

Cabinet

MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 3 NOVEMBER 2020 AT ONLINE MEETING.

Present:

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

Also Present:

Cllr Chuck Berry, Cllr Richard Britton, Cllr Allison Bucknell, Cllr Clare Cape, Cllr Stewart Dobson, Cllr Peter Fuller, Cllr Richard Gamble, Cllr Gavin Grant, Cllr Alan Hill, Cllr Sven Hocking, Cllr Ruth Hopkinson, Cllr Atiqul Hoque, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Bob Jones MBE, Cllr Jerry Kunkler, Cllr Brian Mathew, Cllr Stewart Palmen, Cllr Horace Prickett, Cllr Ian Thorn, Cllr Jo Trigg, Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Cllr Suzanne Wickham, Cllr Christopher Williams and Cllr Pip Ridout

123 **Apologies**

There were no apologies.

124 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2020 were presented.

Resolved:

To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2020.

125 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

126 **Leader's Announcements**

There were no Leaders announcements.

127 **Public Participation and Questions from Councillors**

Questions were received from the following:

- Ian James about the Chippenham HIF Bid and Broadband Rollout
- Chris Caswill about Council Farms and Planning for the Future White Paper response
- Anne Henshaw about consultation on the Local Plan
- Isabel McCord about the Chippenham HIF Bid; and
- Andrew Nicolson about the Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body and the A350

Late questions were received from the following, with written responses being provided after the meeting:

- Cllr Chris Hurst about remote learning; and
- Adrian Temple Brown about the Chippenham HIF Bid

Cllr Whitehead confirmed that the questions had received written responses which had been published on the Council's website prior to the meeting. Supplementary questions were received from the following:

- Anne Henshaw about the Local Plan and Regulation 18 stage consultation; and
- Andrew Nicolson about Wiltshire Council's support for transport schemes from other Local Authorities considered by the Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body; definition of 'agglomeration'; and strategy change in the event of benefits not being realised for the A350 improvements.

Cllr Whitehead confirmed that written responses would be provided for the supplementary questions asked at the meeting.

In addition to the public questions, Cllr Ian Thorn asked a question about the requirements of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Cllr Whitehead confirmed that a written response would be provided after the meeting.

128 **Covid-19 Update**

Councillor Philip Whitehead, Leader of the Council and Cabinet member for Economic Development, MCI and Communications presented the report which provided a brief summary of the key activities to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus in Wiltshire since the last update to Cabinet in October 2020.

The Leader explained that since the report had been produced and published, the government had announced national restrictions on 31 October, 2020 to be considered by Parliament on 4 November, 2020 which have created additional

resource pressures in what was already a challenging operational context. The Strategic Coordinating Group, leading the COVID-19 response in Wiltshire had been stood up, along with other tactical officer groups to address the challenges presented by the latest restrictions, rising infection rates and the impact on Wiltshire communities. He thanked officers for their continued resilience during this pandemic and for managing the additional pressures placed on them in preparation for the lockdown from 5 November 2020. He also commented on the health and wellbeing of officers and that some may contract Covid-19 and the impact this could have on the provision of services. Cllr Whitehead appealed for the public to be understanding during this time, especially for those staff on the 'front line'.

Officers provided updates of their service areas, as detailed in the report, covering the following areas - Test and Trace, outbreak management, safe spaces, community spaces, care homes, social care, education, economy, safeguarding and organisational recovery programme.

Cllr Graham Wright, Chair of the Wiltshire Covid-19 Response Task Group referred to Briefing Note 20-34 – Return to Streamlined Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements, he assured members that although Select Committees were being stood down during the additional restrictions in November, 2020 the report of the Global Warming & Climate Emergency Task Group would be publicly available shortly. Scrutiny was still a high priority and being conducted through the COVID-19 Response Task Group.

