

CABINET

12th March 2013

Present: Councillor Simon Geraghty in the Chair

Councillors Bayliss (Vice-Chairman), Mrs
L. Hodgson, Knight, Riaz and Roberts

Also in Attendance:

Councillors P. Denham, Gregson, S.
Hodgson and Mrs L. Smith

88 Declarations of Interest

The following declaration of interest was made:

Implementation of a New Discretionary Welfare Assistance Scheme
(Minute 92)

Councillor Geraghty - As a Worcestershire County Council
Cabinet Member

The following declaration of disclosable interest was made:

Implementation of a New Discretionary Welfare Assistance Scheme
(Minute 92)

Councillor Mrs L. Hodgson - As a Trustee of St. Paul's Hostel.
Councillor Mrs L. Hodgson left the
meeting for the discussion of this
item.

89 Public Participation

Relating to Agenda Item 4: Provision of New Swimming Pool for Worcester –
Approval to Proceed to Design and Procurement

Mr. Neil Monkhouse, Chair of Worcester Swimming Club spoke in favour of Option
1 as set out in the report.

90 Minutes

**RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12th February 2013
be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

91 Provision of New Swimming Pool for Worcester - Approval to Proceed to Design and Procurement

The Cabinet received a report in relation to the provision of a new swimming pool for Worcester and approval to proceed to design and procurement. The Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities presented the report and set out the decisions required.

The Portfolio Holder stated that at its meeting on 20th June 2012 in response to the findings and recommendations of the Options Appraisal report produced by the Sports Consultancy, Cabinet had approved Option 1 as set out in the report. The Cabinet had also approved the development of a full business case, the implementation of the consultation project and the outline project plan.

The Portfolio Holder explained that following a procurement exercise Deloitte Real Estate were appointed to develop a full business case including detailed viability modelling, procurement options, a user specification, outline planning permission, and funding options for the preferred swimming pool development model.

The Portfolio Holder informed Cabinet that a public consultation programme had been carried out which involved the distribution of posters, leaflets and questionnaires and the holding of road shows and workshops within the community. As a result of the promotional activity 447 people had completed questionnaires and 65 people had volunteered to take part in workshops. The Cabinet were also made aware of the Feasibility Study that had been carried out and the Business Plan that had been compiled.

The Portfolio Holder informed Cabinet that the Business Plan indicated that a future operator of the new facility would generate a return to the Council of £65k. This sum together with monies available from the existing Leisure Connection contract, £324k, would enable the Council to 'prudentially borrow' the sum of £7.75 million. However this would result in a shortfall of £5.2 million assuming a potential capital contribution from the sale of Sansome Walk of £500k.

The Business Plan indicated there was an opportunity for the Council to raise the level of fees and charges at the new facility by up to 10% to reflect the vastly improved facilities which will be available. This additional sum could potentially enable the Council to borrow a further £2 million from Prudential Borrowing. However, this would still result in a funding shortfall of £3.2 million.

The Portfolio Holder stated that in view of the identified funding shortfall an alternative scheme, Option 2, had been developed for the Council's consideration at an estimated capital cost, including fees and contingencies, of £10.7 million which would contain a reduced level of facilities as identified in the report. Option 2 could help reduce the funding shortfall and improve the affordability.

The Portfolio Holder also informed Cabinet that to date only limited work had been carried out to identify potential external funding sources to close the funding gap of Option 1. The Portfolio Holder advised that other potential external funding sources would will be investigated further should the Council decide to proceed with the project.

The Chairman of Performance Management and Budget Scrutiny Committee informed Cabinet that the Committee had reviewed the Worcester Swimming Pool Feasibility Study as its meeting on 5th March 2013. The Chairman stated that the Committee still favoured Option 1 as the preferred option if at all possible, but would expect Cabinet to explore ways of closing the funding gap. The Committee had also stated that the quality of the building and the size of the pool proposed as part of Option 1 should not be reduced.

Other Members present questioned the level of feedback received from the consultation process and stated that there was a need for a fuller and more extensive consultative process as 447 responses was not representative of the overall community. Members also stated to Cabinet that the process should not be rushed and adequate time should be taken to explore external funding sources and other methods of reducing capital costs. The Cabinet were also informed that there was a view that options around exploring the development of the existing site should have been considered further. Other Members present also stated the importance of continuing to explore options for the way forward and being sure that the community supports the decisions made.

The Leader of the Council summarised the debate by assuring Members that options would not be closed down at this stage of the process and that Option 2 offered the minimum specification for the new Swimming Pool Complex. The Leader clarified that developing the existing site of the swimming pool was not a viable option for the Council for the reasons stated in the report. The Leader also stated that it was important to move forward with the process in order to further explore external funding sources to help close the funding gap.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet recommends that Council:-

- 1. agree the site at Perdiswell for the new Swimming Pool Complex;**
- 2. agree Option 1 as its preferred option with Option 2 being the minimum specification for the new Swimming Pool Complex;**
- 3. agree the indicative Business Plan and the significant assumptions contained within it particularly that the model excludes in-house operations;**
- 4. agree that the operation of the new facility will be via an external operator based on a non-business lease with a peppercorn rent which includes the option to tax;**
- 5. agree the Capital allocation for construction and fees of £10.5 million;**
- 6. agree to progress to tender and evaluation stage for the construction and allocate a budget of £300,000 for the tender process; and**
- 7. that Cabinet ask Officers to investigate and secure further value for the project through sponsorship, partnership, grants and other potential site uses.**

92 **Implementation of a New Discretionary Welfare Assistance Scheme**

The Cabinet received a report detailing the implementation of a new discretionary Welfare Assistance Scheme. The Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities presented the report to Cabinet. The Cabinet were informed that from April 2013 the Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolishes the Community Care Grants and Crisis Loan element of the Discretionary Social Fund scheme administered by the Department of Work and Pensions and would give unitary and upper tier local authorities grant funding to develop and deliver a localised scheme in its place.

