

## **The Cabinet**

**28<sup>th</sup> October, 2015 at 3.00 pm**  
**at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Present:** Councillor Cooper (Chair);  
Councillors Crompton, Y Davies, Eling,  
Hackett, Khatun and Moore.

**Apology:** Councillor Sandars.

**Observers:** Councillors Ahmed, Gavan, L Horton,  
P Hughes, S Jones and Underhill.

181/15 **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

### **Strategic Items**

182/15 **Town Halls – Revision of Fees and Consideration of Future Use (Key Decision Ref. No. FR022)**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources sought approval to the revised fees and charges for letting facilities at the Council House, Smethwick, the Town Hall, West Bromwich and Wednesbury Town Hall in order to encourage wider community participation.

The fees and charges for the Council's services had been approved by the Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2015 (Minute No. 15/15 refers) however, it was now proposed to make a number of changes as follows to assist in the community participation approach to lettings:-

## The Cabinet – 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2015

- to change the concessionary rate period in order to encourage further daytime/evening use of facilities by community groups between the hours of 9.00am and 9.00pm;
- to bring into line the community fee with the internal users fee so that no entrance (activity) fee was charged between the extended hours of 9.00am and 9.00pm;
- to delete the half day/full day fee of £25.50 half day and £51.00 full day for a flat rate;
- to charge all community events/bookings after 9.00pm weekdays, all day Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays regardless of whether an entrance fee was payable of £49.50 for the Hall Hire per hour, which was a change from the minimum of two hours requirement, and £23.00 for the Chamber or Committee Room per hour, a change from the minimum of two hours previously applied;
- to not charge a recognised group who utilised the kitchen for purposes of a community ‘soup kitchen’ or similar;
- to apply a 50% reduction where a recognised group utilised the kitchen for purposes other than a community “soup kitchen”, reducing the fee from the flat rate £51 to £25.50 per event.

In order to safeguard loss of income to the Council, control measures would be tightened so that community hirers did not broker third party lettings.

There would not be additional staffing costs associated in extending the free use of the premises or extending the concessionary fee during weekdays. The management of the facilities and all bookings would also remain with the Council.

To encourage community use, it was proposed to adopt the Third Sector Funding Strategy definition of a community group which included groups which were non-governmental, not for profit, value driven for the social good, non-political, had local people on their governing bodies etc..

## The Cabinet – 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2015

Following a number of questions from the Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Board and the Chair of the Jobs, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources confirmed that:-

- opening the facilities at weekends would incur additional costs for security staff as there was a premium rate attached to out of hours work, but this was manageable within the overall budget arrangements;
- the revised fees would be effective from the date of the Cabinet decision and not retrospectively.

In recommending the proposals for approval, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources confirmed that as part of the development of the Town Hall Strategy, measures would be put in place to enable these facilities to generate income to sustain their future use particularly in light of the continued cuts in Government budgets to local authorities.

### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that further to the decision taken by the Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2015 relating to fees and charges for Council services (Minute No. 15/15 refers), the fees and charges applied to community organisations using the Council House, Smethwick, the Town Hall, West Bromwich and Wednesbury Town Hall be approved, as set out in Appendix 1;
- (2) that subject to resolution (1) above, the fees and charges for the use of the Council House, Smethwick, the Town Hall, West Bromwich and Wednesbury Town Hall be reviewed annually in line with the fees and charges for the Council's services;
- (3) that in connection with resolution (1) above, in order to encourage community use and provide clarity of what constitutes a community group,

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]

## The Cabinet – 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2015

the following definition of qualifying community group will be:

- a) based in or delivering services in Sandwell;
  - b) non-governmental;
  - c) value driven, for the social good;
  - d) non-party political;
  - e) have a voluntary governing body of at least three local people;
  - f) principally reinvest any financial surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives that bring a significant community benefit to Sandwell;
  - g) do not distribute any of their surpluses or assets through share dividends to individuals or shareholders and do not seek to profit from the arrangements agreed with the Council;
- (4) that the Assistant Chief Executive be requested to prepare a Town Hall Strategy and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources be requested to consider this report for approval;
- (5) that subject to resolution (1) and (3) above, the Assistant Chief Executive notifies existing community users in writing of variations to fees and qualifying criteria.

183/15

### **Award of Contract - Day to Day Repairs to Council-Owned Housing (Key Decision Ref. No. TNS032)**

The Leader of the Council and portfolio holder for Town and Neighbourhood Services sought approval to appoint Axis Europe Plc and G Purchase Construction Limited to deliver day to day repairs to maintain Council-owned housing properties.

In accordance with the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules, Axis Europe Plc and G Purchase Construction Limited were found to be the best value tenders in the procurement process.

