

Cabinet

MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 1 JUNE 2021 AT ONLINE.

Present:

Cllr Richard Clewer (Chairman), Cllr Laura Mayes (Vice-Chairman),
Cllr Pauline Church, Cllr Jane Davies, Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Nick Botterill,
Cllr Simon Jacobs and Cllr Dr Mark McClelland

Also Present:

Cllr Caroline Corbin, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Tony Jackson, Cllr Mel Jacob, Cllr Carole King, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Ashley O'Neill, Cllr Sam Pearce-Kearney, Cllr Pip Ridout, Cllr Ian Thorn, Cllr Jo Trigg, Cllr Suzanne Wickham, Cllr Christopher Williams, Cllr Graham Wright, Cllr Helen Belcher, Cllr Clare Cape, Cllr Charles McGrath, Cllr Nabil Najjar, Cllr Paul Sample JP, Cllr Mike Sankey, Cllr Martin Smith and Cllr Bridget Wayman

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Phil Alford.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2021 were presented.

Resolved:

To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2021.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Leader's announcements

There were no Chairman's announcements.

5 Public participation and Questions from Councillors

Questions were received from the following members of public:

- Ken McCall – Ashton Park Urban Expansion, Trowbridge / A350 Yarnbrook-West Ashton Relief Road

- Melanie Boyle – Travel Solutions for Chippenham
- Margaret Willmot – Climate Emergency and Transport Policy
- Cllr Gordon King – Deliverability of Strategic Site H14 at Westbury and Railway Bridge

Cllr Clewer explained that the above questions had received written responses which were published on the Council's website prior to the meeting in the agenda supplement 2, which can be accessed [here](#).

A supplementary question was received from Cllr King in relation to a future application for Government funding for the delivery of the new bridge. Cllr Botterill confirmed that he would discuss the matter further with Cllr King following the meeting.

In addition to the above questions, a number of further questions were received from Councillors as follows:

- Cllr Ian Thorn about (i) Wiltshire Climate Alliance inclusion at Area Board meetings; (ii) The transfer of the Climate Change portfolio from the Leader of the Council to the Cabinet Member for Development Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change; (iii) Furlong Close. In response, Cllr Clewer explained that (i) Area Boards were all encouraged to decide how best to address climate change for their area; (ii) with the increase in responsibilities as Leader of the Council, Cllr Clewer felt it was appropriate to transfer the Climate Change portfolio to another Cabinet Member so that it receives the time it deserves, that he was now unable to achieve in his new role as Leader of the Council; and (iii) There were many complex issues associated with Furlong Close and residents would be supported and their views would be taken on board.
- Cllr Bridget Wayman asked for an update in relation to questions she had asked as the former Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste, to Defra about the Bath Clean Air Zone. In response Cllr Clewer assured Cllr Wayman that conversations were taking place with Defra and an update would be provided once available.
- Cllr Sam Pearce-Kearney asked about S106 monies and their use for future highway schemes. In response, Cllr Botterill, Cabinet Member for Development Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change explained that expired agreements with developers would be revisited and Parish Council's would be asked to investigate how best to spend S106 monies that were not specifically aligned to certain projects.

6 **COVID-19 Final Update**

Cllr Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council and Cabinet member for MCI, Economic Development, Heritage, Arts, Tourism and Health & Wellbeing introduced the report which provided a summary of the key activities to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus in Wiltshire since the last update to Cabinet in March 2021.

The Chief Executive explained that since the last report the roadmap for exiting lockdown has been followed with further relaxations coming into place. Support for businesses, vulnerable groups, care homes and educational settings continued.

The Cabinet noted that this would be the final update report as a separate report on this subject and work to address the legacy of the pandemic will be embedded into the council's new business plan.

The Chief Executive reported that the final stage of relaxations set out in the roadmap is set for midsummer's day (21 June) and conditional on the data continuing to move in the right direction. Government will make its decision on this the week beforehand (14 June). Wiltshire Council is working closely with its partners in English Heritage and Wiltshire Police to ensure that summer solstice events such as that at Stonehenge can go ahead if it is permitted.

