

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and
Employment held at 10.00 am on Tuesday, 29 March 2016

Present

Members: Councillor K Maton (Cabinet Member)

Other Members: Councillor R Lakha
Councillor D Welsh
Councillor J McNicholas

Employees (by Directorate):

Place: H. Caves, N. Clews, T. Miller, R. Moon
Resources: G. Holmes, S. McGinty, C. Sinclair

Apologies: Councillor G Crookes
Councillor R Brown

Public Business

60. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

61. Minutes

- (a) The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Employment, held on 18 January 2016, were signed as a true record.
- (b) The minutes of the joint meeting of the Cabinet Members for Business, Enterprise and Employment and Public Services, held on 2 February 2016, were signed as a true record.

62. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that approval be given to exclude the press and the public under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 for consideration of the private reports relating to “Proposal to enter into an Exclusivity Agreement for Riley Square” and “Freehold disposal of land at Lansdowne Street” on the grounds that that items involve the disclosure of exempt information, as defined in Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of that Act as they contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and that in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

63. **Recommendations from the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) Task and Finish Group on Selective Licensing**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Place setting out recommendations of the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board Task and Finish Group which had been established to consider the practicalities and implications of introducing a licensing scheme for the private rented sector.

During the Municipal year 2013/14, Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee established a Task and Finish Group to look at the issue of Houses in Multiple Occupation. One of the outcomes of the review was that licensing for private rented sector housing be looked at in more detail. The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to undertake this task.

The Task and Finish Group noted concerns in respect of some of the housing conditions experienced in the private rented sector and it was recognised that this wasn't limited to houses in multiple occupation or smaller shared housing, but to the private rented sector as a whole. This was supported by information from the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey, reported in 2013. The areas of the city that had the highest number of properties that were considered to be non-decent were St. Michael's, Lower Stoke, Foleshill and Whoberley. Both St. Michael's and Foleshill had the highest proportion of private rented property.

The Draft Coventry Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2013 reported that Coventry had a higher proportion of non-decent homes (37%) than England (36%). However there were areas of the city that had a considerably higher proportion than the England average. 11 wards had higher than England with Foleshill (49%) and St. Michael's (47%).

Members of the task and finish group had looked at the criteria for implementing discretionary licensing schemes in detail and identified the area of the city that would most benefit from the implementation of a scheme and be likely to meet the criteria. They had considered:

- The local context and background
- Detail on different kinds of discretionary licensing
- The desired outcome of implementing a licensing scheme to key stakeholders
- Government guidance
- The data in Coventry City Council
- Financial analysis
- Information from other areas

The Group's recommendation was to initiate the process to implement selective licensing in a specific area of the city that met Government criteria – which was St. Michael's Ward (excluding the city centre).

It was expected that, subject to the successful implementation of the St Michaels scheme, discretionary licensing would be extended to other areas that met the Government's criteria. In anticipation of this, the Cabinet Member suggested that residents from those areas referred to in the report who had raised concerns be informed that data was already being collected and collated.

The Cabinet Member thanked the Chair and members of the Task and Finish Group for their work and, in approving the recommendations, requested that Ward Councillors be involved in discussions promoting the implementation of the scheme including meetings with local residents and landlords.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Employment:

- (1) Initiate the statutory process to implement a selective licensing scheme in St. Michael's Ward (minus the city centre) of the city and to ensure that Ward Councillors were involved in discussions regarding promoting the implementation of the scheme, including meetings with local resident and landlords.**
- (2) Agree that, pending the consultation in recommendation (1), consider at the same time, the financial feasibility of implementing a selective licensing scheme in the St. Michael's Ward of the city.**
- (3) Actively encourage landlords to join a landlord's accreditation scheme. Appropriate discounts on licences will be granted to those landlords who have houses in the proposed licensing area.**
- (4) Agree that any future proposal to implement further selective licensing schemes would be considered by the appropriate Scrutiny Board before a decision is taken by the Cabinet Member.**

64. Proposal to Enter into an Exclusivity Agreement for Riley Square Shopping Centre

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Place seeking authority to enter into an Exclusivity Agreement in respect of Riley Square Shopping Centre.

Riley Square Shopping Centre was part of the Bell Green District Centre, built in the 1960s. The shopping centre had an outdated design and suffered from a lack of significant investment. It had been recognised that the shopping centre was in gradual decline and this had been accelerated with the changing habits of shoppers and the competing retail centres in the vicinity of the Arena Park, Courthouse Green and the Gallagher Retail Park.

