

# CABINET

Thursday, 27 November 2008

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Foulkes (Chair)	
	Councillors	S Holbrook G Davies P Davies G Gardiner S Kelly	M McLaughlin R Moon J Quinn J Stapleton
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	D Mitchell T Anderson S Mountney I Lewis J Hale G Watt L Fraser T Smith H Smith	D Elderton L Rennie A Pritchard C Blakeley J Crabtree D Knowles P Gilchrist JE Green

## 262 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th November had been printed and published. It was noted that Minute 251 (Progress towards the transformation of Adult Social Services ) had been called in and would be considered by the Social Care, Health and Inclusion Overview and Scrutiny Committee before 12th December 2008.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved and adopted.

## 263 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The members of the Cabinet 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.

The following declarations were made:

Councillors Steve Foulkes, George Davies, Gill Gardiner, Bob Moon and Jean Quinn declared a personal interest in minute 264 (Transforming Wirral – Strategic Asset Review) due to their links with organisations mentioned within the report.

Councillor Phil Davies declared a personal interest in minute 265 (Reconfigure action of youth service) due to his membership of the management committee of a youth club.

The Leader of the Council indicated that as this report proposed the start of a consultation process, interested individuals would have an opportunity to feed into that consultation process, if the recommendations were agreed.

The Chief Executive presented a report which set out a vision for transforming Wirral's use of assets in order to improve service delivery; provide better value for money; and support the regeneration of the Borough, particularly its most deprived parts. It recommended investing £20 million, over four years, to develop a strategic network of 12 state-of-the-art multi-purpose complexes. These would be a mix of brand new buildings and enhancements to existing facilities. It was proposed to develop high quality, energy efficient and well maintained facilities, equipped with modern technology (including free Wi-Fi access) and to consult with local people over extending opening hours to meet service users' needs.

To achieve the level of service improvement, whilst simultaneously controlling overall buildings related costs, required a strategic review of all the Council's properties and a reduction in the total number of publicly funded premises. The vision for the future was of much improved facilities, but not as many Council maintained buildings: the vision is 'Fewer but Better'. If the Council paid for the running costs of fewer buildings, Wirral residents would be able to enjoy the high quality and efficient modern facilities they deserved whilst the Council Tax could be kept at an acceptable level.

The Leader of the Council referred to the background to the report and increases in energy costs and indicated that his priority was to ensure that increased costs were not passed on to the Council tax payer.

The Deputy Leader of the Council referred to the transfer of assets to the community and the opportunity for residents to become involved in shaping the new services.

Councillor Stuart Kelly also referred to the transfer of assets to the community and the need for the administrative services of the Council to reduce its share of the costs.

The Leader of the Council hoped that the results of the consultation would be able to be reported to the Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2009 and invited other private and public organisations to contribute to the consultation process.

The Leader of the Council moved an amendment, duly seconded and it was –

Resolved – That

(1) Cabinet agrees the recommendation as set out below:

That the proposals set out in the report for the strategic consolidation of the Council's asset base across the borough be agreed in principle and then be subject to public and staff consultation as described, with the results of that consultation brought to a future meeting of Cabinet.

and asks that a special Area Forum Conference/Conferences be convened as soon as possible in order to allow a full debate on the proposals in the report.

(2) Cabinet also asks that this matter be referred to a joint Scrutiny Committee, comprising of Finance and Best Value, Corporate Services and Culture, Tourism and Leisure Overview Scrutiny Committees, with a Chair to be elected at the meeting. Democratic Services be asked to make the appropriate arrangements for this meeting to take place as soon as possible; and

(3) the proposals set out in this report for the strategic consolidation of the Council's asset base across the Borough, along with the provision of a mobile library/one stop shop, be agreed in principle and then subjected to public and staff consultation as described, with results of that consultation brought to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

The Cabinet adjourned at 7.05pm and reconvened at 7.20pm.

## 265 **RECONFIGURE ACTION OF YOUTH SERVICE PROVISION**

The Director of Children's Services presented a report which proposed a new strategy for the provision of Youth Services.

The principles adopted were:

- For universal services to be organised locally, linked to the District Boards, Youth Forums and Area Forums.
- For targeted services for the most vulnerable young people to be organised on a borough wide basis.
- To focus our efforts on better but fewer centres, and ensure synergy with the Strategic Asset Review
- To work with partners across the public and voluntary sectors by a process of commissioning.

