

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 18th April, 2013.

Present: Cllr Robert Cook (Chair); Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy and Cllr Michael Smith.

Officers: N Schneider (CEO); J Danks, B Brown, L King (R); P Dobson, R Poundford, J Nixon, L Stephenson (DNS); J Humphreys (CESC), P Kelly (PH); D E Bond, M Waggott, M Jones, P J Mennear, P K Bell (LD).

Also in attendance: Cllr Nigel Cooke (Chair of Environment Select Committee); Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell (Chair of Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee).

Apologies: Cllr David Coleman, Cllr David Harrington, Cllr Steve Nelson and Cllr David Rose.

CAB 1/13 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Smith declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 11 – Billingham Customer Service Centre as he was a member of Billingham Town Council.

Councillor Mrs McCoy declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 11 – Billingham Customer Service Centre as she was a member of Billingham Town Council.

CAB 2/13 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th March 2013 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

CAB 3/13 **Scrutiny Review of the Marketing of Stockton's Visitor Offer**

Consideration was given to a report on the Scrutiny Review of the Marketing of Stockton's Visitor Offer.

The report outlined the findings and recommendations following the review of the marketing of Stockton's visitor offer undertaken by Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee. The review had considered how the Borough should be promoted as a place to visit and live, following substantial changes to the regional and local support arrangements for the visitor economy. The Committee had also considered the importance of the area's heritage and its key role in the marketing of the Borough.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the additional promotional activity to attract inward investment to be undertaken by Tees Valley Unlimited should include enhancing the quality of life aspects of the marketing materials;
2. a Visitor Economy Sector Action Plan be developed to reflect the revised arrangements for supporting this business sector;
3. work to increase awareness of the opportunities for local businesses to gain benefit from the Council's events programme be undertaken;

4. a local Visitor Economy network be developed to provide a forum for information sharing and promote joint working;
5. methods of supporting the promotion of local restaurants and other places for eating out be explored;
6. the new Stockton Council website should include a dedicated section for visitors to the Borough;
7. the proposed development of a dedicated Stockton Borough heritage website is recognised and could be supported promotionally as existing resources allow;
8. the Council continues to take advantage of all appropriate opportunities to highlight the railway, industrial and scientific heritage of the Borough within promotional channels and its cultural activity and events programme.

**CAB
4/13** **Minutes of Various Bodies**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings of various bodies.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following meetings be received/approved, as appropriate:-

The Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership – 26th February 2013

**CAB
5/13** **LA Nominations**

In accordance with the procedure for the appointment of school governors, approved as Minute 84 of the Cabinet (11th May 2000), Cabinet was requested to approve the nomination to school Governing Body as detailed within the report.

RESOLVED that appointments be made to the vacant Governorship subject to successful List 99 check and Personal Disclosure, as follows:-

Egglescliffe CE Primary School – Mr Alan Judge
Priors Mill CE Primary School – Mr A Gallimore
Tilery Primary School – Mr J Wright

**CAB
6/13** **Economic Climate Update Report**

Cabinet considered a monthly update report providing members with an overview of the current economic climate, outlining the effects that this was having on Stockton Borough, and the mitigations already in place and those being developed.

Members noted some of the positive and negative developments since the last

report. Details of the support on offer to people and businesses was also provided.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted and the work undertaken to date supported.

**CAB
7/13** **Billingham Customer Service Centre Update**

Consideration was given to a report on the Billingham Customer Service Centre.

The report updated Members on the progress made to advance the development of the Billingham Customer Service Centre, including the layout and facilities agreed by the building users; the programme for demolition and redevelopment.

In April 2012 the redevelopment of the site of the Billingham Council Offices and Art Gallery was endorsed as the preferred option for delivery of the Billingham Customer Service Centre, a copy of the Location Plan was attached to the report, subject to further negotiations with the North Tees Primary Care Trust (PCT) to identify any requirements they may have for accommodation within the facility.

Detailed discussions with the building users; including the Library Service, Customer Services, Vela Group and Billingham Town Council, had finalised the accommodation requirements for the building as well as the adjacencies of these services to optimise the use of space. This had resulted in the agreed layout and the Internal Layout and Site Layout was attached to the report. The internal layout provided for Customer Services and Vela to have use of three customer service desks, a cashiers desk, back office and store; the Town Council to have a general office, manager's office and store; the Library Service to have a librarian's office, work room and sufficient space to accommodate the book stock and ICT facilities equivalent to the existing Roseberry site; and for all four services to have the shared use of staff facilities and multi-purpose meeting accommodation.

The next steps for the development were:-

Demolition of existing structures complete - Spring 2013
Library Service consultation complete - Spring 2013
Detailed design complete - Spring 2013
Planning consent - Summer 2013
Contract out to tender - Autumn 2013
Construction commence - Winter 2013
Service Centre operational - Winter 2014

RESOLVED that the progress made to advance the development of the Billingham Customer Service Centre be noted.

