

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

CABINET

Meeting held 19th October, 2011

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PRESENT: Councillors Julie Dore, Bryan Lodge (Deputy Chair), Leigh Bramall, Harry Harpham, Helen Mirfin-Boukouris and Mick Rooney.

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jackie Drayton and Mary Lea.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 28th September 2011 were approved as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

4.1 Excellent Transport and Highways Services for Sheffield

- 4.1.1 Mr. Alan Kewley referred to Item 10 on the agenda for the meeting – “Excellent Transport and Highways Services for Sheffield City Council : Progress on Transport and Highways Services Review” particularly to the terms of reference and membership of the Change Board referred to in the report and questioned whether it would be able to achieve the aims of the Review which was to change the culture of the Services to a more customer – focused approach. He also felt that there had been a lack of communication with customers and groups with an interest in transport and highways matters regarding representation on the Board and that he personally had no knowledge that the interest group “Sheffield on the Move” was represented on the Board.

- 4.1.2 Councillor Leigh Bramall (Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport) responded that the Change Board had been established to ensure that the Review’s recommendations were delivered and to challenge officers on progress made on the Review’s recommendations. The membership of the Board had been kept relatively small in order to ensure it was dynamic, but a member of “Sheffield on the Move” had been given a place on the Board to provide representation of transport users and promote direct customer-focus. The Board

was currently examining ways of benchmarking customer survey data and would continually monitor how the public perceived the changes which were being implemented by the Services. He confirmed that the minutes of the Board would be made public, acknowledging that the work of the Change Board had not been considered by "Sheffield on the Move". However, he would request that this matter be placed on the next agenda of that body.

4.2. Hanover/Lansdowne Estate Cladding and Repair Scheme

4.2.1 Karen Greenhalgh asked the following questions relating to the Hanover/Lansdowne estate refurbishment to which Councillor Harry Harpham (Cabinet Member for Homes and Regeneration) responded as shown:-

4.2.2 Could the Cabinet agree to waive the policy of not passing on grants to leaseholders?

4.2.3 Councillor Harpham indicated that he could not respond to the question due to the short notice given, but would answer Ms. Greenhalgh's question in writing in due course.

4.2.4 Is Sheffield City Council, Sheffield Homes or Apollo offsetting emissions by improving the sustainability of existing nearby homes and was the Council using the Hanover/Lansdowne scheme to achieve zero carbon new build standards as the offset?

4.2.5 Councillor Harpham indicated that he had discussed the potential for including the scheme in the Solar City project as a pilot scheme with his colleague Councillor Leigh Bramall (Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport) who was keen to include the scheme and this was now being examined.

4.2.6 Do you think charging people in the bottom 10% of society £10,000 plus to achieve carbon targets is acceptable? Transform South Yorkshire, one of the nine Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinders has spent grant money refurbishing the homes of poor owner occupiers. Failing housing markets were tackled, not sustainability.

4.2.7 Councillor Harpham responded that the HMR Pathfinder's purpose was not to simply give money to poor owner occupiers but stimulate housing markets in areas where the housing market had collapsed. However, he offered to respond to the question in more detail in writing.

4.2.8 Could the Council say how it is fair that leaseholders have been unable to be included in any policies to assist the poor and are being financially hammered for a Decent Homes project? Leaseholders were not included in accessing "Pathfinder Grants". Was this due to Council policy?

4.2.9 Councillor Harpham indicated that he could not respond to the question due to the short notice given, but would answer Ms. Greenhalgh's question in writing in due course.

4.2.10 At a Planning Board, two Councillors voted against the Hanover/Lansdowne Project, due to poor consultation. What has changed since that meeting?

4.2.11 Councillor Harpham confirmed that he was one of two Councillors who voted against the Hanover/Lansdowne scheme three to four years due to the poor consultation process. However, he believed that consultation had now improved.

4.3. Future of Council Housing

4.3.1 A number of questions were submitted by Mr Paul Page in relation to Item 11 on the agenda – “Future of Council Housing” and, in the absence of Mr Page, who had to leave the meeting, the Chair requested Councillor Harry Harpham (Cabinet Member for Homes and Regeneration) to respond to Mr Page in writing and advise him of the opportunities to raise questions in person at future meetings of the City Council, Cabinet, a Community Assembly or appropriate Scrutiny Committee.

4.4 Council Housing

4.4.1 Mr Martin Brighton asked the following questions relating to Council Housing to which Councillor Harry Harpham (Cabinet Member for Homes and Regeneration) responded as shown:-

4.4.2 How will the Council prevent or minimise the war of words, which has already started, that is using rhetoric, propaganda, misinformation and mischief that will only serve to confuse its decent tenants? (Star 14 October).

4.4.3 Councillor Harpham responded that, should Cabinet agree to the recommendations of the report on the “Future of Council Housing” to be considered later in the meeting, consultation on the proposals would commence in November, 2011 and all the available information submitted to the Members’ Task and Finish Group will be circulated as part of the consultation, together with the views of that Group. The consultation and circulation of information would take place through various means via the social media, events in shopping centres etc. with a view to generating a balanced debate amongst tenants so that they could come to a balanced judgement on the future management of Council housing.

