

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Cabinet** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, NG24 1BY on Tuesday, 24 September 2024 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor P Peacock (Chair)
Councillor R Cozens, Councillor S Crosby, Councillor L Brazier,
Councillor E Oldham and Councillor P Taylor

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor N Allen, Councillor I Brown, Councillor K Melton and
Councillor P Rainbow

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor C Penny and Councillor R Holloway

177 NOTIFICATION TO THOSE PRESENT THAT THE MEETING WILL BE RECORDED AND STREAMED ONLINE

The Leader advised that the proceedings were being audio recorded and live streamed by the Council.

178 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillor L Brazier declared a Non-Registerable Interest in Agenda Item No. 13 – Transfer of Section 106 Open Space – off Site Sports Contribution to Ollerton Town Football Club – given he was the local Ward Member and his daughter played for Ollerton Town Football Club.

Councillor S Crosby and Councillor P Taylor declared Other Registerable Interests in Agenda Item No. 8 – Proposal to Adopt the Land and Ongoing Maintenance of the Middlebeck Phase One Development – as Members of Newark Town Council.

179 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2024

The minutes from the meeting held on 10 September 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

180 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GRANT AMENDMENTS (KEY DECISION)

The Business Manager - Public Protection presented a report which set out proposed amendments to the adopted standalone policy covering the administration and distribution of mandatory and discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) and changes to the private sector housing Minor Works Grant (MWG) scheme. These grants were designed to provide adaptations to the home to allow people to continue to live in the community and were means tested.

The report sought approval for a number of amendments to both the DFG and MWG schemes which reflected feedback from service users and partner organisations over recent years, a recognition that building and labour costs had increased significantly since the last revisions made in 2021, plus the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and assisting ex-service personnel and their families.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet approve:

- a) the inclusion of the Armed Forces Covenant into the policy;
- b) the increase in the discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant funding from £20,000 to £30,000 to be funded through the Better Care Fund Allocation;
- c) the increase to the Minor Works Grant funding from £5,000 to £10,000 to be funded through the Better Care Fund Allocation;
- d) a review of the outcome of the amendments to the discretionary grant maximum amounts after 6 months of the policy update approval; and
- e) delegated authority to the Director – Communities & Environment, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder - Housing and the Leader of the Council to increase the discretionary grant by a further £10,000 without requiring a further report to the Cabinet, if considered appropriate, following the review.

Reasons for Decision:

To ensure that the Council can continue to deliver necessary adaptations to enable residents to live independently at home for longer.

Options Considered:

Do nothing – this would not allow inclusion of the Armed Forces Covenant in line with other Council policies, limit the number of disabled facilities grants that can be approved due to maximum limits reached and prevent additional minor works to be completed.

Consider differing funding limits – The proposed amended grant maximum have been based on the current costs of adaptations that are being managed by the team. There will always be a few cases that will exceed any limit but these levels represent the majority of cases.

181 NEWARK & SHERWOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY 2022 - 2026 - YEAR 2 OUTTURN REPORT

The Senior Health Improvement Officer presented a report which gave a mid-point update on the Health & Wellbeing Strategy for 2022 to 2026. The Strategy helped the Council deliver against objective one in the Community Plan to 'Improve Health & Wellbeing' and aligned to the County Council's joint strategy. Appendix A to the report provided a detailed midterm update on the strategy at year two.

The Cabinet welcomed the update and the positive work the Council were doing in respect of health and wellbeing. It was suggested that the update could include the family hub in Ollerton and the work the Council does in respect of biodiversity such as the provision of play parks and outdoor fitness equipment. One matter which remained of concern was access to the provision of emergency care.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet note the work delivered to date in line with the Health & Wellbeing Strategy for 2022 to 2026.

Reasons for Decision:

To share the progress made against the Health & Wellbeing Strategy for 2023-24.

Options Considered:

None, the Council had local priorities in respect of health and wellbeing.

