

Time started	5.30 pm
Time ended	5.52 pm

Urgent Leader of the Council Cabinet Member Meeting 30 August 2018

Present: Councillor Holmes (Chair)

Other members present: Councillors Eldret and Webb

Officers present: Ian Fullagar (Head of Strategic Housing), Alex Hough (Democratic Services Manager) and Don McLure (Strategic Director of Corporate Resources).

11/18 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Poulter.

It was noted that within the Council Constitution within Part B of the Scheme of Delegations that 'any member identified by the Executive Leader as Deputy Leader will deputise for the Executive Leader in his/her absence in respect of any matters reserved to the Executive Leader'.

It was further noted that in Part B of the Scheme of Delegations that among matters reserved to the Executive Leader was 'taking decisions in cases of urgency in respect of any executive matter, including key decisions'.

12/18 Identification of Urgent Items to which Call-in will not apply

It was confirmed that consent had been granted from the Chair of the Executive Scrutiny Board for the matter under consideration as an urgent key decision (detailed at minute 13/18) to be exempted from call-in.

Resolved to exempt the proposed use of the Housing Revenue Account to acquire the Aida Bliss site from call-in on the grounds of urgency.

13/18 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

14/18 Minutes of the meeting held on 17 August 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 August 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

15/18 Proposed use of the Housing Revenue Account to acquire the Aida Bliss site

A report of the Strategic Director of Communities and Place was received proposing the purchase by the council of the former Aida Bliss building in

Chester Green using the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), in order to deliver affordable housing on the site.

It was noted that delegated authority already existed for the purchase of the site as part of the Our City, Our River (OCOR) project. However, it was now being proposed that the site was purchased directly through the HRA in order to ensure housing capital receipts could be invested in the acquisition. It was stated that the purchase price of £600k had not changed as a result of the proposal and that the decision was being sought urgently as the purchase was due for completion on 31 August 2018.

It was reported that there was a strong financial case for purchasing the site in this manner. It was noted that there were relatively few housing sites of scale in the city where Right to Buy receipts could be utilised. It was further stated that funding would need to be returned to the Government if not spent within a certain period and that the purchase would count against Quarter 2 targets for the use of Right to Buy receipts.

The Chair enquired as to the timeframe within which affordable housing could be delivered. It was stated that development of the site would be a long-term process and would be subject to planning permission being secured. Initially, a full feasibility appraisal would be completed that considered notional property values, rental income and the potential number of homes that could be delivered, compared to the costs of developing the site. It was also suggested that elements of the original building would likely be retained.

Security risks at the site were discussed. It was reported that an initial assessment had been completed; fencing and CCTV erected; and, a 24 hour security presence introduced to ensure the safety of the public.

Members stressed the need for engagement with the local community over both the plans for the site and the security measures that had been introduced, following the tragic accident that took place in September 2017. It was also requested that greater clarity was provided in relation to resident parking in the area, following the closure of the adjacent public car-park.

Options considered

1. The site could be acquired through OCOR funding arrangements but this would prevent the full potential of the site being considered to provide much needed affordable housing.

Decision

1. To agree that the acquisition of the Aida Bliss site be funded through, and subsequently held in, the council's Housing Revenue Account for future development purposes.

Reason

To enable the council to fully appraise the site's potential to deliver new affordable homes through the HRA.

MINUTES END