Wirral Youth Service makes provision through both statutory and voluntary organisations. There were eighteen youth centres, four held by the Children and Young People's Department, two by Cultural Services, eleven by voluntary organisations and one centre in a school. Provision was currently stretched with an inconsistent offer and variable hours of opening. The report proposed a consolidation of provision into the four districts with four major centres that would open for extended hours, in addition there would be seven satellites covering the remaining Area Forums that would open for three nights. One major centre had already received Cabinet approval, Shaftsbury Youth Club and was the subject of a "My Place" bid. The report sought permission to engage with the Merseyside Fire Service to consider a second centre to be created at Wallasey Fire Station using Youth Capital Plus funding. The centres would be identified as part of the Strategic Asset Review. The report also includes a proposal to enhance the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

The proposals would in total result in a saving of £150,000.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning welcomed the creation of 'super centres' which would be open 6 nights of the week and the more

efficient use of resources. Councillor Phil Davies also referred to the recent scrutiny report on Youth Outreach work and indicated that a more detailed report would be brought on this matter.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning moved an amendment and it was –

RESOLVED: That

(1) Cabinet welcomes this report which will modernise the youth service and create a series of Youth super centres able to provide the facilities that the young people of Wirral have told us they want;

(2) Cabinet deletes paragraph 17.3 and agrees the proposals in paragraph 17.1 and 17.2; and

(3) Cabinet further agrees the savings outlined in Table 1 paragraph 2.2 giving a total saving of £150,000.

#### 266 **INSURANCE FUND BUDGET 2009/10**

The Director of Finance presented a report which set out the elements which make up the Insurance Fund, the cost of running the Risk & Insurance Section and the budget for 2009/10.

The Leader of the Council congratulated the team involved in improving the position of the Insurance Fund.

Resolved - That

(1) the continuing improvement in the position of the Insurance Fund be noted; and

(2) the Insurance Fund budget for 2009-10 be agreed.

#### 267 **PROJECTED BUDGET 2009-11**

The Director of Finance presented the projected budgets for 2009-2011 to coincide with the period of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR).

At the request of the Leader of the Council, the Director of Finance updated the Cabinet on the position regarding the Icelandic Bank.

The Leader of the Council moved an amendment, duly seconded, and it was –

Resolved – That

(1) Cabinet recognises that the recession is having an impact on many of Wirral's families and it is essential to do everything possible to ensure that Wirral's Council Tax Payers are not faced with the additional burden of high Council Tax increases. In order to further reduce Wirral's budget gap, and in the light of the reports and Cabinet recommendations on the Insurance Budget (Item 15), the Highway and Engineering

Services Procurement Exercise (Item 9), and the Reconfiguration of Youth Services (Item 16) Cabinet recommends the following:

CHILDREN'S SERVICES	
	£
The Schools budget be charged with the full cost of insurance, reflecting the risks assessed by the insurer and that the mechanism for doing this is agreed with the Schools' Forum.	400,000
The Reconfiguration of the Youth Service is agreed in line with the report and consequential savings accepted as outlined in the recommendation.	150,000
TECHNICAL SERVICES	
	£
The revenue savings of £320,000 arising from the HESPE exercise as outlined in the report be accepted.	320,000
FINANCE.	
	£
The sum of £140,000 of increased income from Wirral Partnership Homes following the closure of their cash offices be accepted.	140,000

(2) Cabinet asks that the efficiencies contained within this motion be referred to the relevant Scrutiny Committees for urgent consideration before Council meets on December 15th. Should this prove impossible in any instance, then, because it is considered to be in the Council's best interests to implement proposed savings as early as possible, Cabinet asks Council to approve those items which have not been considered by Scrutiny committees where there is all party support and, in so doing, to suspend paragraph 2(a) of the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules and to deal with the proposals in accordance with paragraph 2(b), i.e. where there is no such agreement, absence of which should be indicated by the lodging of an objection within the timescale set by Standing Order 12(1), Council is asked to refer the relevant item to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for discussion and subsequent referral to the next Council meeting. Items already discussed by the relevant Scrutiny Committee will be dealt with in the normal way; and

(3) this motion is subject to any statutory requirements on staffing issues.