182 PROPOSAL TO ADOPT THE LAND AND ONGOING MAINTENANCE OF THE MIDDLEBECK PHASE ONE DEVELOPMENT (KEY DECISION)

The Director – Planning & Growth presented a report which put forward a proposal that would see land from the first phase of the Middlebeck Development being maintained by the Council over the next 20 years through a commuted sum payment of £2million. It was reported that at the time land south of Newark was consented the Council agreed to take on the public open space as part of the new development, something it now does not normally do. However, there were practical advantages of the Council taking on the land which were set out in the report. The commuted sum of £2m was inclusive of maintenance costs and repairs and renewals which would be required over the 20-year period. It was noted that any agreement was dependent on Newark Town Council not wishing to take on the ownership of this land which they could do under the current devolution agreement.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- a) approve, subject to appropriate legal mechanisms and formal decision from Newark Town Council it does not wish to take on the land, the Council entering into a long-term arrangement to adopt and maintain the open space from the first phase of the Middlebeck development in Newark;
- b) approve the maintenance of the land in return for a £2million commuted sum agreed with the developer, Urban & Civic;
- c) agrees that, at the end of the 20-year period, ongoing maintenance of the land would be funded from the Council's own resources;
- d) approves that delegated authority be given to the Council's Directors - Communities & Environment and Planning & Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders, to enter into an appropriate legally-binding contract with the developer Urban & Civic, as detailed at paragraph 2.6 of the report; and
- e) approves that Newark Town Council be formally approached for a decision about whether it wishes to take on responsibility for the future ownership and maintenance of the land in line with the principles set out in the Devolution Agreement.

Reasons for Decision:

The recommendations align with the Community Plan objectives in relation to biodiversity, the environment and climate change. As set out in the report, the development has the potential to help the Council meet objectives set out in the community plan, thereby offering value beyond the £2million commuted sum to maintain the open spaces.

Options Considered:

The existing S106 Planning legal agreements set out that the land will be passported to Newark & Sherwood District Council in stages when certain housebuilding milestones are reached. A management company option, which exist in some other parts of the district, is not deemed to be viable by the developer, with sales in the first phase not having this mechanism incorporated. Homeowners would understandably have an expectation that an additional charge in this regard would not be placed upon them. The Council could look to passport the land and the funding to the Town Council which does have precepting powers to fund the maintenance of the land once the commuted sum has been defrayed. This was envisaged in the devolution deal with the Town Council in that they would have the first option on any new space in their administrative boundary. The Middlebeck Open Space crosses town and parish boundaries, stretching beyond the devolution agreement. Moreover, Members may be aware of the financial challenges the Town Council faces, irrespective of the additional challenge that comes with an asset of the size and scale of future Open Space cumulatively across Middlebeck which incorporates open space in every phase and new country parks. Informal discussions with the Town Council have seen these concerns raised, but there is not yet a formal decision from the Town not to take on the land or otherwise.

183 CORPORATE ANNUAL BUDGET STRATEGY FOR 2025/26

The Business Manager - Financial Services presented a report which to set out the General Fund, Capital & Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Strategy for 2025/26. The Strategy was considered by the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee at their meeting held on 24 June 2014 at which they recommended approval.

It was noted that the budget process would result in setting the budget and the Council Tax for 2025/26 and the HRA budget and the rent setting for 2025/26.

The Strategy took into consideration agreed financial policies on Budgeting and Council Tax, Reserves and Provisions, Charging, Value for Money and also a set of Budget Principles which set out the approach to be taken to the budget process. These policies had been reviewed and updated where necessary and were attached as appendices to the report.

The current Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was approved on 7 March 2024. The report set out a summary of the financial forecast identified within the current MTFP assuming that Council Tax average Band D would increase by the same rate as in the 2024/25 financial year, namely 1.94%.

The report also set out a number of underlying assumptions which would be applied in compiling the draft budget for 2025/26 including staff costs, provision for inflation and fees and charges.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- a) approve the overall General Fund, Capital & HRA Budget Strategy for 2025/26;
- b) note the consultation process with Members;
- c) note that Budget Officers continue work on the assessment of various budget proposals affecting services for consideration in setting the Council's budget; and
- d) note that Budget Managers work with finance officers in identifying further efficiency savings, increasing income from fees and charges and in identifying new sources of income.

Reasons for Decision:

To enable the Council's budget process to proceed encompassing agreed assumptions.

Options Considered:

Not applicable, the Budget Strategy is required each year in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

184 COMMERCIAL PLAN UPDATE

The Business Manager - Financial Services presented a report which gave an update on the Commercial Strategy and action plan which demonstrated how the Council was responding to the anticipated reduction in funding by making strategic savings and generating additional income. From the MTF and subsequent Annual Budget Strategy this showed an anticipated £300,000 reductions in net expenditure in 2024/25 increasing in later years to £520,000.

The Council had identified areas where additional income could be made, or savings could be achieved without impacting the quality of service delivery. The report detailed projects and actions identified as generating income and/or achieving savings which were broken down into three categories.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet note the update on the Commercial Plan.

Reasons for Decision:

To share how the Council is seeking to address our forecast financial deficit.

Options Considered:

None, this was an update report.

185 ANNUAL REVIEW OF EXEMPT ITEMS

The Business Manager – Elections & Democratic Services presented a report which detailed the exempt business considered by the Cabinet for period 11 July 2023 to date. The report set out those reports taken as exempt business and identified which items, in the opinion of report authors, could be released into the public domain.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- a) note the report, with any items being released into the public domain if considered no longer exempt by report authors; and
- b) the annual review of exempt items continues to be brought to the Cabinet going forward.

