

THE CABINET
21ST NOVEMBER 2013

Present: Councillors:
Ray Dawe Leader
Helena Croft Deputy Leader and Communication, Horsham Town
& Special Projects
Andrew Baldwin The Environment
Jonathan Chowen Arts, Heritage & Leisure
Gordon Lindsay Resources
Roger Paterson The Local Economy
Sue Rogers A Safer & Healthier District
Apologies: Claire Vickers Living & Working Communities

Also present: Councillors: Roger Arthur, John Bailey, Peter Burgess, George
Cockman, David Coldwell, Roy Cornell, Leonard Crosbie, Malcolm
Curnock, Duncan England, Frances Haigh, David Holmes, Christian
Mitchell, Kate Rowbottom

EX/17 **RECORD OF THE MEETING OF 25TH JULY 2013**

The record of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 25th July 2013 was approved as correct and signed by the Leader.

EX/18 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

EX/19 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

EX/20 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No questions had been received.

REPORT BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ARTS, HERITAGE & LEISURE

EX/21 **Green Space Strategy 2013-23**

The Cabinet Member for Arts, Heritage & Leisure reported that the Green Space Strategy had been developed in order to set out the Council's vision for its green spaces, the goals it wished to achieve and the actions required to meet those goals.

The vision for the Green Space Strategy was to provide, protect and enhance a publicly accessible network of diverse and quality green spaces to meet the needs of the community. At an operational level, the strategy would provide a focus for the management and continued improvement of the publicly accessible green spaces in the District that were owned and maintained by the Council.

EX/21 Green Space Strategy 2013-23 (cont.)

The Draft Strategy had been published for consultation purposes in Spring 2013 and had been amended in the light of the feedback received from a variety of sources including volunteer groups, users and parish and neighbourhood councils.

Members discussed a number of issues including allotments/community orchards; the split between parish and District Council maintained play areas; the need for/practicalities of such a detailed document and the large number of actions; the limited use of Horsham Park for events; and the procedures for the adoption of open spaces by parish councils where appropriate.

RESOLVED

That the Green Space Strategy be adopted for the period 2013-2023.

REASONS

- (i) To provide, protect and enhance a publicly accessible network of diverse and quality green spaces that meet the need of our community.
- (ii) To establish a strategic approach to the management and improvement of green spaces in the Horsham District.

REPORT BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR THE LOCAL ECONOMY

EX/22 **Horsham District Economic Development Strategy**

The Cabinet Member for the Local Economy reported that economic development and securing high levels of employment was considered to be the most important Council priority and was essential for driving forward a high quality of life for the District's residents. The purpose of the Draft Economic Strategy was to set out the direction that the Council and partner organisations working within the District needed to take to ensure that Horsham's economy remained strong and vibrant, through the provision and creation of employment opportunities that benefited all who lived and worked in the area.

The draft Strategy set out a framework for the development of the local economy over the next ten years. It described the Council's objectives and priorities to deliver a competitive and sustainable economy; driving the creation of jobs and better paid jobs; supporting the development of innovation and enterprise; supporting and investing in economic growth; and the promotion of the District as a location of choice to do business and to visit.

EX/22 Horsham District Economic Development Strategy (cont.)

The Strategy was supported by an Action Plan covering the period from 2013 to 2015, which detailed proposed short, medium and long term actions across the six headline economic objectives, based on identified strengths and challenges. The Action Plan would be reviewed annually, ensuring that priorities remained relevant and were updated where appropriate to take into account new issues and opportunities. Resources had been and would continue to be allocated to ensure that the implementation of the plan was achieved.

Cabinet Members expressed their support for the Strategy.

Members raised a number of issues including the need for measurable targets; prioritising of actions and linking with objectives; links to the Gatwick Diamond Initiative and the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership; the need to work in partnership with both small and large businesses; the issue of empty business premises; and the need for resources to deliver the Council's priorities. The Cabinet Member indicated that the issues raised could be addressed more fully at a future advisory group meeting.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Horsham District Economic Strategy 2013 – 2023 be adopted, as submitted.
- (ii) That the Economic Development Action Plan be agreed as submitted.

REASONS

- (i) Adoption of the Strategy will set out what the economic priorities are for the District and assist the Council and its partners in delivering them.
- (ii) Agreement to the Economic Action Plans will ensure that future Service Plans across the Council will embed appropriate activities and deliver specific actions.

REPORT BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR A SAFER & HEALTHIER DISTRICT

EX/23 Single Equality Scheme 2013-15

The Cabinet Member for a Safer & Healthier District reported that, under the Equality Act 2010, public sector bodies were required to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination for service users and staff and promote good relations between people of different protected characteristics (equality strands), rather than waiting for individuals to complain.

EX/23 Single Equality Scheme 2013-15 (cont.)

A Single Equality Scheme had therefore been produced, setting out what the Council would do to meet its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The scheme covered the period 2013 -2015 and built upon the achievements of the first Single Equality Scheme, as reported in Annual Equality and Diversity reports which were available on the Council's website.

This scheme was closely aligned with the District Plan 2011-15 and the action plan looked at the equality implications of District Plan priorities for the current year. It would be reviewed as the District Plan was reviewed. The primary action required was to undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EIA), the means by which the Council demonstrated that it had considered the impacts of its policies and services upon its residents and staff with different "protected characteristics" (age, disability, sex, religion and belief, race, maternity/ pregnancy, marriage/civil partnership, sexual orientation and gender reassignment). Completed EIAs were published on the Council's website.

RESOLVED

That the Single Equality Scheme be noted.