The Chief Executive reported that the recent elections in Wiltshire were one of the largest elections in the country and a significant logistical challenge; however, the Council ensured these were held in a COVID-19 secure way. It was noted that residents were encouraged to, where possible, vote by post and this messaging would continue for the forthcoming Police and Crime Commissioner election to be held on 19 August. He thanked all the staff involved for the significant effort undertaken to deliver one of the largest set of elections in the country. Developments since the last report were summarised in the report and in appendix 1 under the following areas:

- Test and Trace and isolate
- Community (asymptomatic) testing
- Mass vaccinations
- Outbreak management
- Public Health support to Schools & Educational settings
- Community spaces and engagement
- Wellbeing Hub
- Care Homes
- Education and Skills
- Economy
- Excess Deaths
- Health & Care
- Safe Spaces
- Homelessness
- Organisational Recovery

Cllr Laura Mayes thanked officers for their outstanding contributions, continued hard work and resilience during this difficult and testing time. She urged officers to take a break in order to look after their health and mental wellbeing.

Cllr Graham Wright, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, reported that the Committee met on 25 May 2021 to consider the Cabinet report. Robust Scrutiny was undertaken, and the Committee were

satisfied with the updates and responses to questions received and supported the proposals in the report. Select Committees would consider details about their areas of responsibility during the forthcoming round of meetings.

Cllr Ian Thorn, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, echoed the comments of others paying tribute to officers across all services, and taking time out was vital for all officers. In particular he paid tribute to officers involved in the elections and the remarkable efforts in delivering successful elections.

In response to questions from Cllr Thorn, about (i) the help being offered to businesses; (ii) the development of community groups and how they could continue to operate into the future; (iii) Teacher assessments; Cabinet members and officers explained that (i) resources were being allocated to a total of £4m over 4 years to help businesses with the recovery phase of the pandemic; (ii) Members recognised the importance of the local groups continuing, and the Wellbeing Hub would continue going forward; and (iii) the Council recognises the impact on teachers and how hard they have worked during the pandemic, especially with the assessment of pupils of exam age. It was noted that information would be provided about the processes being followed for assessments, so that students and parents would have confidence in the system being employed.

In response to questions, comments and issues raised by other Councillors, officers explained the following:

- The need for the adult population to be double vaccinated. Community testing using rapid lateral flow devices helps to identify those people who are infectious but asymptomatic and unaware they may be spreading the disease. This helps trace their contacts, support them to isolate and prevent transmission to others.
- The rates of successful contact tracing for COVID cases across Wiltshire remained high, with 98% of Wiltshire cases being successfully reached by either NHS Test and Trace or the Wiltshire Local Tracing Partnership, delivered by the Public Health Team.
- Engagement with residents and service users is essential along with the provision of mental health services tailored to the individual.

Cllr Clewer thanked all officers for their efforts in combating the pandemic along with the many officers associated with the recent elections in May 2021.

Resolved:

- **To continue to encourage all residents to download the NHS Test and Trace app on their phone.**
- **To continue to encourage all residents to answer a call received from 0300 456 0100 as it may be the local contact tracing team within the Council**

- **To continue to encourage all residents to follow national guidance**
- **To continue to encourage residents to attend for vaccination when invited and to continue to follow national guidance after vaccination**
- **To thank residents that voted in the recent elections and encourage use of a postal vote for the upcoming PCC election on 19 August**
- **To note the work underway as we approach the final stages of the government roadmap**

Reason for decision:

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

7 Provisional Outturn 2020/21

Cllr Pauline Church, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement, Commissioning, IT, Digital and Commercialisation introduced the report which (i) advised Members of the provisional outturn position for financial year 2020/21 (31 March 2021) for revenue with the necessary approvals as appropriate; and (ii) provided an update on the financial impact on the Council of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and details on Government support.

The Cabinet received questions from Susan McGill in relation to this report. Cllr Clewer explained that the questions had received responses, which were available to read in the agenda supplement 2 on the Council's website [here](#).

Cllr Church reported that the £13.571m set aside in two new earmarked reserves, one for Latent Demand and a Collection Fund Volatility reserve as well as £4.165m in the Budget Equalisation Reserve approved as part of the quarter two (Q2) budget monitoring report, would mitigate risk and known pressures that will arise in future years and balance the budget for 2021/22 financial year. It was noted that the approvals have effectively reset the budgets for services by transferring all the variances, the overspends and underspends, and putting the net position into the Latent Demand reserve.

