

THE CABINET
5th June, 2013

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

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors McNeely and Wyatt.

C18 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A member of the public asked

C19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

C20 SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME - PROPOSED GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor Doyle, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Adult Services, which detailed how the Supporting People Programme Governance Framework had been determined by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) until 2010. The funding and administration of the Programme was no longer regulated by DCLG, allowing arrangements for governance to be locally determined.

This report, therefore, proposed changes to the governance arrangements that would strengthen the role of Cabinet Members across Council portfolios putting them firmly at the heart of decision-making on spend and service direction.

The proposals would raise the profile of the Supporting People Programme and redefine its strategic contribution to Council priorities.

Specific proposals related to:-

- The terms of reference for the current Supporting People Commissioning Group and the Core Strategy Group were amalgamated to form a 'Supporting People Programme Strategic Group' with senior representation from NAS, CYPS, Public Health, and key strategic partners.
- All issues requiring agreement and/or decision-making that emerged from the Strategic Group to proceed to the appropriate Cabinet Member.

- An annual report to be tabled at full Cabinet to agree the plan for the year ahead.

Resolved:- That the report and its contents be approved.

C21 PROACTIVE INSOLVENCY FOR COUNCIL TAX AND NON DOMESTIC RATES

Councillor Akhtar, Deputy Leader, introduced a report by the Director of Finance, which detailed how Rotherham's in year collection rates for Council Tax (97.5%) and Non Domestic Rates (98.1%) were again very high in 2012/13. There, however, still remained a large amount of Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates cumulative arrears debt outstanding. As at 1st April, 2013 in excess of £6.3m Council Tax and £2.6m Non Domestic Rates debt remained outstanding from previous years. Rotherham success in collection of these cumulative arrears had always been excellent in comparison with other Metropolitan authorities.

Although on-going payments were being received for the majority of these cumulative debts, there remained a hardcore of bad debtors who despite having the means to pay, have not paid Council Tax for years and owed substantial amounts. For these debtors, the recovery methods currently being employed were proving unsuccessful.

This report, therefore, outlined a proposal to resume proactive insolvency, bankruptcy and charging order action in cases carefully selected by the Revenues and Benefits Service in order to ensure that future Council Tax collection was maximised. When proactive insolvency was previously undertaken by this Council between 2004 and 2008 it resulted in the collection of £636k Council Tax arrears. If the recommended proposal was accepted, Cabinet was also asked to endorse the incorporation of the proposal in an update to the Council's Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates Recovery Policy. This was approved by Cabinet in July 2010 following the Scrutiny Review of 2009.

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

(2) That the proposal to resume proactive insolvency, bankruptcy and charging order action as part of the Council's Recovery Policy be approved.

(3) That the updated Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates Recovery Policy (Appendix 1) and Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 2) be approved.

C22 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 I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act (as amended March, 2006) (information relating to financial and business affairs of any particular person).

C23 RATIONALISATION OF THE PROPERTY PORTFOLIO - LAND OFF FERHAM ROAD, HOLMES

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Development Services, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Environment and Development Services, which sought approval for the disposal of the above-mentioned asset which was vacant and surplus to the requirements of the Department of Schools and Lifelong Learning.

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

Cabinet Members asked about the conditions of sale associated with this site, specifically in relation to security and fly tipping, and were assured that this was included.

Resolved:- (1) That the Director of Audit and Asset Management be given approval to market the asset on the basis set out in Option 2 of the report.

(2) That the Director of Audit and Asset Management negotiates the terms of disposal of the asset as described in the report.

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

C24 NEW APPLICATION FOR HARDSHIP RELIEF 2013/14

Councillor Akhtar, Deputy Leader, introduced a report by the Director of Finance, which provided details of an organisation which had applied for Hardship Relief under Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1988. The customer had asked for hardship relief to be considered for his current outstanding balance which was from the previous financial year and the current year.

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

Cabinet Members considered the application but were mindful that:-

- The problems regarding cash flow did not appear to be a one off and seemed set to continue.
- There was no evidence that assisting as requested would lead to the long term sustainability of the business.
- The business seemed to have exhausted ways of cutting costs.
- There was nothing to suggest that the hardship was as a direct result of unusual factors outside the control of the business.

Resolved:- That, in accordance with the policy approved by the Cabinet on 24th April, 2013, the application in respect of hardship relief be refused.