

CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING, REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

RECORD OF DECISIONS taken by the Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration & Economic Development, Councillor Luke Stubbs, at his meeting held on Tuesday, 8 September 2015 at 5.00 pm at the Conference Room A - Civic Offices

Present

Councillor Luke Stubbs (in the chair)

Councillor Ben Dowling

Officers Present

Michael Lawther, Deputy Chief Executive

Calvin George, Unit Manager, Looked After Children

Jo Bennett, Leasehold and Commercial Services
Manager

Mark Stables, Service Manager, Integrated Learning
Disability Service

Kate Freeman, Looked after Children Commissioning
Manager

Nick Haverly, Finance Manager, Housing Regeneration
and Community

35. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies were tendered on behalf of Councillor Colin Galloway.

36. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of members' interests.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting (including Councillors Hastings Potter and Vernon-Jackson who attended in the public gallery). Introductions were made by all those attending the meeting.

37. Forward Plan Omission (AI 3)

The Deputy Chief Executive advised the Cabinet Member that as set out on the agenda and in the notice of omission, this decision is a Key Decision for the purposes of the Forward Plan as defined in Article 13 of the Constitution but was not included in the Forward Plan for 21 August 2015 until 30 November 2015 and is therefore an omission from the Forward Plan. The Chair of the City Council's Scrutiny Management Panel had been notified of the decision being made, in accordance with the City Council's Constitution (General Exceptions, Section 15). As the decision must be taken by such a

date that it is impracticable to defer the decision until it has been included in the next Forward Plan, this decision will not be subject to call-in. The report by the Director of Property and Housing includes the reasons why urgent action has to be taken in connection with this proposal.

The Cabinet Member noted the Forward Plan Omission.

38. Purchase of xx, Priory Crescent, Milton (AI 4)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

The Cabinet Member advised that a deputation request had been made by Mr Cross and invited him to speak. Mr Cross spoke against the proposals including that he considered his property would be adversely affected given its proximity to the property concerned and he was concerned about anti-social behaviour. He felt that the way PCC had progressed this was unfair and undemocratic. There was a lack of information, no letter and no consultation. He also felt that the area was not suitable for a children's home.

Clarification was provided by officers that there was no change of use required and that public consultation had not been carried out in similar circumstances in the past. The Cabinet Member said that it was difficult to carry out consultation in circumstances where a delay may jeopardise a sale. The Cabinet Member confirmed he had seen and read all the written representations that had come in both by email and letter and would take these into account when making his decision. He noted that almost all of them had been against the proposals.

Councillor Vernon-Jackson was then invited to make his deputation which he then did, speaking against the proposals including that the council appears to have had difficulty with running its residential children's homes so why would this be any different and included the following points

- Burrfields Rd had been looked at previously so what had changed between then and now?
- If the home was unsuccessful and had to close it may then end up costing the council money.
- The home was near to pubs and was in the wrong place
- There had been no consultation and he urged the cabinet member to defer his decision.

The Leasehold and Commercial Services Manager agreed to provide Councillor Vernon-Jackson with a list of other properties that had been looked at for providing a home for the children concerned.

The Cabinet Member invited Cllr Potter to make his deputation which he then did saying he thought that there should be public consultation before the matter went ahead and that other locations should be considered.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that a decision on this matter had not yet been made - this was the purpose of the meeting.

Officers were invited to respond to the matters raised and explained

- that the plan was for the property to house 3 children between the ages of 12 and 15 and

- the aim was to provide them with a domestic model of care as this was advocated by Ofsted as being the best for the children concerned. Ofsted expect the children concerned to be part of the community.
- the children needed to be looked after separately from those in older age ranges.
- the demand to make savings by reductions in the management structure meant that sites needed to be in closer proximity to one another
- a detached property would enable any issues to be contained within the residence and not impact neighbours.

Councillor Dowling, opposition spokesperson said the Liberal Democrats were obviously not against children having a home. He said he had reservations about the process - in particular the lack of consultation. Even near neighbours were not sent letters and were not visited by PCC to explain what they intended to do. He said he felt this was a negative start to the process and that savings could still have been made by buying a cheaper property elsewhere in the city.

The Cabinet Member said that it was unfortunate for any child to be in care. The current location is not a centre of anti-social behaviour and was in fact quite a peaceful setting and the aim was to replicate this at the alternative location. Many of the comments received in the written representations appeared to be in response to a leaflet that had been circulated by the Liberal Democrats, rather than in response to the report itself. The Council generally had a good reputation for running its homes and there would always be an adult on site. Given the ages of the children expected to be housed in the property, the comments about local pubs were not considered to be relevant. In hindsight, the report should not perhaps have included the full address of the property as the intention was not to draw attention to it and this would be mitigated if possible. The financial argument as included in the report was compelling. The Cabinet Member said he recognised that people would have reservations about living next to a children's home, particularly if it was represented as being problematic. However, it was necessary to take a corporate view and there was a need for a home not too far from Tangiers Road that was detached and affordable. He said he thought the financial case and the needs of the children concerned were compelling and for those reasons he would accept the recommendations and approve the report.

.DECISION:

That the Cabinet Member for PRED approved the following:

- (1) That the Director of Property and Housing be given authority to purchase xx Priory Crescent;**
- (2) That the City Solicitor be authorised to complete the purchase of xx Priory Crescent;**
- (3) That the proposed expenditure on Skye Close Children's Home be approved.**

(NB The house number would be removed from the published papers for this meeting on the website (including these minutes))

The meeting concluded at 6.00 pm.

Councillor Luke Stubbs
Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration & Economic
Development