

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Joint Cabinet Members (Strategic Finance & Resources), (Business, Enterprise & Employment) & (Policing & Equalities) held at 2.00 pm on Monday, 3 November 2014**

Present:

Members: Councillor P Townshend Cabinet Member (Chair)  
Councillor A Andrews (Shadow Cabinet Member)  
Councillor J Birdi (Shadow Cabinet Member)  
Councillor D Gannon (Cabinet Member)  
Councillor K Maton (Cabinet Member)  
Councillor T Sawdon (Shadow Cabinet Member)

By invitation: Councillor J Clifford

Employees (by Directorate):

C Hickin, People Directorate  
U Patel, Resources Directorate

Apologies: Councillors C Fletcher and J McNicholas

## **Public Business**

### **1. Appointment of Chair**

**RESOLVED that Councillor Townshend be appointed as Chair for this meeting.**

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. Exclusion of Press and Public**

**RESOLVED that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the items of business referred to in Minute 6 below headed "Progress made in bringing long-term empty homes back into use" on the grounds that that item involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of that Act.**

### **4. Progress made in bringing long-term empty homes back into use**

The Cabinet Members (Strategic Finance and Resources), (Business, Enterprise and Employment) and (Policing and Equalities) considered a report of the Executive Director, People which provided an update on the progress made in bringing long-term empty homes back into use. There was a corresponding private report on the agenda which provided details of action taken and progress to date.

The City Council has a duty to assess and plan for housing need and takes the view that every empty home was a wasted opportunity for a Coventry family. These properties had the potential to become a drain on public funds in that they could quickly fall into disrepair and become blights on neighbourhoods. Often they could become magnets for fly-tipping, anti-social behaviour, vandalism and arson.

Homes may become empty for a number of reasons and in most cases this is a short-term or temporary situation and was usually because the house may be awaiting sale, or letting, or required renovation prior to occupation. This process was governed by the prevailing housing market and would not require any intervention from the City Council. The Council focused on properties which had stood empty for a considerable period of time and in some cases may have been abandoned for years. These problematic homes were a major cause for concern, as they were not being actively marketed or prepared for occupation and were unlikely to come back into use without the Council's intervention.

The Council was systematically concentrating its resource on tackling those homes that had been empty for some time, in accordance with the Empty Homes Enforcement Policy. This Policy and approach ensured that the homeowner was provided with every opportunity to bring their property back into use on a voluntary basis however, enforcement action would be taken when proven to be necessary or appropriate.

The report provided details of the measures that had been taken to bring a number of properties that have been identified as being empty and in need of Council intervention to bring them back into use.

**RESOLVED that the Cabinet Members (Policing and Equalities), (Business, Enterprise and Employment) and (Strategic Finance and Resources) jointly:**

- 1. Endorse the actions that have been taken as outlined in the report to address long-term empty homes in the City.**
- 2. Request a further detailed report to be submitted to a joint Cabinet members' meeting on or before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015; that report to include recommendations as to how the City Council might use its legal powers including those of compulsory purchase to acquire residential properties that have been continually unoccupied for a period in excess of 3 years.**

**5. Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no other items of public business.

#### **Private Business**

**6. Progress made in bringing long-term empty homes back into use**

Further to Minutes 5 above, the Cabinet Members (Strategic Finance and Resources), (Business,, Enterprise and Employment) and (Policing and Equalities)

considered a corresponding private report of the Executive Director, People which provided detailed information on the measures undertaken to bring back a number of properties identified as being empty back into use.

**RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member (Policing and Equalities), (Business, Enterprise and Employment) and (Strategic Finance and Equalities) jointly:**

- 1. Endorse the actions that have been taken as outlined in the report to address long-term empty properties in the City.**
  - 2. Request a further detailed report to be submitted to a joint Cabinet Members' meeting on or before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015; that report to include recommendations as to how the City Council might use its legal powers including those of compulsory purchase to acquire residential properties that have been continually unoccupied for a period in excess of 3 years.**
- 7. Any other items of private business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no other items of private business.

(Meeting closed at 2.40 pm)