268 **HIGHWAY AND ENGINEERING SERVICES PROCUREMENT EXERCISE - PROPOSED EFFICIENCY SAVINGS AND CONTRACT MOBILISATION UPDATE**

Further to the decision by Cabinet on 16th October 2008 to award the new Highway and Engineering Services contract to Colas Limited, the Director of Technical Services presented a report which set out in detail the proposed efficiency savings to be delivered through the new contract and provided an update on the contract mobilisation process on the run-up to the 1st April 2009 contract commencement.

The Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Transport Services welcomed the report and thanked all staff that had been involved in the process.

Resolved - That

- (1) the findings of the recent Gateway 3 Investment Decision Review be noted;
- (2) the proposed efficiency savings detailed in this report be noted and agreed; and
- (3) the latest position with respect to Contract Mobilisation be noted and officers' intention to report to future meetings on progress involving action taken against the Gateway 3 Review Recommendations be endorsed.

269 **FINANCIAL & PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

The Chief Executive presented one of a series of reports submitted throughout the year presenting an overview of the performance of the council in delivering the vision for Wirral as set out in the corporate plan and covered the second quarter of 2008/9.

The report provided an overview of the authority's performance and the circulated appendices gave a more detailed break down against performance, capital and revenue budgets and risks.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources welcomed the presentation of the report.

Resolved –

- (1) the performance to date be reviewed and any areas for further action be identified;
- (2) the variations in the capital programme in respect of Adult Social Services IT infrastructure funded from grant and the Bromborough Pool Bridge overspend from within the Local Transport plan (LTP) allocation be approved; and
- (3) the report, without appendices, for the quarter ending 31 December be presented to the Cabinet in February. The full report, which should include the detailed appendices, to be made available on the Virtual Committee.

270 **CALCULATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE**

The Director of Finance presented a report which detailed the method used to calculate the Tax Base for the 2009/2010 Council Tax and recommended a figure for tax setting purposes.

Resolved – That the Council be recommended that:

- (1) the Council Tax Base for 2009/10 be approved; and
- (2) in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the figure calculated by this Authority as its Tax Base for the year 2008/2009 shall be 104,276.

271 **UPDATE ON THE NATIONAL BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE PROGRAMME**

Building Schools for the Future (BSF) was launched in February 2003. BSF aimed at educational transformation through providing all secondary school pupils and teachers in England with 21<sup>st</sup> Century buildings and facilities.

Following consultations by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) reported to Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2008, the Director of Children's Services presented a report which updated members on recent developments in the BSF Programme.

The Director of Children's Services also sought permission to submit a revised expression of interest to DCSF, who had requested that the submission be with them by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

Councillor George Davies referred to the recent press reports on the future of the Building Schools for the Future programme and the Director of Children's Services indicated that there had been no communication from central government on this matter. He was meeting with the Schools Minister in early December when clarification would be sought.

Resolved: That

- (1) the progress of the national Building Schools for the Future programme and local work towards inclusion in this programme of work be noted;
- (2) the request for an updated Expression of Interest from PfS be responded to in a positive manner based upon the principles of prioritisation with a response to the PfS as outlined in sections 4 and 5 of this report by the deadline of 30.11.08; and
- (3) BSF be the subject of a further report once national priorities have been announced, with the report to also include an update on financial implications within the council's capital programme.

**272 NEW KITCHEN AND DINING ROOM EXTENSION, STANTON ROAD PRIMARY SCHOOL, BEBINGTON, WIRRAL - TENDER REPORT**

The Cabinet considered a report which advised Members of Tenders received, and to sought approval of the lowest tender.

Cabinet at its meeting on 16th April 2008 approved the Scheme and Estimate for this project and authorised invitations to tender (minute 607 refers).

Resolved - That the lowest tender in the sum of £783,755.41 submitted by PT Ltd, be approved, subject to the Contractor developing a satisfactory Health & Safety Plan and completion of contract documentation.