4.4.4 What is the proposed policy for Repairs and Maintenance, i.e. also to be taken in-house via the DLO (Direct Labour Organisation) or will it be sub-contracted to an organisation such as Kier post -March 2014 ?

4.4.5 Councillor Harpham indicated that the Council would look at the Repairs and Maintenance contract in due course and therefore he could not give a direct answer to the question at this moment in time.

4.4.6 Following the public statement of Councillor Harry Harpham, and as endorsed by Council Leader, Julie Dore, that consultation is not the best that it could have been, how can customers of Council housing and Council housing services now look forward to being meaningfully engaged in consultations that involves them

in the decision-making processes that affect them and their communities ?

- 4.4.7 Councillor Harpham agreed that he had been critical at times of the way the Council had conducted consultation and he believed that there was always room for improvement in the way the Council operated, including consultation.
- 4.4.8 The Council's proposal is for a consultation that involves tenants and leaseholders, but only tenants can vote. Surely all customers should have a vote on the issues that affect them, i.e. on issues such as Repairs, Maintenance and Investment, and their wishes taken into account. How will the Council achieve this?
- 4.4.9 Councillor Harpham responded that only tenants will vote in the ballot on the future of Council housing and not leaseholders. No decision had been made on the Repairs and Maintenance contract, although he recognised that this was of great concern to tenants.

4.5 Decent Homes Programme

- 4.5.1 Mr Martin Brighton asked the Cabinet to comment on the repeated claim in "The Star" on 13 October that blamed the lack of cash for the Decent Homes project on the collapse of the Right to Buy (RtB) sales. The simple truth is that there never was enough cash in the RtB scheme to begin with, even taking the highly exaggerated anticipated sales into account. This false excuse has been used before, it was exposed at the time, yet is pulled out again for yet another round of deceit. The bottom line is that, before the creation of Sheffield Homes, there never was enough money to complete the project, which is exactly the same as we have now, yet tenants were being persuaded to vote for something that was known by the council to be financially unsustainable.
- 4.5.2 Councillor Harry Harpham (Cabinet Member for Homes and Regeneration) responded that approximately £700 million had initially been made available under the Decent Homes Programme and that tenants had had the opportunity, in 2004, to choose the management and improvement of the Council's housing stock through either an Arms Length Organisation (ALMO), Stock Transfer or Private Finance Initiative and they had chosen the ALMO option. He indicated that, in his view, the sales assumptions in respect of the RtB scheme had been rather optimistic and had had an effect on the Decent Homes Programme.

5. ITEMS CALLED-IN FOR SCRUTINY/REFERRED TO CABINET/COUNCIL

- 5.1 The Deputy Chief Executive reported that there had been no items of business called in for scrutiny arising from the meeting of the Cabinet held on 28th September 2011.
- 5.2 The Cabinet noted the information reported.

6. RETIREMENT OF STAFF

- 6.1 The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report on Council staff retirements.

6.2 **RESOLVED:** That this Cabinet :-

(a) places on record its appreciation of the valuable services rendered to the City Council by members of staff as follows :-

<u>Name</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Years' Service</u>
<u>Children, Young People and Families</u>		
Kathleen Clark	Teacher, Ecclesfield Primary School	38
Glenda Harrison	Senior Teaching Assistant Level 3, Netherthorpe Primary School	30
Brenda Jarvis	Assistant Headteacher, Woodhouse West Primary School	35
Sandra Staniforth	Senior Teaching Assistant Level 3, Charnock Hall Primary School	29
Joyce Topliss	Clerical Officer/Senior Supervisory Assistant, Gleadless Primary School	25

Communities

Julie Sides	Library and Information Assistant	31
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(b) extends to them its best wishes for the future and a long and happy retirement; and

(c) directs that an appropriate extract of this resolution under the Common Seal of the Council be forwarded to those staff above with over twenty years service.

7. EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS DECISION RECORD

The following decisions were taken by the Cabinet.

7.1 AGENDA ITEM 10: EXCELLENT TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL – PROGRESS ON TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS SERVICES REVIEW

7.1.1 The Executive Director, Place, submitted a report outlining the progress made in implementing the Transport and Highways Services Review, the improvements in service performance and the possibilities that might exist for partnership with both public sector partners and the private sector.

7.1.2 RESOLVED: That Cabinet:-

(a) welcomes that change has occurred within the Transport and Highways

Division and that attitudes are altering within the Transport and Highways Service;

- (b) recognises that more work is still needed to be done within the Service to achieve the required level of innovation and customer service and satisfaction; and
- (c) mandates the Transport and Highway Service Review Change Board to oversee the changes and to continue to challenge the Service to achieve the required performance.

7.1.3 Reasons for the Decision

- (a) An effective, innovative and responsive Transport and Highways Service for the Council is vital for the City Council and for the future well being of Sheffield. The Transport and Highways Division has provided well regarded and excellent service in some areas but not consistently. There have been significant failures. These were identified in the review and continue to be addressed.
- (b) The Service will continue to put efforts into:-
 - Providing a customer focussed service
 - Innovative solutions, including “light touch” measures
 - Providing options at an area level of local people and Members
 - Preparing for Highways PFI
- (c) Work on ongoing developing the possibilities for partnership working across the City Region and with possible private sector partners in the longer term.

