


CABINET

MINUTES of a MEETING held in COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN on Tuesday, 10 February 2015.

Cllr Jane Scott OBE	Leader of the Council
Cllr John Thomson	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways and Streetscene and Broadband
Cllr Fleur de Rhé-Philipe	Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Skills and Strategic Transport
Cllr Keith Humphries	Cabinet Member for Public Health, Protection Services, Adult Care and Housing (exc strategic housing)
Cllr Jonathon Seed	Cabinet Member for Communities, Campuses, Area Boards, Leisure, Libraries and Flooding
Cllr Toby Sturgis	Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Development Management, Strategic Housing, Property, Waste
Cllr Dick Tonge	Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance, Risk, Procurement and Welfare Reform
Cllr Stuart Wheeler	Cabinet Member for Hubs, Heritage & Arts, Governance (including information management), Support Services (HR, Legal, ICT, Business Services, Democratic Services)
Also in Attendance:	Cllr Roy While, Cllr Simon Killane, Cllr Christine Crisp, Cllr David Jenkins, Cllr Bill Moss, Cllr Glenis Ansell and Cllr Chris Caswill

Key Decisions Matters defined as 'Key' Decisions and included in the Council's Forward Work Plan are shown as 

13 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Laura Mayes.

14 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2015 were presented.

Resolved:

To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2015.

15 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.


16 **Leader's announcements**

There were no formal announcements.

17 **Public participation and Questions from Councillors**

The Leader stated that there were a number of public questions, and registered speakers, in relation to the Draft Chippenham Site Allocations Plan; she proposed to take these prior to the debate on the relevant item; and that if any member of the public wished to make a statement, or ask a question, she was happy for them to do so.

18 **Draft Chippenham Site Allocations Plan**

 Councillor Toby Sturgis presented a report which sought Cabinet's approval for the Draft Chippenham Site Allocations Plan and to progress it through formal consultation to submission, with submission to the Secretary of State being subject to Council approval.

The Leader referred to the questions, and written responses, submitted by Members of the Public and Councillor Chris Caswill that had been circulated as a supplementary paper to the agenda and appended to the signed minutes of this meeting.

In response to a question from Councillor Chris Caswill, Ian Gibbon, Associate Director – Legal & Governance, recognised the position of the Council as landowner and planning authority. These positions would be kept separate, dealt with openly and transparently and be appropriately managed.

In response to a question from Councillor Chris Caswill, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated that he would give a written answer providing more detail on the approach to gross value referenced in the original answer to question h).

In response to a question from Ian James, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated that he happy with the approach that the Council had taken to make reasonable estimates as to the costs of infrastructure such as bridges; and that the Eastern Link Road would become a priority for the Council if the proposed site allocations plan is adopted as currently presented.

In response to a question from Councillor Chris Caswill, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated that Council submitted a lower housing figure for Chippenham as part of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the inspector disagreed. The proposed new housing in the Chippenham Plan is an increase of approximately 10% on the Adopted Core Strategy figure for Chippenham.

In response to a statement from Councillor Chris Caswill, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated he felt that the policy on Country Parks was robust enough to

protect the River Avon Corridor; and that an eastern link road should alleviate the traffic problems.

In response to a question from Helen Stuckey, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated the cost estimates for bridges had been checked against similar schemes, and were the best estimates available.

In response to a question from Ian James, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated that whilst members of the public would be able to submit objections to the proposed sites, evidence as to why they are considered unsuitable and alternatives that would enable the projected development to take place would be more constructive. Furthermore that the Environment Agency, responsible for advising on flooding matters, would be taking the impact of climate change into account; and that sustainable urban drainage system proposed as part of the development of sites should result in less run off water than currently.

In response to a question from Kim Stuckey, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated that he would give a written answer sign posting the evidence as to why the site in the Bremhill Parish had been preferred; and he advised that any Neighbourhood Plan should consider how it fits with the finalised Sites Allocation Plan.