In response to questions from Cllr Ian Thorn, Leader of the Liberal Democrats about (i) the availability and delivery of PPE; (ii) Preparations for admissions to Care Homes from hospital; (iii) Support for the most vulnerable; and (iv) compliance and enforcement activity. Cllr Whitehead and Officers explained that (i) The supply and delivery of PPE would not be an issue on this occasion as stocks of the equipment were high; (ii) Measures are in place to manage admissions to Care Homes from hospital; (iii) Work continues with the CCG and a number of bids for additional funding towards support for the vulnerable have been or would shortly be submitted; and (iv) Compliance activity is undertaken through engagement and education.

Comments arising from the general discussion included:

- Implementation of the Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 and self isolation and how to apply for the funding
- Support for businesses required to close due to the implementation of restrictions
- Government support for businesses benefitting from business rate relief and council tax relief
- Clarification on further support from the government in relation to loss of income from car parks
- Testing of residents prior to admission to Care homes
- Support offered to families who have relatives in Care Homes and unable to visit during the lockdown restrictions
- Local support for test and trace activity

- Programme of flu inoculations during the lockdown restrictions
- Provision of free school meals during half term holidays and notifications to schools of the Councils support for this action.
- The take up of free school meal vouchers
- The provision of free school meals during the Christmas holidays
- Normal operation of dentists, doctors, vets and opticians during the lockdown restrictions.

Resolved:

- 1. Continue to encourage all residents to download the NHS Test and Trace app on their phone.**
- 2. Note changes in national policy and the work underway within the four Recovery Coordinating Group themes and on Organisation Recovery.**

Reason for Decision:

Wiltshire Council continues to work closely with partners to deliver in a rapidly changing environment.

129 **Financial Year 2020/21: Q2 Budget Monitoring**

Cllr Pauline Church, Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement and Commercial Investment presented the report which (i) advised on the Budget Monitoring position 2020/21 Quarter 2 (30 September 2020) for revenue and capital for the financial year 2020/21 with suggested actions as appropriate; (ii) provided an update on the financial impact on the Council of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and details on Government support; and (iii) provided an update on the Treasury Management performance for the year to date (30 September 2020).

Questions were received from Ian James about general reserves, Chippenham HIF finances and Stone Circle finances.

Cllr Whitehead acknowledged that the questions had received written responses which had been published on the Council's website prior to the meeting. There were no requests for supplementary questions.

Cllr Church commented on the following matters:

- The estimated financial impact to the Council of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and the anticipated impact for the remainder of the 2020/21 financial year.
- The Council's latest submission to the Government that sets out the forecast impact on the Council's finances.
- Quarter 2 budget monitoring forecasts based on information as at 30 September 2020.
- The receipt of £32m emergency funding from the Government.

- The quarter 2 position forecasting an overspend of £20.467m, an improvement of £5.177m on the period 5 forecast overspend of £25.644m.
- The forecast being reduced to an overspend of £0.467m as at quarter 2.
- With improvements to the Council's financial position, rather than defer the collection fund deficit over three years, sufficient provision is put into the current financial year to deal with any losses now rather than burden future financial years.
- The underspends arising from the unallocated pay award budget and the tranche 4 emergency funding received from Government is transferred to a new earmarked reserve with the purpose of utilising the funds to equalise the budget in 2021/22.
- Confirmation of the current forecast movement of approvals between years as schemes have been assessed and the spend profile recast.
- An interim Treasury Management update based on information as at 30 September 2020.

Cllr Whitehead thanked officers for the incredibly long hours worked and resilience shown during the Covid-19 period.

Cllr Graham Wright, Chair of the Wiltshire Covid-19 Response Task Group, explained that the Task Group at their meeting held on 28 October 2020 and the Financial Planning Task Group, at their meeting held on 27 October 2020, received updates on the Council's financial position. Detailed discussions were held, with many questions raised and the Task Group's were satisfied with the responses received.

