

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Gainsborough on 12 June 2014 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Tom Regis (Chairman)

Councillor Owen Bierley
Councillor Nigel Bowler
Councillor Ken Bridger
Councillor David Cotton
Councillor Chris Darcel
Councillor Stuart Kinch
Councillor Giles McNeil
Councillor Reg Shore
Councillor Jeff Summers
Councillor Anne Welburn

In Attendance:

Mark Sturgess	Chief Operating Officer
John Rice	Interim Commercial Director
Russell Stone	Head of Financial Services
Andy Gray	Team Manager - Housing and Communities
Kim Leith	Health & Safety Co-ordinator
Katie Coughlan	Governance and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Ian Fleetwood (Vice Chairman)

Membership: Councillor Stuart Kinch substituting for Councillor Ian Fleetwood

This being the first meeting of the new civic year, the Chairman welcomed those Members newly elected to serve on the Committee.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

6 MINUTES

- i) **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 17 April 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

- ii) **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committees held 19 May 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

7 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Giles McNeill declared a non-pecuniary interest in Paper G, PR.07 14/15 (Proposed CPO of Property in Gainsborough South West Ward), as a serving Member of the Planning Committee, but stressed he would give consideration to this matter in his capacity as a Member of the Policy and Resources Committee.

The same interest was declared by Councillors David Cotton and Owen Bierley.

8 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE SETTING OUT CURRENT POSITION OF PREVIOUSLY AGREED ACTIONS AS AT 9 APRIL 2014 (PR.01 14/15).

Members gave consideration to the Matters Arising Schedule which set out the current position of all previously agreed actions as at 4 June 2014.

RESOLVED that progress on the Matters Arising Schedule as set out in report PR.01 14/15 be noted.

9 ANNUAL CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE REPORT (PR.02 14/15)

The Committee gave consideration to a report which provided a summary of performance in respect of Health and Safety throughout the Authority.

The Committee placed on record their thanks to the Health & Safety Co-ordinator and the Safety Champions for the work they undertake on behalf of and for the Authority

RESOLVED that the Corporate Health and Safety Report be supported and noted.

10 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY REPORT NO 3 (PR.03 14/15)

Members gave consideration to a report which sought to provide an update on progress on the delivery of the Corporate Plan priorities and an update on performance of service areas. The report is a key part of the Council's governance framework and provides a public statement on how the council is performing against its publicly stated priorities.

Detailed and lengthy debate ensued and in responding to Members' comments, questions and concerns, Officers offered the following information: -

In terms of youth unemployment, it was acknowledged that this area was not moving in the right direction, however, reassurance was offered that this was being addressed and Officers outlined the ways in which they were working with current providers and partners to improve the situation.

With regard to affordable housing, the reduced performance was attributed to a reduction in monies from the Homes and Communities Agency. Furthermore the housing market across the district had been particularly flat, meaning the quota from development sites had not been achieved, however this was an improving situation.

It was confirmed that costs had been incurred as a result of the Guildhall demolition; this had been the subject of a previous report considered in closed session. It was stressed, however, that the Council was currently in a litigation process in a bid to re-coup the vast majority of this.

The formula used when calculating the News Homes Bonus was explained to the Committee. This incentive from the Government was currently in place for six years. It was stressed however that such a scheme could be withdrawn at any time. The ways in which the monies were being used was also shared with the Committee and this was primarily to support the housing initiatives the Council was currently undertaking.

Members requested a summary to be circulated showing the main areas which contributed to the projected surplus of £835,000.

Reference was made to page 38 and some Members expressed deep concern at the satisfaction levels reported regarding "Gainsborough as place to shop and visit" and were of the view Gainsborough and its Market Place should be a corporate priority.

In responding, Officers clarified how the data was collected, as a result; how it no longer reflected the original baseline thus further illustrating why the report format and measures were being overhauled going forward, resulting in more meaningful and accurate data being reported to Members. Having learned the data had been collected in Marshall's Yard, this increased those Members concerns and there was again a call for Gainsborough to be considered as a corporate priority.

The Chairman referred to the Matters Arising Schedule and indicated that further information regarding the market's performance and footfall figures was due for consideration at a future meeting. The Leader of the Council also referred to the work being undertaken by the Greater Gainsborough Town Centre Member Steering Group, to address such concerns, stressing this was a long term project with no quick fix.

RESOLVED that having examined the contents of the report it be received and noted.

11 PROPERTY ACQUISITION AND DISPOSAL (PR.04 14/15)

Members gave consideration to report which detailed the Council's recent property acquisitions and disposals.

In presenting the report, the Interim Commercial Director updated Members on the fact that there had been a delay in acquiring the first three properties listed within the report, as a result of legal issues. The position with regard to these 3 properties would be reported again to the next committee.

In responding to Members' questions, Officers outlined how the land at Castle Hills had been disposed of as part of the deal to acquire Lea Road School.

Some Members were of the view that a greater price for this piece of land could have been achieved, when considering its ransom strip style, or at the very least some sort of claw back on future development should have been included, bearing in mind the land value would significantly increase with a change of use, something this Authority would have assisted in delivering.

Officers stressed the land had been disposed of at nearly three times its value, and the ransom strip status was considered debatable.

RESOLVED that, subject to the Interim Commercial Director's opening comments, it be noted that the properties detailed in the report have been acquired / disposed of.

12 COMMITTEE TIMETABLE (PR.05 14/15)

Consideration was given to a report which sought Member approval of the Committee Timetable for 2015-16 municipal year.

It was suggested that large numbers of meetings towards the end of July be avoided if possible.

RESOLVED that the Committee Timetable for May 2015 to April 2016 (as set out at Appendix A to report PR.05 14/15) be approved.

13 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN (PR.06 14/15)

The Governance and Civic Officer presented the Committee Work Plan which set out those items for future Committee consideration.

RESOLVED that the Work Plan be noted.

14 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

15 PROPOSED CPO OF PROPERTY IN GAINSBOROUGH SOUTH WEST WARD (PR.07 14/15)

Members gave consideration to a report which provided them with information regarding the proposed compulsory purchase of a property in the South West Ward of Gainsborough.

In responding to Members' questions, Officers outlined all previous enforcement undertaken on the property in question, together with the limitations of each particular "notice". Members were supportive and indicated this power should be enacted more often.

The potential abortive costs were outlined. Members were accepting of the fact that on a purely commercial basis the proposal was not an attractive one, however, when dealing with properties of this nature with multiple issues affecting the neighbourhood in which they were located, financial cost was only one factor to be borne in mind.

RESOLVED that the release of the necessary funds to support the Compulsory Purchase Order as approved by Prosperous Communities Committee on 3 June 2014 be approved.

The meeting concluded at 7.52 pm.

Chairman