**273 EQUALITY WATCH SCHEME 2009 -2012 PUBLIC CONSULTATION DRAFT**

The Single Equality Scheme was critical to the delivery of the council's aim to improve accountability, accessibility and openness and involve those who used our services in their design and delivery, which was aligned to the strategic objective to create an excellent council. The scheme would take forward key aspects of community engagement as well as consolidate the council's progress through the levels of the Equality Standard for Local Government. Moreover, the scheme would provide a co-ordinated approach to ensuring that the council meets its legal duties to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate any unlawful discrimination and harassment within the organisation.

The Equality Watch Scheme would be the Council's corporate equality and diversity action plan for the period April 2009 to March 2012, covering all six equality strands:

- Gender (including transgender)
  - Disability
  - Race
  - Sexual Orientation
  - Age
  - Religion or Belief
- } Also taking into consideration multi-forms of discrimination

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services requested that the action referring to a communications strategy (page 20 of the agenda) be withdrawn.

Resolved: That

- (1) the Equality Watch Scheme 2009 to 2012 (as amended) be agreed for public consultation during the period 1 December 2008 to 28 February 2009; and
- (2) £68,000 be allocated from the Council's Efficiency Investment Budget to part fund the costs of the scheme.

**274 INTERNATIONAL LINKS**

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services presented a report which outlined the activity undertaken by the recent Wirral delegation visit to Suzhou,

China from the 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> September 2008. The report also recommended the development of four projects that would build upon the relationship that had been successfully developed.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services referred to Cabinet minute 128 (9<sup>th</sup> July 2008) where it was noted that translation services could be required and an additional recommendation was proposed.

The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council referred to the success of the visit.

Resolved: That

- (1) the projects outlined in the report be endorsed;
- (2) Members support the continuing development of relationships between Wirral and Suzhou;
- (3) an official invitation be sent inviting a return delegation in the spring/early summer of 2009; and
- (4) the provision of translation services be included as part of the approved expenditure for the Wirral delegation's visit to Suzhou, China in September 2008.

275 **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – CORE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT - PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES**

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services presented a report which set out the background to progress on the emerging Local Development Framework for Wirral which would replace the Council's Unitary Development Plan as the Council's local strategy for the location and control of new investment and development.

The report sought approval to undertake public consultation on a draft Issues and Objectives Document as part of the preparation of a Core Strategy for Wirral, which would be the lead document of the Borough's Local Development Framework.

The Cabinet Member for the Environment welcomed the energy capacity study referred to within the report and requested that a presentation on Peel Holdings renewable energy proposals be arranged.

**Recommended: That**

- (1) the proposals for the future preparation of a Core Strategy Development Plan Document set out in this report be approved;**
- (2) the revised proposals for the preparation of the Core Strategy be included within a review of the Local Development Scheme;**
- (3) the Issues and Objectives Document attached to the report be submitted for consideration to the Sustainability Appraisal Panel;**

**(4) the Issues and Objectives Document attached to the report be made subject to an Equality Impact Assessment;**

**(5) the Director of Corporate Services be given delegated authority to make any changes necessary to the Issues and Objectives Document to reflect the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal Panel and the Equality Impact Assessment before publishing the Document for public consultation;**

**(6) Area Forums be offered the opportunity for a presentation on the Local Development Framework and the emerging Core Strategy; and**

**(7) the principle of preparing a renewable energy capacity study be approved, subject to the possibility of joint working with other neighbouring Local Authorities being explored and a further report on costs being brought back for Cabinet approval.**

## **276 NETWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Director of Technical Services presented a report which outlined the key elements of the Council's first Network Management Plan and sought endorsement of the principles set out in the document. The Plan was intended to set out the processes that the Council employed to meet the Council's duty under the Traffic Management Act 2004.

Whilst there was no statutory requirement to develop a Network Management Plan, it was considered that having such a plan would enable the authority to ensure it was actively working to make the most efficient use of its existing road network to support economic and community development across the borough. It would also fully demonstrate to the Government Office North West how the Council was complying with its duty through an assessment of current processes and the identification of performance targets and areas for improvement. The plan documented existing procedures and working practices and set out action plans and improvement areas to enable the authority to comply with the requirements of the Traffic Management Act and the associated Network Management Duty. A copy of the proposed Wirral Network Management Plan was attached as Appendix 1.