In response to questions from Cllr Ian Thorn about underspends in the budget for Learning Disabilities and Mental Health and overspends in the budget for Access & Reablement, Cllr Church and officers reported that challenges in staff recruitment and over recovery of income in relation to Section 117 funding had a positive impact on the budget for this service area. In relation to Access and Reablement, it was noted that budget targets had been amended and the service area had been working hard to reduce the amount of overspend, which had been significantly reduced compared to the original forecast.

In response to a question from Cllr Hopkinson about spend on mental health issues and the hiring of agency staff, Cllr Church and officers offered to provide a full written response after the meeting.

Resolved:

To note:

- a) the Section 151 officer's summary of the impact of COVID-19 on the Council's 2020/21 budget;**
- b) the current revenue budget is forecast to overspend by £0.467m by the end of the financial year and forecast level of General Fund reserve;**

- c) the current savings delivery performance for the year;
- d) the forecast level of reserves;
- e) the current capital budget movements and spend as at 30 September 2020
- f) the update report on Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21

To approve:

- g) the transfer to a new Budget Equalisation Reserve of the balance on the 2020-21 pay award budget and the tranche 4 emergency funding received from Government.
- h) the budget virements in the capital programme, as per Appendix B.
- i) a recommendation on to Full Council to approve the revised lending criteria, in that the Council uses the counterparty list provided by Link Asset Services, without any adjustment (Appendix D, paragraph 32 – 35).

Reason for decision:

To inform effective decision making and ensure sound financial management as part of the Councils overall control environment.

To inform Cabinet on the forecast impact upon the financial position of the Council due to COVID-19 and of the Councils overall position on the 2020/21 revenue as at Quarter 2 (30 September 2020), including delivery of approved savings and highlighting any budget changes.

130 **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22: Budget Assumptions**

Cllr Pauline Church, Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement and Commercial Investment presented the report which provided information about the assumptions being used in setting the budget for 2021/22, reflecting the significant impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the Councils assumptions that were previously made in the approved Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2021/22.

Cllr Church explained that the assumptions and their outcome give rise to the current estimated budget gap that will need to be closed in order to set a balanced budget for financial year 2021/22. This depended on the outcome of the spending review, which Government have recently confirmed will be a one year spending review for both revenue and capital and announced in late November 2020. The Cabinet noted that work will continue over the coming months to put together proposals to balance the Councils budget as well as refine and update assumptions to reflect the most recent evidence and forecasts.

Cllr Graham Wright, Chair of the Wiltshire Covid-19 Response Task Group, explained that the Task Group at their meeting held on 28 October 2020 and the Financial Planning Task Group, at their meeting held on 27 October 2020, considered the Medium Term Financial Strategy report. Many questions were asked about the Council's finances and the Task Group's were satisfied with the responses received.

In response to questions from Cllr Ian Thorn about the ability of residents to pay, being a third variable (para 22 of the report), in relation to the level of income received from Council Tax; and bad debt provision, Cllr Church, Cllr Whitehead and officers commented that the Council would always support residents who were experiencing financial difficulties, in particular with the payment of Council Tax and would put measures in place to provide appropriate help and advice in support of the residents need.

Resolved:

To approve the budget assumptions being used in the setting of the 2021/22 budget and the Medium Term Financial Strategy and note the current estimated budget gap.

Reason for Decision:

To inform effective, transparent decision making and ensure sound financial management as part of the Councils overall control environment.

To inform Cabinet on the assumptions being used to assess the growth, inflation, and demand for services, the estimated level of income from sales, fees and charges and the level of income estimated from core funding e.g. council tax, business rates and government grant and how all of these aspects have been impacted by COVID-19 pandemic.

131 **Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and Revised Capital Programme**

Cllr Richard Clewer, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts & Tourism, Housing and Communities presented the report seeking consideration of a revised capital programme for both the Council's new build council house programme and also the investment into the Council's existing housing stock.

