

## **CABINET**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2017 in the Shrewsbury Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND**

**12.30 pm - 1.45 pm**

**Responsible Officer:** Jane Palmer

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### **Present**

Councillor Peter Nutting (Leader)

Councillors Steve Charmley (Deputy Leader), Joyce Barrow, Lezley Picton, David Minnery, Robert Macey, Nic Laurens, Nicholas Bardsley, Lee Chapman and Steve Davenport

### **72 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **73 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None were declared.

### **74 Minutes**

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 27 September 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

### **75 Public Question Time**

The following statement and question, in relation to Agenda Item 9 Consultation on the Preferred Scale and Distribution of Development for the Shropshire Local Plan Review (the Preferred Options) were submitted by local resident, Mr Charles Green:

#### Question

Is Cabinet aware that major elements of the Preferred Options now placed before them ignore the clear preferences of the immediately preceding round of consultation, as expressed by those participating in that consultation; and therefore that by endorsing these Preferred Options Cabinet will be wilfully ignoring the democratically expressed views of its electorate? Why have a consultation and then ignore the results of that consultation?

Statement giving background to the question

For Housing Numbers, the majority preference was for *Moderate Growth*, which was the lowest of the options at 26,250 new dwellings from 2016 to 2036. But instead, the stated Preferred Option now is for the highest growth figure of 28,750 new dwellings, which was specifically rejected by most people. There is, in any case, a cogent argument that all these figures are well in excess of any demographically assessed genuine need for new dwellings.

For Economic Growth, the clear preference was for *Productivity Growth*, which was characterised as creating more 'higher value' jobs whilst potentially setting a lower employment land requirement and a lower overall provision of new jobs. The number of new jobs mentioned under this option was 9,300. Instead, the Preferred Option is now for 14,900 new jobs, an increase of 60%, and an option that was not offered in the previous consultation. It is this high Economic Growth Preferred Option that is now driving the Preferred Option for the highest of the housing numbers, rather than the lowest option that the electorate clearly preferred.

This step-change in the offer for Economic Growth derives from the Council's recently launched Economic Growth Strategy. The process for that step-change in offer began before the consultation results from the Issues and Options stage of the Local Plan Review were known, and its thrust is not consistent with what was preferred from that Local Plan Review consultation. Shropshire Council therefore appears to be trying simultaneously both to dupe and to ignore its electorate.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services provided the following response:

Answer

The consultation on Issues and Strategic Options was particularly valuable as an early step in seeking views from across a range of communities, businesses, organisations and individuals on Shropshire's future growth up to 2036. Consultations like this are an important part in plan making, both in terms of gauging 'headline' preferences, but also to understand the reasons behind these preferences. However, responses to consultations do not stand alone, and a range of other material factors will always influence the direction of a Local Plan and its emerging strategic priorities.

In producing the draft Preferred Options for the Scale and Distribution of Development, Shropshire Council officers have considered the consultation responses received during previous stages of consultation, both in terms of the proportion of respondents that expressed preference for a specific option and the specific comments made when identifying this preference.

The document referred to by Mr Green in his comments is the *Issues and Strategic Options Consultation Response Summary* published in July 2017. Looking specifically at housing requirement, this document provides a broad overview of the responses to each option but does not provide any 'weighting' to these comments, as implied by Mr Green. The consultation responses themselves have subsequently

been 'weighed' against other material issues and emerging evidence in arriving at the housing requirement Preferred Option now presented for further consultation.

In summary, the other material issues Shropshire Council officers have considered include:

- The evidence base produced to support the Local Plan Review;
- The need to balance housing and employment growth;
- Government objectives to deliver the right housing in the right places in order to address the national housing crisis;
- The objectives of the Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy;
- Strategic investment opportunities identified within Shropshire;
- The role of Shropshire within the wider region, and the opportunity to help support the delivery of the objectives of the West Midlands Combined Authority; and
- Aspirations to deliver more family and affordable housing, increase economic growth and productivity, deliver important infrastructure; increase education opportunities, and upskill communities.

