

# CABINET

Thursday, 25 September 2008

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Holbrook (Vice-Chair, in the chair)	
	Councillors	G Davies P Davies G Gardiner S Kelly	M McLaughlin R Moon J Quinn J Stapleton
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	JE Green	
<u>Apologies:</u>	Councillors	S Foulkes	

## 192 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting had been printed and published; minute 186 (Wirral Partnership Homes – proposed amendments to constitution) had been called in for scrutiny by the Housing and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2008 be approved and adopted.**

## 193 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The members of the Committee were asked to consider whether they had a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any of the items on the agenda and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest. No declarations were made.

## 194 VALUE FOR MONEY

The Director of Finance submitted a response to the issues identified from the 2007/08 Audit Commission Value for Money Profile of Wirral, compared with its nearest neighbours, which had been reported to the Cabinet on 23 July. He explained that, as part of its use of resources assessment, the Audit Commission had pointed to areas of high spending within the authority and had asked that the Council give the reasons why, indicate what changes it proposed to make and what future action it proposed.

On a motion by Councillor Holbrook, duly seconded, it was -

**Resolved - That**

**(1) Cabinet welcomes the report which shows that the Council continues to make further progress in delivering value for money.**

**(2) Cabinet confirms that:**

- (i) the cost profiles reflect Council spending on policy priorities, for example, in improving the Borough's level of recycling;**
- (ii) the cost profiles do not always represent the best way of determining whether a service is value for money, for example the operation of the Fair Debt Policy, or where comparisons on a cost per transaction or per client basis show good performance, as in the case of housing and council tax benefit;**

**(3) Cabinet further notes the improving trends in children's social care and looked-after children, and the actions taken in adult social care.**

**(4) however, Cabinet requests that the Director of Adult Social Services provides to a subsequent Cabinet meeting a more detailed breakdown of the actions undertaken in respect of the matters in Appendices A7 to A10. Cabinet notes in the interim that the same overall set of figures, agreed as part of the budgetary efficiencies for 2008/09 and a three-year figure for the development of locality-based integrated teams, has been repeated in each of those appendices because of the individual impact on each area. Cabinet confirms for the sake of clarity that these are single, overall figures and not multiple efficiencies of the same amount.**

**195 DEPARTMENT OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT - BUDGET**

The Director of Finance reported on the budgetary issues involved in the creation of the new Department of Law, Human Resources and Asset Management and sought agreement to the transfer of budgets between the Departments of Corporate Services, Adult Social Services and Technical Services, which would then form the revised base for future financial monitoring.

**Resolved - That the virement of revenue budget, efficiency targets and capital programme between the Departments of Law, Human Resources & Asset Management, Corporate Services, Technical Services and Adult Social Services be agreed, as detailed in the Director's report.**

**196 WIRRAL'S PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK: ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN FOR 2009/10**

The Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Corporate Services reported on proposals for reviewing the Council's Corporate Plan, agreed on 21 April 2008, in order to inform the budget setting process for 2009/10.

**Resolved –That -**

**(1) the Council be recommended to agree**

**(i) that the main priorities for improvement identified for 2008/09 remain the most important areas of focus for the Council and should therefore be retained as priorities for 2009/10; and**

**(ii) the minor revisions relating to recycling and the need for a sustainable and stable budget;**

**(2) Chief Officers develop departmental plans and budget proposals for 2009/10 that reflect the strategic objectives set out in the Corporate Plan and the revised priorities for improvement indicated in the Appendix to the Director's report;**

**(3) the Departmental Plans and the changes for the Corporate Plan delivery framework be reported to the Cabinet on 15 January 2009, with the latter then submitted to Council for formal approval.**

## 197 **CONSULTATION PROCESS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

The Chief Executive reported on the statutory requirement relating to the production of a Sustainable Community Strategy for Wirral by the Local Strategic Partnership and described the progress to date in developing that key document. In view of the Council's leadership role in relation to strategic planning at a borough-wide level, through the Local Strategic Partnership, the Cabinet was asked to endorse the draft version of the Sustainable Community Strategy, attached as Appendix 1, for the purposes of consultation with partners and the community, and to agree the proposed consultation timetable set out Appendix 2.

He explained that sustainable communities were places in which people wished to live, now and in the future. They embodied the principles of sustainable development at the local level. That meant they improved quality of life for all whilst safeguarding the environment for future generations. The UK Government's Sustainable Development Strategy, "Securing the Future", had been published in March 2005 and included the Government's definition and components of a sustainable community:

- to balance and integrate social, economic and environmental components of their community;
- to meet the needs of existing and future generations;
- to respect the need of other communities, in the wider region or internationally, also to make their communities sustainable.

The Local Government Act 2007 required every local authority to develop a 'sustainable' community strategy.