REASONS

To meet the Council's obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

EX/24 **Budget 2013/14 – Progress Report to end of September 2013 and Outturn Forecast**

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report that compared expenditure and income with the profiled budget for the period 1st April 2012 to 30th September 2013 and provided a forecast for the full year outturn. It was noted that the forecast underspend for the year now stood at £250,000. This forecast would be updated as the year progressed.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

REASONS

Monitoring of the Council's budget is essential, so that if necessary action can be taken to safeguard the Council's financial position.

EX/25

SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE – MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET

Planning Services Review and Restructure and Response to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee's Recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Living & Working Communities reported that, following a meeting of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee in March 2013, where poor performance of the Planning Department had been brought before the Committee as a major concern of the Finance & Performance Working Group, the Business Improvement Working Group had been tasked with undertaking an independent member review of the Council's Development Management Department to establish the reasons for the poor performance on major applications. The final recommendations of the Working Group, as amended and agreed by the Scrutiny & Overview Committee at its meeting on 11th November 2013, were submitted.

Separately from this review, and in response to the threat of the Council being placed under 'Special Measures' by the Department of Communities and Local Government, an Interim Development Management Improvement Manager had been appointed to put in place short term measures to avoid designation and to identify measures to improve long-term performance, delivery of the service and to meet the needs of customers. As part of this process an action plan had been developed which had put in place a number of interim measures.

As a result of measures previously put in place by the Head of Service and the changes introduced by the Interim Manager, the performance of the department for the most recent two year period had increased from 17% in the last quarter of 2012/13 (January-March 2013) to 50% in the second quarter of 2013/14 (July-September 2013). In the second quarter of 2013/14 (July-September 2013) performance in respect of all applications had significantly improved, with a figure of 90.9% being returned in respect of major applications.

Having achieved the short-term goal of preventing the Council from being designated for special measures, it was now proposed to introduce further changes not only to sustain the improvements in performance but also to increase the momentum of change, moving towards to a more efficient service which met the needs of customers.

Whilst a number of the recommendations of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee were covered by these proposed measures, the recommendations regarding the reorganisation of the structure of the Development Management Department, the appointment of a Planning Director and the integration of all planning functions, including planning policy, within one Directorate were the subject of an ongoing Organisational Restructure process which was currently out for consultation.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the changes already put in place and those proposed to be implemented be noted.

EX/25 Planning Services Review and Restructure and Response to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee's Recommendations (cont.)

- (ii) That the recommendations of the Scrutiny & Overview Committee in relation to the re-structuring of the department, which would form part of the wider management and Organisational Restructure review, be noted.
- (iii) That the following responses to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee's recommendations be agreed:

	Scrutiny & Overview Committee Recommendation	Cabinet response
1.	A "Director of Service" should be appointed to take full control of the day to day running of the department, to carry out a complete re-structure of the department, to carry out a full and complete staff evaluation and appoint the appropriately qualified and experienced staff in the correct positions and to be responsible for productivity and efficiency improvements to ensure that national targets are met in a timely fashion.	Noted. The Chief Executive's current proposals for an Organisational Restructure include the creation of the post of Director of Planning, Economic Development and Property as well as a restructure of Development Management. Council is due to decide on these proposals in January 2014 and it would not be appropriate to comment further at this stage.
2.	Strategic Planning to be brought under the direct control of the new Director of Planning Services in order to improve co-ordination between departments and ensure thorough, accurate and consistent advice is given to Development Control in respect Five Year Housing Land Supply and Localism.	Noted. This is part of the proposal referred to at 1 above.
3.	Environment Health should be separated from the Development Management function.	Noted. This is part of the proposal referred to at 1 above.
4.	The use of six month short term contracts should be reviewed in greater detail. New staff being recruited should have an appropriate "Trial Period" within their contract and then engaged on a full time basis at a fair market rate. This will enable the council to attract the calibre of staff that is now required	Agreed. Short term contracts have been used to cover absence and workload peaks. All new staff are appointed subject to a six month probationary period.

EX/25 Planning Services Review and Restructure and Response to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee's Recommendations (cont.)

5.	A recognised effective appraisal, training and mentoring programme to be implemented.	<p>Agreed. Structured training needs for individual officers will be identified through the appraisal process. Additional training needs for individual officers will be identified through the case review process. Structured monthly half day training sessions will be provided by internal and external specialists for all officer. Support will be given for Continuous Professional Development training and activities for officers.</p>
6.	Provide training to staff on the use of the current software and implement upgrading of equipment as a matter of urgency	<p>Agreed. Individual training needs on software identified through processes referred to in 5 above. Updating and development of software is being undertaken and training being provided. Additional software and training has now been secured.</p>
7.	Consideration should be given to how Section 106 agreements are resourced in the Council and the processes between the departments improved to ensure that there are no unnecessary delays. In the event of lack of suitable resources within the in house legal department the production of S106 agreements should be outsourced so as not to cause any delay in issuing decisions.	<p>Agreed. These steps are in hand. Development Management and legal section are involved in on-going discussions and implementing measures to ensure that process is speeded up to ensure early instruction by officers with the information which is required at the start of the application process.</p>
8.	A review of the departmental structure (North/South and Majors) should be undertaken and changes made forthwith to address the problems identified and establish a new structure ensuring the most efficient provision of services.	<p>Noted. This is part of the proposal referred to at 1 above.</p>

EX/25 Planning Services Review and Restructure and Response to the Scrutiny & Overview Committee's Recommendations (cont.)

9.	External consultants should be engaged to clear the backlog of applications and S106 agreements that have not been dealt with in due time.	Agreed. Action already taken to tackle application backlog through the appointment of Interim DM Improvement Manager and three additional consultants. Further consideration is being given to securing additional resources to accelerate completion of outstanding s106 agreements.
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EX/26 **MATTERS OF SPECIAL URGENCY**

There were no matters of special urgency to be considered.

The meeting closed at 7.28pm having commenced at 5.30 pm.

LEADER