

Cabinet

MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2019 AT THE KENNET ROOM, COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

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 Andrew Bryant, Cllr Ruth Hopkinson, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Steve Oldrieve, Cllr Stewart Palmen, Cllr Horace Prickett, Cllr Jo Trigg and Cllr Robert Yuill

165 **Apologies**

There were no apologies.

166 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2019 were presented.

Resolved:

To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2019.

167 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

168 **Leader's announcements**

There were no Leader announcements.

169 **Public participation and Questions from Councillors**

1. Lou Barry asked a question about reduction in car mileage in Wiltshire and sustainable transport options.

The Leader confirmed that Ms Barry had received a response to her question and these had been published on the Council's website prior to the day of the meeting. Ms Barry then asked a supplementary question

about the funding available for future traffic schemes and the potential to divert this funding to climate emergency schemes.

A number of verbal responses were provided by Cabinet members at the meeting which included information about air quality, reduction in town centre traffic, improvements to journey times, alleviating traffic congestion, improvements to the economy and funding of public transport.

The Leader, in response to the questions asked and issues raised, asked Ms Barry to consider and suggest, prior to the next Cabinet meeting on 7 January 2020, how improvements could be made to public transport in Wiltshire and how this would be funded.

The Leader thanked Ms Barry for her question and contribution.

2. Bill Jarvis asked questions about (i) home insulation and renewable heating, and (ii) integrated transport systems.

The Leader confirmed that Mr Jarvis had received a response to his question and these had been published on the Council's website prior to the day of the meeting. Mr Jarvis then asked a supplementary question about the conclusions arrived at by the Climate Emergency Task Group on home insulation and renewable heating, and the need for further investment.

Cllr Clewer provided a verbal response to the supplementary questions which included information about the use of reserves and the availability of national grant schemes.

The Leader, in response to the questions asked and issues raised, asked Mr Jarvis to consider and suggest, prior to the next Cabinet meeting on 7 January 2020, how improvements could be made to public transport in Wiltshire and how this would be funded.

The Leader thanked Mr Jarvis for his question and contribution.

3. Adrian Temple Brown read out a statement about funding for traffic schemes, the need to change policies, and the need for increased awareness of the climate challenge.

Cllr Clewer provided a verbal response to the statement which included confirmation that majority of traffic schemes were funded by the government and that any new policy would need to be considered in light of the information available and be sustainable.

The Leader thanked Mr Temple Brown for his question and contribution.

170 **Council Tax Base**

Councillor Simon Jacobs, Cabinet member for Finance and Procurement presented a report which recommended that Cabinet approve the Council Tax Base for 2020/2021.

Councillor Jacobs explained that the Council is required to approve its Council Tax Base annually, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base (England)) Regulations 2012. He indicated that the Council Tax Base must be notified to Major Precepting Authorities (the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Wiltshire & Swindon and Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service) and Local Precepting Authorities (Town and Parish Councils) by 31 January 2020.

The Cabinet noted that the proposal had been scrutinised by the Financial Planning Task Group, who were satisfied with the report and had no comments.

Cllr Ruth Hopkinson, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats had no comments on the report.

Resolved:

- 1. To approve the Council Tax Base 2020/2021.**
- 2. To Note that the recommended collection rate adjustments are set at 99.75% and 82.50%, to give a resulting overall collection rate adjustment of 98.92% which reflects current expectations for collection (further details are outlined in the main body of the report).**
- 3. To approve that The Chief Finance Officer (Director Finance and Procurement) is continued to be given delegated authority to determine the estimated Collection Fund balances (council tax and business rates) as at 31 March 2020 by 15 January 2020**

Reasons for Decision:

Before the Council Tax can be set by the Council in February 2020 a calculation must be made and approved of the Council Tax Base, which is an annual requirement as laid out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

171 **Mid Year Updated Medium Term Financial Strategy**

Cllr Simon Jacobs, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement presented a report which provided an update on the 2020/21 budget setting process and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2020/21-2024/25. The report also proposed a new set of financial objectives to help frame the Council's strategic financial direction.

