

Cabinet

MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 19 MAY 2020

Present:

Cllr Philip Whitehead (Chairman), Cllr Richard Clewer (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Pauline Church, Cllr Simon Jacobs, Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Toby Sturgis and Cllr Bridget Wayman

Also Present:

Cllr Phil Alford, Cllr Chuck Berry, Cllr Richard Britton, Cllr Bob Jones MBE, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Ian Thorn, Cllr Christopher Williams and Cllr Graham Wright

51 **Apologies**

There were no apologies.

52 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2020 were presented.

Resolved:

To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2020.

53 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

54 **Leader's announcements**

The Leader advised that as this was the first virtual Cabinet meeting, if there were technical difficulties the meeting would be adjourned and re-scheduled on a later date.

55 **Public participation and Questions from Councillors**

A statement and three questions were received from Mr Chris Caswill, re "The Future Chippenham Project"

The Leader thanked Mr Caswill for his comments and confirmed that responses had been prepared on the issues raised and a copy had been sent to Mr Caswill and also published on the Council's [website](#).

A statement and two questions were received from Anne Henshaw, representing Campaign to Protect Rural England, re "The Review of the Local Plan"

The Leader thanked Ms Henshaw for her comments and confirmed that responses had been prepared on the issues raised and a copy had been sent to Ms Henshaw and also published on the Council's [website](#).

56 **Council Response to COVID-19 - Update**

Report by Chief Executive Officers – Alistair Cunningham and Terence Herbert.

A statement and three questions were received from Margaret Willmot, re the Wiltshire Council response to Covid-19

The Leader thanked Ms Willmot for her comments and confirmed that responses had been prepared on the issues raised and a copy had been sent to Ms Willmot and also published on the Council's [website](#).

The Leader then introduced the report.

Chief Executive Officers – Alistair Cunningham and Terence Herbert introduced the report.

That Wiltshire Council had been playing an integral role in leading the local response to COVID-19, working with partners across the footprint of Wiltshire, to ensure that those most vulnerable in the community were supported, local businesses received the government funding allocated to the county and critical council services could continue to deliver essential services during what was an unprecedented and rapidly changing incident.

This report set out the public health data in respect to COVID-19 at a county level and provided a summary of the Council's response to date, the impact on services and an overview of the Council's current financial position.

Overall, Wiltshire Council had overseen a significant and timely response to the emerging threat of the pandemic in Wiltshire. This had involved the suspension of a number of services, the redeployment of staff to support the most vulnerable, extensive support to businesses and suppliers, strong partnership working with health and care and other agencies, a significant communications effort and close working with local communities and voluntary groups. Schools and early years settings had also been supported to rapidly adjust to new government guidance.

Associate Directors were given the opportunity to briefly outline how their services had contributed to the Wiltshire Council response.

The Leader thanked Emma Legg, Lucy Townsend, Helean Hughes, Tracy Daszkiewicz, Sam Fox, Parvis Khansari, Jo Pitt and Ian Gibbons

The Leader, Terence Herbert and Alistair Cunningham paid tribute to the staff commitment across all departments of Wiltshire Council, with some staff Working 24/7.

Cabinet members, group Leaders and other members in attendance paid their own tributes to Wiltshire Council staff.

Graham Wright – Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee advised that:

In recognition of the need for officers and Executive members to focus on the covid-19 response, Overview and Scrutiny had temporarily shifted to a streamlined structure, with all scrutiny engagement on Executive decisions being undertaken by OS Management Committee and its newly established Wiltshire Covid-19 Response Task Group. Meetings of the other three select committees had been cancelled until September. OS Management Committee would meet next on 3rd June to ratify this arrangement, which would be in place until the August recess when the situation would be reviewed again.

The Covid-19 Response Task Group had already met on two occasions and It was envisaged that it would meet prior to every Cabinet meeting for the foreseeable future to review items that fall under its terms of reference. Although the intention was to focus on covid-19, our terms of reference do allow the task group to consider any other matters coming to Cabinet. Overview and Scrutiny would consider doing so if the matter was of particular significance. In other cases it may just request a briefing for the relevant select committee chairman.

To be as constructive as possible, members of the task group wish to focus on the future; meaning the recovery from, and legacy of, covid-19. This included looking at how the council would adapt itself to its new operational and financial context. The task group would be efficient and proportionate in its approach to allow the incident response to remain the priority.

