



RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Tuesday, 3rd April, 2007 at 4.30 p.m.
In the Tichbourne Suite, Princes Hall, Aldershot

Councillor P.J. Moyle (Leader)
Councillor R.L.G. Dibbs (Deputy Leader and Environment Portfolio)

Councillor Mrs. D.B. Bedford (Leisure and Youth Portfolio)
Councillor M.S. Choudhary (Concessions and Community Support Portfolio)
Councillor A.M. Ferrier (Corporate Services Portfolio)
Councillor G.J. Tucker (Safety and Regulation Portfolio)
Councillor F.J. Williams (Health and Housing Portfolio)

The Cabinet considered the following matters at the above-mentioned meeting. All executive decisions of the Cabinet shall become effective, subject to the call-in procedure, from **Monday, 23rd April, 2007**.

137. **MINUTES –**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 20th March, 2007 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

138. **REGENERATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP –**
(Environment)

The Cabinet welcomed Cr. J.J. Wall, Chairman of the Environment Policy and Review Panel, who was attending the meeting to present the findings of the Regeneration Task and Finish Group in respect of the criteria and approach to assessing priority areas for regeneration and neighbourhood renewal.

Cr. Wall advised the Cabinet of the terms of reference of the Group and the process of the work carried out, which had included: considering

updates on the town centre study work in Farnborough and Aldershot; reviewing the North Camp regeneration work; considering information on delivering sustainable communities; and, reviewing the work of the Community Policy and Review Panel on social needs and deprivation.

The key issues that had emerged from the Task and Finish Group had been: that it would be more appropriate to use the term “neighbourhood renewal” than “regeneration”; the importance of partnership working to bring in external knowledge, skills and resources; the use of corporate working and policies to identify projects which would have an impact in a local area; and, the engagement of the community throughout the process.

Cr. Wall advised the Cabinet that the Task and Finish Group proposed to continue its work in the 2007/08 Municipal Year and that the approach to neighbourhood renewal should build on the current approach used in the North Camp regeneration work.

During discussion, it was agreed that it was important for the Council to focus on the concept of neighbourhood renewal and creating sustainable communities within locations across the Borough, particularly in the light of the White Paper on Local Government. The importance of multi-agency working was stressed to achieve change. The Cabinet referred to the relevance of the work of the Community Policy and Review Panel on indices of deprivation in examining what it was that the Council and others should be doing to make sure those deprived areas of the Borough were no longer categorised as deprived. The Panel had identified all the elements that contributed to deprivation (e.g. poor educational attainment) and it was felt that the work of both the Community and Environment Panels could be drawn together on a corporate basis to focus on neighbourhood renewal in areas within wards where there was deprivation.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the findings of the Regeneration Task and Finish Group be endorsed, subject to the comments set out above;
- (ii) it be recommended that the Task and Finish Group be renamed “Neighbourhood Renewal Task and Finish Group”; and
- (iii) a corporate approach be taken to neighbourhood renewal to incorporate the findings of both the Social Needs and Deprivation Task and Finish Group (Community Policy and Review Panel) and the Neighbourhood Renewal Task and Finish Group (Environment Policy and Review Panel).

139. **FINANCIAL MATTERS –**
(Leader)

(1) **Revenue Budget Monitoring 2006/07 – Position as at March 2007 –**

The Cabinet received the Head of Financial Services' Report No. FIN0705, which set out the Council's anticipated financial position for 2006/07, based on the monitoring exercise carried out during March, 2007. The Report advised that, allowing for the variations mentioned in the Report, the Council's General Fund revenue balances were currently forecast to be approximately £1.15 million by the end of 2006/07. This assumed that the £700,000 reductions in service costs were to be achieved. The latest forecast showed no significant improvement in the Council's financial position and put greater emphasis on financial management over the medium term, particularly through the savings and efficiency programme.

The Cabinet NOTED the Head of Financial Services' Report No. FIN0705 and the importance of the savings and efficiencies programme over the medium term.

