

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES**

RECORD OF DECISIONS taken by the Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Lee Mason, at his meeting held on Thursday, 19 January 2017 at 10.00 am in The Executive Meeting Room - Third Floor, The Guildhall

### **Present**

Councillor Lee Mason (in the chair)

Councillor Colin Galloway  
Councillor Hugh Mason  
Councillor Yahiya Chowdhury

### **Officers Present**

Gerry O'Brien, Cemeteries Manager  
Louise Wilders, Director of Community and Communication  
Sue Page, Finance Manager  
John Stedman, Archivist & Corporate Records Manager

#### **1. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)**

The Cabinet Member for Resources welcomed everyone to the meeting. He said that in addition to the items on the published agenda there was an urgent item of business that he would be inviting Louise Wilders, Director of Customer and Communications to introduce at the end of the meeting.

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **2. Declaration of Members' Interests (AI 2)**

There were no declarations of members' interests.

#### **3. Cemetery Fees - Fees and Charges for 2017-2018 (AI 3)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Gerry O'Brien introduced the report and explained that this was the first proposed increase in fees for 2 years. He explained that the aim was to keep costs reasonable as there was no wish to increase burial poverty as this would only result in more call on the Burial Poverty Fund.

Mr O'Brien confirmed that the burial costs for those out of area who wished to be buried in Portsmouth were double the costs for those within the Portsmouth area. However, for those who had been moved to live in care homes out of area, the higher burial fee would not be pursued but would be charged for those who voluntarily moved out of Portsmouth. The higher

charges were imposed to help ensure there would be enough space for Portsmouth residents in the future.

During discussion the following matters were raised:

- The Council provision did not conduct burials at weekends. It was recognised that this was a sensitive area, but the Council strives to be fair to all religious denominations. Another issue is that some denominations have a tradition that expects funerals to be arranged very quickly whereas the normal waiting time is around two weeks. It is not fair to allow certain denominations to take precedence over others.
- Gerry O'Brien said that the ideal solution where particular denominations have requirements that cannot reasonably be met by the Council, would be to buy their own plot - as has happened with the Jewish community. However there are many health and safety guidelines that would have to be observed. Also the Council would not be able to pay anything towards the plot - it would have to be at the cost of the denomination concerned. The Council would be able to support and advise any denomination wishing to investigate this possibility though. Gerry O'Brien said that although he would support any denomination wishing to take this forward, his view was that it would be very difficult to pursue this successfully as
  - the plot would have to be situated in a fairly isolated area,
  - such a plot would be difficult to find and
  - there was immense pressure on available space making it likely that private development companies would out bid the denomination trying to purchase it.

**DECISION:**

**The Cabinet Member decided that charges for burials and associated services be increased as per Appendix 1 of the report.**

#### **4. Records Management Policy (AI 4)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

John Stedman introduced the report which presented a records management policy for approval and adoption across the Council. He explained the importance of adopting the policy and the report outlined the reasons for the recommendation in paragraph 4 of the report.

Reference was made to an email received from a member of the public, Ms Hilary Reed, that had been circulated to members. She asked that The Equality Act 2010 be added to the list within the Records Management Policy. The Cabinet member said that it was not necessary to specifically add that in as the wording was already sufficient to cover it and the opposition spokespersons agreed.

In response to queries the following matters were clarified

- With regard to the statement "Store records in an environment which will prevent their physical deterioration" in paragraph 4 of the Policy, members were advised that some paper records had been discovered

to pose health and safety issues as some had mould growing on them. Steps were being taken to address this and storage in alternative formats such as digital preservation were being looked at. With regard to who decides what to keep and what not to keep, sometimes this was governed by regulations so for example Council minutes would be kept for a substantial period. Other documents would be kept for a specified period. Where there was doubt as to whether something should be kept or not, experts would make that decision such as the corporate records manager and also archivists would be consulted in case records were of historical interest.

- Reference to "disposal" in the policy may mean passing to an archive perhaps in a library at the end of the specified retention period. There was no clear policy on this but members agreed that there was no need to make a change to the contents of the policy as the guidelines could be changed.

**DECISION:**

**The Cabinet Member agreed and adopted the Records Management Policy (attached as Appendix A of the report)**

**5. Monitoring of the Second Quarter 2016/17 Revenue Cash Limits and Capital Programme (AI 5)**

(TAKE IN INFORMATION ONLY REPORT)

Sue Page, Finance Manager introduced the report which was to inform the Cabinet Member and Opposition Spokespersons of:

The forecast revenue expenditure for the year compared with the cash limited budget and

The forecast capital expenditure against the revised capital programme for the Resources portfolio.

Ms Page said that 4.4, 4.5 and 4.7 of the report showed underspends, but that these were as a result of holding vacant posts in anticipation of future efficiency requirements.

She said with regard to the overspend mentioned in 4.6, AMS Design and Maintenance, this was as a result of fee income forecast as being below target as a result of capital schemes being delayed to accommodate client need. There had also been a focus on delivering non fee earning work which aims to generate significant ongoing savings across the Council as a whole.

The Cabinet Member for Resources said that Mr Greg Povey, Assistant Director of Contracts, Procurement and Commercial Finance and Information Service who was attending the meeting had mentioned that the IT Business Suite was going to be officially opened on 13 February and that Members were welcome to attend for the opening and the tour. He also said that he would be happy to go through the IT Strategy with any member should that be helpful.

**6. Urgent Business - Verbal update on proposed work on the Council Chamber (AI )**

(INFORMATION ONLY)

The Cabinet Member for Resources said that there was an urgent update item for the meeting today which was for information only. Louise Wilders was invited to introduce the item which she then did. She advised members that when officers had been considering updating the microphone and recording systems in the Council Chamber, more issues had come to light than had been anticipated. Consequently she just wanted to give members advanced notice that a report on this would be brought to the March meeting of Resources portfolio and that that report would include the potential costs involved. It was anticipated that costs would be financed from underspends. Members expressed their views on the current shortcomings of the Chamber. Members also discussed a potential income stream if the chamber could be refurbished so as to appeal to other organisations for hiring. It was anticipated that the work involved would take place during the Summer so as not to disrupt any meetings.

It was noted that a report would come to the March Resources portfolio.

The meeting concluded at 12.10pm.

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Councillor Lee Mason  
Cabinet Member for Resources