

THE CABINET
19th January, 2011

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

Councillor Whelbourn (Chairman of the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee)

C146 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

C147 SERVICE REVIEW - NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS

Councillor Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Adult Services, which described the progress made in reviewing the structure and functions of the Neighbourhood Wardens Service and recommended a new operating model and the outcome of the review and a proposed implementation plan of the reconfigured service.

The report set out the background to the review, its principles, proposals and next steps of the process. It was noted that whilst the report referred to prioritising the work to those areas of the Borough with the most significant problems, this was to be altered to targeting work to areas where it was most needed.

The proposals reduced the Warden's Service by nine posts and the gross cost of the service by a third. The current cost of the service, after deductions for existing planned savings were set out in detail as part of the report. Whilst savings were almost exclusively from posts, other savings arising from vehicles and other revenue nominals were required..

Early staff departures via the voluntary severance scheme would accrue current year savings against budget which when offset by the vacancy factor would net further savings.

The impact of the new service re-alignment would reduce capacity within frontline service that, whilst not affecting the Council's ability to deliver its statutory services, would be noticeable to local communities and partners in the support and action relating to anti social behaviour and enviro-crime within localities.

This review presupposed that the Neighbourhood Wardens Service would at some future point be assimilated within a wider locality based service. This development would be important in ensuring that effective streamlined processes could be developed. However, the Neighbourhood Wardens Service was capable of existing without this wider service, but it would be harder and more time consuming to deliver the improvements in services which communities required.

Reductions in the services' ability to support the range of community meetings previously supported, may result in a reputational risk to the Council which would need to be carefully managed.

Resolved:- (1) That the content of the report and the staffing implications arising from the proposals and the timescale for implementation be noted.

(2) That the structural changes set out in the report be noted.

(3) that the targeting of work to areas where it was most needed be welcomed.

C148 REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP SERVICE

Councillor Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Adult Services which described the progress made in reviewing the structure and functions of the Neighbourhood Partnership Service and recommended a new operating model.

The proposals contained within the report primarily concerned a reduction in senior management posts whilst retaining frontline positions. In the light of the current economic climate it was expected that partnership working would have to be more direct and operationally focussed. These proposals took account of such anticipated changes whilst maintaining the capacity to still deliver an effective neighbourhood partnership service.

The report set out the background to the review, its principles, proposals and next steps of the process.

This new operating model would generate annual savings of £360k in a full year, once exit costs had been accounted for.

This review presupposed that the Neighbourhood Partnership Service would at some future point be assimilated within a wider locality based service. This development would be important in ensuring that effective streamlined processes be developed. However, the Neighbourhood Partnership Service was capable of existing without this wider service, but it would be harder and more time consuming to deliver the improvements in services which communities required.

There was a risk that the size of the geographic areas covered by each of the new teams would be too large to make an effective impact. This would need to be carefully monitored and consideration given to any learning when finalising the locality review.

There was a risk that the service would no longer be able to support wider partnership processes as desired by other departments and organisations. SYPF understand this potential and were also keen to streamline co-ordination activity to make it more effective, however, services delivering wider agendas such as those relating to health, children's services and economic development would also need to take account of the reduced capacity of the Neighbourhood Partnership Service.

Resolved:- (1) That the content of the report, the staffing implications arising from the proposals and the timescale for implementation be noted.

(2) That the structural changes set out in the report be noted.

C149 HOUSING RENT INCREASE 2011/12

Councillor Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Adult Services which sought approval from Members for the proposed housing rent, new build rents, garage rent, heating charge and communal facilities increases for 2011/12.

The report set out in detail information relating to:-

- Council Rent Setting.
- Housing Subsidy and Rent Determination.
- Garage Rents.
- District Heating.
- Warden Service and Communal Facilities.

The greatest risk and uncertainty surrounded the level of rent income received into the Housing Revenue Account. This was dependent upon the number of properties available to generate income. The level of properties was directly affected by the level of sales and demolitions which may vary to those used in the budget assumptions. Due to the current economic climate it was unlikely that Rotherham would see any significant sales.

It was possible that rent income may fall and arrears may rise, this would affect the amount of income received and, therefore, be reflected in housing revenue account balances.

All budgets carried a certain level of risk in that unforeseen circumstances may arise, causing additional pressures on the level of resources applied.

Recommended:- (1) That the average rent increase by 8.69% based on the DCLG subsidy and rent proposals which result in an average weekly increase of £5.08 to £63.61 when collected over 48 weeks.

(2) That the average weekly rent on new build Council properties be set at £83.14 when collected over 48 weeks.