Cllr Clewer explained that the revisions to the Housing Revenue Account business plan based on a capital programme seeks to address the climate emergency. The proposed capital programme will support carbon zero development of new council housing where the Council is in control of development and a programme of investment of about £50m over the next 10 years so as to improve the energy performance of the Council's existing housing stock so that all units will achieve an Energy performance rating of at least B.

Cllr Clewer indicated that the report responded to the Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group recommendations, and he challenged Housing Associations with properties in Wiltshire to put in place and achieve the same carbon reduction measures as proposed in the report.

Cllr Graham Wright, Chair of the Wiltshire Covid-19 Response Task Group, reported that he was happy with the robust scrutiny undertaken and thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their contributions and how the report dovetailed well with the recommendations of the Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group.

Resolved: To agree that

- 1. the Council house new build programme will aim to deliver carbon zero new build where the Council is in control of development.**
- 2. the revised Council house build programme 2020 – 203/32 at an estimated cost of £195m**
- 3. the Council housing investment programme should aim to achieve energy performance rating of B for all its existing housing stock and**
- 4. the revised Council house investment programme 2020 – 2031/32 totalling £289m**

Reason for Decision:

The proposals will significantly improve the energy efficiency of the Council's housing stock not only responding to the Council's climate emergency commitment but delivering homes that are cheaper to run and thus healthier to live in.

132 The Maltings and Central Car Park, Salisbury: Regeneration Update and River Park Scheme

Cllr Bridget Wayman, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste presented the report seeking consideration of a number of proposals to deliver the first phase of the River Park Scheme for the regeneration of the Maltings and Central Car Park, Salisbury.

Cllr Wayman explained that the scheme would deliver significant flood risk mitigation for existing Salisbury residents and businesses in partnership with the Environment Agency; enable redevelopment and regeneration to come forward on the Central Car Park and Maltings site and the wider city; and enhance the local environment for residents, employees and visitors in the area, and encourage enhanced health and wellbeing outcomes including modal shift to more sustainable methods of transport.

Cllr Whitehead and Cllr Clewer expressed support for the scheme and encouraged residents in the central area of Salisbury to check the most recent flood maps which had been revised since the last episode of flooding in the town centre area, as the changes may impact insurance policies. They complimented officers on the speed of developing the scheme in partnership with the Environment Agency.

Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Chair of the Environment Select Committee reported that he and Cllr Bob Jones received a briefing on 27 October, 2020 and they supported the proposals as detailed in the report.

Resolved: To agree

- 1. To increase the level of grant to be made available to the Environment Agency to a maximum of £6.06m after deduction of the council's historic and ongoing costs towards the project, using Local Growth Fund grant approved by the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership. This funding is within the capital allocation which was approved by Full Council in November 2019.**
- 2. To delegate authority to agree the terms of the Local Growth Fund grant agreement(s) with the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Environment Agency to the Director Highways and Environment in consultation with the Director of Finance and Procurement.**
- 3. To undertake a public consultation on the River Park Masterplan in partnership with the Environment Agency to commence in November 2020 for a period of 7 weeks**
- 4. To delegate to the Director of Highways and Environment authority to make changes to the consultation documents.**
- 5. To the prerequisite changes in parking at the Maltings and Central Car Park during construction of the Phase 1 River Park scheme and following completion of the scheme.**
- 6. To note the proposals being considered for provision of coach parking during construction of the Phase 1 River Park scheme.**

Reason for Decision:

- To enable redevelopment and regeneration to come forward on the Central Car Park and Maltings site and the wider city*
- To allow future phases on the Maltings and Central Car Park site to come forward quickly following the major investment in flood attenuation and public realm being delivered by Environment Agency using an £18 million package of investment from the Environment Agency and Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership*

- *To provide a positive response and deliver against the Council's recovery plans – both in response to the Novichok incident and latterly the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on Salisbury*
- *To ensure public and stakeholder engagement and support for the masterplan and the River Park.*

133 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 1.00 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Stuart Figini, Senior Democratic Services Officer of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718221, e-mail stuart.figini@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115