Jane Laurie asked a question about the Strategy and suggested that it should contain a recognition of climate emergency. The Leader confirmed that Ms Barry had received a response to her question and this had been published on the Council's website prior to the day of the meeting. Ms Laurie then asked a supplementary question about the need for additional funding to combat the climate emergency. Cllr Clewer, Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts, Tourism, Housing, Climate Change and Military-Civilian Integration, provided a verbal response in relation to the funding streams available for the Council, general public and community groups to access in order to tackle climate issues.

The Cabinet noted that the proposal had been scrutinised by the Financial Planning Task Group, who raised a number of comments on the proposals in relation to (i) the need for clarity around the financial objective 'To generate income through a commercial approach' and the new financial objectives in general and, (ii) queried whether a corporate contingency budget might be used as an alternative to tight financial control. Cllr Jacobs and Cllr Whitehead, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development, reported that (i) the Council was in the process of setting up commercial businesses to generate additional funding and details of this had been previously considered by the Cabinet and; (ii) the strategic approach to mitigating against financial risks would include the creation of a corporate contingency/risk provision budget as part of the budget setting process.

Cllr Ruth Hopkinson, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats had no comments on the report.

In response to a comment from Cllr Oldrieve about a concern that the report did not reflect the decision of Full Council in February 2019 acknowledging a climate emergency, Cllr Whitehead and Cllr Clewer explained that the Council's business plan would contain detail about how it proposed to tackle the climate emergency. Initial funding has been provided through capital budgets with future medium and long term proposals being developed through funding from within the Council's revenue budgets.

Cllr Hill provided reassurance that Overview and Scrutiny would be providing an opportunity for councillor involvement in the forthcoming budget setting process, as in previously years.

Resolved:

- 1. That the contents of the report be noted.**

2. That the Financial Objectives set out in the report and detailed below under which the Council plans and operates, be approved:
- a. To ensure that the allocation of all resources is policy and evidence led and ensures delivery of the Councils strategic objectives.
 - b. To provide strong, robust financial management and control in order to deliver a balanced budget and a sound financial framework including a five-year medium-term financial strategy.
 - c. To continue to generate savings and secure value for money through measures aimed at greater efficiency in service delivery and management, including invest to save investments and reductions in activity costs.
 - d. To generate income through a commercial approach.
 - e. To support local residents and businesses through the current challenging economic climate for Local Government.
 - f. To maintain general fund balances at or above the minimum prudent level as determined by the Chief Finance Officer and to add to balances whenever the opportunity arises.
 - g. To undertake investment only where a value for money case can be demonstrated. This will include social value.
 - h. To keep local taxation increases in line with Central Government set limits.

Reason for decision:

To inform Cabinet of the 2020/21 budget setting and Medium-Term Financial Strategy processes.

172 **Western Gateway - a powerhouse for the West**

Cllr Philip Whitehead, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development presented a report which outlined Wiltshire Councils engagement with the Western Gateway and agree to its ongoing involvement, subject to review after 12 months.

Cllr Whitehead explained that central government had announced its support for cross-border economic collaboration through the 'Western Gateway' in November 2019, with £400k of start-up funding to take the objectives of the partnership forward. The partnership aimed to drive inclusive growth through greater collaboration amongst councils and other partners either side of the Severn estuary.

In response to a question from Cllr Ruth Hopkinson about the benefits of the Western Gateway for areas in Wiltshire south of the M4 corridor, Cllr Whitehead confirmed that the Western Gateway would be of benefit to all of Wiltshire. He

referred to Wiltshire's strong connections with the defence industry and links with the Ministry of Defence at Abbeywood and Cheltenham.

Resolved: To approve Wiltshire Council's participation as a full and equal partner in the Western Gateway; and to review the benefits of the participation after 12 months.

Reason for decision:

The Western Gateway proposal offers the potential means to amplify the voice of Wiltshire with national government and ensuring our desired infrastructure and other needs are better addressed.

173 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 11.10 am)

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