

Minutes of: **CABINET**

Date of Meeting: 20 January 2021

Present: Councillor E O'Brien (in the Chair)
Councillors J Black, D Jones, A Quinn, T Rafiq, L Smith and
T Tariq

Also in attendance: Councillors N Jones, J Mason and M Powell

Public Attendance: No members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor C Cummins and Councillor A Simpson

CA.453 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Clare Cummins and Andrea Simpson.

CA.454 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Quinn declared a personal interest in respect of all matters under consideration, as both his son and daughter in law are employed by the NHS, his wife is employed by the Citizens Advice Bureau and he is a member of the trade union, Unite.

CA.455 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

CA.456 MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

CA.457 MINUTES

It was agreed:

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CA.458 INCLUSION STRATEGY

Councillor Tahir Rafiq, Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs and HR, presented the report which explained that the Council and CCG partnership had, through the leadership of the Strategic Commissioning Board, made a commitment to make significant improvements in our equalities and inclusion practice as both an employer and service provider/commissioner. This commitment was made as part of the leadership role in delivering the Bury 2030 vision and wider organisational transformation.

It was advised that the term inclusion has been intentionally used for this strategy as it incorporates equality, diversity and human rights, and our legal requirements

under the Equality Act. Previously the Council and the CCG have used a combination of these terms, so inclusion provides a common term to corral around given this is a joint strategy and encompasses the intent to promote equal access and take up of opportunities; to respect and celebrate diversity; to protect and raise human rights, of all people across the Borough.

Councillor Tahir Rafiq drew attention to the appended delivery plan which set out the work to pursue defined objectives and summary milestones. It was noted the draft version of this strategy had been considered by the Strategic Commissioning Board on 7 December 2020 who had recommended it for approval.

Decision:

That the Joint Inclusion Strategy be approved for implementation.

Reasons for the decision:

An independent review into internal practice was undertaken in summer 2020 and, as a result, the Inclusion Strategy had been co-produced with staff groups; community leaders and senior champions. It set out:

- The context for this work including the current disparity in outcomes across different communities and how the Bury 2030 vision intends to address this;
- The general legal equalities duties on the Council and CCG and how these will be met;
- Organisation-specific inclusion objectives and an action plan initially for delivery to 2022.

Other options considered and rejected:

None.

CA.459 REHOUSING POLICY WITH REGARDS TO DISABLED FACILITY ADAPTATIONS GRANTS

Councillor Eamonn O'Brien the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which advised that Urban Renewal Officers have reviewed the existing Council Procedure with regards to adaptations to Council properties.

This existing procedure enforces rehousing should the grant maximum exceed £15,000, however, a recent high court case, R (on the application of Glynis McKeown) v Islington LBC (2020) has ruled that this is discriminatory, since a local authority has no more reason to force a social-housing tenant to move home than they could with an owner occupier. This report proposes replacing the Procedure with a new Procedure that is in line with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 legislation and this High Court ruling.

Members discussed the grants alongside the objectives of the housing strategy, and it was noted that both adaptations and purpose-built accessible homes were needed.

Decision:

- To repeal the existing Council Procedure in relation to Disabled Adaptations for Council tenants.

- To approve and implement the proposed new Procedure
- The cost be managed within the overall HRA budget that forms part of the capital programme and that consideration be given to increasing the budget in future years should there be an ongoing cost pressure.

Reasons for the decision:

The High Court Ruling means it is no longer appropriate to have a Rehousing Procedure specifically in relation to Disabled Adaptations of Council properties. A new procedure is therefore proposed.

Other options considered and rejected:

None.

CA.460 REVIEW OF RADCLIFFE SHOP FRONT IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

Councillor Eamonn O'Brien the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which reviewed phase one of the Radcliffe Shop Front Improvement Scheme and considered how the remaining scheme funds could be most effectively used to support ongoing regeneration of Radcliffe town centre.

Members discussed the problems encountered by the original scheme and the positive impact the remaining funds could have in supporting improvement works to Radcliffe Market Chambers building to deliver early activity as part of the Radcliffe SRF. It was noted that this proposed use of the funding was recommended by the Radcliffe Cabinet Committee to Cabinet, at its meeting on 22 December 2020.

Decision:

That approval be given to the transfer of the remaining Radcliffe Shop Front Grant funds to support improvement works to Radcliffe Market Chambers as part of the wider investment in this high profile building and in line with the Radcliffe SRF objectives as per the recommendation of the Radcliffe Cabinet Committee on 22 December 2020.

Reasons for the decision:

It is anticipated that physical improvements to business premises is unlikely to be a priority owing to financial pressures from the impact of Covid 19, thereby reducing the effectiveness of a shop front grant scheme in delivering positive impacts in Radcliffe town centre.

As part of the Radcliffe SRF, an early opportunity has been identified to deliver improvement works to the Council-owned Market Chambers building which is in a prominent location and its early improvement would have an immediate positive impact on the core town centre.

Other options considered and rejected:

To progress with Phase Two of the Shop Front Regeneration Scheme. Having considered the factors as set out in the report, this is not the recommended option.

CA.461 DISPOSAL OF SUMMERSEAT HOUSE, SUMMERSEAT LANE, SUMMERSEAT

VIA OPEN MARKET SALE

Councillor Eamonn O'Brien the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report regarding the proposed disposal of Summerseat House, a vacant former Pupil Learning Centre located in Summerseat.

