

CABINET

Wednesday 6th May 2009

PRESENT:

Councillor Francine Haerberling – Leader of the Council
Councillor Malcolm Hanney – Resources and Deputy Leader
Councillor Terry Gazzard – Development and Major Projects
Councillor Charles Gerrish – Customer Services
Councillor Chris Watt – Children's Services

102 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair was taken by Councillor Francine Haerberling, Leader of the Council.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

103 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure as set out on the Agenda

104 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors Vic Pritchard and David Hawkins.

105 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Councillor Malcolm Hanney declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest relating to some of the Cabinet Questions.

Councillor Charles Gerrish declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest relating to Agenda Item 13, as a Trustee of the SWAN Network.

106 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR(PERSON)

There was none.

107 QUESTIONS FROM PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

There were 14 questions from the following people: Councillor John Bull, Councillor Ian Gilchrist, Councillor Nathan Hartley (2), Councillor Armand Edwards, Councillor Nicholas Coombes, Councillor Paul Crossley (4), Councillor Caroline Roberts, Councillor Sharon Ball, Peter Sas and Terry Reakes

[Copies of the questions and responses, including supplementary questions and responses if any, have been placed on the Minute book as Appendix 1 and are available on the Council's website.]

108 STATEMENTS, DEPUTATIONS OR PETITIONS FROM PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

Major Tony Crombie of The Bath Society made a statement in which he referred to the report on item 12 of the agenda. He felt there were many good points in the report but had some concerns, in particular the status of the Recreation Ground as a public realm open space. He appealed to the Cabinet to agree that the most supportive solution for Bath Rugby Club would be for provision to be made as part of the Western Riverside development.

109 MINUTES: WEDNESDAY 4th March 2009

On a motion from Councillor Francine Haerberling, seconded by Councillor Charles Gerrish, it was

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 4th March 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair(person)

110 CONSIDERATION OF SINGLE MEMBER ITEMS NOW REQUISITIONED TO CABINET

There were none.

111 CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS REFERRED BY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BODIES

There were none.

112 SINGLE MEMBER CABINET DECISIONS PUBLISHED SINCE PREVIOUS CABINET MEETING (Report 11)

The Cabinet agreed to note the report.

113 PUBLIC REALM & MOVEMENT STRATEGY (Report 12).

Jan Brown, Norfolk Crescent Green Residents' Association, made a statement [*a copy of which is attached to the Minutes as Appendix 2*] in which she emphasised the need for proper consultation on the strategy.

Charlotte Laurence, Norfolk Crescent Green Residents' Association, made a statement [*a copy of which is attached to the Minutes as Appendix 3*] in which she referred to the suggestions for a footbridge to Norfolk Crescent and asked Cabinet for an assurance that the footbridge, which was previously removed from the proposals and then added again, would be removed permanently.

Joan Vaughan, Norfolk Crescent Green Residents' Association, made a statement [*a copy of which is attached to the Minutes as Appendix 4*] in which she asked that Cabinet consider carefully the impact that the proposals would have on the small community around Norfolk Crescent Green.

David Redgewell, Travel Watch South West, made a statement [*a copy of which is attached to the Minutes as Appendix 5*] in which he emphasised that the proposals must address how people feel in their city and should not be simply about creating a "theme park" environment.

Caroline Kay, Chief Executive, Bath Preservation Trust, made an *ad hoc* statement

[a copy of which is attached to the Minutes as Appendix 6] in which she welcomed the fact that Cabinet was considering the proposals. She was however concerned about the consultation timescales. She asked that full recognition be given to the World Heritage status of the city and the many historic sites and conservation areas.

Councillor Paul Crossley made an *ad hoc* statement in which he congratulated Major Projects officers for the very good work they had done to prepare the proposals. He requested that documents should be made more readable. He noted that the recommendations included a delegation to Cabinet members and appealed that these decisions should be taken through the proper Cabinet decision making process and reported in the Cabinet Decision Register.

