

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET
HELD ON**

25 February 2016

7.40 - 8.45 pm

PRESENT

Cabinet Members

Councillor Jon Clempner, Leader of the Council
Councillor Jean Clark, Portfolio Holder for Governance
Councillor Mike Danvers, Portfolio Holder for Resources
Councillor Tony Durcan, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration & Enterprise
Councillor Rod Truan, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Mark Wilkinson, Portfolio Holder for Environment

Additional Attendees

Councillor Maggie Hulcoop
Councillor Danny Purton
Councillor John Strachan

Other Councillors

Councillor Simon Carter
Councillor Joel Charles
Councillor Andrew Johnson
Councillor Eddie Johnson
Councillor Clive Souter
Councillor Ian Beckett
Councillor David Carter

Officers

Brian Keane, Head of Governance
Simon Freeman, Head of Finance
Andrew Bramidge, Project Director -
Enterprise Zone
Joel West, Governance Support
Officer

97. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Emma Toal.

98. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

99. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2016 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

100. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

101. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

The question submitted and response provided are appended to these minutes.

102. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

103. **PETITIONS**

None.

104. **FORWARD PLAN**

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan is noted.

105. **RECENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE LEADER, DEPUTY OR PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S)**

None.

106. **BCA REGENERATION SCHEME: APPROPRIATION OF LAND FOR PLANNING PURPOSES**

The Cabinet received a report proposing that the Council appropriates land to facilitate the redevelopment of the Briars, Copshall Close and Aylets Field.

Proposed by Councillor Jon Clempner (seconded by Councillor Jean Clark) it was:

RESOLVED that:

- A** Cabinet agrees, in principle, that the Council should exercise its statutory powers to appropriate the Land at The Briars, Copshall Close and Aylets Field (BCA) for planning purposes.
- B** Authority is delegated to the Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Housing, and Regeneration and Enterprise, to take all necessary action to effect the appropriation (on a phased approach if considered appropriate).

107. **DEBT WRITE OFF REPORT**

The Cabinet received a report which detailed a number of debts which were deemed to be irrecoverable and therefore proposed for write-off.

Proposed by Councillor Mike Danvers (seconded by Councillor Jon Clempner) Cabinet:

RESOLVED that:

- A** Irrecoverable Council Tax amounting to £106,688.99, as detailed in Table 1 of Appendix A of the report submitted, be written off.
- B** Irrecoverable Non Domestic Rates amounting to £50,307.94, as detailed in Table 2 of Appendix A of the report submitted, be written off.
- C** Irrecoverable sundry debts amounting to £5,365.63, as detailed in Table 3 of Appendix A of the report submitted, be written off.
- D** Irrecoverable housing benefit overpayments amounting to £19,014.78, as detailed in Table 4 of Appendix A of the report submitted, be written off.

108. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM COMMITTEES/WORKING GROUPS/PARTIES AND PANELS**

a) **Referral from Overview Working Group - Review of Sustainability of Harlow Playhouse Theatre**

The Cabinet received a report from the Overview Working Group which recommended an approach to ensuring the Playhouse's continued operation.

Proposed by Councillor Jon Clempner (seconded by Councillor Jean Clark) it was:

RESOLVED that:

- A** The current funding for the Playhouse of £326,000 (plus recharges) per annum is maintained until 2018/19.
- B** The Council seeks expressions of interest and invites potential operators with a view to reduce the ongoing funding required from the Council.
- C** Cabinet notes the Overview Working Group's opinion that funding of some scale will almost certainly be required beyond 2018/19, albeit in a potentially diminishing level.
- D** Cabinet keeps under review the Capital Programme for the Playhouse with a view to aligning it with its discretionary funding.

109. **MINUTES OF PANELS/WORKING GROUPS**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following meetings are noted.

- a) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 14 January 2016 of Harlow Local Highways Panel
- b) Minutes of meeting Monday 18 January 2016 of Housing Standards Board

110. **HARLOW ENTERPRISE ZONE - LONDON ROAD NORTH DEVELOPER PROCUREMENT**

The Cabinet received a confidential report advising of the outcome of a public procurement exercise for a development partner for the Enterprise Zone, London Road North site and proposing that the Council appoint a preferred bidder.

Andrew Bramidge, Project Director - Enterprise Zone, gave a presentation on the Harlow Enterprise Zone, London Road North. The presentation explained the history of Enterprise Zones, the vision for the London Road North site (including layout plans and artists impressions), outlined the major responsibilities of the Council's development partner and detailed next steps. Construction of the first building on site is expected to commence around November 2016.

Proposed by Councillor Tony Durcan (seconded by Councillor Jon Clempner) it was:

RESOLVED that:

- A** Cabinet, subject to formal contract, agrees to appoint Vinci Investments Limited as its development partner for the Harlow Enterprise Zone, London Road North Science Park.
- B** The agreement of the detail of the Development Agreement and all arrangements for the delivery of the development are delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Enterprise.

111. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

**CABINET – 25 FEBRUARY 2016
QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Agenda item 5 refers

1. **Mrs S Sullivan, 85 Morley Grove, Harlow to Councillor Mark Wilkinson, Portfolio Holder for Environment**

In April 2015 Harlow Council introduced an Additional Licensing Scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The Additional Scheme applies to all HMOs in Harlow that are not covered by the national mandatory scheme (the mandatory scheme applies to all HMOs of three or more storeys and occupied by five or more persons forming more than one household).

Under the Additional Scheme, licences are issued on an annual basis. That ensures the finances involved are evenly spread and flexibility maximised for the benefit of both landlords and the Council. However, Harlow Council has continued to issue five-year licences to properties under the mandatory scheme. This means that the statistically most dangerous properties are now subject to less frequent scrutiny and landlords of the larger HMOs have an advantage over their smaller competitors.

Can Harlow Council please revise its policy and issue licences for the mandatory scheme for one year at a time? This would better protect the tenants in these properties and ensure equality of competition between landlords.

Reply from Councillor Mark Wilkinson, Portfolio Holder for Environment

The inspection frequency for all HMOs in the regulatory framework is determined by risk assessment, regardless of whether licences are issued annually or once every five years. This means that HMOs in the mandatory scheme with even the lowest risk ratings are inspected more frequently than once every five years.

The mandatory HMO licensing scheme was set out at the time of its introduction to align with current central government policy.

As with most local government services, the diminishing resources available to focus on HMO issues have recently been focussed on implementation of the Council's discretionary Additional Licensing Scheme, prioritising bringing previously unregulated HMOs into the regulatory framework.

I am advised that the law appears to allow an annual licensing fee to be charged for mandatory HMO licences, however I am conscious that there are risks and costs associated with change to such a regulatory regime. I will ask Officers to report on the balance of costs and benefits involved in such a proposal within the next municipal year.