Resolved - That

**(1) the report be noted and the authority's approach to the Network Management Duty including the Draft Wirral Network Management Plan be endorsed; and**

**(2) the Director of Technical Services be authorised to finalise the Wirral Network Management Plan in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Transport Services.**

## **277 PROVISION OF HOUSEHOLD WASTE AND RECYCLING CONTAINERS POLICY**

The Director of Technical Services presented a report which sought Cabinet approval for a policy for the supply of waste and recycling receptacles to householders. The policy detailed the situations where residents would be charged for replacement or additional containers. The report also highlighted the financial implications of current

and future service demands for replacement bins and the rising cost of new bins as a result of increased oil prices.

Resolved - That

(1) the Provision of Household Waste and Recycling Containers Policy detailed in section 3.0 of this report be approved for implementation by January 1st 2009; and

(2) the prioritisation of the remaining 2008/9 Waste Capital Infrastructure Grant (WCIG) funding totalling £245K be approved for the provision of recycling receptacles to multi-occupancy properties.

## 278 **CHANCELLOR'S 2008 PRE-BUDGET STATEMENT - CHANGE IN VAT**

The Leader of the Council indicated that he agreed to consideration of this item as a matter of urgent business.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer presented his Pre-Budget Statement 2008 on 24 November 2008. This included revisions to the rates of VAT from 1 December 2008. The Director of Finance presented a report which set out the implications for the Council.

The Leader of the Council moved a motion, duly seconded, and it was -

Resolved: (unanimously) That

(1) the changes to VAT for the period 1 December 2008 to 31 December 2009 be noted;

(2) the VAT inclusive charges be unchanged at 1 December 2008;

(3) in the light of difficulties being experienced by retailers as a result of the Credit Crunch, Cabinet agrees that the sum of up to £35,000 for 2008/9 be used to meet the request of the Chamber of Commerce for assistance on car parking charges in the run up to Christmas;

(4) Cabinet agrees that a "Free from Three" policy be instituted on the three Thursdays before Christmas, on the 4<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> and 18th December, in the shoppers' car parks in Birkenhead, Liscard, Heswall and West Kirby and that there should also be free parking all day Boxing Day and New Years Day to help attract shoppers to the Sales;

(5) Cabinet asks the Director of Law, H.R. Asset Management to enter into negotiations with the owner of the Cherry Tree Centre Car Park in Liscard to see if the Council can assist with allowing them to make the same offer to their shoppers; and

(6) call-in on this matter be waived and the Council be advised accordingly.

279 **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.

280 **REVISED VALUATION OF DOCK PROPERTIES FOR RATING**

The Director of Finance presented a report which set out the background and current position arising from the decision to change the valuation for rating purposes of what were previously described as Dock Undertakings. The national change had resulted in backdated bills being created and despatched by rating authorities to the occupiers. The size of the bills had the potential to threaten the solvency of some firms. The Director of Finance set out the options open to the Authority along with indicative timescales and financial implications and recommended a way forward.

The Leader of the Council indicated that this matter would also be discussed at a City Region level at their forthcoming meeting.

Resolved - That

- (1) the Director of Finance writes to each occupier setting out the position on sums due but hold from issuing bills at this point while awaiting any Government proposals;
- (2) the Director of Finance expects to issue bills in January 2009 to commence repayment over an extended timescale to be guided by any Government proposals;
- (3) discussions be held with each occupier to identify their own actions with regard to valuation appeals and meetings with the port owner with regard to rates already paid within their payment to the owners; and
- (4) a further report to be brought to the Cabinet as soon as the Government proposals are known.

281 **THE GOVERNMENT'S UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE**

The Chief Executive updated members on the Government's "University Challenge – Unlocking Britain's Talent" initiative to create up to twenty new University facilities in England.

Resolved - That

- (1) the progress made on the development of a Wirral proposal as part of the Government's University Challenge be noted;
- (2) Cabinet offers its support and endorsement to the developing proposal; and

(3) the Chief Executive and Officers continue to offer support in the development of the proposal.

**282 UPDATE ON CONTRACTUAL POSITION IN RESPECT OF NURSING HOMES**

The Director of Adult Social Services presented a report which updated members on the progress being made with respect to contract negotiations concerning nursing homes.

Resolved – (unanimously) That

(1) Cabinet approve the course of action set out as Option 4 in paragraph 3 of this report; and

(2) call-in on this matter be waived and the Council be advised accordingly.

**283 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no further items of business.