Cllr Crossley also asked for more funds to be made available for cleansing, since the authority currently spent less than many others on cleansing. He agreed with Major Crombie's appeal for a home to be found for Bath Rugby and noted that Cllr Sharon Ball had made a similar appeal on a previous occasion. He expressed his agreement with those who had pressed for the Norfolk Green footbridge to be removed from the proposals, and reminded Cabinet that Cllr Andy Furse had previously made the same request.

Councillor Terry Gazzard reminded the speakers from the Norfolk Crescent Green Residents' Association that he had held a long, fruitful meeting with them about the footbridge and that Cabinet members were listening carefully to what they said. He promised to respond later, in detail. He reminded Cllr Paul Crossley that Cllr Malcolm Hanney had already made an additional £50k available for cleansing.

Cllr Gazzard also responded to the points raised by Caroline Kay by saying that the target date for final approval was July 2009 but that this might be subject to agreement of a funding strategy which could not be confirmed until after the concept design stage. Work was currently in progress to consider the communications strategy, initial funding strategy, appointment of concept design consultants and the development of initial design concepts. He gave an assurance that the Bath Preservation Trust and other organisations would be fully consulted from an early stage and that he would be in touch with them shortly.

In proposing the item, Cllr Gazzard said that an additional financial implication would be the need to quantify the revenue impact of the higher maintenance standards required to prevent the deterioration of the public realm. This would require early consideration of the funding options.

Councillor Charles Gerrish seconded the proposal, saying that he was excited by the long term prospects for the city centre. He pointed out that the Council had already been working with a residents' Task & Finish Group; some issues had been highlighted which had proved to be very helpful. He looked forward to the outcome of the proposals.

Councillor Malcolm Hanney expressed his support for the proposals and said that the public realm was critical to Bath's future. He responded to the point raised by Major Crombie by reminding the meeting that the Trust was obliged to listen to its beneficiaries and that Bath Western Riverside was not a viable option.

Councillor Chris Watt agreed with Cllr Hanney and added that the planning consents for Western Riverside did not envisage sporting use for the land. He felt strongly that it would be unfair to deprive people of housing. He was eager to see community based sporting and entertainment events developed on the Recreating Ground,

especially given its proximity to the river.

Rationale

The Public Realm and Movement Strategy for Bath City Centre seeks to put in place a long-term plan to deliver a beautiful, coherent, accessible, world-class public realm where the priority in terms of movement and animation is given to people, be they residents, workers or visitors. It is proposed that this will enhance the economic success and sustainability of Bath and the wider district; encourage increased social cohesion, community safety and public health; and enhance the natural, built, and historic environments in line with Bath's status as an international visitor destination and World Heritage Site.

Other Options Considered

None.

On a motion from Councillor Terry Gazzard, seconded by Councillor Charles Gerrish, it was

RESOLVED (unanimously)

(1) To ENDORSE the Public Realm and Movement Strategy and forward it to Council with a request that Council input fully into the development of the PRMS as Council policy prior to its approval, taking account of the key issues raised by consultees and subject to the development and agreement of the funding strategy;

(2) To DELEGATE authority for the approval of the Strategy as Council policy to the Cabinet Member for Development and Major Projects and the Cabinet Member for Customer Services:

(a) taking full account of the input of Cabinet and Council as outlined above; and

(b) following their review and agreement of amendments to the final Strategy document, Action Plan and Sustainability Appraisal as a result of consultation comments received. Implementation plans to be developed with the Action Plan as a first priority.

(3) To ENDORSE the approach for taking the Action Plan forward for implementation, including identification of resources and funding opportunities to be identified in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Development & Major Projects, Customer Services, and Resources, subject to the Council's Project Initiation process and capital approvals.

(4) That the PRMS will form the basis of a developer contributions model which will subsequently be produced and consulted upon either as i) an addendum to the Bath and North East Somerset Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document or ii) as part of the review of that Supplementary Planning Document.