The Preferred Options for the Scale and Distribution of Development are considered to represent a sustainable strategy for Shropshire and will support the long term sustainability of the County. The Preferred Option is proposed for consultation to enable the different elements of the option and the supporting evidence to be considered and commented upon. This consultation will invite partners, stakeholders and the public to give their views on the Preferred Option as the potential strategy for the Local Plan Review.

Mr Green asked the following supplementary question, 'Do you as a Cabinet really believe that persistent growth is the way that the Council should be going, as set out in the Preferred Options document tabled before you? Any views given by the public in the next round of consultation can just as easily be ignored by the Council as they have been in the last consultation'. The complete submission from Mr Green is attached to the formal record of the meeting.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services responded that the Council was not suggesting infinite growth as the way forward and considered that other points raised by Mr Green in the preamble to his supplementary question had been answered. He stated that he would consider whether a written, more detailed response would be necessary.

## **76 Member Questions**

No questions had been submitted by any member of the Council.

## **77 Scrutiny Items**

The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group on the future commissioning of youth activities presented the report from the Group and drew attention to the key recommendations that had been subsequently supported by the former Young

People's Scrutiny Committee on 28 June 2017. The proposals were in support of geographically targeted youth funding provision from April 2018 based on local need and a reduction in the number of Local Joint Committee areas to receive funding with the focus being on the main market towns in the county.

Several Members spoke on this issue and raised numerous concerns including:

- The isolation of young people living in rural areas
- Mental health of young people
- The increasing numbers of young people within the SEND grouping who were being transported long distances in order to benefit from provision
- The loss of the 'rurality' aspect considered a retrograde step.
- Historically youth funding has attracted match funding
- Rural areas do not have the capacity to fund raise as their urban counterparts
- The rigorous regime for checking volunteers – this may be a disincentive
- Small market towns need youth funding provision; the young people are the future.
- Even spread of funding across the market towns of the county
- The positive impact of the youth service on reducing crime and ASB should not be underestimated

After having heard the comments made, a Member stressed the key point was the massive reduction in the funding of youth activities. He stated that the whole debate illustrated how the Council was dealing with its funding reduction, still endorsing austerity and denying services to those in need and vulnerable within society. Responding, the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People urged everyone with a view to take part in the public consultation and put forward an alternative course of action. He stated that significant budget cuts were inevitable but drew attention to the transitional arrangements that should ease the situation.

The Leader added that the Council's Financial Strategy illustrated the severity of the Council's situation and the difficult decisions that would have to be made in the coming months; there would be no more money available, decisions would have to be made on how to spend the money available.

**RESOLVED:**

- i. That detailed proposals be commented on and confirmed for a revised "funding formula" and Local Joint Committee funding allocations in support of targeted geographical youth activity provision from 2018/19 onwards; and to confirm that a public consultation is undertaken on the new funding proposals.
- ii. That authority be delegated to the Director of Place and Enterprise in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People to finalise the public consultation before a report is brought back to Cabinet with final recommendations.
- iii. That the intention to work with a broad range of interested partners over the next 18 months to develop an integrated approach to the provision of universal

and targeted youth activities within the context of a wider review of early help provision be noted.

- iv. That the work carried out by the Task and Finish Group and reported at the Young People's Scrutiny Committee on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 2017 be acknowledged.

## **78 Financial Strategy 2018/19 to 2020/21**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report from the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance detailing the first financial strategy report for 2017/18 and provided information and recommendations on the Council's proposals to manage its financial position for 2018/19 and beyond. He stressed that work was ongoing behind the scenes and efficiencies and different ways of working were being considered; changes in attitude and to working practices would be needed with a view to taking steps to close the funding gap and to ensure the Council's future sustainability.

