

EXECUTIVE

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive of Bolsover District Council held in Committee Room One, Sherwood Lodge, Bolsover, on Monday 10th December 2012 at 1000 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor E. Watts - Chair

Councillors K. Bowman, D. Kelly, D. McGregor, B.R. Murray-Carr, A.M. Syrett and A.F. Tomlinson.

Officers:-

W. Lumley (Chief Executive Officer), B. Mason (Director of Corporate Resources), S. Tomlinson (Director of Neighbourhoods), S.E.A. Sternberg (Solicitor to the Council), S. Clow (Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager) (to minute no. 696), S. Chambers (Communications Officer), and R. Leadbeater (Democratic Services Officer).

688. APOLOGY

An apology for absence was received on behalf of the Head of Shared Procurement.

689. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

690. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

691. MINUTES – 19TH NOVEMBER 2012

Moved by Councillor D. Kelly, seconded by Councillor D. McGregor
RESOLVED that the minutes of a meeting of the Executive held on 19th November 2012 be approved as a true record.

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692. WORKING NEIGHBOURHOODS FUND AND WORK AND SKILLS PLAN UPDATE – APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2012

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration presented the report to update Members on the spending and allocation of Working Neighbourhoods Funding (WNF) for the period April to September 2012.

Members' attention was drawn to the appendix to the report which;

- Provided an updated spend/financial position for WNF monies allocated to the Council and Bolsover Partnerships,
- Reported on activity taking place in relation to WNF planning, commissioning and future activity in relation to securing additional funding;
- Reported on unemployment statistics for the district and
- Provided an updated work and skills plan for activity in the first half of 2012/13.

Members were advised of the progress on a number of projects such as the Core Worklessness Group, Help to Work Directory, Sheffield City Region Apprenticeships and National Offender Management Service. These projects had delivered some significant successes.

Members raised questions with regard to how funding was targeted to District wards in respect of addressing unemployment. In response, the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration advised that smaller specific areas were targeted where need was greatest rather than at whole wards. There were currently three key projects which focussed on helping people back into employment. The Chief Executive Officer added that the majority of the WNF had been allocated which had produced some significant outcomes. Some schemes would continue to be funded until March 2014 with the resources being targeted to areas where the greatest benefit would be seen. Discussions with the private sector were also taking place with a view to sustaining the long term future of some projects.

Moved by Councillor A. Tomlinson, seconded by Councillor E. Watts
RESOLVED that the report be received.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that WNF is targeted to best effect.

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693. LOCALISATION OF COUNCIL TAX AND WELFARE BENEFIT REFORM

The Director of Corporate Resources presented the report to advise Members of the requirement to introduce a localised Council Tax benefit system from 1st April 2013 and to seek agreement to recommend implementation of the preferred scheme to Council. The scheme would be required to be subject to review annually.

Members' attention was drawn to a table summarising the options that had been considered.

A local scheme had been consulted upon following agreement by the Executive in August 2012, of which the main proposals had been:

- to cover a maximum of 85% of Council Tax benefit,
- charge 100% Council Tax on holiday homes and empty properties rather than the 50% currently charged and
- reduce the Council Tax exemption period on empty properties from 6 to 3 months.
- continued local funding of War Pensions disregard.

The consultation period had closed on 29th October and the results were provided in a separate report for Members' information. On 16th October, the Government had announced that for the 2013/14 financial year, a grant would be made available to those local authorities who adopted a scheme in accordance with the Government's view of a well designed scheme which maintained positive incentives to work. The main variance to the Council's proposed local scheme was that Council Tax Benefit would be funded at a level 91.5% rather than 85%. This amendment would secure additional Government Grant and would minimise the impact of the proposals on those local residents of working age who were in receipt of benefits. Members were advised that the figures stated in the report were estimated and would be finalised upon confirmation of the government grant which would be received on 19th December.

The Director of Corporate Resources advised that the Government's reform would impact on the level of income Parish Councils would receive by way of precept and they would share in the financial losses and gains associated with the introduction of the localisation of Council Tax Benefit. It was not however anticipated that the impact would be significant on the majority of Parish Councils, although a limited number with for instance, a large number of benefit recipients, might be adversely impacted.

The scheme would be recommended to Council for final approval. Members asked questions to which the Director of Corporate Resources responded.

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Moved by Councillor A.F. Tomlinson, seconded by Councillor E. Watts

RESOLVED that the Executive notes the requirement to operate a localised Council Tax benefit system with effect from 1 April 2013, and considers whether to accept the recommended option as outlined within this report as the preferred scheme to propose for adoption by the Council at its meeting of 23 January 2013. The recommended option is based on a local scheme which complies with the Government's proposals and thus would be eligible for Government Grant in respect of the 2013/14 financial year.

