

PRESENT: Ashcroft (Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs Atherley Gibson
Blane J Hodson
Baldock Jones
Bell Moran
Cheetham O'Toole
Cropper Pendleton
Mrs R Evans Pope
Fillis Savage
Gagen

Officers: Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration (Mr R Livermore)
Deputy Borough Treasurer (Mr M Kostrzewski)
Strategic Housing Manager (Mr S Jones)
Planning Officer (Mr D Carr)
Principal Solicitor (Mr L Gardner)
Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer (Mrs CA Jackson)

In attendance:

Councillors: Owens (Portfolio Holder – Housing (Finance), Regeneration & Estates)
Westley (Portfolio Holder – Resources and Transformation)

44. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

45. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 2, Members noted the termination of membership of Councillor Kay and the appointment of Councillor Mrs Atherley for this meeting only thereby giving effect to the wishes of the Political Groups.

46. URGENT BUSINESS

There are no items of urgent business.

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs Atherley, Ashcroft, , Baldock, Blane, Bell, Cheetham, J Hodson, Jones and Pope declared non-pecuniary interests in relation to Item 14 (Medium Term Capital Programme) in relation to Parish Council matters in view of their membership of Parish Councils.

48. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of a Party Whip.

49. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2012 be received as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

50. RELEVANT MINUTES OF CABINET

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 15 January 2013. Questions and comments were raised in respect of the following items:

Minute 98 (Collective Energy Switching) – delegation re. procedure process in relation to the scheme; opportunity to scrutinise selection; potential benefits; use of collective buying power; overlap of schemes; monitoring of future energy prices.

Minute 99 (Traffic Regulation Orders Pay & Display Parking, Sandy Lane & Yeadon, Skelmersdale) - Traffic Regulation Order (TPO) – Sandy Lane Parade short stay duration and associated charges; parking permits for the scheme.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Cabinet be held on 15 January 2013 be noted.

51. CALL IN ITEM - ITEM REFERRED FROM CORPORATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMPLAINTS MONITORING

Consideration was given the report of the Borough Solicitor which advised that a decision in respect of the above item (Minute 82 refers) had received a call in requisition signed by five members of the Committee. The report set out the reason for the call in together with a different decision put forward by the five Members concerned on the requisition notice.

In the ensuing discussion the following comments/questions were noted in relation to:

- Volume of customer interactions handled by the Contact Centre and across the Authority;
- Advantages/disadvantages associated with the recording/logging of verbal complaints; investment in new software to support and the capturing complaints data.

RESOLVED: That the Committee does not wish to ask for a different decision.

52. ITEM REFERRED BY CABINET - SKELMERSDALE & UP HOLLAND DEMAND RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT SYSTEM

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Solicitor which detailed the request by Cabinet to refer the report of the Borough Planner, attached as Appendix 1, to the Committee for consideration, in respect of Skelmersdale & Up Holland Demand Responsive Transport System.

Members discussed the performance of the pilot demand responsive transport system since its introduction and raised questions/comments in relation to:

- The notable increase in passenger numbers using the service.

- The possibility of an expansion of the service to neighbouring areas.
- The costs associated with the scheme and the fare increases.
- The use of Section 106 commuted funds to support the service.
- Long term approach to transport systems in Skelmersdale, including upgrading of the subways to encourage mobility between areas.
- The benefits to those travelling to the firms in the scheme to seek work.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

53. WELFARE REFORM

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration that gave details of a range of financial initiatives to support tenants through the planned and proposed range of Welfare Reforms.

In the ensuing discussion Members raised questions/comments on:

- The remit/role of the Financial Inclusion Officer, including support/advice to tenants in relation to other related initiatives, benefits and debt management.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and proposals therein be supported.

54. CONSULTATION WLBC HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY AND TENURE POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration which sought the views of the Committee on both of the above consultation documents as part of the overall consultation process. The report gave an overview of the proposed changes to the documents and advised that the consultation period relating to them was due to conclude on 22 February 2013.

In the ensuing discussion questions/comments were noted in relation to:

- Circumstances of tenants affected by the new tenancy arrangements.
- Application of the priority housing allocation Bands.
- Affect of the bedroom tax – notification; household income; family mobility; underoccupancy and down-sizing.
- Meaning/affect in applying the local connection criteria.
- Sheltered Housing and application of local connection criteria.
- Tenancy succession and promotion of mixed, socially mobile communities.

The Strategic Housing Manager attended the meeting and responded to questions referencing details contained in the report. He explained the guidance received from Government in relation to tenancy succession and the qualification criteria and application of “local connection”. He concluded that it was intended that the Policy would be reviewed on a regular basis.

Members discussed the proposed 12 month qualifying period related to the local connection criteria in respect of employment.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that the agreed comment, that the Local Connection Criteria related to the 12 month employment qualifying period be removed, be incorporated in the report to Cabinet on 19 March 2013.

55. BUSINESS PLAN 2013/14 REFRESH

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Managing Directors that gave details of the Business Plan 2013/14 Refresh (Appendix A – version dated 14 January 2013) as contained on pages 1791 to 1844 of the Book of Reports.

RESOLVED: That the “Business Plan 2013/14 Refresh” (Appendix A – version dated 14 January 2013) go forward to Council on 27 February 2013 for adoption.

56. DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2013-14

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Treasurer which provided a summary of the current General Revenue Account position.

In discussion Members made reference to the budget position and the provision of alcohol beverages in the Mayor’s room following full Council meetings.

RESOLVED: That the budget position be noted.

57. MEDIUM TERM CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Treasurer which set out a number of options for determining the medium term capital programme in the context of the current difficult financial environment.

Members made comments in relation to:

- The financial approach being taken.
- Sheltered accommodation – provision of lifts.

During the discussion a question was raised in relation to funding schemes and responsibilities related to bus shelter improvements or removal. The Deputy Borough Treasurer who attended the meeting made an undertaking to provide a response to the Member who had raised this.

RESOLVED: That the medium term capital programme be noted.

58. HOUSING ACCOUNT - REVENUE & CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report by the Assistant Director Housing and Regeneration which provided a summary of the budget position for the Housing Account for the next financial year.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

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Chairman