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]

## The Cabinet – 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2015

The contract, in the sum of approximately £1,800,000 (£600,000 per annum), was for a three year period and would be subject to satisfactory performance and budget availability.

The contract would supplement and support the existing Council employed workforce to achieve the targeted completion dates.

The Leader of the Council recommended the proposal for approval.

Following a question from the Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Board, the Leader of the Council confirmed that:-

- the Council's direct labour organisation would remain the preferred supplier of Council house repairs, although there would be occasions when private organisations would be used to compliment and supplement what the Council could deliver itself;
- a shortage in skills gaps within the workforce included plasterers, carpenters, plumbers, etc. However, the Council was working with Sandwell College in order to recruit apprentices and train them on these skills. Once trained, they could be recruited within the Council's own workforce and therefore reduce the reliance of external contractors;
- the social value benefits from these contracts included the Council's good track record in recruiting young people into the apprenticeship scheme and enabling more skilled people to take up jobs in Sandwell.

### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that the Director – Neighbourhoods award the contract for day to day repairs to Council owned housing to Axis Europe Plc and G Purchase Construction Limited (a wholly owned subsidiary of Wates Living Space) in the sum of approximately £1,800,000 (£600,000 per annum), for a period of three years;

## The Cabinet – 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2015

- (2) that in connection with resolution (1) above, the Director – Governance enter into an appropriate contract with Axis Europe Plc and G Purchase Construction Limited for day to day repairs to Council owned housing.

### **Business Item**

184/15

### **Re-introduction of a Merit Increment Salary Scheme for Employees**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources sought approval to reintroduce the merit increment scheme to motivate and reward high-performing employees and help to retain employees in service areas where it was difficult to recruit.

Managers were previously able to award eligible employees up to two merit increments if they met certain criteria. However, since the implementation of Single Status in 2010, this practice was put on hold. However, the current financial climate and the reducing resources available to the Council, the retention of experienced, qualified high performing employees had meant the Council needed to review its approach. It was proposed that the revised scheme would be based upon the following criteria:-

- a) the employee had satisfactorily completed a professional course and/or nationally accredited training programme relevant to the business of the Council and had demonstrated a consistently high level of performance which had made a substantial contribution towards the Council achieving its objectives, or
- b) where a manager wished to retain any employees in a difficult to fill role and could evidence that the employee had received a provisional or formal offer of employment from another employer.

On 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015, the Joint Consultative Panel considered the proposals and indicated their support to reintroduce the scheme with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2015.

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]

## The Cabinet – 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2015

An equality impact assessment was not required for this proposal.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources recommended the proposal for approval.

Following a question from the Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Board, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources confirmed that the Council continued to maintain good relations with trades unions which was critical for a good organisation and emphasised the importance of ongoing dialogue between employees and trades unions. The Council had continued to avoid compulsory redundancies, had set up the Sandwell Guarantee scheme to redeploy staff and was committed to supporting and training staff.

### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that the Merit Increment Salary Scheme for employees be reintroduced, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2015;
- (2) that the following criteria be applied to the assessment of the payment of merit increments:-
  - a) the employee has satisfactorily completed a professional course and/or nationally accredited training programme relevant to the business of the council and has demonstrated a consistently high level of performance which has made a substantial contribution towards the council achieving its objectives; or
  - b) where a manager wishes to retain any employees in a difficult to fill role and can evidence that the employee has received a provisional or formal offer of employment from another employer.

## The Cabinet – 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2015

### 185/15 Exclusion of the Public

**Resolved** that the public and press be excluded from the rest of the proceedings to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

### **Strategic Item**

### 186/15 Recommendations from the Land and Asset Management Committee at its meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 (Key Decision Ref. Nos. LAM006 and LAM008)

The Chair of the Land and Asset Management Committee presented the recommendations of the Committee from its meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2015 relating to the following matters:-

- the disposal of 0.29 acres of land forming the site of the former Forge Farm, West Bromwich, for residential purposes and additionally to grant a lease of the remaining site for agricultural purposes;
- declaring the Council owned public pay and display car park at Crocketts Lane, Smethwick surplus to Council requirements and to dispose of the freehold interest in the land.