**CAB
8/13** **Stockton Local Economic Assessment**

Members considered a report that provided a progress update regarding the Local Economic Assessment (LEA)

The LEA findings did not, in isolation, provide the answers to all of the key questions posed but were instead the start of a baseline assessment of Stockton's current position, and would help the Council to formulate an action plan; developing services and targeted interventions across the Borough.

Key findings included:

- a. A growth in the Borough's manufacturing and distribution sector since the recession started in 2008
- b. An increase in the number of start-up businesses demonstrated by a greater number of businesses less than two years old and two–three years old than nationally
- c. A good spread sizing of businesses across the Borough
- d. Above average vehicle speeds with the North East having the quickest journey times in the country (useful when considered alongside the growing distribution and logistics sector)
- e. A growing use of 'enabling' technologies
- f. A growth in the number of Stockton residents employed in senior, technical and professional occupations
- g. A good level of qualification attainment with levels one and two exceeding national figures and level 3, regional figures. GCSE attainment had also increased by just under one third since 2005
- h. An increase in the number of school leavers progressing to Further Education (FE) and encouragingly, enrolments to FE in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects continues to rise
- i. Despite a regional reduction in university application rates (2012), an increased number of applications to Durham University
- j. A slightly higher than national average (over 77%) of our working age population is economically active.

Whilst the LEA started to form the baseline of the Borough's economy, Census 2011 data had been 'drip fed' over the past six months and The Council had not yet been able to interrogate it sufficiently, in some cases, to evaluate across variations in data nor establish why variations occur, i.e. why certain conditions are prevalent, or if there are specific trends apparent. This work was ongoing and the Census data would be added as made available (as intelligence).

Census data aside, it was becoming increasingly obvious that the Council did do not have access to a sufficient range of information / data sources to form a true and sufficiently detailed picture of the economy of our Borough, and one of the main considerations must therefore be given to resourcing qualitative data.

The known changes coming forward during 2013/2014 as part of the Welfare Reform also need to be understood in greater depth, in terms of their impact on families/individuals and Stockton's economy as a whole.

In October 2012 a report commissioned by the Council, published by the Institute of Local Governance (ILG), considered the impact that Welfare Reform would have on Stockton's economy and local communities. These initial findings were based on the limited level of intelligence available at the time and were

used to inform short term policy changes to manage the short and longer term transition arrangements. This intelligence needed to be built upon to include hard data and softer intelligence around behaviour changes; to inform the broader impact anticipated as a result of the benefit changes.

Data and intelligence would be gathered from a number of sources from April 2013 going forward, to monitor the impact on a number of levels as detailed below. This intelligence gathering was happening at a local, Tees Valley and Regional level with measures in place to monitor the short, medium and long term impact on both the residents and the economy.

- k. certain groups in the population, e.g. disabled people, households
- l. LSOA, Ward and Borough levels
- m. those that have already been affected by the recession
- n. people's reduced spending power as a result of having less disposable income
- o. impact on businesses
- p. the potential for a reduced number of jobs in the labour market
- q. both statutory and non statutory services
- r. community and voluntary sector services
- s. future policy implications
- t. impact on Partner organisations

RESOLVED that

1. the continued research associated with the development of the LEA be authorised.
2. the Corporate Director of Development and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport, be authorised to agree and approve the final LEA

**CAB
9/13**

Lindsay House Compulsory Purchase Order

The Chair outlined that he had accepted this item as being urgent as the confirmation of the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) was required to ensure that the Council could acquire all remaining interests within a reasonable timescale to progress demolition of the building as part of the regeneration improvements to the Town Centre.

Consideration was given to a report on the progress of the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) of leasehold interests within the Council owned Lindsay House building on Stockton High Street and sought the relevant authority to confirm and finalise the CPO process, allowing the Council to gain vacant possession of the property and ultimately demolish the building and redevelop the site as part of wider redevelopment proposals for Stockton High Street which were underway.

At Cabinet on 8th December 2011 approval was given for the use of CPO powers under section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by section 99 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) to

acquire all necessary interests in Lindsay House and the adjacent area required for the implementation of the redevelopment of the Lindsay House site.

The rationale for the CPO was set out in the attached Statement of Reasons that was attached to the report. This document set out the basis upon which the CPO was made and detailed the reasons upon which a decision on the confirmation of the CPO would be based.

Following Cabinet approval in December 2011 the CPO was made on 17th August 2012 to acquire the leasehold interests of 5 remaining tenants. The CPO was attached to the report for Members to be aware of the interests that were subject to the order. Since then the Council had been successful in either relocating businesses to alternative premises in the town centre or terminating the leases of some of the tenants who did not seek to relocate or had already left the premises. Two tenants (Arriva and Instant Cash Loans Ltd) were the only remaining tenants occupying the building.