(5) To NOTE that the extent and/or timing of available funding from external public and private sector sources and from the Council itself will inevitably mean that implementation of the policy will be incremental (as outlined in the Strategy document), phased over a long term period, estimated as 10-20 years.

114 ECONOMIC DOWNTURN – COUNCIL RESPONSE (Report 13).

Councillor Paul Crossley made an *ad hoc* statement expressed concern over the effect that the economic situation would have on the Council. He welcomed the plans to keep the Overview and Scrutiny Panel engaged in easing the way through the recession. He referred to paragraph 6.3 of the report and emphasised that the Council must not tie itself into long leases but at the same time must not allow the

High Street shops to become empty. He recommended that Cllr Malcolm Hanney should consider the government "voids" scheme.

David Redgewell made an *ad hoc* statement in which he emphasised the need for the strategy to address other issues as well as the need for tourism. He felt there was an urgent need to fund training in new skills.

Councillor Francine Haerberling said that although Bath had been affected less than many other areas, the Council took very seriously the challenges ahead. Considerable provision had been made in the Council Budget, as detailed in the report. There was also a reserve of £671k which would offset any reduction in income. She referred to the Action Plan, published with the Agenda. In moving the recommendations, Cllr Haerberling drew attention to 3 additional resolutions which were on display in the public gallery.

Councillor Malcolm Hanney seconded the proposal. He referred to section 6 of the report which clearly laid out the Council's determination to mitigate the effects of the economic downturn. He agreed with Cllr Paul Crossley that the situation would be very difficult, especially after 2010, but because the Council had for a number of years run a balanced budget it was well-placed to come through strongly. He said that the Council was working with commercial landlords to keep Bath attractive. The Roman Baths income and visitor numbers were holding up; and a strategy was in place for schools. The Council was ready to progress the Bath Western Riverside plans, as soon as the economic situation was right. He was aware that after 2011, government regeneration funding would be removed.

Cllr Hanney referred to Cllr Paul Crossley's comments about voids and said that the Council had a very low number of voids because it encouraged the use of empty properties; but it was not the place of the Council to commit Council Tax funds in this area. He felt that it was essential for the whole Council to understand the economic impact of the recession, particularly as he expected an increased number of failing businesses. He felt however that the Council would be well positioned to take advantage of the upturn, when it arrived.

Councillor Chris Watt referred to section 6 of the report and said that £100k had been allocated from the recession reserve to ensure the continuity of community groups, including youth groups. The money was to support small ventures such as lunch clubs, youth clubs etc.

Rationale

The Council must act prudently in its response to the economic downturn taking into account its priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan; impacts of the downturn on its services and budgets both now and in the future; its role as community leader and the associated role of the Local Strategic Partnership.

Other Options Considered

The Council has no option but to ensure there is a prudent approach inherent in its budgets.

On a motion from Councillor Francine Haerberling, seconded by Councillor Malcolm Hanney, it was

RESOLVED (unanimously)

- (1) To APPROVE the Economic Resilience Strategy/Action Plan attached to the report;
- (2) To NOTE the actions referred to in the report which have already been reflected in the updated corporate plan and service action plans;
- (3) To RECOMMEND that Overview & Scrutiny Panels review service action plans to ensure they sufficiently take into account the impact of the recession;
- (4) To NOTE the potential impact of the recession on its own services and budgets;
- (5) To NOTE the role of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in helping to alleviate the effects of the recession;
- (6) To RELEASE up to £100k from the recession reserve, plus reasonable costs of administration, to enable a fund to be established for small grants to local organisations to help mitigate the impact of the recession on local people;
- (7) To DELEGATE the agreement of relevant criteria to the Cabinet Member for Resources in consultation with the LSP and Director of Resources & Support Services;
- (8) To DELEGATE the award of grants in line with the agreed criteria to the Cabinet Member for Resources in consultation with the Director of Resources & Support Services.

The meeting ended at 18:00

Chair(person) _____

Date Confirmed and Signed _____

Prepared by Democratic Services