

THE CABINET
21st December, 2011

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

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. S. Russell and Whelbourn.

C114 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

C115 DRAFT RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON COUNCIL TAX REFORM

Councillor Akhtar, Deputy Leader, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Resources which summarised the Government's proposals for the technical reforms to Council Tax, in particular changes to exemptions for second homes and empty properties, which would generate additional income for authorities from the 2013/14 financial year. Other proposals related to Council Tax leaflets and payment profiles. The possible implications for Rotherham of the proposals were set out in the report. Attached as an appendix was the Council's proposed response to the Consultation paper issued on 31st October, 2011.

Further information was also provided on the changes being proposed by the Government and the implications of these changes for Rotherham

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

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

(2) That the draft response to the DCLG Consultation Paper on the Technical Reforms of Council Tax be approved.

C116 BRITISH HEART FOUNDATION HEART TOWN

Councillor Wyatt, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, introduced a report by Alison Iliff, Public Health Specialist, which presented proposals for making Rotherham a British Heart Foundation Heart Town.

The British Heart Foundation (BHF) wanted to establish fifty Heart Towns across the United Kingdom mobilising communities to help prevent and fight circulatory and heart disease. The British Heart Foundation wished to build on existing relationships within the Borough and establish Rotherham as one of the first fifty Heart Towns and the first in South Yorkshire.

Becoming a Heart Town would put an increased focus on cardiovascular disease, increasing awareness of risk factors and improving the health and wellbeing of the community. The initiative aimed to bring communities together through local fundraising and volunteering as well as raising awareness of heart disease and offering residents a range of support services including school initiatives, workplace health and lifestyle information resources.

The British Heart Foundation would provide access to its information and training resources and organise a 'One Day' fundraising initiative to support their Mending Broken Hearts Appeal. A British Heart Foundation team of staff and volunteers for Rotherham would co-ordinate local activity. Heart Town status was a five year commitment.

To become a Heart Town, Rotherham would have to commit to:-

- Signing a community pledge with BHF agreeing to become a Heart Town for a five year period.
- Adopt Heart Town branding.
- Working with BHF, create a Heart Town ride/walk/run in the centre of town.
- Support BHF work in schools, businesses and the community.
- Support BHF fundraising and volunteering initiatives.

There should be no additional funding required to become a Heart Town. If the branding were to be used on signage there would be cost implications related to production of the new signs, but the British Heart Foundation may be able to broker sponsorship for this through their corporate fundraising contacts.

There would be some officer time required to ensure the partnership approach was implemented successfully.

There may be potential local reputational risk if the Council was seen to be working with a major national charity and not supporting local voluntary organisations with the same aims. Other Heart Towns appeared to have minimised this through having the One Day fundraising events splitting the sponsorship between the British Heart Foundation and local charities. This risk, however, was extremely small.

Resolved:- That Rotherham become a British Heart Foundation Heart Town with an aim to launch the initiative in January, 2012.

C117 SCRUTINY REVIEW OF REGENERATION FUNDING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL

Councillor Hughes, Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, introduced the report which set out in detail the key findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Regeneration Funding and Neighbourhood Renewal, which had been endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) at its meeting on 2nd December, 2011.

The review was commissioned following the publication of the latest indices of multiple deprivation, which showed a deterioration for a number of areas in Rotherham.

The initial scoping and research in July and August was followed by review sessions at Dinnington Resource Centre (6th October) and Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (21st October).

The main aims, as set out in the agreed scoping document, were to:-

- Assess the effectiveness of past neighbourhood-based regeneration programmes in Rotherham and identify good practice and key lessons.
- See whether learning could be applied to the planning or delivery of existing or future projects to ensure the greatest impact was made.
- Analyse, in particular, the various intensive neighbourhood management schemes (i.e. Chesterhill, Local Ambition Programme) and assess the potential for further roll out.

The scrutiny review had highlighted the fact that establishing effective working arrangements at a local level – in genuine partnership with local people – was often as important as the level of investment provided.

Through the various recommendations outlined in the report, the Council and Rotherham Partnership should aim to better co-ordinate and target resources at areas of greatest need, recognising that it would mean a reduction or withdrawal of services in other areas.

There was a risk that interventions would be short term and not achieve a sustainable impact. To avoid this, the Council would need to ensure that any new approaches were properly embedded within the Council and partner agencies and become “the norm”.

Cabinet Members welcomed this report and its findings and emphasised the need for further input to tackle the visual and social regeneration that was required, as well as improved support to access skills and employment.

Resolved:- (1) That the Scrutiny Review of Regeneration Funding and Neighbourhood Renewal and its recommendations be noted and a response be submitted within two months as outlined within the Council's Constitution.

(2) That the decision of Cabinet on the report, recommendations and proposed action be reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in due course.

(3) That the report and links to other workstreams, in particular the 9th November, 2011 Cabinet report, targeting and co-ordinating resources to the most deprived areas be noted.