Regarding the Covid-19 report in today's agenda, the Task Group considered this last week on the 12th of May. We were grateful to be joined by the Leader, Deputy Leader, two Chief Executive Officers and a number of directors who answered all of our questions and had also provided further information following the meeting. We found the report very comprehensive and our questions covered every area of the response it set out, including:

- How the council would support residential care homes when occupancy levels fall
- How vulnerable people were being identified

- How children entitled to Free School Meals were being provided for
- The role of the Local Resilience Forum and the council's governance around emergency decision-making
- What modelling was being done to prepare for the financial challenges we now face.

Finally, the task group would also be meeting before Cabinet in July to consider the latest report on the covid-19 response and will be back to report its comments then.

Resolved:

- 1. Notes the update with respect to the response to COVID-19 and recognise the impact that it has had across Wiltshire on its residents, communities and businesses, the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE), public sector partners and the Council itself.**
- 2. Notes the Section 151 officer's summary of the impact of COVID -19 on the council's 2020 / 2021 budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.**
- 3. Notes the changes to local authority powers and duties introduced by the Coronavirus Act 2020 and supporting guidance.**
- 4. Notes the decisions taken by officers under delegated authority in Appendix 1**
- 5. Thanks local communities, the voluntary sector, businesses, strategic partners and education settings for their support during these unprecedented circumstances.**
- 6. Acknowledges the significant and exceptional effort of staff working throughout the COVID-19 response.**
- 7. Notes that a further report will be presented in June, which will include additional information on the Council's response and recovery plans.**

Reason for the decision

That these are unprecedented times for local government and this report provided Cabinet with an overview of the work both undertaken and ongoing by Wiltshire Council in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, together with the associated challenges and risks. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic would have immediate and undoubtedly long lasting significant financial implications for Wiltshire's economy, communities and residents as well as the Council itself.

57 **Capital Programme - Transport**

Cllr Bridget Wayman outlined the report.

A statement and two questions were received from Mr Chris Caswill, re “Who will oversee the staff restructuring foreseen in the Transport papers” and “Do you anticipate it leading to any redundancies? Is that the intention”

The Leader thanked Mr Caswill for his comments and confirmed that responses had been prepared on the issues raised and a copy had been sent to Mr Caswill and also published on the Council’s [website](#).

A statement and two questions were received from Anne Henshaw, representing Campaign to Protect Rural England, re “With climate change there is a need to consider a better use of roads with more public transport, car-sharing, working locally or from home and more long haul freight going by rail “and “The repairs and improvements needed to existing road networks of all categories to make them safe for all users in a wider based travel future”.

The Leader thanked Ms Henshaw for her comments and confirmed that responses had been prepared on the issues raised and a copy had been sent to Ms Henshaw and also published on the Council’s [website](#).

A statement, two questions and two supplementary questions were received from Mr Colin Gale, re How Wiltshire Council can develop a Transport Infrastructure without an agreed ‘Freight Management Strategy’ and If the A350 is going to be Wiltshire Councils designated North-South route how is Wiltshire Council going to manage that route with the freight hauliers and reduce the level of freight on the A342 and A345

The Leader thanked Mr Gale for his comments and confirmed that responses had been prepared on the issues raised and a copy had been sent to Mr Gale and also published on the Council’s [website](#).

That following recent (and likely continuing) success in bidding for major transport projects, the Council needed to consider its capacity to manage an increasing programme of scheme development and delivery activity.

Whilst the sharp upturn in funding for projects incorporating transport infrastructure was of course welcome, the scale of that increase necessitates a corresponding shift in the Council’s current approach in that regard.

The report illustrated the extent of funded and pending activity and proposed arrangements to ensure that appropriate resource were in place.

Resolved:

1. Noted the intention to establish a revised internal structure creating a focussed major transport projects development and delivery team.
2. Noted that recent funding awards were conditional on the Council providing a 'local contribution' in terms of both development and construction costs, and agreed the need for suitable financial provision to be made - the final extent of that to be determined once:
 - costs had been finalised
 - negotiations on the percentage contribution had been agreed with the funding agency and the outcome of all pending bids were known

Reason for the decision

That Wiltshire Council had succeeded in securing funding for a substantial programme of major transport projects that required local funding and resourcing to an extent that could not be delivered within existing budgets and team structures.

The proposals were made to avoid:

- *compromising the Council's ability to respond convincingly to bidding opportunities*
- *compromising the Council's ability to develop and deliver major transport projects in line with agreed programmes*
- *a significant risk that conditional funding secured via external bodies being lost*

58 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 11.50 am)

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