A report had been taken to Cabinet Member for City Development in November 2008 to authorise officers to market and secure new external investment in Riley Square shopping centre and a development partner. Since 2008 there had been repeated attempts and discussions to attract potential retailers, developers and investors but nothing was forthcoming.

In October 2015, the Council was approached by a developer about the potential for investment by way of refurbishment and partial redevelopment of Riley Square. They had requested a six month period of exclusivity that would enable them to work up proposals for the centre, undertake a retail impact study to identify established retail operators and agree terms with the Council for the transfer of the

centre by way of a long leasehold interest. They had agreed to commit up to £100,000 to fund the study with the findings to be shared at the end of the exclusivity period.

A corresponding private report, detailing confidential financial matters was also submitted for consideration (Minute 68 below refers).

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Employment:

- (1) Delegate authority for the Assistant Director for Property Asset Management to enter into an Exclusivity Agreement with the Developer for a maximum period of six months to enable them to work up a detailed feasibility study and proposal for Riley Square Shopping Centre including public consultation with Whitefriars Housing Association and other stakeholders on the emerging proposals for the shopping centre.**
- (2) Request that the Assistant Director for Property Asset Management submits a report to the Cabinet Member at the end of the six month exclusivity period setting out the findings of the Retail Impact Study, proposals for investment and refurbishment of the centre and terms for the disposal of the centre by way of a long lease.**

65. Freehold Disposal of Land at Lansdowne Street

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Place which sought approval for the freehold disposal of land at Lansdowne Street.

The former St Marys R.C School closed in the autumn 2002 and was amalgamated with St Benedict's R.C School in Hillfields. Whilst the school site was owned by the Catholic Diocese Schools Commission (CDSC) the playing fields were in Council ownership. The total combined area of the former school site was 2.13 acres (0.86 hectares) with the Council ownership 0.85 acres (0.34 hectares)

The CDSC sold their part of the site in 2004 and the purchaser subsequently tried to purchase the Councils interest and obtained planning permission for a residential and student scheme (which included the Councils land) but unfortunately a disposal was never completed.

The Council granted a lease to Mazing Ltd over its land for use as a private car park to support the Far Gosford regeneration project in 2014. Mazing Ltd and Complex Developments Ltd were the two companies that had developed various projects in Far Gosford Street in partnership with the Council. The Fargo Village developers had now submitted an unconditional offer to purchase the site.

A corresponding private report, detailing confidential financial matters was also submitted for consideration (Minute 69 below refers).

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Employment:

- (1) Authorise the freehold disposal of the land in consideration of the sum to Complex Development Projects.**
- (2) Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for City Centre and Development Services following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise & Employment, for any subsequent variation in terms.**
- (3) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Resources and in particular, officers within Legal Services to complete the necessary legal documentation in this matter.**

66. Outstanding Issues

The Cabinet Member received a report of the Executive Director of Resources that identified those items which the Cabinet Member had requested further reports on.

In respect of the one outstanding matter entitled “Save the Employment Support Service”, the Cabinet Member agreed that the date to receive the progress report be changed to to July 2016.

67. Any other items of public business which the Cabinet Member decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.

There were no items of urgent public business.

68. Proposal to Enter into an Exclusivity Agreement for Riley Square Shopping Centre

Further to Minute 64 above, the Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Place which detailed confidential financial matters in relation to the proposal to enter into an Exclusivity Agreement for Riley Square Shopping Centre.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Employment:

- (1) Delegate authority for the Assistant Director for Property Asset Management to enter into an Exclusivity Agreement with the Developer for a maximum period of six months to enable them to work up a detailed feasibility study and proposal for Riley Square Shopping Centre including public consultation with Whitefriars Housing Association and other stakeholders on the emerging proposals for the shopping centre.**
- (2) Request that the Assistant Director for Property Asset Management submits a report to the Cabinet Member at the end of the six month exclusivity period setting out the findings of the Retail Impact Study, proposals for investment and refurbishment of the centre and terms for the disposal of the centre by way of a long lease.**

69. **Freehold Disposal of Land at Lansdowne Street**

Further to Minute 64 above, the Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Place which detailed confidential financial matters in relation to the freehold disposal of land at Lansdowne Street.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Employment:

- (1) Authorise the freehold disposal of the land in consideration of the sum to Complex Development Projects.**
- (2) Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for City Centre and Development Services following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise & Employment, for any subsequent variation in terms.**
- (3) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Resources and in particular officers within Legal Services to complete the necessary legal documentation in this matter.**

70. **Any other items of private business which the Cabinet Member decides to take as a matter of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.**

There were no items of urgent private business.

(Meeting closed at 10.20 am)