The property comprising a Grade II listed former house with associated buildings and grounds would be sold on the open market utilising the services of a property marketing agent / consultant in order to achieve best value and secure the future use of the property. The property is vacant and its condition is rapidly deteriorating due to a lack of funds for repair and maintenance plus several break-ins, thefts and acts of vandalism.

Members discussed the development of the Economic Regeneration & Capital Growth directorate, noting that ensuring we had the right people, skills and resources was the key to delivering on bigger projects, and required strategic prioritisation of sites for development and those for disposal. It was noted that the mature woodland situated at the site would be protected as this was a conservation area.

Decision:

That:

- Summerseat House is offered for sale.
- The Council's Property and Asset Management section procure a property marketing agent / consultant to assist in the disposal of Summerseat House. The appointment of an agent will expose the property to a wide range of potential purchasers and the agent can provide advice and recommendations with regard to potential purchasers.
- Delegated authority is given to the Director of Economic Regeneration and Capital Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth to consider and accept / decline competitive bids for the property from potential purchasers and then to instruct the Council Solicitor with regard to an acceptable bid.

Reasons for the decision:

The sale of the property would:

- Remove the risks to the Council associated with holding a vacant asset.
- Produce a capital receipt for the Council.
- Provide ongoing Council Tax and / or Business Rate revenue.
- Alleviate the substantial ongoing costs of holding the property.
- Enable the conversion/redevelopment of the property and its future use.

Other options considered and rejected:

Option 1 - Redevelopment by the Council

Options for the Council to redevelop the property as a direct development have been explored by the Council's Growth and Development Manager, including developing a small affordable housing/apartment scheme. There are viability issues with such a scheme and it would be dependent upon significant gap funding to make it viable. On that basis and taking other factors into consideration Officers consider that a disposal is felt to be the best way forward.

Option 2 - Retain the asset in case of future Council accommodation requirement.
This option would result in significant and ongoing holding costs being incurred together with the ongoing risks associated with holding empty properties. Significant capital expenditure would also be required in the short term to address the deterioration of the buildings located on the property.

CA.462 APPOINTMENT OF MAYOR 2021/22

Councillor Eamonn O'Brien the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, proposed that, in this unprecedented year, Councillor Tim Pickstone be appointed as Mayor for a second year. Members praised his attitude and understanding in a year that saw civic ceremonies take place digitally if at all.

Councillor O'Brien further proposed that the opportunity be taken to review the sequencing of Deputy Mayorship, and that Councillor Shaheena Haroon be appointed as Deputy Mayor for the forthcoming year. Members praised Cllr Haroon's work in the borough, with communities and charities, and her position as a role model for so many.

These proposals had cross-party support from those present at the meeting.

Decision:

That Council be recommended to appoint Councillor Tim Pickstone as Mayor and Councillor Shaheena Haroon as Deputy Mayor for the Civic year 2021/22.

CA.463 MINUTES OF ASSOCIATION OF GREATER MANCHESTER AUTHORITIES / GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY

It was agreed:

Minutes of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority meeting held on 27 November 2020 be noted.

CA.464 URGENT BUSINESS - DISCRETIONARY GRANT PAYMENTS FOR BUSINESS

Councillor Eamonn O'Brien the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, advised of the proactive work the Council was undertaking, following the Government's announcement of the third National lockdown, to bring forward a package of support to go to critical businesses in the first quarter of the new-year. This paper sought approval to bring forward a major package of support to key strategic businesses and employers.

The Leader advised that Bury's strategic approach had changed in line with a changing national picture. Rather than using the discretionary grants over the next 12 months to support businesses in the economy move towards recovering and reopening, with a new national lock-down the prioritisation of distribution of grants over the next few months was proposed to help companies at threat of closure of severe retraction because of the lockdown measures.

Three new groups of target beneficiaries were proposed for the 'Bury Business Grants Programme':

1. Key strategic businesses who if they were to close would harm the Borough's economic capacity.
2. Key employment generators. Companies who support the employment base of the Borough.
3. Micro businesses who have not previously benefitted from support programmes.

It was noted that the additional funding would be £1.69m, bringing the total grant monies to £5.8m. The focus on micro businesses would enable greater support for taxi drivers, something previous government policy precluded, and homeworkers, although it was noted not all would be eligible. For applications with clear merit but which did not meet the eligibility criteria, Councillor O'Brien advised that these would be considered by a special advisory group of officers. Members praised officers for their work, noting that the processes needed to be correct to enable effective support to businesses, as demonstrated by the previous problems across Greater Manchester in distributing grants.

Decision:

That a major package of support to key strategic businesses and employers be brought forward.

Reasons for the decision:

The restrictions imposed from the third national lockdown have impacted further on our businesses. In response to this, the Chancellor announced in January that top-up funding to the Additional Restrictions Grant will be made available and there is considerable pressure from Government to distribute the Additional Restrictions Grant at speed. The proposed package of support to go to critical businesses in the first quarter of the new-year would hopefully enable key strategic businesses and employers to survive to a point where the economy can begin to reopen.

Other options considered and rejected:

None.

COUNCILLOR E O'BRIEN
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 6.02 pm and ended at 7.17 pm)