The Portfolio Holder explained that in Worcestershire, the funding would be paid to Worcestershire County Council, who had agreed to give Worcester City Council the grant allocation for South Worcestershire to deliver a Scheme. The Cabinet were informed that the purpose of the grants was to help individuals or families in difficult circumstances.

Members welcomed the initiative.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet:-

- 1. accepts the grant allocation from the County Council for the years 2013/14 and 2014/15;**
- 2. agrees to develop and deliver the South Worcestershire Welfare Assistance Scheme across South Worcestershire from 1 April 2013; and**
- 3. agrees to delegate authority to the Strategic Housing Services Manager in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities to prepare a legal contract confirming the arrangements for the grant allocation and to the develop and deliver the South Worcestershire Welfare Assistance Scheme.**

93 **Localism Act - Local Processes**

The Cabinet received a report regarding local processes in relation to the Localism Act. The Portfolio Holder for Customer Service and Communications presented the report. The Cabinet were informed that various community rights exist under the Localism Act 2011 which included the Community Right to Challenge, Community Right to Bid and Community Right to Build/Neighbourhood Planning. All of the provisions were now in force and were supported by Regulations and Statutory Guidance. The Portfolio Holder advised Cabinet that there were therefore a number of decisions that needed to be made regarding the process and local arrangements that would be adopted in order to legally comply with the Localism Act.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the suggested processes had been developed in consultation with relevant service managers and reflected the regulations, statutory guidance and best practice.

The Portfolio Holder explained the processes relating to Community Right to Challenge and the Community Right to Bid. A detailed summary was also given regarding neighbourhood planning. The Portfolio Holder explained that Neighbourhood Planning was a new way for communities to decide the future of the places where they live and work. A further explanation was given regarding the Neighbourhood Planning Process and the options for the level of support and facilitation provided by the Council to members of a neighbourhood forum. Option 1 consisted of a statutory level of support, Option 2 a statutory plus evidential level of support and Option 3 a full level of support. The Cabinet were informed that Option 1 was the favoured option.

The Cabinet were asked by other Members present why Option 3 had been discounted. The Leader of the Council reiterated that Options 1 and 2 offered more realistic levels whilst Option 3 would result in significant costs and resource implications for the Council.

The Portfolio Holder also advised Cabinet that as a planning authority the Council was required to fund and organise any referendums relating to neighbourhood plans. Initial estimates suggested that the cost of doing this would be in the region of £17,000 to £200,000 in the extreme.

Members express their concerns regarding the costs of compiling plans, the Leader of the Council stated that the Council had a statutory duty to have a Neighbourhood Planning Process in place.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet:-

- 1. approve the Community Right to Challenge process and delegate to the Managing Director in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder to develop proposals in respect of relevant services;**
- 2. delegate to the Managing Director the ability to amend periods during which an Expression of Interest will be accepted;**
- 3. approve the Community Right to Bid process;**
- 4. approve the Neighbourhood Planning process and adopt Option 1; Statutory Level of Support; and**
- 5. recommend that Council considers forming a reserve of £50,000, should a budget surplus be generated in 2012/13, to meet the costs of any neighbourhood plan applications.**

94 Quarter 3 - Financial Monitoring 2012-13

The Cabinet received a report which detailed quarter three financial monitoring for 2012/13. The Portfolio Holder for Delivering Value for Money presented the main elements of the report. The Portfolio Holder explained that Cabinet were being asked to approve the proposed write-offs as set out in the report.

The Chairman of the Performance Management and Budget Scrutiny Committee informed Cabinet that the report had been considered at its meeting on 5th March 2013 and that there were no issues that the Committee wished to highlight to Cabinet.

The Leader of the Council and other Cabinet Members thanked officers for their hard work in putting action plans in place to target a balanced budget at year end.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet:-

1. **notes the financial monitoring report details highlighted for the 3rd quarter ended 31st December 2012 (Q3), and consider any recommendations for action; and**
2. **approve the proposed write-offs totalling £110,000 as detailed in paragraph 3.1 of the report.**

95 Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring 2012/13

The Cabinet received a report which detailed quarter three performance for 2012/13 The Portfolio Holder for Delivering Value for Money presented the main elements of the report. The Portfolio Holder made particular reference to the Viewpoint annual survey which had identified that overall satisfaction with the way the Council runs things had increased from 53% to 71%.

The Chairman of the Performance Management and Budget Scrutiny Committee informed Cabinet that the report had been considered at its meeting on 5th March 2013 and that there no matters that the Committee wished to highlight to Cabinet.

The Leader of the Council summarised by stating that overall 82% of performance measures had met or exceeded the target. The Leader of the Council also summarised the positive progress that had been made in each of the priority areas as set out in the report.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet note the Council's performance for Quarter 3 2012/13 against this suite of performance measures and projects, and the actions taken to address performance issues.

96 Any Other Business

None.

97 Item Involving the Disclosure of Exempt Information

None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 pm to 8.30 pm

Chairman at the meeting on
11th June 2013