

Cabinet



Date	Tuesday, 31 August 2010
Venue	Town Hall, St Annes
Committee members	David Eaves (Leader of the Council) Councillors Susan Fazackerley, Dr. Trevor Fiddler, Cheryl Little, Albert Pounder
Other Councillors	Councillors Frank Andrews, Fabian Craig-Wilson, Kevin Eastham, Kathleen Harper, Elizabeth Oades, Paul Rigby
Officers	Phillip Woodward, Clare Platt, Joanna Scott, Paul Walker, Ian Curtis, Andrew Dixon, Andy Cain, Lyndsey Lacey
Other representatives	3 Representatives from New Fylde Housing were in attendance
Members of the public	1 member of the public was in attendance

1. Declarations of interest

Members were reminded that any personal/prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct adopted in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000.

Councillors Albert Pounder and Paul Rigby declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 4 relating to Governance Arrangements - New Fylde Housing and withdrew from the meeting during consideration and voting thereon.

Councillor Susan Fazackerley declared a personal interest in item 6 (urgent item) relating to Lowther Pavilion-Sound System Replacement in so far as she is appointed to Lowther Gardens Trust as a borough council representative.

2. Confirmation of minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 21 July 2010 as a correct record for signature by the chairman.

3. Urgent items

The Chairman agreed to the consideration of a late item relating to Lowther Pavilion sound system replacement which is set of in item 4 below.

4. Lowther Pavilion - Sound System Replacement

The Chairman reported that the above mentioned item had been received after the publication of the agenda. He accepted that it should be considered by the Committee as a

matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) on the grounds that the current equipment is outdated and new equipment needed to be installed during a break in the productions schedule to ensure timeliness of installation.

The Leader of the Council (Councillor David Eaves) provided an overview on proposals to supply and install a new sound system at Lowther Pavilion which was endorsed by the Portfolio holder for Leisure and Culture (Councillor Susan Fazackerley).

The report highlighted the context to the acquisition, work undertaken by the Friends of Lowther in raising funds to purchase and install a new sound system together with details of the financial/ procurement implications.

It was reported that the Trustees of Lowther had reviewed quotations received for the supply and installation of the equipment and recommended that RC Sound and Technical be awarded the work at a total cost of £24,907.24. A breakdown of costings was detailed in the report.

The Chief Executive stated that although quotations were sought by the Trustees, it was recommended that the contract be considered as exempt from the contracts procedure rules because of the specialist nature of the proposed equipment.

In reaching its decision, Cabinet considered the details set out in the report before it and at the meeting and RESOLVED:

1. To approve an addition to the 2010/11 capital programme of £25,000 for the purchase and installation of sound equipment, fully funded by the Friends of Lowther Pavilion.
2. To agree to vary, in accordance with clause 1.2.1. the relevant mid range contract procedure rules as set out in Part C, Appendix 3 of the Council's Constitution.
3. To approve to the equipment being supplied and installed by RC Sound and Technical, Blackpool
4. To recognise the work undertaken by the Friends of Lowther Pavilion in raising the funds necessary to purchase the equipment and to thank the group for their kind donation.

5. Governance Arrangements - New Fylde Housing

Further to the decision by Cabinet at its last meeting to seek further information from New Fylde Housing on its proposed governance arrangements, Councillor Cheryl Little (Portfolio holder for Social Wellbeing) presented an updated report on the matter.

Attached to the report was further information produced by New Fylde Housing on the rationale/justification for reducing the number of elected councillors on the Board. In addition, a copy of the report considered by Cabinet at its last meeting was also included. This detailed the consultation process undertaken by New Fylde Housing and the options considered as part of this process.

Representatives of New Fylde Housing were in attendance at the meeting to respond to any further questions on the matter.

In reaching its decision, Cabinet considered the details set out in the report before it and at the meeting and RESOLVED to agree to the preferred option (Option 2 - reducing the membership overall) which resulted in the composition of New Fylde Housing Board changing to 5 independent members, 3 tenant members and 1 council member.

6. Review of Accommodation

By way of introduction, the Leader of the Council (Councillor David Eaves) made reference to current circumstances affecting the Council's accommodation project which were highlighted in the report. A number of questions had been submitted by Councillor Elizabeth Oades and Councillor Kevin Eastham (detailed below) relating to the review of accommodation project.