In response to a question from Kim Stuckey, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated the evidence supporting the sustainability of the sites was contained in the report; that if robust evidence was presented that significantly undermined the site preferences then the Council would have to consider its options; that the site selection criteria is set out in the report; that areas outside of the Chippenham Community Area were included in the landscape assessment as they were affected by the proposals; that similar overlaps with neighbouring community areas happened in the west with the Corsham Community Area; and that a written answer would be given regarding what consultation events had already taken place.

In response to a question from Richard Hames, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated the route of any possible roads would be discussed at the Masterplan stage; that there were opportunities within the consultation period for members of the public to meet with officers to discuss their views; and that impact of the proposals on primary healthcare is being considered as part of the Plan.

In response to a question from Sarah Smith, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated that the affordable housing target was for 40% on the proposed sites, not a 40% target for the whole of the town.

In response to a question from Owen Inskip, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated that whilst he recognised that pylons were unattractive the cost of placing underground could be considered prohibitive; and that the sustainability report should be made available shortly.

In response to a question from Mr Perry, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated that it was not always in the best interests of the Council or the community to put a site on the open market, as to do so might prevent appropriate development and not achieve best value; that although there had been some smaller areas of dispute, developers had put millions of pound into infrastructure for Chippenham; that the centre of Chippenham required mixed development to ensure its sustainability; that the high street had a lower than average vacancy rate; and that the Council would seek 40% affordable housing where appropriate.

In response to a question from Stephen Eades, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated that Wiltshire Council has a duty as the Local Planning Authority to consider all applications in accordance with the development plan; and that the sooner the Chippenham Plan can be progressed, then the stronger the Council's position would be.

In response to a question from David Levy, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated if villages wanted more affordable homes then they could include this in their Neighbourhood Plans; and that the Council regularly surveys rural communities to assess housing need.

In response to a question from Ian James, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated that he would be happy to meet to discuss the government's policy on conversion of rural properties to residential; and thought that the current policy may not always be conducive to sustainable development

In response to a question from Ms Cord, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated that although officers will collate and consider consultation responses, all consultation responses would be sent to the Inspector; and that it was for the inspector to decide what evidence he/she would examine.

In response to a question from Mr Whittard, Councillor Toby Sturgis stated that the Inspector's figure for the number of houses was a minimum requirement and that the proposed additional housing would generate sufficient contributions to enable infrastructure investment to the benefit of the town; and that the issue of downloading large documents would be addressed.

Councillor Christine Crisp, as local member for one of the areas affected, stated that she appreciated the time given to the public at the meeting and encouraged people to submit their views to the consultation.

Councillor Fleur De Rhe-Philippe commended the officers for drafting a report that was written in such a way to make it more accessible to the public.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

- (i) Approves the Draft Chippenham Site Allocations Plan, as set out in Appendix 1 subject to amendment in (iii), for a six week statutory consultation period starting the week commencing 23 February 2015.**
- (ii) Endorses the Draft Chippenham Site Allocations Plan, as set out in Appendix 1 subject to amendment in (iii), and recommends that Council approve the document for the purpose of Submission to the Secretary of State subject to there being no representations received during the consultation which, the Associate Director for Economic Development and Planning in consultation with the Associate Director for Legal and Governance and the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Development Management, Strategic Housing, Property and Waste consider to raise issues on the soundness of the Strategy requiring further consideration by Cabinet.**
- (iii) Authorises the Associate Director for Economic Development and Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Development Management, Strategic Housing, Property and Waste to: make any necessary minor changes to the Draft Chippenham Site Allocations Plan in the interests of clarity and accuracy before it is published; make arrangements for consultation; propose further minor changes in response to the consultation, and subsequently submission in accordance with (ii).**

Reason for Decision:

To ensure that progress continues to be made on maintaining an up-to-date development plan for Wiltshire, in line with the timetable set out in the Council's recently approved Local Development Scheme and statutory requirements. In accordance with legislative requirements, the Council will need to approve the submission of the Draft Chippenham Site Allocations Plan to the Secretary of State for examination.

