

CABINET

MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 2 JULY 2019 AT THE KENNET ROOM, COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE (Chairman), Cllr John Thomson (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Pauline Church, Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Toby Sturgis, Cllr Bridget Wayman and Cllr Philip Whitehead

Also Present:

Cllr Chuck Berry, Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Richard Gamble, Cllr Ruth Hopkinson, Cllr Jerry Kunkler, Cllr Horace Prickett, Cllr Ian Thorn, Cllr Ross Henning, Cllr Robert Yuill, Cllr Gordon King and Cllr Graham Wright

85 Apologies

There were no apologies.

86 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2019 were presented.

Resolved:

To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2019.

87 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

88 Leader's announcements

The Leader explained the approach to public participation during the meeting.

89 Public participation and Questions from Councillors

There was no public participation.

Service Devolution and Asset Transfer Package - Pewsey

Cllr Richard Clewer presented a report recommending a final package of services and assets to transfer to Pewsey Parish Council from Wiltshire Council and provided detailed information relating to the financial impact this would have on Wiltshire Council.

Cllr Clewer detailed the final package of the services and assets to be transferred and that all Section 106 monies held or due to Wiltshire Council relating to assets within the Pewsey Parish boundary would be transferred to the Parish Council.

The Leader of the Council welcomed Curly Haskell, Chair of Pewsey Parish Council, who spoke in support of the asset transfer package. He thanked officers of the Council for their help and support during the negotiations with the Parish Council, especially as some areas of the negotiations were challenging. Cllr Klunker, member representing Pewsey expressed his support for the proposals.

Cllr Thomson thanked the Parish Council for supporting the package of transfers. He commented positively about working with the Parish Council on two previous projects, namely the library and leisure centre, and had no doubt that the Parish Council would be successful in operating the assets being transferred.

Cllr Clewer and the Leader of the Council thanked members of Pewsey Parish Council for their involvement in securing the transfer of services and assets detailed in the report and wished them well for the future.

Resolved:

- 1. To approve the final list of services and assets listed that will be transferred to Pewsey Parish Council. The inclusion of any open space land is subject to consideration of any objections received following the advertising of the disposal in accordance with statutory obligations.**
- 2. Note the net revenue impact to the Council and acknowledge that the Service Devolution programme benefits of cost savings and avoidance will be realised on a cumulative basis as the programme progresses and as more Towns/Parishes complete the process.**
- 3. Delegate the implementation of the transfer of assets and the service delegation to Alan Richell, the Growth & Investment Director in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism, Cllr Richard Clewer.**

Reason for Decision:

To complete the transfer of the package of assets and services to Pewsey Parish Council.

91 **Avon Mutual - The Development of a Regional Mutual Bank**

Cllr Philip Whitehead presented a report recommending Wiltshire Council support the setting up of a regional bank for the wider Avon region, alongside other local authorities in the region.

Cllr Whitehead explained that the Community Savings Bank Association was established in 2015 to apply international best practice to creating a network of 18 co-operative regional banks in the UK, Avon Mutual being one of the regional banks for the South West area. Funding of £2m would be required to support the establishment of the bank prior to it applying for a banking licence from the Financial Conduct Authority. Wiltshire Council's contribution would amount to £50,000.

The Cabinet noted that the Mutual Bank would help to support residents, develop local economies and promoting economic development, supporting small and medium sized enterprises business growth and improving financial inclusion.

In response to a question from Cllr Thorn, Chair of the Financial Planning Task Group, about the proposal for a grant to the mutual bank in preference to an investment, Cllr Whitehead explained that the Council was limited to providing grants at this stage in the process as the Bank was not at the stage of applying for a banking licence. Once the licence was granted the Council would be able to review additional investments.

In response to additional questions from (i) Cllr Church about the funds currently raised by the Bank; (ii) Cllr Mayes about previously unsuccessful attempts to establish similar banks in the UK; (iii) Cllr Clewer about how the Bank would market its operation to those who struggle to acquire credit; (iv) Cllr Thomson about the range of funds managed by the Local Authority for residents, under the Mental Health Act, that could be transferred to the Bank; Cllr Whitehead explained that (i) the Bank had received 95% of its estimated requirement of £2m; (ii) was confident that the Banks would succeed on this occasion as the Banks infrastructure, both in IT and operationally, has received appropriate investment from the Community Savings Bank Association, with the potential for banks to be located in campus hubs, and remain as retail banks that would be stabilised in the market place;

The Leader requested that future discussions with the Bank should include the services to be delivered to Wiltshire residents and businesses, including pop-up banks in leisure centres and community hubs and offering advice to those struggling with financial issues.