C118 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING

Councillor Akhtar, Deputy Leader, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Resources which stated that in setting the 2011/12 Revenue Budget the Council had to manage an unprecedented level of savings (£30.3m) resulting from the withdrawal of Central Government funding and grant allocations. It did this by ensuring the budget process focused on the customers the Council serves, the communities and businesses of Rotherham. Consequently, as a

first course of action, management and administration and back office costs were streamlined.

The report provided details of progress on the delivery of the Revenue Budget for 2011/12 based on performance for the first eight months of the 2011/12 financial year. It was currently forecast that the Council would overspend against its Budget by £7.393m (3.4%). This showed an increase in overspend of £470k compared to the budget monitoring report for the first six months of 2011/12. The main reasons for the forecast overspend were:-

- The continuing service demand and cost pressures in looking after vulnerable children across the Borough, which were also being felt both nationally and locally by a large number of Councils.
- Additional, one-off property costs relating to the continued rationalisation of the Council's asset portfolio as part of the efficiency drive to reduce operational costs.
- The extended timescale for realising the full forecast management and business support savings of £1.45m.

Management actions had been put in place to address some of the issues identified to date and work was being undertaken to identify further actions. As these took effect they would be monitored to enable the impact of the actions to be assessed. Careful scrutiny of expenditure and income across all services and close budget monitoring, therefore, remained essential.

Resolved:- (1) That the progress made to date in delivering the significant financial challenges presented in the Council's Revenue Budget be noted.

(2) That action be taken to minimise the impact on the Council's medium term financial position.

C119 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)).

C120 CAPITAL PROGRAMME - CAPITAL RECEIPTS UPDATE

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Town Centres, Economic Growth and Prosperity, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Resources which highlighted changes to the forecast of capital receipts resulting in a revision of the Council's capital programme.

The appendices to this report reflected a revised basis of reporting of the Capital Receipts programme identified projected receipts in each of the formerly reported risk bands (High, Medium and Low), with projected total receipts against each banding. The intention was to provide more accurate

projections with the timing of receipts during each year being more easily identifiable.

Further information was provided on the current position and forecast of estimated gross capital receipts over the next three years for specific assets.

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

Cabinet Members received clarification on several issues with the position regarding Swinton Baths Site being investigated further.

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

C121 REVIEW OF NON RESIDENTIAL SERVICE CHARGES

Councillor Doyle, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, introduced a report by the Strategic Director Neighbourhoods and Adult Services which stated that the Directorate was required to review its charges as part of the budget setting process.

The report set out the current charges benchmarked against local neighbours and members of a Chartered Institute of Public and Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) benchmarking group.

Charges were reviewed in 2011 as part of the Council's budget setting exercise and subsequently increased by an average of 25% in October, 2011 following a comprehensive consultation exercise.

In general Rotherham's average charge income per person was lower when compared to other Councils referred to in the report. However, the gap had reduced following the increases in charges over the last two years.

The report set out potential charging options for consideration.

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

Cabinet Members were mindful that any increase in charges would have an impact on its customers.

Resolved:- That revised charge increases of 4.5% be implemented from April, 2012.

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

Councillor Akhtar assumed the Chair for this item.

C122 RATIONALISATION OF PROPERTY ASSETS - COUNCIL OFFICES, DONCASTER GATE, ROTHERHAM

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Town Centres, Economic Growth and Prosperity, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Resources which sought approval to commence the marketing and disposal of the Doncaster Gate office site.

Further information was provided on the recommendations for disposal and the two options which were being considered.

It was, therefore, suggested that Option 2 be pursued in order to obtain the highest potential capital receipt

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

Cabinet Members asked a range of questions about the marketing of this site and its potential future use.

Resolved:- (1) That Option 2 be pursued for the marketing and disposal of the asset in order to obtain the highest potential capital receipt.

(2) That the Interim Asset Manager commence marketing of the asset and negotiate the sale.

(3) That the Senior Manager, Legal and Electoral Services, complete the necessary documentation.

C123 STRATEGIC PARTNERING

Councillor Akhtar, Deputy Leader, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Resources which provided an update on progress made towards completing early the successful strategic partnership, RBT.

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

Cabinet Members noted the information and the progress made.

Resolved:- (1) That the progress made towards completing early the Council's strategic partnership, RBT, be noted.

(2) That the proposals contained within the report to bring services currently within RBT back into Council management structures be supported.

C124 DIGITAL REGION

Councillor Akhtar, Deputy Leader, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Resources which detailed the progress of the Digital Region initiative and its associated company Digital Region Ltd.

Further information was provided on the current position of the initiative and the proposals for its future.

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

Cabinet Members sought clarification on the various options that were being proposed.

Resolved:- That the proposals within this report regarding the Digital Region initiative and its associated company Digital Region Ltd. be supported.