19 Revenue Budget Monitoring - Period 9 - 2014/2015

Councillor Dick Tonge presented a report which advised members of the revenue budget monitoring position as at the end of period 9 (end of December 2014) for the financial year 2014/2015 with suggested actions as appropriate.

In the course of the presentation and the discussion, the issues discussed included: the movements in the budget since the last reporting period; the impact of the economy on demand for waste disposal services; and the tax collection rates.

Resolved:

That Cabinet note the outcome of the period 9 (end of December) budget monitoring.

Reason for Decision:

To inform effective decision making and ensure a sound financial control environment.

20 **Capital Monitoring - Period 9 - 2014/2015**

Councillor Dick Tonge presented a report which informed Cabinet on the position of the 2014/2015 Capital Programme as at Period 9 (31 December 2014), including highlighting budget changes. A budget monitoring report to members is taken to Cabinet Capital Assets Committee quarterly in September, December, February and June. This report focuses on major variations in budget.

In response to a question from Councillor Jon Hubbard, Michael Hudson, Associate Director – Finance, stated that the revenue savings resulting from the reduction in capital borrowing were identified in the Revenue Budget Monitoring report.

Resolved:

That Cabinet note the budget movements undertaken to the capital programme (shown in Appendices A and B of the report).

Reason for Decision:

To inform Cabinet of the position of the 2014/2015 capital programme as at Period 9 (31 December 2014), including highlighting any budget changes.

21 **Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

Key Councillor Dick Tonge presented a report which provided an update on the introduction of the Council Tax Reduction scheme which was introduced in April 2013. The report outlined the impact of the scheme at the end of its first year in operation, specifically on collection rates in Wiltshire and in comparison with neighbouring authorities.

In the course of the presentation and the discussion, the issues discussed Included: how the Council has responded to changes in Government policy; how the Council's approach compares to other authorities; the creation of a discretionary fund to support those in difficulty; and how the position on empty homes would be clarified.

Councillor Dick Tonge introduced two recommendations in addition to those outlined in the report. The purpose of these amendments would be to allow the Council to take a more joined-up approach to the management of claimant debt; and enable the Council to engage with customers to manage debt and finances in a structured and formal way.

Resolved:

- (i) To confirm the £200,000 discretionary fund, in the budget is made available to support those households with multiple debts. The report is supplied with a policy, procedure and equality impact assessment to support the introduction of the new fund.**
- (ii) To agree to close a loophole identified in the administration of the council tax charged on empty homes and to propose the minimum duration of six weeks a property must be occupied before another period of discount or exemption can apply.**
- (iii) To agree that in all other aspects the council scheme remains unchanged in 2015-16.**
- (iv) That work is carried out to identify and implement a more coordinated approach to managing debt that avoids duplication within the Council.**
- (v) That key staff be trained and qualified to deliver financial support and personal budgeting.**

Reason for Decision:

The local council tax reduction scheme is unique to Wiltshire and was introduced with a range of other welfare reforms. There is an obligation to review the scheme annually and to determine whether the changes justify public consultation. The proposals are based on the outcomes and findings from the first full year of operating the scheme and the research carried out on the impact of schemes in other local authorities.

22 Treasury Management Strategy 2015/16

Councillor Dick Tonge presented a report which asked Cabinet to consider and recommend that the Council approve the Prudential and Treasury Indicators, together with the Treasury Management Strategy for 2015-16.

In the course of the presentation and the discussion, the issues discussed included: the elements of the strategy that had remained unchanged from the previous year's strategy; the changes to legislation that placed more of the balance of risk on depositors; the effect this may have on credit ratings; and that

the Council is monitoring developments in the process to develop a municipal bond agency.