(2) **Capital Programme Monitoring 2006/07 – Position as at March 2007 –**

The Cabinet received the Head of Financial Services' Report No. FIN0706 which set out the position regarding the Council's Capital Programme for 2006/07, based on the monitoring exercise carried out during March, 2007.

The Cabinet NOTED the latest Capital Programme monitoring position.

140. **SAVINGS AND EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME AND ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT FORWARD LOOK –**
(Leader)

The Cabinet considered the Director of Resources' Report No. DOR0707 which set out a framework and approach to address the Council's requirement for reductions over the medium term in the level of spending to ensure that the Council maintained a sound financial position, including an outline of the potential areas for savings and efficiencies and the latest information and position on the Annual Efficiency Statement.

The Cabinet had previously identified the areas of staff monitoring, fees and charges, rent reviews and service reviews for potential reductions in net expenditure in 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10. With regard to staff monitoring, the Cabinet was advised that vacancies within the establishment would be monitored by the Directors' Management Board. In respect of fees and charges, the Cabinet had previously considered proposals to review charges in 2007/08 in line with the medium term financial strategy and further proposals would be developed over the medium term. Rent reviews would

continue to be monitored as and when opportunities arose and when renewals or review dates were due. In consultation with Heads of Services, the Directors' Management Board had agreed potential areas for savings and efficiencies. These ranged in size and impact and would require further work in terms of the potential for savings, timescale, resource implications and assessment of impact on services. The principal areas identified for service reviews were parks and open spaces, Aldershot Lido, tourism and the Aldershot Visitor Centre and Customer 1st/ICT programme. In respect of process reviews, those identified were licensing and Hackney Carriages, development control, administration and recycling (garden waste). In addition, there were a number of other potential areas that were being developed for work over the medium term. These included: recruitment and payroll (including joint working); review of printing, mobile phones and energy efficiency; and, joint working on service provision and contract management.

The Cabinet was advised that the Directors' Management Board would take responsibility for reviewing the programme of work on a monthly basis, with regular updates to be given to the Cabinet and reports to Corporate Services Policy and Review Panel on the overall position on the programme. Other Policy and Review Panels would be involved and consulted on proposals and processes, including the setting up of task and finish groups.

The Cabinet considered the financial implications of the savings and efficiency programme. It was recognised that, in a number of cases, there would be a requirement for investment to be made in order to enable delivery of revenue savings. It was agreed that this could be achieved by using the service restructuring fund.

The Cabinet also considered the Annual Efficiency Statement Forward Look, which outlined the Council's strategy for securing efficiency gains in 2007/08. The Cabinet endorsed the key actions identified in the appendix to the Report, which were anticipated to deliver efficiency savings of £588,400. It was noted that, in future, progress against the Council's Annual Efficiency Statement would be reported as part of the savings and efficiency programme.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the Savings and Efficiency Programme, monitoring arrangements and the Annual Efficiency Statement Forward Look 2007/08 be endorsed.

141. **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – REPRESENTATIONS ON THE RUSHMOOR CORE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT – (Environment)**

The Cabinet considered the Head of Planning Services' Report No. PLN0712, which set out a summary of the representations received as a result of consultation on the Core Strategy Development Plan Document, following its submission to the Secretary of State on 20th December 2006.

The Cabinet was advised that a Planning Inspector, Robert Yuille, had been appointed by the Government Office for the South East to carry out the examination of the Core Strategy, which was scheduled to start at the end of July, 2007. Following consideration of the representations received, the Inspector had requested an exploratory meeting with the Council and representatives of English Nature, Environment Agency and the Government Office for the South East. This meeting had taken place on 29th March, 2007 to discuss some of the key issues raised, including clarification over the delivery of the Council's housing requirement of 6,200 new homes during the period 2006-26 and the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

The Cabinet noted that, since the Local Development Framework system had been introduced in 2004, several local authorities had withdrawn their Core Strategy Development Plan Document following submission due to potential problems with the soundness of the document; others had been found to be unsound following examination. The Cabinet was advised that the Head of Planning Services might need to make small alterations to policy in the Core Strategy during the examination. It was agreed that delegated authority would be given to the Head of Planning Services to make such amendments and that the Cabinet Member for Environment would be notified immediately when such changes were made.