7.1.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

No alternatives were put forward or considered to be appropriate in the circumstances.

7.2 AGENDA ITEM 11:FUTURE OF COUNCIL HOUSING

- 7.2.1 The Executive Director, Communities, submitted a report referring to the expiry of the Management Agreement between Sheffield City Council and Sheffield Homes, its Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) on 31st March 2014 and the consequent need for a decision about how Council housing is managed after 2014.

The report also referred to the consideration which had been given by a Task and Finish Group of Members to the requirements for housing management functions in the future and how these requirements could be delivered, either by an ALMO

or directly by the Council. Following consideration of the options, the Council's preferred option, at this stage, was for its housing management services to be delivered directly by the Council and no final decision would be made until consultation on both options has been carried out and a ballot of tenants had taken place.

7.2.2 RESOLVED: That Cabinet :-

- (a) notes the contents of the report;
- (b) agrees that consultation on the future arrangements for the management of Council housing includes a ballot of all secure tenants; and
- (c) agrees that the Council's preferred option, at this stage, of reintegrating management services back into the Council is communicated to tenants during consultation, as described in the report, about future housing management arrangements.

7.2.3 Reasons for the Decision

The report informs Cabinet of the progress made so far on reviewing the future management of the Council's housing stock including consideration of the options. Cabinet is required to confirm the approach that a ballot is held to ensure that all secure tenants are consulted on future arrangements for the management of Council housing and to endorse the preferred option at this stage for communication to tenants. The outcome of the ballot and consultation will be the subject of a further report when Cabinet will be asked to make a policy decision about the future management of Council housing.

7.2.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

The Council could decide to consult tenants on the future ownership (as well as management) of Council housing. However, that would mean a loss to the Council of its largest single asset and so two options are being considered as offering potentially the best outcome for the future management of council housing. Council tenants have the statutory 'Right to Manage' and so within both options there still remains the opportunity for tenants, in any part of the city and at any time, to develop a tenant management / cooperative proposal. It was therefore not necessary to consider these as 'stand alone' options

**7.3 AGENDA ITEM 8: REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME
BUDGET MONITORING 2011/12**

7.3.1 : The Executive Director, Resources, submitted the Month 4 monitoring statement on the City Council's Revenue Budget and Capital Programme for 2011/12.

7.3.2 RESOLVED: That Cabinet:-

- (a) notes the updated information and management actions provided by this report on the 2011/12 budget position;

- (b) gives approval for the remaining unallocated funds for the Park Grange Post Office of £240,000 are returned to the Economic Fighting Fund and used to extend the discount scheme for Market traders; and
- (c) in relation to the Capital Programme:-
 - (i) approves the proposed inclusions in paragraphs 92 to 107 and variations in paragraphs 108 to 124;
 - (ii) approves the proposed procurement strategies, delegations of contract awards, and appointment of contractors in paragraphs 126 to 131;
 - (iii) approves the granting of delegated authority to the Senior Construction Category Manager, to award the necessary contracts for the projects at paragraphs 92 to 107 and paragraphs 126 to 131, following stage approval by Capital Programme Group;
 - (iv) notes the emergency approvals in paragraphs 132 to 134 and the Director variations in paragraphs 135 to 142;
 - (v) notes the variations approved by the Council's Executive Management Team in paragraphs 108 to 111 and 117 to 120; and
 - (vi) notes the financial position on the Capital Programme.

7.3.3 Reasons for Decision

To formally record changes to the Revenue Budget and the Capital Programme in line with Financial Regulations and to reset the capital programme in line with latest information.

7.3.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

A number of alternative courses of action are considered as part of the process undertaken by Officers before decisions are recommended to Members. The decision reflects recommendations made to Members represent and what Officers believe to be the best options available to the Council, in line with Council priorities, given the constraints on funding and the use to which funding is put within the Revenue Budget and the Capital Programme

7.4 AGENDA ITEM 9: LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESOURCE REVIEW – RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

- 7.4.1 The Executive Director, Resources submitted a report on a proposed response to the Government's consultation paper on its proposals for local authorities to retain business rates as part of a Local Government Resource Review.

- 7.4.2 **RESOLVED:** That Cabinet:-

- (a) notes the points raised in this paper and the possible implications of the Government's proposals; and
- (b) agrees that authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Finance, in consultation with Director of Finance, to approve Sheffield City Council's response to the consultation.

7.4.3 Reasons for Decision

To formally bring the consultation on the proposed Business Rates Retention Scheme to the attention of Cabinet, and to gain approval of the delegation of responsibility to respond.

7.4.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

No alternatives were put forward or considered to be appropriate in the circumstances.

NOTE: The next meeting of Cabinet will be held on Wednesday, 9th November, 2011 at 2.00 p.m. in the Town Hall.