

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4 February 2014

Present: Councillor S Graham (Chair)
Councillors B Burdis, A Cowie, S Day,
John Hunter, N Huscroft, P Mason, D McGarr,
P McIntyre, A McMullen, J O'Shea and M Rankin

School Governor Representatives
Mrs M Ord and Mrs J Little

Others in attendance
Councillor E Darke

OV57/02/14 Apologies

Apologies for absence was received from Councillors J Allan, Marian Huscroft and Rev Vine.

OV58/02/14 Substitute Members

Pursuant to the Council's constitution the appointment of the following Substitute Members were reported:-

Councillor N Huscroft for Councillor Marian Huscroft

OV59/02/14 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

OV60/02/14 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meetings held on 6 January 2014 be confirmed.

OV61/02/14 Wallsend Customer First Centre (previous minute OV56/01/14)

The Chair informed the Committee that a visit had been taken place to look around the Wallsend Customer First Centre by Committee and Ward Members.

A report was presented following the request from the Committee at its meeting on 6 January 2014.

It was informed that in June 2012, Cabinet received a report that highlighted the temporary relocation of the Wallsend Customer Services Centre into the Forum Shopping Centre. This was to allow customers access to a range of services together and providing value for money.

In December 2012, a Cabinet report stated increased customer satisfaction and business benefits had been highlighted by the temporary relocation.

On 7 February 2013 an agreement of lease was signed between the Council and NewRiver for the development of the building, where the Council would lease parts of the ground, the first and second floors.

The lease was to formally commence once the development works to an agreed specification was complete.

The Committee heard that the term of the lease was 30 years at an initial rent of £363,353 per annum and annually reviewed in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI). The Council would be responsible for the repair of the leased property, including fixtures and fittings but not the external structure.

The lease did not contain any break clauses for either the Council or NewRiver.

A separate agreement was entered into with NewRiver to pay abortive costs of up to £0.150m to carry out essential works prior to the outcome of the Council's 13/14 Budget setting process for the project. The budget was agreed and there was no abortive costs were charged.

Under the leasing arrangements, the Authority can assign the lease under another party as long as it acts as guarantor.

The Committee heard, the 10 December 2012 Cabinet report detailed that the lease would be for 30 years without a break clause with an annual charge of £363k rent and £17k service charge. It also stated the budgets for the Park House and Wallsend Library were to contribute to the overall costs of the new Customer First Centre.

Prior to entering the Agreement of Lease, a valuation report was prepared to evaluate the rental proposal. The cost of £78.22 per square metre was considered favourable compared to other rental options available at the time, although there were no comparable properties in Wallsend Town Centre.

In relation to options to utilise the second floor of the building, the Authority could either occupy or sub-let the space with no additional rent or service charge, although it would require refitting as the space would be unfinished.

Appended to the report was a notional plan of how the second floor could be utilised as office space.

Members questioned the evidence to the value for money for the project, the length of the lease and details on the interest rate, it was asked what other sites had been used for comparison on the rental proposal.

The Officer stated that the information asked was detailed in the Cabinet reports that were of a confidential nature and therefore the information was not able to be presented at the meeting.

It was asked to what options the second floor of the building would be used. It was stated that the space was included in the Authority's Accommodation Review that was currently being undertaken and no other options would be looked at until this review was complete.

At this point Cllr A McMullen entered the meeting.

The Committee agreed that the confidential information that was considered in the decision making process for the Wallsend Customer First Centre be presented at the next meeting of the Committee on the 3 March 2014. It also requested that officers from the valuation team be present at the meeting to answer questions in respect to the proposal.

Members of the Committee were encouraged to forward any questions and issues to Democratic Services, to ensure officers were aware of all areas of concern.

Agreed that a further report including the confidential information received by Cabinet be presented to 3 March Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

OV61/02/14 Proposals for Developing the Children and Young People's Plan 2014-18

The Head of Commissioning and Fair Access attended the Committee to present the outline of the North Tyneside Children, Young People and Learning Partnership's proposals for developing the new Children and Young People's Plan 2014-18.

The Partners comprising North Tyneside Council (the lead authority), North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group, Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust, North Tyneside Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), voluntary and community sector representation, all phases of education, diocesan education authorities, JobCentreplus (JCP) and Northumbria Police had agreed to develop a new plan for the period 2014-18, despite the removal of the statutory requirement to produce a plan.

A shared strategic plan would aid Partners to face challenges that include the growing complexity of commissioning and delivery networks, increased demand for specialist services, reductions in funding and the interdependencies of the most problematic social problems.

A strategic need assessment would be produced that would analyse current and future needs of children and young people in North Tyneside. The assessment would be shared with members of the partnership and would be used to identify a series of priorities aligned with the 'Our North Tyneside Plan' for consultation.

Appended to the report was a timeline to consultations and production of the Children and Young Peoples Plan 2014-18.

Members asked to how the consultations would be undertaken. It was stated the partners had access to a number of consultative groups involved with children and young people.

It was suggested that the Community Conversations could benefit the consultations with the community.

Agreed that Children and Young People's Plan 2014-18 be noted

OV63/02/14 Community Engagement – response to recommendation and monitoring

The Committee received the responses from Cabinet to the recommendations made as part of the community engagement review.

Of the 11 recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny, the Cabinet accepted 9 and rejected 2, the report detailed the reasons for its decisions.

In respect of the accepted recommendations the Committee agreed it would commence the monitoring its progress in September 2014 following the third round of Community Conversations.

Agreed that (1) the Community Engagement response from Cabinet be noted; and (2) monitoring of the accepted recommendations to commence in September 2014.