Reasons for Decision:

To review previous exempt reports considered by the Cabinet over the previous 12 months and to continue receiving this report in order to release reports into the public domain if appropriate.

Options Considered:

This report reviews previous exempt items of business considered by the Cabinet over the previous 12 months, in order to release any information into the public domain if appropriate.

Given the report only reviews confidential items over the previous 12 months it is limited in scope and an alternative approach to taking this report on an annual basis is to utilise the Freedom of Information regime which enables the public to request reports / information to be released at any time which would then be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

There is also provision under the Access to Information Procedure Rules for Members to request the Monitoring Officer to release exempt information into the public domain if there are substantive reasons to do so (paragraph 1.3 of the report refers).

186 NEWARK TOWNS FUND UPDATE (KEY DECISION)

The Business Manager - Economic Growth & Visitor Economy presented a report which provided an update for the Cabinet on the Newark Towns Fund Programme and sought approval to submit a Project Adjustment Request to the Government to redistribute the grant funding from the Gateway Project to the Newark Heart Project.

It was noted that the original Newark Cultural Heart project envisaged a £1.5m capital Towns Fund grant towards the visible transformation of Newark Market Place. The aspiration was that this would allow a space, with associated infrastructure that could accommodate a range of experiences from the markets to events, to al-fresco dining, to areas to relax and play. However, it was apparent that the current £1.5m budget would be insufficient to change the Market Place as originally hoped, given the level of reinforcement work required on infrastructure.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet:

- a) note and welcome the progress on the Towns Fund Programme; and
- b) approve, subject to agreement from the Newark Town Board, the following:

- i. an increase to the Newark Cultural Heart delivery budget by £2,203,737 (made up of £2,110,000 from the Towns Fund Capital grant and £93,737 from the Towns Fund Revenue grant;
- ii. delegate to the Director - Resources, in consultation with the Director - Planning & Growth, authorisation to submit a Project Adjustment Request form to Government seeking authorisation to re-allocate the remaining £2,203,737 detailed at b) ii from the Newark Gateway scheme to the Newark Cultural Heart project; and
- iii. to undertake the Full Business Case and return to Cabinet for approval in late 2024.

Reasons for Decision:

Through the recent Newark Masterplan consultation, the Market Place continues to be a priority for the community. Additional grant will allow for a visible and impactful transformation of the space, enhancing the space for events and animation.

Options Considered:

The Council could return the grant earmarked for the Newark Gateway (SiSCLog) to Government. This has been discounted given the ability to enhance Newark Market Place as part of Newark Cultural Heart, another Town Fund project.

187 TRANSFER OF SECTION 106 OPEN SPACE - OFF SITE SPORTS CONTRIBUTION TO OLLERTON TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB

The Business Manager – Regeneration & Strategic Housing presented a report which sought Cabinet approval to transfer Section 106 contributions held by the District Council for open space off site sports to Ollerton Town Football Club for improvements at the Walesby Lane Sports Ground in Ollerton.

AGREED (unanimously) that Cabinet approve:

- a) the Section 106 contributions for open space off site sports held by the District Council be transferred to Ollerton Town FC for improvements at the Walesby Lane Sports Ground in Ollerton; and
- b) the Council's Capital Programme for 2024/25 is increased by £59,696.76 financed by the Section 106 receipt reference AG924 held for open space off site sports improvements in Ollerton.

Reasons for Decision:

To enable Ollerton Town Football Club to deliver improvements to its sports ground in Ollerton which will deliver improved sporting, health and community benefits and outcomes for local residents.

Options Considered:

The Section 106 receipt held under this agreement must be spent on open space off site sports in Ollerton, therefore it is appropriate that the District Council transfers the receipt held to Ollerton Town Football Club in order that the Club, as long term

leaseholder and operator of site, can deliver much needed improvements to the sports ground for the benefit of local community groups which access and use the site.

The District Council is working closely with the Ollerton Town Football Club to improve the facilities at its ground in order to grow its capacity to accommodate increased active participation in sport and leisure activities at one of the communities most valuable assets and it is appropriate therefore to support the Club to deliver improvements at the site as part of a wider ambition to regenerate the site and protect it for future generations.

The Walesby Lane site was determined as the most appropriate site to invest in based on the recent growth in the numbers of teams based at the site particularly women and girls' participation and the scope the ground offers for further expansion of activity to meet the growing demand for football locally. The only other local sports club with its own outdoor facility has suitable provision to meet local demand.

Meeting closed at 6.56 pm.

Chair