Resolved: To approve a grant of £0.050m to support the funding of the initial process to accreditation by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Reason for Decision:

- 1. In general, the operation of Avon Mutual Bank in the County would align with strategic priorities and support the local authority's existing policy objectives with regard to social mobility, supporting vulnerable people and supporting the growth of businesses across the County. The operation of a mutually owned bank would be a means to reduce the problems of financial exclusion for households and extend the availability of loans and finance to small and micro-companies which presently struggle to access sufficient finance from mainstream banks. In addition, an initial analysis suggests that there would be social and fiscal benefits.*
- 2. One of the main characteristics of financial exclusion is having no bank account and no access to the financial services which are provided through it. It should also be noted that not having a bank account will affect a person's ability to get a job, arrange accommodation, pay bills and prove their identity. In particular, those claiming Universal Credit will need to have a bank account. A consequence of not having a bank account and financial exclusion is that those households could pay a 'poverty premium' because they have to pay more for accessing basic financial products and services as well as higher costs for paying for energy and insurance. The most recent research estimates that the average cost which poor families bear in acquiring cash and credit, and in purchasing goods and services, can amount to a 'poverty premium' of around £490 a year with the most affected experiencing a poverty premium of £750 a year. To poor households these are significant sums. People on low incomes must often rely on 'sub-prime' credit or high-cost mail order at higher rates of interest because they cannot access mainstream financial services.*
- 3. In terms of the impact of SMEs and the economy, only 2-3% of total bank lending in the UK goes to SMEs despite SMEs accounting for 99.9% of all businesses, 60% of employment, and 40% of annual GDP in the UK. Lower rates of SME lending correlate with higher rates of SME failure. Local regional banks with decision making autonomy and local knowledge have an advantage and thus are able to lend far more to SMEs.*
- 4. Restoration of the trust in banks since the financial crisis is key to ensuring that businesses and consumers have the confidence to seek access to finance that they require to make the most of economic opportunities. The Avon Mutual Bank's model redresses this as the customers are also the shareholders thus the Board is directly accountable to the customers.*

92 **Annual Governance Statement**

Cllr Richard Clewer presented the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2018/19 for comment before final approval is sought from the Audit Committee on 24 July 2019.

Cllr Whitehead reported that the Audit Committee, at its meeting on 26 June 2019, had considered the draft Statement and made a number of comments which would be incorporated in the final document and considered further by the Audit Committee on 24 July 2019.

Resolved: To note the draft Annual Governance Statement 2018/19 and that it will be revised in the light of the comments made by the Audit Committee on 26 June 2019, prior to final approval by the Audit Committee and publication with the Statement of Accounts and Senior Information Risk Owner Annual Report at the end of July 2019.

Reason for Decision:

The Council is required, as part of its annual review of the effectiveness of its governance arrangements, to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2018/19. This will be signed by the Leader of the Council and the Corporate Directors after final approval by the Audit Committee on 24 July 2019. The AGS will form part of the Annual Statement of Accounts for 2018/19.

93 **Wiltshire Council Adoption Service: 2018-2019 End of Year Cabinet Report**

Cllr Laura Mayes presented the report which provided a year-end report to Cabinet about the performance of the Adoption Service within Wiltshire Council for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. The report also informed Cabinet about the effectiveness of Adoption West.

Cllr Mayes explained that it is a requirement of the condition of registration that Cabinet is satisfied the Adoption Agency complies with the conditions of registration, is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children. She commented on the management of the Adoption Service, the role of Adoption West, the Wiltshire Adoption Scorecard, the numbers of children requiring adoptive families and those already placed with families and the recruitment and approval of adopters by Adoption West.

The Cabinet noted that following an Ofsted inspection of Children's Services in July 2015, which received a decision of Requires Improvement, the Service was now performing well and exceeding national targets in a number of areas. Cllr Mayes and the Leader of the Council thanked all the staff involved in the Adoption Service for their hard work in achieving excellent outcomes for the children in Council care.

Matters highlighted in the course of the discussion included: the national database of adopters; the early preparations for adoption cases with Adoption West; the allocation of placements to suitable adopters outside of the Council boundary; the approach used to work with foster carers with a view to becoming adopters and the rescission of Placement Orders.

Resolved: That the Adoption Service 2018/19 Year End Report is noted and accepted.

Reason for Decision:

Wiltshire Council is an Adoption Agency registered with Ofsted. The 2014 Adoption Minimum Standards (25.6) and 2013 Statutory Guidance (3.93 and 5.39) describe the information that is required to be regularly reported to the executive side of the local authority to provide assurance that the adoption agency is complying with the conditions of registration whilst being effective and achieving good outcomes for children and service users.

94 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 9.30 - 10.20 am)

These decisions were published on the 4 July 2019 and will come into force on 12 July 2019

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