

## **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

### **RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

Monday, 21st November, 2011

**Present:-** Councillors John Bull (Chair), Manda Rigby (Vice-Chair), Colin Barrett, Charles Gerrish, Dave Laming, Chris Watt and Nigel Roberts

Councillor Robin Moss (Chair of Economic and Community Development Policy Development Panel)

**Also in attendance:** William Harding (Head of Human Resources), Tom McBain (Divisional Director - Property), Andrew Pate (Strategic Director – Resources), Tim Richens (Divisional Director - Finance) and David Trethewey (Divisional Director - Policy & Partnerships)

#### **24 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **25 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

#### **26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were none.

#### **27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

There were none.

#### **28 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN**

There was none.

#### **29 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING**

Raj Lalla - Bath Racial Equality Council, made a statement to the Panel asking for continued support [a copy of the statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book].

#### **30 MINUTES - 12 SEPTEMBER 2011**

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

### **31 KEYNSHAM TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION AND WORKPLACES PROJECT UPDATE**

The Panel received a presentation from Tom McBain Divisional Director - Property and Derek Quilter Divisional Director - Major Projects. The presentation covered the following:

Workplaces Programme Update - Progress to Date  
Keynsham Regeneration Project - Public Consultation Feedback  
Project Response  
Keynsham Regeneration Project - Review of Funding Options  
Issues/Next Steps  
(A full copy of the presentation is held on the minute book for this Panel)

Panel members raised the following points and asked the following questions:

The Strategic Director and the Finance Divisional Director explained the capital receipt and internal borrowing (option 5 in the presentation) following a question from Councillor Chris Watt.

Councillor Nigel Roberts asked about sustainability and cycling as part of the overall plan. Derek Quilter, Major Projects explained that a new bus station, better cycle routes, cycle parks and storage facilities were being looked at. He further explained that in the long term, some work at the train station in Keynsham was being considered.

Councillor Gerrish stated that it was useful to see information on the rent being paid on buildings being vacated, he asked what these costs would be over sixty years and whether this would mean there would be a saving. The Strategic Director explained that the report to Cabinet would refer to this and that the whole project is designed to achieve a 10% return. He further explained that to stay in existing accommodation would incur a substantial cost.

Councillor Gerrish asked several questions. He asked if the Ashton Way car park could be decked; if any air quality management issues had been considered regarding the road layout and would the clock still be visible from the High Street. Derek Quilter - Major Projects explained that restricted covenants meant that decking at Ashton Way was discounted; traffic modelling is being carried out with a view to keeping the traffic moving which causes less pollution; the clock would be visible from the High Street.

Following a questions from Councillor Gerrish about the reflection of the brass, the Divisional Director explained that it would fade down to a matt appearance but that he would consider glare issues with regard to the material planned for the One Stop Shop.

Following an invitation from the Chair, there was a question and answer session with members of the public and officers:

Q: Will the material used mean the buildings look shabby in the future?

A: The ground floor of the building will be natural stone, the upper parts will be glass or brass. Brass will fade to a certain level and then stay the same without maintenance.

Q: We would like a start and end date as the High Street will continue to deteriorate while this is uncertain.

A: Subject to Cabinet approval (December 2011) and Planning approval (January 2012) the project can start in August 2012.

Q: Will the development plans for the fire station and Riverside hold up the start of the main project?

A: The planning application will be for the main site only and will not be held up by the negotiations on other buildings.

Q: Residents will be looking for better traffic flow, is a gyratory system favoured?

A: We will do some traffic modelling around the gyratory issue, the initial feeling is a two way system would improve the situation.

Q: Would the savings you will make on rent, pay for the redevelopment sooner than sixty years?

A: There is a sixty year model for the project, savings start to be made within 3-4 years.

Q: How many shop units are planned?

A: 20,000 square feet. There is currently 15,000 square feet.

Q: Can you put something in the contract about the height restriction?

A: Height will be part of the planning conditions.

Q: Why has the 60's style been chosen?

A: It is a modern design.

Q: How much guaranteed availability for community use will there be in the civic centre?

A: The civic centre will be open 8am-10pm, it will be available for hire.

Q: Where will the new fire station be?

A: We don't know the exact location yet but it will be somewhere in or close to the centre of Keynsham.

The Chairman thanked all members of the public for their contribution and reminded them that they could have further input at the planning application stage.

The Cabinet Member for Community Resources - Councillor David Bellotti updated the Panel on this issue:

Councillor Bellotti explained that this project was at the consultation stage. He stated that this was a testing time to do any development and explained that all methods of funding were being considered.

He explained that Councillor Symonds Cabinet Member for Transport was seriously looking at a one way system which would give the opportunity in the High Street for wider pavements. He explained that the administration would be taking into account the income that the whole development generates as Keynsham will become much more prosperous and there will be added value.

Panel members raised the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Watt asked a question on the sensitivity analysis in terms of predicting things like rent increases for shops. Councillor Bellotti explained that there would be an increase in rents for shops when the project is completed and a 60% occupancy rate would match the current rental income. He explained that no retail (other than the anchor tenant) would sign up 2-3 years in advance so it would not be possible to get 20,000 square feet filled before the project started.

The Strategic Director explained that to go forward, this project must have Cabinet approval and the funding would go to full Council and it will then go through the planning process. He explained that the project is the retail area, one stop shop and offices above but outlining areas (riverside/fire station) will inform this, but the main project will be done first.