Councillor Oades asked if

- a) the costs associated with re-furbishing the existing accommodation took account of the ongoing yearly maintenance and whether the accommodation would be fit for purpose for staff and provide a permanent solution to meet the future needs of the Council?***
- b) if the future accommodation would be debated by the full Council.***
- c) if the Council had considered asking private contractors to tender for improvement/refurbishment works for a bolt standard solution rather than a grandiose local government scheme***
- d) what the likely ongoing costs associated with replacing the garages/depot/storage at the Derby Road, Wesham site were.***

In response, Councillor Fiddler stated that the estimates in the report were in relation to capital works and did not relate to ongoing maintenance. These would be estimated as part of working up a scheme and would be kept within existing budgets. The report proposed a budget limited solution to the refurbishment of the existing Town Hall buildings and therefore the accommodation would be as fit for purpose as the council could afford.

He confirmed that a formal report would be presented to a future meeting of Council and that such the report would include full financial implications.

Councillor Fiddler stated that the report proposed a cost limited scheme to improve the Council's accommodation. The next step would be for officers to carry out further survey work and to specify what work should be carried out and at what estimated cost. He stated that the costs were currently being prepared and would be considered alongside the other project costs and sale bids before final approval was given.

Councillor Kevin Eastham also submitted a question seeking clarification on the Council's next stage and whether it was worth spending money on an existing building that was not fit for purpose

In response, Councillor Fiddler stated that given the Council could not afford to build new accommodation, a cost limited refurbishment of the existing Town Hall would be the best and only realistic solution to provide satisfactory accommodation. The amount which could be available to be spent on making the Town Hall satisfactory was likely to be less than half the amount of the new build project and would be a basic refurbishment to provide improved office and civic accommodation that is fit for purpose.

Paul Walker (Director of Strategic Development) was then invited to present his report on the outcome of the work commissioned to examine the feasibility of providing all purpose accommodation on the site of the Public Offices (Plan B) including the recommendations relating thereto and other alternative options for delivering improved accommodation.

In brief, the report provided a full chronological summary of key stages/ decisions taken over the past few years on the accommodation project, an overview on the need for improved accommodation, details/ costings on the Public Offices (Plan B) scheme together with an overview on resources to fund any proposed new accommodation/construction.

Mr Walker stated that in essence, the construction of a new all purpose 'Town Hall' facility is unaffordable at this time given the values that could be realised from the sale of surplus assets and the costs involved in a new build scheme. Similarly, a full refurbishment of the existing accommodation is also unaffordable, unless significant new capital receipt funding was generated.

Mr Walker further reported that there were a number of issues with the existing accommodation that required urgent attention and therefore doing nothing was not an option. Due to the proposals for the construction of a new facility a good deal of planned maintenance work on the Town Hall had been deferred over recent years. Current maintenance budgets were limited to essential planned and urgent reactive work.

Members were advised that the only affordable option would be to dispose of surplus sites and invest the funds realised through these disposals in one site to achieve more compliant and suitable accommodation to meet the needs of the council. It was recommended that the St David's Road depot, Derby Road offices/depot and the Public Offices sites be marketed for disposal and that a scheme be prepared based on a basic and satisfactory refurbishment of the Town Hall.

In reaching its decision, Cabinet considered the details set out in the report before it and at the meeting and RESOLVED:

1. To note the "Plan B" scheme produced for the Public Offices site and the costs involved.
2. To acknowledge the projected shortfall in available resources and recommend that the construction of new all purpose accommodation and full refurbishment of existing accommodation is unaffordable at this time.
3. To confirm its commitment to securing satisfactory office and civic accommodation at the earliest opportunity.
4. To agree to the marketing of the remaining sites identified for disposal (St David's Road depot, Public Offices and Derby Road Wesham)
5. To agree a cost limited approach to provide satisfactory accommodation on the Town Hall site within the funding realised from the sale of the currently identified disposal sites described in recommendation 4, such works to incorporate reintroduction of the Council Chamber and the One Stop Shop facility.
6. To agree the use of the remainder of the £25,000 capital budget provision agreed for the Public Offices feasibility work last year by Council to enable the production of an initial costed plan with outline design solutions to improve the Town Hall accommodation and to cover the cost associated with recommendation 7 below,
7. To agree that the planning application previously produced for the Public Offices site be submitted to help establish an alternative use to assist in the marketing of the site.
8. To note the withdrawal of the planning application at North Beach car park.