(3) That garage rents be increased by 4.6% in 2011/12.

(4) That communal facilities charges be increased by 4.6% in 2011/12.

(5) That the various proposed increases be made to heating charges included in this report.

(Cabinet Members declared personal interests on the basis of either being a Council tenant or related/associated with a Council tenant)

C150 CALCULATION OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2011/12

Councillor Wyatt, Cabinet Member for Resources and Commissioning, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Finance, which provided details of the calculation of the Authority's proposed Council Tax base for the 2011/12 financial year. In accordance with the regulations governing its calculation it was determined that the tax base for the financial year 2011/12 be 75,311.58 Band D Equivalent Properties.

The Council Tax Base was derived from the total number of properties within the Council's area as at the 13th September, 2010, which, in the opinion of the Listing Officer, were subject to Council Tax, but must reflect several changes and adjustments both prior to April, 2011 and during the forthcoming 2011/12 financial year.

After allowing for the additions, discounts and reliefs the estimated property base was converted into Band D Equivalent properties, giving a total of 77,640.80 Band D Equivalents. The appendix to this report provided details of the total for both parished and non-parished areas.

It was recommended that an adjustment of 3% should be made to the tax base in respect of non-collection, giving a total of 75,311.58 Band D equivalents. The result of applying the 97% collection rate to the Band D Equivalents for each of the parishes within the Borough and for the Borough as a whole was shown in the final column of the Appendix to the report with the Tax Base for the Council as a whole (both parished and unparished areas) made up as follows:-

Tax Band	Band D Equivalent Properties
Band A	34,534.62
Band B	14,530.80
Band C	11,189.15
Band D	7,419.82
Band E	4,605.75
Band F	2,108.78
Band G	869.31
Band H	53.35
TOTAL	<u>75,311.58</u>

Compared to 2010/11 the Council's Tax Base for 2011/12 had increased by just over 240 Band D equivalent properties or 0.32%. Around half of the increase in Band D Properties - 120.67 properties was in the unparished area of the council, in particular in Wath. For the parished areas, the increase in tax base was largely attributable to new developments in Aston, Thurcroft and Wales parishes. In addition to the increase in property numbers, it should be noted that Parish Boundaries have been adjusted and a new Parish of Hellaby had been created with effect from April, 2011.

There were no direct costs arising from this report, however, determining the Council Tax Base was a fundamental part of determining the level of Council Tax set, which was a significant element of the Council's resources for the coming financial year.

As the Council Tax base must be set by the 31st January, 2011, it contained projections in respect of the additions, adjustments, discounts and reliefs to be granted before the 31st March, 2011 and during 2011/12.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be approved.

(2) That the amount calculated by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council as its Council Tax Base and those of the Parish Councils shown at Appendix A in the report now submitted for 2011/12 shall be a total of 75,311.58 Band D equivalent properties.

C151 LOCAL LETTINGS POLICY

Councillor Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Adult Services which set out details of the proposed Local Letting Policy report which had been originally presented to Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Communities on 28th October, 2010. As the proposal represented a major change to the current Housing Allocation Policy, the Cabinet were required to approve the policy change.

This report also provided a summary of the:-

- Consultation responses.
- Equalities Impact Assessment.
- Consultation feedback regarding lettings to Council tenants.
- Consultation feedback with an amendment regarding at least 10% of the properties being set aside for people in employment.
- Additional issues raised.

It was anticipated that the Local Lettings Policy would create more sustainable communities, which should lead to fewer empty properties (voids) on that particular estate. The view was that there would be high demand from existing Council tenants, but there was no evidence to back this up, therefore, to avoid the risk that empty properties may take longer to let due to the restrictive local lettings policy, it was imperative to avoid void rent loss that other households were then considered. It was, therefore, proposed that where the shortlist had been exhausted that properties would be offered in accordance with the normal Allocation Policy to those applicants who have made a request.

There would be additional costs for the letting process, including staff time to produce the advert, the shortlist, verify the application, undertaking the viewing, making the offer and sign up procedure. In effect this policy would incur over 250 lettings. A dedicated Officer could focus on the new lettings, void re-lets and intense housing management of the new tenancies, for a 6 month period. Discussions would take place with 2010 Rotherham and Housing Choices to establish how best to take this forward.

There was no 100% guarantee that previous Council tenants with a good tenancy record would not have housing management problems into the future. As many checks as possible would be undertaken to try and mitigate this risk.

Resolved:- (1) That the local letting policy for new build Council housing and subsequent lettings as detailed in Appendix 1 be approved to take effect initially for twelve months from January, 2011.

