

Cabinet

MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 11 JANUARY 2022 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Richard Clewer (Chairman), Cllr Laura Mayes (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Jane Davies, Cllr Phil Alford, Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Nick Botterill and Cllr Dr Mark McClelland

Also Present:

Cllr Helen Belcher, Cllr David Bowler, Cllr Clare Cape, Cllr Gavin Grant, Cllr Sven Hocking, Cllr Tony Jackson, Cllr Bob Jones MBE, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Dr Brian Mathew, Cllr Nic Puntis, Cllr Mike Sankey, Cllr Ian Thorn and Cllr Jo Trigg

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Ashley O'Neill.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2021 were presented, and it was,

Resolved:

That subject to a correction to include Councillor Nic Puntis as being in attendance, to approve and sign the minutes as a true and correct record.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Leader's announcements

The Leader confirmed that Councillor Pauline Church had decided over the Christmas period to stand down from the Cabinet in order to focus more time on her business.

The Leader would be taking on Cabinet responsibility for Finance and Procurement until after the Council budget had been approved.

IT and Digital would be taken on by Councillor Ashley O'Neill, who would also be taking on responsibility for Governance and Broadband from Councillor Ian

Blair-Pilling, who would take on the Public Health and Public Protection portfolios currently overseen by Councillor O'Neill.

Councillor Nic Puntis was appointed portfolio holder for Flooding.

5 **Public participation and Questions from Councillors**

Written answers were provided to questions as detailed in the Agenda Supplement.

In response to Question 22-002 Councillor Ian Thorn sought details of how much the council had spent on defending planning appeals in previous financial years. It was agreed a written response would be provided.

In response to Question 22-003 Councillor Thorn asked whether there was a need to increase the number of planning staff.

In response to Question 22-004 Councillor Thorn requested a breakdown of the costs from the Wiltshire Towns Fund be provided in a written response.

Councillor Gavin Grant then asked a question relating to an appeal decision granted by an inspector for a site at Filands in Malmesbury, and the view of the Cabinet Member. Councillor Nick Botterill stated the recent decision was still being considered, but that the relationship between Neighbourhood plans and Local Plan requirements was of some concern to communities.

Councillor Thorn then asked for an update on the council's response to the ongoing Omicron Covid-19 situation. The Leader and the Chief Executive provided an update on the current development of cases and impact upon hospitals and other services in Wiltshire.

Councillor Gordon King asked a question regarding delegation of services and assets to towns and parishes and meetings with those parishes. The Leader stated a planned event with some towns and parishes to further discussions had been pushed back due to the current Covid situation, but the policy was continuing to be developed.

Councillor Clare Cape asked whether the situation with a backlog of planning applications was improving, and Councillor Botterill stated there was still pressure from appeals but validation of applications had improved and the backlog situation was likewise improved.

6 **Update on Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23**

Councillor Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council, presented the update report on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2022/23. He thanked Councillor Church, as then Cabinet Member with responsibility for finance, for being integral in preparing the report.

It was reported the proposed budget would be published on 12 January 2022 but noted in particular the report clarifying the funding settlement from central government, confirming an additional £12.5m of government grant to be included in the budget for 2022/23. Details were provided on the inflation assumptions in the report, and the potential impact of ongoing discussions regarding the staff pay award agreed nationally. Inflation and demand risk assessment would be included within the budget.

Councillor Pip Ridout, Chairman of the Financial Planning Task Group, welcomed the report and discussions held with the Task Group, and confirmed it had been agreed the strategy appeared to be sound.

Councillor Ian Thorn sought details on inflation, the modelling of latent demand as a result of Covid-19 and funding set aside for that, and the impact of any changes to the government's new homes bonus. The report estimated that inflation would rise in 2022/23 before reducing again in 2023/24. On latent demand the Leader noted the £7m in reserve, and that the pandemic was ongoing with the potential for significant latent demand to emerge particularly in relation to children's services. On the new homes bonus, it was estimated that there would continue to be support through that or another mechanism.

Councillor Gavin Grant sought details on funding on new Services Grants and on business rates. In relation to the grants, it was confirmed to be non-ring fenced funding, and in relation to business rates it was clarified that the number would be confirmed in estimate toward the end of February 2022 but with reasonable estimates before then of how much the government would compensate the council for loss of income for example when the government froze multipliers or introduced small business rates relief.

Councillor Helen Belcher asked a question on the council looking at alternative sources of income. The Leader stated this was explored but needed to be undertaken carefully. He noted the Stone Circle companies, although returns would not be expected for a number of years.

Councillor Clare Cape sought details on how equivalent demand for services of the council was calculated. The Leader explained that different services calculated this in different ways, for example by number of households or population estimates.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

The updated position in respect of the current estimated financial gap for 2022/23 including the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2022/23.

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 current position for the setting of the 2022/23 budget and continuing the focus for setting plans and providing resources that will be essential for delivering services in Wiltshire over the MTFS period.

7 New Term Highways Maintenance Contract

Councillor Dr Mark McClelland presented the report on the New Term Highways Maintenance Contract. Councillor McClelland discussed the need for arrangements to be put in place to ensure the routine maintenance operations could be continued when the current contract ends and the options available as detailed in the report.

It was recommended that a similar contract to the present contract be put in place, and to seek the necessary authority to begin that process. It was explained the new contract would need to take account of the council's carbon neutrality targets, with climate change and social value relevant factors in the weighting process.

Councillor Pip Ridout, Chairman of the Financial Planning Task Group, explained that the Task Group had received an update from the Cabinet Member and Director, looking at length and value of any contract option and any tendering risks. The Task Group had sought reassurance about the continuation of the parish steward arrangements.

Councillor Ian Thorn sought details on the proposed extension process after five years of the new contract, once awarded, and it was confirmed the relevant Cabinet Member would be consulted on any proposed extension. Councillor Thorn also sought more details on how the contract would ensure partners who were confident in contributing to the council meeting its net zero and other commitments, and the weighting by price, quality, climate change and social value was explained, within legal procurement rules.

Councillor Sven Hocking asked a question relating to the tendering process and whether worthwhile potential contractors might be screened out, Councillor McClelland responded with assurances of it being expected there would be a competitive process.

Councillor Dr Brian Mathew asked a question relating to the decision-making process and a new 'decision wheel' to demonstrate environmental impacts. It was explained this was an approach used in other local authorities to ensure an overview from an environmental perspective.

Councillor Helen Belcher asked about the setting of carbon targets, and it was stated such a detail would be looked into when the contractor was being drawn up.

Councillor Tony Jackson asked a question about not ending up with a single contractor for all activities, with it stated that more specialist areas were not included and were already held by more than one company.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

That authority is delegated to the Director Highways & Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste, Street Scene and Flooding, to:

- (i) Invite tenders in accordance with the Council's procurement procedures, for a single supplier to provide Wiltshire's Term Highways Maintenance Services for a duration of five years with the option to allow the service manager to extend the contract for up to five more years subject to performance from 1 April 2023.**
- (ii) Report the results of the procurement exercise back to a future Cabinet when the tenders results are received, for Cabinet to consider the proposals for award of contract.**

Reason for Decision:

These proposals constitute a key decision to be made by Cabinet in accordance with Part 1 item 4.2.7 of the Wiltshire Council Constitution.

The procurement of a new Term Highway Maintenance contract will have an annual value in excess of £1 million and the total contract value will exceed £4 million.

Note: Councillor Laura Mayes left the meeting at 11.10 ahead of the vote.

8 Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 11.15 am)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Kieran Elliott of Democratic Services,
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