#### **Resolved:-**

- (1) that, in respect of the land at Forge Farm, Forge Lane, West Bromwich, Smethwick:-
  - (a) the Director – Governance disposes of the additional 0.29 acres of land and buildings at Forge Farm, Forge Lane, West Bromwich, as shown in Appendix 2, to the highest offeror or,

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]



## The Cabinet – 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2015

- in the event of the highest offeror failing to proceed, to any offeror whose offer is deemed appropriate and otherwise on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director - Regeneration and Economy;
- (b) the Director - Governance grant a short term lease only of the land at Forge Farm, Forge Lane, West Bromwich, as shown shaded grey on Appendix 2, for agricultural purposes on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director - Regeneration and Economy;
  - (c) the Director - Governance enters into or executes under seal, if necessary, any other related documentation in connection with the disposal of the land referred to in resolution (1)(a) above, on terms to be agreed by the Director - Regeneration and Economy;
- (2) that, in respect of the disposal of the Council owned public pay and display car park in Crocketts Lane, Smethwick:-
- (a) the Council owned land of the public car park at Crocketts Lane, Smethwick, as shown on Drawing No. SAM/13240/013, be declared surplus to the Council's requirements and the Director - Governance be authorised to dispose of the freehold interest on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director-Regeneration and the Economy;
  - (b) the Director - Governance enters into or executes under seal, where necessary, any other legal documentation in connection with the disposal of the land referred in resolution (1) above on terms to be agreed by the Director - Regeneration and the Economy.

[ILO: UNCLASSIFIED]

**The Cabinet – 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2015**

(Meeting ended at 3.33 pm)

Contact Officer: Suky Suthi-Nagra  
Democratic Services Unit  
0121 569 3479

**Revised Fees for the Use of the Town Hall, West Bromwich,  
Wednesbury Town Hall and the Council House, Smethwick**

| <b>Service Provided</b>   | <b>Proposed Charge Effective<br/>October 2015-16</b> |
|---|--|
| <b>Hire of Hall</b><br>Internal Users and Community Groups if no entrance fee being charged Mon – Fri 9.00am - 9.00pm   | No Charge  |
| <b>Hire of Hall</b><br>Internal Users and Community Groups if entrance fee being charged per hour or part thereof Mon – Fri 9.00am – 9.00pm                             | £7.75 per/hr   |
| <b>Hire of Hall</b><br>External Users per hour or part thereof Mon – Fri before 5.30pm  | £25.50 per/hr  |
| <b>Hire of Hall</b><br><b>External Users</b><br>After 5.30pm & weekends<br><b>Internal Users and Community Groups</b> after 9.00pm & weekends per hour or part thereof. | £49.50 per/hr  |
| <b>Hire of Council Chamber / Committee Room</b><br>Internal Users and Community Groups if no entrance fee being charged Mon – Fri 9.00am - 9.00pm                       | No Charge  |
| <b>Hire of Council Chamber / Committee Room</b><br>Internal Users and Community Groups if entrance fee being charged per hour or part thereof Mon – Fri 9.00am – 9.00pm | £5.25 per/hr   |

**The Cabinet – 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2015**

| <b>Service Provided</b>   | <b>Proposed Charge Effective October 2015-16</b> |
|---|--|
| <b>Hire of Council Chamber / Committee Room</b><br>External Users per hour or part thereof Mon – Fri 9.00am – 5.30pm  | £18.00 per/hr                                    |
| <b>Hire of Council Chamber or Committee Room</b><br><b>External Users</b> after 5.30pm & weekends<br><b>Internal Users &amp; Community Groups</b> after 9.00pm & weekends per hour or part thereof. | £23.00 per hr                                    |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Hire of Kitchen (per function)                                  | £51.00<br>(Community discount of 50% per function - £25.50) |
| Hire of Kitchen for 'Soup Kitchen' provision or community meals | FREE  |
| Hire of Organ (per function)                                    | £66.00  |
| Hire of Concert Piano (per function)                            | £51.00  |
| Hire of Upright Piano (per function)                            | £30.50  |
| <b>Cancellation Fee external bookings Only</b>                  |   |
| Less than 6 days-notice   | Full Cost   |
| 7-12 days-notice  | 50% charge  |
| 13-23 days-notice   | 25% charge  |
| Over 23 days-notice   | nil   |
| Concessions<br>Pensioners Tea Dance @ Wednesbury                | £30.00 pa   |
| Mayors Charity Events   | 2 events Free of Charge                                     |

**IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY**  
**STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT**

LEGEND

DESCRIPTION

FORGE FARM  
FORGE LANE  
WEST BROMWICH

AREA

PLAN NUMBER

DRAFT

|                      |                           |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| SANDWELL<br>SP0292NW | TERRIER<br>145            |
| SCALE<br>1:2500      | CENTROID<br>402472/292897 |
| DRAWN<br>DM          | DATE<br>08-SEP-2015       |

THIS MAP IS BASED UPON ORDNANCE SURVEY MATERIAL WITH THE PERMISSION OF ORDNANCE SURVEY ON BEHALF OF THE CONTROLLER OF HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

©CROWN COPYRIGHT

UNAUTHORISED REPRODUCTION INFRINGES CROWN COPYRIGHT AND MAY LEAD TO PROSECUTION OR CIVIL PROCEEDINGS

SANDWELL MBC  
LICENCE NO 100032119  
2015