(2) That the amendment regarding at least 10% of the properties being set aside for people in employment be noted.

C152 THE GROWTH WHITE PAPER, LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIPS AND THE REGIONAL GROWTH FUND

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Environment, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Environment and Development Services, which provided an update on progress and recent developments with regard to the Government's White Paper on Local Growth, the establishment of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and the Regional Growth Fund (RGF).

It highlighted potential issues and opportunities for Rotherham arising from this legislation and those local projects which could potentially be brought forward under the Regional Growth Fund and issues relating to:-

- Transition from the RDAs.
- RDA assets.
- Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- Regional Growth Fund.
- Planning.
- Incentives for Growth.

A total of £1.4bn over 3 years was available through the RGF. Although public sector organisations could not bid directly for RGF, they could bid in conjunction with the private sector and could deliver funded activity.

Given that the Fund would in part replace RDA monies, it would not be unreasonable to argue that the allocation of funds across the regions should be broadly proportional to the former RDA budgets, in which case Yorkshire and Humber would receive approximately £210m of the £1.4bn total.

It was intended that where possible RGF monies be used to match against available ERDF funds.

LEPs were expected to fund their own day-to-day running costs

Rotherham must support the completion of projects already started if it was to prevent legal and contractual challenges coming from the community and business, so where the case could be made to draw down Regional Growth Fund for such projects then this should be fully explored along with all other competing priorities.

The Regional Growth Fund was a competitive bidding process against set criteria, with no ringfencing of money for specific areas or activities.

RDAs must "review their current contractual commitments and should exit projects unless this was poor value for money, or would impact upon key flagship projects. This could potentially impact on a number of projects fully, or partially, funded through the Single Pot.

Government have acknowledged that the Regional Growth Fund would invest in some high risk projects and as such there would be some failures within supported projects/programmes.

Cabinet Members noted the report and sought clarification on accountability and scrutinisation of activity and were informed that the Local Enterprise Partnership would be responsible for filling the gaps in provision.

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

(2) That Officers be tasked to work with partners to identify potentials bids that may be submitted under future rounds of the Regional Growth Fund.

(3) That Officers be tasked to work with Yorkshire Forward on options for the future ownership of Yorkshire Forward assets within Rotherham.

C153 RATIONALISATION OF PROPERTY ASSETS - DEVELOPMENT OF AN ASSET TRANSFER POLICY AND FRAMEWORK

Consideration of this item was deferred.

C154 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK MEMBERS' STEERING GROUP

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Environment, introduced the minutes of the Local Development Framework Members' Steering Group held on 10th December, 2010.

Reference was made to the proposed all Members' seminar on the Localism Bill which was now to be arranged as a co-ordinated Council approach rather than focusing on the LDF and Planning process.

Resolved:- (1) That the progress to date and the emerging issues be noted.

(2) That the minutes of the Local Development Framework Members' Steering Group held on 10th December, 2010 be received.

(3) That the arrangements for the holding of an all Member Seminar on the Localism Bill be noted.

C155 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 listed below, of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act.

C156 CAPITAL PROGRAMME - CAPITAL RECEIPTS UPDATE

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Environment, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Environment and Development Services, which provided an update on changes to the forecast of capital receipts resulting in a revision of the Council's capital programme.

The report set out details related to the assets and showed the current forecast of estimated gross capital receipts over the next three years and the gross receipts from assets sales completed in 2010/11 to date.

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

Cabinet Members sought clarification on various issues and the Director of Regeneration and Planning Service agreed to provide further information on:-

- The auction process of assets.
- Assets appropriated for service delivery and especially Oakwood and Mowbray Gardens Swimming Pools.
- The entry for the covenant at West Melton.
- Clarity on what is meant by "abandoned" assets.
- Update on the Dalton Lane entry.

Resolved:- (1) That the position on the current status of the capital receipts which support the capital programme be noted.

(2) That an update on the above issues be provided for Cabinet Members in due course.

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

C157 TRANSPORTATION AND HIGHWAYS DESIGN REVIEW

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Environment, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Environment and Development Services, which summarised the review of the Council's Transportation and Highways Design function, the consultation process and responses received, the changes which have resulted from the consultation exercise, next steps and the financial implications.

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

Cabinet Members noted the contents of this report and the amendment to the structure chart to modify the Assistant Engineer x 3 Posts (Bands H-I) to Engineer x 3 (Bands I-J).

Resolved:- That the revised structure for Transportation and Highways Design be noted.

(Exempt under Paragraph 2 of the Act – relates to information that is likely to reveal the identity of an individual)