A Member commented that the philosophy adopted by the Council was not palatable and the impact on the elderly and young people in the county was being overshadowed by consideration of finances. The Leader stressed that the serious financial issues would be addressed during this term of office, palatable or otherwise. Referring to new ways of working, the Portfolio Holder for Finance stated that this was a work in progress that would take between 6 to 12 months to work through before it could be shared more widely. He urged all Members to set aside their political differences and work together to address the ongoing financial issues.

### **RESOLVED:**

- i. That the changes required to the 2017/18 budget be agreed as a result of the Final Local Government Settlement and the introduction of improved Better Care Funding announced in the Spring Budget.
- ii. That the changes required to future years budgets be noted as a result of the Local Government Settlement and the review of expenditure and income following a second growth modelling exercise.
- iii. That the revised funding gap for the years 2018/19 to 2022/23 be noted
- iv. That the savings proposals be approved which will contribute towards delivery of a balanced budget in 2018/19 as outlined in Appendix 4
- v. That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance (s151 Officer), after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, to apply for Business Rates pilot status alone or jointly with one or more other councils on the understanding that, if the Council is accepted, the opportunity will not be taken forward if there is a projected detrimental effect to this Council's financial position.

**79 Shropshire Council - Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented a report from the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance [Section 151 Officer] proposing some changes to the existing council tax support scheme for Shropshire Council and detailed options for the introduction of a minimum council tax payment for all council tax support claimants.

Referring to paragraph 5.14 of the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance stressed the importance of the Council's Performance Management Scrutiny Committee taking the lead in the response to the consultation process.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) That option 4 be agreed as the preferred option for amending Shropshire Council's council tax support scheme for 2017-18 and associated exemptions with an estimated gross saving of £1,190,000 and confirm the arrangements for consultation as set out in the report
- ii) That subject to the proposed consultation the preferred scheme be brought to full Council for approval on 14 December 2017
- iii) That the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee be requested to respond to the consultation process.

**80 Consultation on the Preferred Scale and Distribution of Development for the Shropshire Local Plan Review**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services presented a report from the Director of Place and Enterprise to seek approval for consultation on the preferred scale of housing and employment development in Shropshire during the period to 2036, together with the preferred distribution of this growth including identifying the proposed contribution from the strategic centre, principal centres and key centres.

He referred Members to paragraph 2.13 relating to housing supply and delivery and explained that the delivery of the preferred housing requirement of 28,750 dwellings would equate to an average annual delivery rate of 1,430 dwellings across the county; this rate was considered realistic and achievable given the recent high completion rate.

Members noted that the objective at this significant stage for public and stakeholder involvement in the partial review of the Local Plan was to obtain feedback on the preferred scale and distribution of housing and employment growth, the proposed settlement hierarchy and the policies to manage development within community hubs and community clusters.

A Member voiced concern that communities with Neighbourhood Development Plans should not be overlooked and growth in the manner desired by local

communities should be taken into consideration. He drew attention to the risk of small local communities being swallowed up by future development at the Ironbridge Power station and urged for a high level of local sensitivity. The Leader stated that the Council needed to make strategic decisions that would be accompanied by significant public consultation and the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Council needed to play a role in the future of this site whilst being mindful of the needs of the local communities.

Responding to a Member's concerns regarding the methodology being applied to future housing and employment development, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services confirmed that he would be happy to meet and discuss the issues with any interested parties. He confirmed that the consultation on the draft Preferred Scale and Distribution of Development document would close on 22 December 2017 and the next stage of the process to be undertaken in 2018 would relate to housing numbers.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) That the draft Preferred Scale and Distribution of Development document attached for consultation subject to minor amendments and editing, be approved.
- ii) That the criteria-based methodology attached for identifying an appropriate settlement hierarchy be approved.
- iii) That delegated authority be granted to the Director of Place and Enterprise in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services to confirm the final version of the documents and to publish these for public consultation.

**81 Exclusion of the Public and Press**

**RESOLVED:**

That, in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and Paragraph 10.4 (3) of the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules, the public and the press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item/s.

**82 Confidential Minutes**

**RESOLVED:**

That the exempt Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 27 September 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

Signed

(Leader)

Date:

