusions in the report.

(2) That in due course further consideration should be given to the installation of photovoltaic solar panels on Council properties on a case-by-case basis and a further report submitted to the Cabinet with an options appraisal once the current market uncertainties had been resolved.

(Councillor Stone declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item and left the room whilst it was discussed)

Councillor Akhtar assumed the Chair.

(THE CHAIRMAN AUTHORISED CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING TWO REPORTS IN ORDER TO PROCESS THE IMPORTANT MATTERS REFERRED TO)

C183 DIGITAL REGION

Councillor Akhtar, Deputy Leader, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Resources, which set out details about Digital Region Ltd. and the options being explored by stakeholders in furtherance of the Digital Region Project.

The financial information and risks and uncertainties associated with the options were set out in detail as part of the report.

Cabinet Members were in favour of the options to move forward Digital Region.

Resolved:- That Digital Region Ltd. adopts a new business model aligned to the Government's favoured commercial model (Option 2, Appendix A refers).

C184 THE HOPE PROJECT

Councillor Akhtar, Deputy Leader, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Adults Services, which detailed how a Rotherham-based charitable housing association, Action Housing and Support Ltd., had developed a pilot intervention programme which aimed to bring empty properties back into use as affordable homes. It planned to do this by engaging vulnerable people in social and construction apprenticeships to improve the properties.

This was a new approach which was consistent with the recently published National Housing Strategy and achieved key outcomes for Rotherham: dealing with empty homes, creating employment opportunities for vulnerable people and offering health and learning improvements to the homeless.

What distinguished HOPE from similar schemes in other parts of the country was its self-sustainability, as the delivery model was not reliant on public support once it reached a critical mass.

Approval was, therefore, sought to support a pilot scheme that proposed to transfer, at a nominal cost and in compliance with the Secretary of State's general consent in relation to such transfers, four miscellaneous Council homes into Action Housing and Support Ltd.'s empty homes HOPE programme.

The financial information and risks and uncertainties associated with this programme were set out in detail as part of the report.

Resolved:- (1) That the benefits to the Council of engaging in the HOPE Programme be noted.

(2) That the transfer, at less than best consideration and in compliance with the Secretary of State's general consent in relation to such transfers, of four properties to Action Housing and Support Limited to contribute towards the company's pilot intervention programme to bring empty dwelling houses back into use as affordable homes be approved.

(3) That a progress report be submitted to the Cabinet following the transfer and subsequent improvement/occupation of the properties.

C185 LEWIS SOUTH, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

The Leader wished to place on record his thanks and appreciation to Lewis South, Democratic Services Manager, who was due to retire after forty-six years service to the Council.

Cabinet Members echoed the sentiments of the Leader.

Resolved:- That Lewis South be wished a long and happy retirement.