The making of the CPO went through statutory consultation and only one objection to the CPO was received, from Instant Cash Loans Ltd. As a result the Secretary of State was required to list the matter for a Public Inquiry to consider the objection and determine whether to confirm the CPO or refuse it. The Inquiry was scheduled for 23rd April 2013. Officers had been in discussion with both remaining interests over options for relocation and compensation payable under CPO code of compensation.

Arriva did not object to the CPO but they remained a tenant with rights to occupy and their lease must still be acquired by implementing the CPO or by a deed of surrender which was also being negotiated with them, and would continue to be negotiated even if the CPO was confirmed. The confirmation of the CPO was required to ensure that the Council could acquire all remaining interests within a reasonable timescale to progress demolition of the building as part of the regeneration improvements to the Town Centre, should a deed of surrender not be forthcoming. Discussions were progressing well with Arriva on the identification of alternative accommodation and officers were confident that they would relocate into a unit on the High Street.

Discussion with Instant Cash Loans Ltd had resulted in them withdrawing their objection to the CPO as they had secured alternative premises in the town centre at 140 High Street. The withdrawal of the CPO had negated the need for the CPO Inquiry scheduled for 23rd April, which had now been cancelled with DCLG granting authority for the Council to confirm the CPO and finalise the process of bringing all remaining interests into the Councils ownership. As with Arriva, their lease also required formal termination by the confirmation of the CPO or a deed of surrender.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Council of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees (Lindsay House, Stockton-on-Tees) Compulsory Purchase Order 2012 be confirmed.

2. All necessary declarations, orders or notices, including a General Vesting Declaration, Notices to Treat or Notices of Entry be made or served to give effect to the Compulsory Purchase Order and all remaining interests be acquired by the Council.

CAB 10/13 Task and Finish Review of Community Safety and Security Services

Consideration was given to a report on the Task and Finish Review of Community Safety and Security Services.

The report presented the Environment Select Committee findings following the Task and Finish Review of Community Safety and Security Services. The review considered evidence regarding performance of the services, including corporately collected data and Crime Statistics, while also examining the results of various customer feedback and resident surveys that had previously been carried out.

RESOLVED that:-

1. Collaboration between Tees Valley Authorities regarding the provision of CCTV / community alarm services infrastructure be supported.
2. The development of Flare to enable members of the public access to review their cases and check progress in the first instance be supported.
3. Vela review the impact of the current review of the concierge services within 12 months following its introduction. The review should include:-
 - A customer satisfaction survey
 - Log of incidents that has occurred
 - An assessment of whether there has been any impact in terms of resident's social isolation that may have resulted from the changes

CAB 11/13 Executive Arrangements

Cabinet considered a report that detailed the decisions taken by the Leader of the Council regarding Cabinet Members, Cabinet Portfolios and executive functions and delegated powers under the Council's Constitution.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

CAB 12/13 Discretionary Housing Payment

Cabinet considered a report relating to Welfare reform changes from April 2013. In particular changes introduced size criteria rules for tenants of registered social landlords which would significantly increase demand for discretionary housing payments from tenants who could not afford to make up the shortfall between the housing benefit payment and the rent charged. Government funding had increased but it was sufficient to cover only 7% of the additional

shortfalls.

Cabinet was asked to approve a new discretionary housing payment scheme which would set out the Council's priorities for such awards. This was provided to members as an appendix to the report.

It was noted that when considering applications for discretionary housing payments it was usual to make a detailed assessment of the personal circumstances of the claimant and family including consideration of income and expenditure, the level of indebtedness etc. Support and advice was tailored to the individual, and a discretionary housing payment was just one tool utilised in order to resolve the underlying housing problems on a long term basis. Such casework was time consuming and costly to provide. With the welfare reform changes the type of problems presenting would change and this "in depth" approach would be too intensive or inappropriate in a number of circumstances. Equally there were other cases where it would be unreasonable, or not in the public interest to expect a claimant to move. It was therefore proposed to "fast track" applications for DHP in these cases to allow more intensive support to be focused on those cases where it is most needed.

It was explained that expenditure on Discretionary Housing Payments would be monitored on a monthly basis and the number and types of awards would be continually scrutinised to ensure that resources were targeted to areas of most need and that there was equitable treatment of client groups. Further DWP guidance relating to DHP's was expected and there could be further legislative changes which impacted upon the policy. It was therefore recommended that delegated authority to make amendments to the policy was approved to the Head of Housing in consultation with the lead Cabinet Member.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the revised discretionary housing payment policy be approved.
2. the approach to the operation of the scheme in year 1 by the utilisation of the fast track process for certain short term cases affected by the under occupancy rules in the social rented sector be approved.
3. responsibility for approval of amendments to the policy be delegated to the Head of Housing in consultation with the lead cabinet member.