The Cabinet

- (i) **NOTED** the representations made on the submitted Core Strategy Development Plan Document; and
- (ii) **RESOLVED** that delegated authority be given to the Head of Planning Services to make minor amendments to the Core Strategy during the examination into the Council's Core Strategy.

142. REVIEW OF TRANSACTION COSTS FOR CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS – (Corporate Services)

The Cabinet considered the Head of Customer Services' Report No. CS0705, which proposed options available for passing on some of the costs of handling credit card payments to those customers paying Council Tax by that method.

At the meeting on 20th March, 2007, the Cabinet had supported the principle of passing on some or all of the transaction charges for credit card handling, subject to further analysis of the options available. The Report set out details of Council Tax charges for 2007/08 and bank charges for credit card transactions. The average Council Tax payment by credit card over the past four months was £146.78, which resulted in an average transaction fee charge to the Council of £4.07.

The Cabinet considered various options for passing on percentage charges of the transaction fee, which would ensure that the fee paid by the

customer was always proportionate to the amount being paid and to the amount ultimately being charged to the Council. This would also ensure the reduction of the Council's collection costs of Council Tax by passing on an element of the credit card transaction fee to customers paying in this way. A further option would be to set a fixed fee per credit card payment based on the average payment. The Cabinet considered that this would not protect the Council from very high charges associated with larger payments and also that a fixed fee would penalise disproportionately those paying smaller sums. The Cabinet was of the opinion that passing on a percentage charge represented a fairer and more financially sound methodology than a fixed fee model and agreed that a rate of 2.5% should be charged.

During discussion, Members stressed the need for further work to encourage customers to make payments by direct debit.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) approval be given to making a charge of 2.5% to customers making Council Tax payments by credit card (this figure to be amended proportionately should changes be negotiated with the bank at a later date); and
- (ii) the start date for charging be agreed between the Head of Customer Services and the Cabinet Member for Customer Services, subject to operational arrangements.

143. **POOL ROAD, ALDERSHOT – ERECTION OF GATES –**
(Environment)

The Director of Community and Environment requested approval to seek planning permission for gates, which had been installed at Pool Road, Aldershot. The gates were required to secure access to a track to a storage area near the Lido. The gates that had been installed were slightly higher than the original ones and hence planning permission was required.

During discussion, Members requested that the gates should be painted in a subdued, green colour.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that approval be given to seeking planning permission for the erection of gates at Pool Road, Aldershot.

144. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC –**

RESOLVED: That, taking into account the public interest test, the public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the undermentioned item to avoid the disclosure of exempt information within the paragraph of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 indicated against the item:

Minute No.	Schedule 12A Para. No.	Category
145	3	Information relating to financial or business affairs

**THE FOLLOWING ITEM WAS CONSIDERED
IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC**

145. **THE PAVILION, QUEENS ROAD RECREATION GROUND,
FARNBOROUGH – ALDERSHOT AND DISTRICT WEST INDIAN
ASSOCIATION –**
(Corporate Services)

The Cabinet considered the Solicitor to the Council's Exempt Report No. LEG0704 which sought authority to enable the Solicitor to the Council to serve a Notice under the Landlord and Tenant Act, 1954 Part II, Section 25, to terminate the existing lease of The Pavilion, Queens Road Recreation Ground, Farnborough, but not opposing the grant of a new tenancy to the Trustees of the Aldershot and District West Indian Association.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that authority be given to the action set out in the Solicitor to the Council's Exempt Report No. LEG0704.

The Meeting closed at 5.40 p.m.

P.J. MOYLE
CHAIRMAN