RECOMMENDED that (1) Council agree to the adoption of a local scheme based upon the following principles:

- Those of working age in receipt of Council Tax Support be required to pay a minimum of 8.5% of the Council Tax Bill (approx £85 for a Band A property).
- The Council ensures that it is in a position to meet the requirements to secure the £163k of Government Grant which will benefit the precepting authorities operating in the area of Bolsover District Council.
- Bolsover District Council continues its policy of disregarding war pensions for the purposes of calculating income in respect of Council Tax Support at a total cost of £14k.

(2) Council agrees to make use of the change in Government legislation to charge 100% of Council Tax (rather than the current 50%) in respect of both Empty Properties and Holiday Homes.

(3) the charge with respect to empty and unfurnished properties is made after a three month period rather than the current six month period.

(4) officers prepare a scheme for passing on relevant funding to the Parish Councils operating within the District boundaries in order to mitigate the impact of the changes associated with the introduction of the Localisation of Council Tax Benefit reform upon Parish Councils.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To ensure that the Council is able to implement and finance a localised scheme providing council tax support for vulnerable groups from April 2013.

(Director of Resources/Council)

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694. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

The Director of Corporate Resources presented the report to update Members on the revised Strategic Risk Register. A summary was detailed in Appendix 1 to the report for Members' information. A more detailed report would be provided to Cabinet in due course.

Moved by Councillor E. Watts, seconded by Councillor A. Tomlinson

RESOLVED that (1) the report be noted and the Council's Strategic Risk Register as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be approved;

(2) an update of the Strategic Risk Register as at 30 December 2012 be brought back to Executive for approval.

REASON FOR DECISION: **To provide Members with an update on the Strategic Risk Register.**

(Director of Corporate Resources)

695. STRATEGIC HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT AND HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager presented the report to seek the Executive's agreement to commission a Strategic Housing Market Assessment using £25,000 of Planning Delivery Grant funding.

Members were advised that the last Housing Market Assessment had been carried out in 2007 and this was now at the end of its useful life. A revised Housing Market Assessment was required which would provide evidence to inform and support strategic housing and planning decisions and provide a robust evidence base for ascertaining housing need across the district.

The Assessment would be carried out in conjunction with the Housing Market Area and would gather information direct from householders across the District. This would enable housing and planning officers to determine the type of housing that was in greatest demand.

The Executive Sounding Board of the HMA had agreed that £8,000 would be provided to the four authorities to support the work to produce the Housing Market Assessment and Strategy.

Members raised questions in respect of the cost implications of the project to which the Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration responded.

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Moved by Councillor A. F. Tomlinson, seconded by Councillor D. McGregor

RESOLVED that (1) the commissioning of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment, in partnership with HMA partners, to support housing strategy and planning delivery be agreed;

(2) the use of circa £25,000 of Planning Delivery Grant to fund the assessment be agreed

(3) it be noted that production of the local housing strategy will be aligned to allow the strategy to reflect the findings of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The joint North Derbyshire and Bassetlaw Housing Strategy expires in 2012 and it is important that the Council has in place a Strategy which provides the framework for delivering housing and housing related services in the District. In order that this strategy is robust and can stand up to scrutiny, it needs to be based on robust housing market and needs information, which is also required to support planning decisions.

(Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager)

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager left the meeting.

696. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Moved by Councillor E. Watts, seconded by Councillor A. F. Tomlinson

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the stated Paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and it is not in the public interest for that to be revealed.

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697. TENDER EVALUATION OUTCOME – TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION ALTERATION WORKS, SHERWOOD LODGE EXEMPT – PARAGRAPH 3

This item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration advised Members that following discussion between Regeneration, Procurement and Legal Services, it had been agreed that the item did not require a report to Executive. This was as a result of the value being significantly below the £50,000 threshold and being a Request for a Quotation rather than a Formal Invitation to Tender which needed to be accepted.

698. TENDER EVALUATION OUCOME – DEPOT WORKFORCE TRAINING EXEMPT – PARAGRAPH 3

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Efficiencies advised Members of the outcome of a tender opening for the provision of health and safety training for matters such as scaffolding awareness and working at heights.

The invitation to tender had been sent out to over twenty training providers, however only one had been returned by the deadline. Following an evaluation this had been considered not fit for purpose.

Moved by Councillor D. McGregor, seconded by Councillor D. Kelly
RESOLVED that (1) the tender process should be terminated and no bids
accepted;

(2) the Council returns to market for a similar solution following
market engagement.

REASON FOR DECISION: **To secure best value for the Council.**

(Head of Shared Procurement)

The meeting concluded at 1045 hours.