### **Resolved – That -**

**(1) the Draft Strategy (Appendix 1 to the report) be endorsed, to be used for the purposes of consultation with key partners and the public;**

**(2) the proposed timetable for consultation and approval of the sustainable community strategy (Appendix 2) be approved; and**

**(3) delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to approve any changes to the document arising from the initial consultation with partners, prior to the commencement of the public consultation period in mid-October 2008.**

198 **2008/09 PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT - QUARTER ONE PROGRESS REPORT**

The Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Corporate Services submitted a supplementary performance report on the progress made towards delivering the Council's nine 2008/09 priorities for improvement, and invited the Cabinet to consider the remedial action that was being taken to address areas of under-performance.

**Resolved** – That the Cabinet welcomes the clarity of the supplementary report and asks that future reporting should also contain, under each heading, a third item identifying key challenges to be addressed, with the potential action necessary to improve performance, and that this should be incorporated into future performance monitoring reports.

199 **APPROVED DUTIES AND APPOINTMENTS**

**Resolved** – That the following be designated approved duties:

(a) attendance by Councillor Holbrook at the 4th Annual North West e-Government Group Conference “Lost in Transformation? – Moving Forward Together” to be held on 10 December 2008 in Manchester;

(b) attendance by Councillor P L Davies at a meeting with Lord Adonis (Schools Minister) in London to discuss the new Birkenhead High Academy and related issues on 21 October 2008.

200 **IMPROVING PRIMARY SCHOOL PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH COMPLEX LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

The Director of Children's Services reported the outcome of informed discussions with headteachers, parents and other interested parties concerning the provision that the Authority made for pupils in the three primary special schools for pupils with complex learning difficulties. He proposed that a more formal review of the options now be undertaken.

The Cabinet member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning thanked the officers, in particular Peter Edmondson and Andre Baird, for their preliminary work and stressed that the current report represented the start of the formal consultation process. He considered that Wirral already had good special needs provision and it was essential to have the support of stakeholders in trying to secure further improvements.

With the Chair's permission, the Leader of the Conservative Group stated that an earlier report on the matter had implied an intention to reduce provision, and he queried whether that was the aim of the current exercise. The Cabinet member replied that it would be wrong at that stage to pre-empt the recommendations from the review.

**Resolved** - That a formal review of the provision that the Authority makes for primary aged pupils that have complex learning difficulties be approved: the review will include widespread consultation with all stakeholders and be

completed by March 2009, when a further report would be submitted to Cabinet.

201 **IMPROVING SECONDARY SPECIAL SCHOOL PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH COMPLEX LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

The Director of Children's Services reported on discussions that had taken place recently regarding secondary provision for pupils with complex learning difficulties and proposed further consultation in conjunction with a feasibility study on the amalgamation of Foxfield School and Meadowside School, both of which provided for pupils within the 11-19 age range. He emphasised that consultation would include the young people themselves.

In response to Councillor Kelly's question, the Director stated that there were several issues relating to transfer from special education. He intended to bring a report on that subject in connection with the transfer of responsibilities and funding from the Learning and Skills Council, some of the details of which had still to be clarified nationally. He was concerned that, when all of the funds had been transferred, there might be a funding gap.

**Resolved - That**

**(1) approval be given to undertake a feasibility exercise to identify the practical and financial implications of amalgamating Foxfield School and Meadowside School;**

**(2) approval be given for an extensive consultation exercise to be undertaken with pupils, parents and all other relevant stakeholders to gauge wider support for the amalgamation of the two schools and the establishment of a single split-site provision for pupils aged 11 to 19 with complex learning difficulties; and**

**(3) approval be given to undertake a detailed exploration with the Learning and Skills Council of the feasibility of developing a post-16 facility that is co-located with a local college.**

202 **HOUSING AND PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT - PROVISIONAL ALLOCATIONS 2008/09**

The Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Corporate Services reported that the Government had indicated its intention to award the Council £131,013 under the annual performance-related Housing and Planning Delivery Grant (which replaced the Planning Delivery Grant). He provided a breakdown of the award and sought confirmation of the distribution of monies to planning services.

The Chair congratulated those concerned on having secured the funding.

**Resolved - That**

**(1) £11,215 of the award of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant for 2008/09 be allocated to the Director of Regeneration for the publication of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Wirral; and**

**(2) £119,798 of the Grant for 2008/09 be allocated to the Director of Corporate Services for the preparation of the Local Development Framework;**

**(3) whilst Cabinet agrees the recommended apportionment for 2008/09, it notes that any subsequent grant for 2009/10 will be subject to review as part of the on-going deliberations on the 2009/10 budget.**

**203 TACKLING GRAFFITI - AN ANTI-GRAFFITI POLICY & STRATEGY**

Following on from the approval of a policy option to provide additional funding for the removal of graffiti, the Director of Regeneration sought endorsement of a new approach to tackling graffiti throughout the borough. Whilst the approach was aimed at improving the quality of service, it was very much focused on tackling anti-social behaviour and improving the quality of life in neighbourhoods.