Councillor Gerrish stated that he would like to think that, regarding rental increases, consideration will be given to existing tenants who will have been through a period of uncertainty. He also stated that rents should not be set for long periods. Councillor Bellotti agreed that there needed to be a mix of rental agreements.

The Chairman thanked everyone and announced that the Panel would look at the finances of the project in the spring 2012.

## **32 MEDIUM TERM SERVICE AND RESOURCE PLANS (INCORPORATING CABINET MEMBER UPDATE)**

*[Note: Councillor Robin Moss - Chair of Economic and Community Development Policy Development Panel was present and joined the debate on this item].*

Andrew Pate Strategic Director - Resources introduced the report. He explained that members are asked to identify any issues requiring further consideration and highlighting as part of the service action plans and budget reports to be considered in January 2012 by the Panel. *[Note: issues identified by the Panel as requiring further consideration are listed at the end of this minute].*

Panel members raised the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Gerrish referred to future changes in the benefit system (page 46 of the report) and asked for reassurance on the constructive estimates. The Director explained that there were big changes ahead for this service with the Universal Credits and new Council Tax Benefit system. He explained that an internal team had been set up to look at the detail and consider possible one off resource

requirements. He reminded the Panel that they had a session planned on this subject on 16th January 2012. Councillor Gerrish stated that he was concerned not to lose experienced staff in the short term. The Director explained that the service is looking to keep experienced staff.

Councillor Colin Barrett asked what ICT provision (page 48 of the report) the authority would have if Mouchel could no longer provide the service. The Director explained that the contract with Mouchel ends during 2013 when the authority will decide whether or not to extend the contract. He explained that assets used by Mouchel (such as servers, licenses etc) were owned by the Council. Councillor Barrett stated that there was a need to safeguard for the future given the authority's heavy reliance on ICT.

Councillor Robin Moss (Chair of the Economic and Community Development Policy Development Panel) asked about the risk assessment on pension predictions and the implications of a diminishing workforce due to employees transferring to Sirona Care and Health. The Director explained that the Council is the lead authority for the Avon Pension Fund and any issues on this are reported to the Pensions Committee. He further explained that the pensions issue also affects the authority as an employer and the Hutton Enquiry is looking at pressures on employers. He explained that any change in the future employer rate (for Sirona staff) would be the responsibility of Sirona. He also explained that the Avon Pension Fund scheme is closed to new employees or Sirona.

Councillor Chris Watt asked if any of the new academies had stopped using the Human Resources and Payroll services and if there was flexibility in the service if academies opt out in the future. William Harding - Head of Human Resources explained that one academy had stopped using People Services. He further explained that there is already a trade with schools so there is some flexibility in the workforce to adapt if necessary.

Councillor Charles Gerrish raised concerns on the proposed reductions in the Voluntary Sector Grants and the effects this would have on organisations such as the Racial Equality Council. He added that in the current climate of rising unemployment, such groups may have a higher workload. David Trethewey Divisional Director - Policy and Partnerships explained that currently groups are funded until June 2012 and that in the next round of funding there would be less money available. He explained that there was the opportunity to focus on the most impactful services.

Councillor Robin Moss explained that the Economic and Community Development PDS Panel had been doing some work around voluntary sector grants and that he had concerns about the risk to external funding if grants are cut. He also had concerns about cuts in the Equalities budget considering that there had been recent cases with adverse court judgements for Councils. He also asked if there was a risk of inconsistency if each department did their own Equalities Impact Assessments. The Divisional Director - Policy and Partnerships explained that the Equalities service would still be centrally co-ordinated but that it would be a reduced service. The Strategic Director explained that Equalities Impact Assessments would be available at the January 2012 meeting of the Panel.

Councillor Gerrish stated that there would be implications for the workload of the electoral service if the government make changes in voter registration.

Councillor Watt asked if Overview and Scrutiny Panels received information on the corporate budget lines. The Cabinet Member for Community Resources explained that this panel always see the final budget at their February meeting.

Councillor John Bull asked about Improvement and Performance and if there could be any savings in the back office service.

Councillor Nigel Roberts pointed to the spend on ICT and asked about a measure of the value or outcomes of this. Councillor Bellotti - Cabinet Member for Community Resources asked that the Panel do some work on ICT going forward.

The Panel raised concerns about Community Safety and proposed cuts.

The Chairman thanked officers for the clear information before them.

Panel members identified the following issues as requiring further consideration as part of the service action plans and budget reports to be considered in January 2012:

- Revenues and Benefits - future changes in the service and maintaining levels of experienced staff.
- Electoral Services - future change in voter registration and implications for increased workload.
- Corporate Budget Lines - more information was requested on this area.
- Improvement and Performance - the panel wished to look at possible savings in this area especially from performance management.
- IT and Transformation - the panel wished to see more information and reassurance on the Mouchel contract. Also on IT, the panel asked if there was a measure of value/output.
- Equalities - the panel had concerns on reductions proposed.
- Community Safety - the panel had concerns on reductions proposed.

### **33 FUTURE WORKPLAN**

The Panel noted their future workplan, adding the following items to the 'items to be scheduled' list:

- Keynsham Regeneration - Progress Review
- Carbon Reduction

The meeting ended at 9.35 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