The report set out the variances in the financial performance from Q3 to the Q4 position. The overall financial variances for the financial year were detailed in Appendix A.

Cabinet noted that after receiving £32m of emergency funding from the Government to support the Council in managing the response to COVID-19, an estimated £6.4m from Government to offset income losses as a result of lockdown interventions, additional furlough grant claimed and the revision of the timing of latent demand, the Q4 outturn position has again improved. The provisional Q4 position shows an additional underspend of £16.246m following

the requests approved as part of the Q2 and Q3 budget monitoring reports, which will see the Council underspend by £33.982m for the financial year 2020/21.

Cllr Church explained that a significant proportion of the one-off funding will be required to meet a range of costs and pressures, some of which maybe recurring, in the following financial year. Therefore, the report set out proposals to set aside these funds to ensure the financial sustainability and resilience of the Council to continue to deliver services over the medium term. Concern was expressed specifically about the Dedicated Schools Grant and in particular overspends on the High Needs Block, which was driven from parents and schools for support for vulnerable children and SEN & disability.

Cllr Pip Ridout, Chair of the Financial Planning Task Group, reported that the next Task Group meeting was set for 25 June 2021 and she would be able to report further on the Task Group comments on this at a future meeting of the Cabinet. Cllr Ridout reminded the Cabinet that the provisional outturn represented a moment in time, and that the Council were still in the midst of a pandemic and its impacts on the Council budgets.

Cllr Ian Thorn, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group asked for information about the Council's financial position if the pandemic had not taken place and there were no exceptional circumstances to be dealt with. The Council's Corporate Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive explained that it was difficult to understand the true picture without Government help and officers were undertaking a base budget review to understand the metrics going forward, and latent demand for future years.

Following questions from Cllr Helen Belcher about alternative sources of income and financial support for the Council, Cllr Church explained that the Council received support from the Government through various grants, for instance, the Dedicated Schools Grant, many services provided by the Council were funded by the Government, and there were some commercialisation opportunities. The Council would also consider other forms of income like Business Rates and Council Tax.

In response to a question from Cllr Simon Jacobs about the £32m funding received from the Government to tackle the pandemic, Cllr Church assured the Cabinet that in relation to this funding, the Council had a statutory responsibility to spend the funding on tackling COVID and not for any other purpose. The Government would also undertake an audit of how the Council spent the funding.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet noted:

- a) the Section 151 officer's summary of the impact of COVID-19 on the Council's 2020/21 budget;**

b) the provisional revenue budget outturn position for the financial year 2020/21;

c) the contributions to and from earmarked reserves as planned;

2. Cabinet approved:

d) the transfer of an additional £2.937m to the Latent Demand reserve;

e) the transfer in total of £3.912m to new earmarked reserves as detailed in the report and Appendices B & C, as follows:

i. National Assessment & Accreditation System (NAAS) £0.163m;

ii. School Improvement, Monitoring & Brokerage Grant £0.220m;

iii. Early Years Professional development programme £0.062m;

iv. Neighbourhood Planning £0.164m;

v. Local Plan £0.323m;

vi. Highways & Environment £3.007m;

vii. Car Parking Machines £0.034m;

f) the transfer of £2.675m to the Capital Financing reserve;

g) the transfer of the balance of the £6.661m provisional underspend as follows:

i. £1.4m to be transferred to the General Fund reserve;

ii. £2m to be set aside for the estimated pay award for 2021/22;

iii. £3.261m to the Budget Equalisation reserve;

h) £0.470m of Capital Approval for Salisbury Car Park & Maltings is brought forward from 2022/23 into 2021/22 and allocated to the River Park Bridge works.

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 provisional revenue outturn position for the Council for the financial year 2020/21, including delivery of approved savings.

To improve the Councils financial resilience by increasing the balance on the General Fund reserve now and setting aside funds in earmarked reserves to prudently assist in managing the Councils future pressures and budget gap.

8 A350 Melksham Bypass Consultation Report

Cllr Mark McClelland, Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste, Street Scene and Flooding introduced the report reviewing the response to the public consultation

on the options for the A350 Melksham Bypass scheme and the further assessment work recently undertaken, and to approve further consultation on a short list of options.