Resolved:

The Cabinet approve the following and recommend that the Council:

- (i) Adopt the Prudential and Treasury Indicators (Appendix A);**
- (ii) Adopt the Annual Investment Strategy (Appendix B), subject to the need for future amendment resulting from any potential change in the minimum requirements for high credit quality and authorise the Associate Director, Finance, Revenues & Benefits and Pensions to amend the Strategy accordingly, unless he considers the amendment(s) to be of major significance, in which case formal Council approval will be sought at the earliest opportunity;**
- (iii) Delegate to the Associate Director, Finance, Revenues & Benefits and Pensions the authority to vary the amount of borrowing and other long term liabilities within both the Treasury Indicators for the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary;**
- (iv) Authorise the Associate Director, Finance, Revenues & Benefits and Pensions to agree the restructuring of existing long-term loans where savings are achievable or to enhance the long term portfolio;**
- (v) Agree that short term cash surpluses and deficits continue to be managed through temporary loans and deposits; and**
- (vi) Agree that any surplus cash balances not required to cover borrowing are placed in authorised money-market funds, particularly where this is more cost effective than short term deposits and delegate to the Associate Director, Finance, Revenues & Benefits and Pensions the authority to select such funds.**

Reason for Decision:

To enable the Council to agree a Treasury Management Strategy for 2015-16 and set Prudential Indicators that comply with statutory guidance and reflect best practice.

23 Wiltshire Council's Financial Plan 2015/16

Key Councillor Dick Tonge presented a report which provided an assessment in advance of draft proposals going to Council to set a budget for 2015/16 and the impact on Council Tax, rents, fees and charges, the capital programme, schools overall budgets, as well as Council reserves.

The Leader also invited the following Members to speak to the item: Councillor Simon Killane, as Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Chair; Councillor Christine Crisp, as Chair of Health Select Committee; Councillor Jon Hubbard, as Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and chairman of Children's Select Committee; Councillor Roy While, as members of the Financial Planning Task Group; and Councillor Chris Caswill.

In the course of the presentation and the discussion, the issues discussed included: the consultations with the representatives of the Trade Unions; that the results of public consultation would be published in time for consideration by Council; that the work of the Scrutiny Task Group was praised; the benefit of involving the individual Select Committees; that the Liberal Democrat Group would present their amendments to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee; and that whilst some base budgets may be protected, that additional demographic and policy changes would increase demand on revenue.

In response to a question from Councillor Chris Caswill, Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, stated that although Ofsted had taken over responsibility for an aspect of their work, resulting in a reduction in the budget, Early Years Advisory Teachers remained a key support role and there would not be reductions in frontline support.

Resolved:

That Cabinet recommend to Council that it:

- (a) Endorses the update of the Financial Plan for 2015/16.**
- (b) Approves the savings and investment proposals summarised at Sections 9 and 7 respectively of this report and at Appendix 1, to provide a net revenue budget for 2015/16 of £314.983 million.**
- (c) To:**
 - (i) Freeze Wiltshire Council's element of the Band D council tax for 2015/16 £1,222.43, as calculated in accordance with statute, as set out in Section 10 of this report.**
 - (ii) Set the Council's total net expenditure budget for 2015/16 at £314.983 million.**
 - (iii) Set a 2.2% increase for dwelling rents in accordance with rent restructuring;**
 - (iv) Set the HRA Budget for 2015/16 as set out at Appendix 1G of this report.**

- (v) **That all other service charges related to the HRA be increased by 2.2%, including garage rents.**
- (vi) **Approve the Capital programme proposed at Appendix 1F of this report.**
- (vii) **Set the changes in fees and charges set out in detail at Section 8 of and at Appendix 1H of this report.**

Reason for Decision:

To enable the Council to set its revenue, capital, housing revenue accounts, fees and charges, levels of reserves and resultant Council Tax for 2015/16 to then issue Council Tax and rent bills. To provide the Council with a strong business and financial plan for sustainable delivery for 2013-17.

24 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 1.01 pm)

These decisions were published on the Friday 13 February 2015 and will come into force on Monday 23 February 2015.
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The Officer who has produced these minutes is Yamina Rhouati, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718024 or e-mail yamina.rhouati@wiltshire.gov.uk
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