**Resolved – That -**

**(1) the Cabinet notes that this implements the budget proposals agreed in March 2008 to provide additional funding to establish a new ‘zero tolerance’ approach to tackling graffiti within the borough in order to improve the quality of the service, help tackle anti-social behaviour, and improve the quality of life in neighbourhoods.**

**(2) the new policy and comprehensive strategy for tackling graffiti be approved, the actions taken so far be endorsed, and officers report back on progress to a future meeting later in the year.**

**204 ESTABLISHMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY UNIT**

Further to minute 127 (9/7/08), the Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Corporate Services proposed that a Sustainability Unit be created as part of the new Department of Law, H.R. and Asset Management, and that a further report on this issue be presented to the Cabinet outlining the proposals for the Unit.

**Resolved - That**

**(1) £80,000 be allocated from the efficiency budget to cover the costs of the new posts;**

**(2) the report be referred to the Employment and Appointments Committee to agree the establishment of the new posts; and**

**(3) the one-off policy option of £115,000 relating to Sustainability be vired from the Technical Services Department to the Department of Law, H.R. and Asset Management.**

**205 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Resolved - That, under section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following**

items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.

206 **QUARRY BANK FLATS, BIRKENHEAD**

The Director of Law, H.R. and Asset Management sought approval to declare Quarry Bank flats, Birkenhead, a surplus operational asset, and for its disposal to a registered social landlord, which would allow the block to be redeveloped or refurbished in order to provide affordable housing to meet local need.

**Resolved - That**

- (1) the premises be declared a surplus asset;**
- (2) the premises be marketed for sale by way of a development brief to registered social landlords; and**
- (3) if the outcome of the marketing exercise results in any offers received, they be reported back to a future meeting of the Cabinet or to the Cabinet portfolio holder as appropriate.**

207 **SALE OF FORMER SOMERVILLE SCHOOL, GORSEY LANE, WALLASEY**

The Director of Law, H.R. and Asset Management sought approval to dispose of the former Somerville School site to a registered social landlord to allow the site to be developed as an Extra Care facility for older people.

**Resolved - That the sale of the site identified in the Director's report to Housing 21, in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in Sections 7 and 8 of the report, be approved.**

208 **SALE OF SITES AT WOODHALL AVENUE/ROYSTON AVENUE, WALLASEY AND HOME FARM ROAD, WOODCHURCH**

The Director of Law, H.R. and Asset Management sought approval to the disposal of a number of sites with the aim of delivering affordable housing to meet local needs.

**Resolved - That**

- (1) the site of the Woodhall Avenue and Royston Avenue Clearance Area, identified in Plan 1 accompanying the Director's report, be declared a surplus asset, and**
- (2) the site, once fully assembled, be disposed of to Cosmopolitan Housing Association, in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in Sections 5 and 6 of the report;**
- (3) the two sites in Home Farm Road, identified in Plan 2, be declared surplus assets and their sale to Wirral Partnership Homes be approved in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in Sections 5 and 6 of the report.**

## 209 MY PLACE – WIRRAL’S PROPOSALS

The Director of Children’s Services presented the two final bids for My Place and asked the Cabinet to recommend which of the two proposals should go forward as Wirral’s nomination. The proposal from Pacific Road was to develop a high class youth arts centre and provide opportunities for young people. The Shaftesbury Youth Club was proposing a refurbishment and new building to provide high quality sports and personal development opportunities for young people. In both cases each organisation would be expected to have a cross-Wirral appeal to young people. A final decision was required because only one bid could go forward from each authority.

Members discussed the merits of the two submissions. They were impressed by both and urged that, if possible, elements of whichever bid was not successful be developed to complement existing facilities within the Borough.

### **Resolved – That -**

- (1) the Cabinet agrees to put forward as Wirral’s bid for My Place the submission from the Shaftesbury Youth Club;**
- (2) the Council enter into a formal agreement with the Shaftesbury Youth Club that sets out how they will contribute to Wirral’s developing agenda for young people;**
- (3) the Cabinet expresses its thanks to everyone associated with both bids for their hard work and commitment in putting them together;**
- (4) the Director of Children’s Services be requested to look into how the proposals within the Pacific Road bid might be developed thorough other means;**
- (5) (unanimously) in view of the urgency involved in this matter, namely the need to lodge the winning submission with the Government by 30 September, the Cabinet agrees to waive the call-in in relation to this decision.**

## 210 REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Corporate Services sought approval to providing a grant from the Think Big Investment Fund to the company named in his report to assist towards its business expansion project, which included the creation of 45 new full-time equivalent jobs and the transfer of eight temporary staff on to permanent contracts, bringing the total workforce in Birkenhead to 200 permanent members of staff.

**Resolved - That a Think Big Investment Fund grant of £78,440 be approved in accordance with the conditions set out in the report.**