The Cabinet received questions from Janet Giles, Andrew Nicolson and Alan Baines in relation to this report. In addition, Andrew Nicolson and Alan Baines read out statements at the meeting. A copy of the statements are available to read in an updated agenda supplement 2 on the Council's website [here](#).

Supplementary questions were received from Andrew Nicolson about the urgency claims for the new bypass and potential for new employment opportunities. In responding to the supplementary questions, Cllr McClelland and Cllr Richard Clewer explained that (i) the Council's Transport Strategy encourages modal shift, however the Council needed to be realistic, especially in relation to the transport options for rural communities. Cllr McClelland also highlighted the Government's priority to improve links to the south coast and M4, with the A350 being key to this priority; and (ii) in referring to the national transport strategy, evidence indicates that investment in transport helps the economy of the country.

Questions were also submitted by Charmian Spickernell in relation to this report, although they were received after the deadline for questions. Cllr Clewer explained that all questions had received a written response which were published prior to the meeting in Agenda Supplement 2 on the Council's website [here](#).

Cllr McClelland reported that the A350 Melksham Bypass is a Large Local Major scheme which has been awarded development funding by the Department of Transport (DfT) to take it to Outline Business Case stage. It would be a major improvement to the important A350 route which provided vital transport links between the M4, the towns of western Wiltshire and the south coast. A range of options for the scheme were the subject of a public consultation earlier in the year and these had helped to develop the scheme further, in order to prepare a short list of options for further consultation.

Cabinet noted that a sifting process has been undertaken to identify the most suitable options for further consultation. In addition to the most suitable options, the report detailed the reasons why certain routes were discounted.

Cllr Ian Thorn, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group highlighted the need for positive mitigation measures to be employed and for an effective consultation to take place which was reflective of the wishes of the local community.

Cllr Jon Hubbard expressed surprise that the report only highlighted one option for further consultation, giving the impression that a decision had already been made and that future contributions may not be taken into account. He felt that issues of congestion will remain, although pollution levels will be eased due to new technologies being introduced for vehicles. He asked if the proposal to explore the possibility of improving walking and cycling facilities could be

included in any agreed schemes. Cllr McClelland confirmed that this was acceptable and should be included as part of any future scheme.

Cllr Clare Cape raised issues about the potential for carbon reduction on the proposed schemes. In response, Cllr McClelland explained that further development including detailed analysis of any scheme was necessary and carbon reduction issues would be considered at that stage.

Following a question from Cllr Gordon King, Cllr McClelland confirmed that a reduction in journey times was the primary criteria of any scheme that was implemented.

Resolved:

- i. The response to the initial public consultations and the views of the town and local parish councils are noted and taken into account in the scheme development.**
- ii. The following options should not be included in the short list of options for further consultation for the reasons set out in the report:**
 - Non-road options (Options 1 to 6)**
 - Improvement of the existing road (Options 7a, 7b and 7c)**
 - Western routes (Options 8a, 8b, 9a, 9b and 9c)**
 - Short eastern routes (Options 10a and 10b)**
 - Longest eastern route (Option 10d) and its variants**
- iii. Further public consultation should be undertaken on a short list of options comprising the long eastern route (Option 10c) and alternative alignments at the northern end which may be feasible.**
- iv. The possibility of improving walking and cycling facilities in conjunction with the scheme or separately should continue to be explored.**
- v. The views of the public, town and parish councils, Area Board and other organisations should be obtained on the short list of options in order to inform the future development of the scheme.**

Reason for decision:

The A350 Melksham Bypass is a Large Local Major scheme which has been awarded development funding by the DfT to take it to OBC stage. It will be a

major improvement to the important A350 route which provides vital transport links between the M4, the towns of western Wiltshire and the south coast.

As part of the development of the scheme various options were consulted on. In order to inform the further development of the scheme, it is proposed to adopt a short list of feasible options for further consideration and consultation. The preferred route will need to meet the transport objectives and the DfT requirements in order to be awarded funding.

The proposed consultations with the public, town and parish councils, the Area Board and other organisations, will inform the development of the scheme, and assist in preparing an OBC to submit to the DfT.

9 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 1.10 pm)

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