

**THE CABINET
19th September, 2012**

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

Also in attendance Councillor Steele (Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Whelbourn.

C58 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

**C59 LOCALISATION OF SUPPORT FOR COUNCIL TAX (COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT)
AND COUNCIL TAX TECHNICAL CHANGES**

Councillor Akhtar, Deputy Leader, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Resources, which detailed how from April 2013, the Government would be abolishing the current national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme and asking Local Authorities to set up their own local schemes to meet the needs of their local area. In making these changes the Coalition Government was cutting the amount that Rotherham Council had to provide Council Tax Support by £4.1million.

The Government was also allowing Councils more discretion with regards to certain Council Tax discounts and exemptions which could be amended in order to raise additional Council Tax income which could be used to partially meet the funding cut.

Proposals for Rotherham's local Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme and changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions have been developed and were attached as part of the report in the form of a consultation leaflet. In order to meet legislative requirements these proposals must be put out for public consultation.

Following an eight week consultation period, commencing on 24th September, 2012, the responses would be considered before the final scheme agreed and finally adopted by Council. The adoption of the scheme must happen by 31st January, 2013 in order to avoid the imposition of a Government default scheme which would have severe financial implications for the Council.

In noting the report Cabinet Members asked if consideration could be given to running balances for people paying their Council Tax and were assured that a number of improvements were being investigated.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and the contents noted.

(2) That the proposed Local Council Tax Support scheme and Council Tax changes for public consultation to commence 24th September, 2012 for an eight week period be approved.

C60 OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Councillor Lakin, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families Service, introduced a report and action plan by the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services, which detailed how between the 2nd and 11th July, 2012 OFSTED carried out an unannounced inspection of the arrangements within Rotherham for the protection of children. This inspection was carried out under the new framework and the Local Authority was only the second in the country to have such inspection at that time. The report was published on the 10th August, 2012 and overall the arrangements were found to be adequate.

The Inspectors recognised the series of improvements that have been made since 2009 and reported that in some area services provided were good, while in other areas, changes that have been made were seen to be positive, but it was still too early to judge their full impact - hence the overall grading. The key element of the judgements given was in relation to lack of consistency across the whole of the service.

Clearly there was more work to be done to continue to raise standards, but what was clear from the report was the commitment of all staff to keeping children and young people safe and ensuring their well-being across all of the work.

The recommendations in the report broadly matched the areas that have already been identified in the improvement work across all agencies. An action plan had been developed covering the thirteen recommendations, some needing to be done immediately and others within either three or six months.

There were minimal financial implications from the inspection itself including officer time plus car parking costs and refreshments for the inspectors. However, it was critical to note that the potential broader impact of the welfare reform could have on local communities and as a result of this child neglect cases may increase. This in itself would have a direct impact on the size of caseloads. Caseloads were regularly reviewed with assessments taking place of the need to realign resources to augment the social worker cohort.

Cabinet Members took into account the recommendations and the discussions taking place in the region.

Resolved:- (1) That the report and the action plan be received and the contents noted.

(2) That the action plan be monitored as part of the Children and Young People's Services Improvement Panel.

C61 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 those paragraphs indicated below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act (as amended March, 2006).

C62 CAPITAL PROGRAMME - CAPITAL RECEIPTS UPDATE

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Development, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Resources, which highlighted changes to the forecast of capital receipts.

As with all property transactions a capital receipt could not be guaranteed until the sale was completed. If the current economic climate continued to depress the property market, the risks associated with achieving targets would continue to increase.

Longer holding periods to reflect poor market conditions were increasing maintenance costs as assets, particularly buildings, suffered increased vandalism and anti-social behaviour and general deterioration.

Resolved:- That the position on the current status of the capital receipts be noted.

(Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act – information relates to finance and business affairs)

C63 PROPERTY RATIONALISATION: RATHWELL GRANGE, BROOM VALLEY ROAD, BROOM VALLEY, ROTHERHAM

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Development, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Resources, which sought approval for the disposal of the above-mentioned asset which was surplus to the requirements of the Department of Health and Wellbeing.

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

Resolved:- (1) That the Director of Audit and Asset Management be authorised to market the asset on the basis set out in Option 3 of the report.

(2) That the Director of Audit and Asset Management negotiates the terms of disposal.

(3) That the Director of Legal and Democratic Services completes the necessary documentation.

(Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act – information relates to finance and business affairs)

C64 IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATED YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICES

Councillor Hussain, Cabinet Member for Communities and Cohesion, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services, which outlined proposals for the creation of an Integrated Youth Support Service for Rotherham.

The report set out in detail the potential efficiencies in terms of budgets and the potential for improved outcomes for young people.

Reference was made and clarification provided on the relationships with schools and the discussions that had taken place regarding the bringing in-house of the Connexions Service.

Resolved:- (1) That these proposals and the creation of a new Integrated Youth Support Service within this framework be approved.

(2) That, as part of the creation of a fully integrated Youth Support Service, the bringing in-house of the Connexions Service from 1st October, 2012 be approved.

(Exempt under Paragraph 4 of the Act – information relates to labour relations matters)