



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 18th FEBRUARY 2021

PRESENT: Councillor D Cook (Chair), Councillors R Pritchard (Vice-Chair), J Chesworth, M Cook, S Doyle and J Oates

The following officers were present: Andrew Barratt (Chief Executive), Anica Goodwin (Executive Director Organisation), Rob Barnes (Executive Director Communities), Stefan Garner (Executive Director Finance), Anna Miller (Assistant Director – Growth & Regeneration), Joanne Sands (Assistant Director Partnerships), Rob Holder (Consultant), Jo Hutchison (Democratic Services, Scrutiny and Elections Officer), Jodie Small (Legal, Democratic and Corporate Support Assistant) and Adam Deakin (Technical Infrastructure Engineer)

The following Councillors were in attendance:
Councillor R Ford and Councillor T Jay.

88 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of Cabinet held on 4th February 2021 were approved as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor R Pritchard and seconded by Councillor J Chesworth)

89 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

90 QUESTION TIME:

None.

91 MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE OR BY THE COUNCIL)

Cabinet received the Report of the Chairs of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny and the Corporate Scrutiny Committee which updated Cabinet and included the recommendations to it following consideration of matters by the Scrutiny Committees.

The Chair invited Councillor R Ford, the Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to present the recommendations on the Green agenda item. The recommendations were that:

1. A working group be set up comprising the responsible Portfolio Holder, Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee and a member of the Opposition to review the contents of any report produced to help understand the council's baseline carbon footprint.
2. A commitment be made to engage with members of the public regarding the green agenda, seeking their views and input on the contents of any baseline report produced.

The Chair invited Councillor Ford to remain at the meeting whilst Cabinet considered the Climate Change Declaration update item which would then further consider the scrutiny recommendations.

The Chair invited Councillor T Jay, the Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee to present the recommendations on the Quarterly Performance Report, Quarter 3. Councillor Jay reported that the Corporate Scrutiny Committee had received the performance update and financial health check for Quarter 3 at its meeting on 3 February 2021 and the Committee recommended to Cabinet that Cabinet be advised of the areas where additional information had been sought by the Committee, in the form of an additional page being added to the report following the meeting. The Chair reported that Corporate Scrutiny Committee had also endorsed the report.

RESOLVED that:

Cabinet approved the recommendation that the areas where additional information had been sought by the Committee be added to the report in the form of an additional page.

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor M Cook)

92 QUARTER THREE 2020/21 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Cabinet received the Quarter 3 2020/21 performance update and financial Healthcheck. The report had been considered by Corporate Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 3rd February 2021. Requests for additional information were made at that meeting and were included at Appendix D.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approved:

- the contents of this report,
- the Corporate Scrutiny Committee recommendation that Cabinet be advised of the areas where additional information had been sought by the Committee, in the form of an additional page being added to the report following their meeting.

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor S Doyle)

93 CORPORATE VISION, PRIORITIES PLAN, BUDGET & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2021/22

The Leader of the Council proposed the Vision Statement, Priority Themes, Corporate Priorities and Plans and their inclusion in the Corporate Plan.

The recommended package of budget proposals to enable the Council to agree the:

General Fund (GF) Revenue Budget and Council Tax for 2021/22;

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2021/22;

5 Year General Fund Capital Programme (2021/26);

5 Year HRA Capital Programme (2021/26);

3 Year General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) (2021/24);
and

5 Year HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) (2021/26).

To comply with the requirement of the Council's Treasury Management Policy in reporting to Council the proposed strategy for the forthcoming year and the Local Government Act 2003 with the reporting of the Prudential Indicators and the requirement to prepare an annual Corporate Capital Strategy.

The Leader reported that the Council received Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) income based on its policy for developments within the borough, 15% of the income is set aside in reserve to fund neighbourhood projects and the balance now stands at over £35,000. The Leader proposed an additional recommendation as set out at 28 below.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet endorsed the following recommendations to proceed to Council for approval:

1. the Vision Statement, Priority Themes, Corporate Priorities and Outcomes for 2021/22 (Appendix A);
2. the proposed revisions to Service Revenue Budgets (Policy Changes) (Appendix C);
3. the sum of £60,376 be applied from Council Tax Collection Fund surpluses in reducing the Council Tax demand in 2021/22 (Appendix E);
4. the sum of £7,137,191 be applied to Business Rates Collection Fund deficits in 2021/22, in part offset by a transfer from the Business Rates reserve of £6,876,350 (Appendix E);

5. that on 3rd December 2020, the Cabinet calculated the Council Tax Base 2020/21 for the whole Council area as 22,366 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")];
6. that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2021/22 is £4,179,982 (Appendix E);
7. the following amounts as calculated for the year 2021/22 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
 - a. £54,121,642 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act (Outgoings excluding internal GF Recharges);
 - b. £49,941,660 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act (Income excluding internal GF Recharges);
 - c. £4,179,982 being the amount by which the aggregate at 7(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 7(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year (Item R in the formula in Section 31A(4) of the Act);
 - d. £186.89 being the amount at 7(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (at 5 above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year;
8. the Council Tax level for the Borough Council for 2020/21 of £186.89 (an increase of £5 (2.75%) on the 2020/21 level of £181.89) at Band D;
9. an aggregate Council Tax (comprising the respective demands of the Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority) of £1,864.86 at Band D for 2021/22 be noted (£1,780.17 in 2020/21) (Appendix H);
10. the Council Tax levels at each band for 2021/22 (Appendix H);
11. the sum of £206,157 be transferred from General Fund Revenue Balances in 2021/22 (Appendix E);
12. the Summary General Fund Revenue Budget for 2021/22 (Appendix E);
13. the Provisional General Fund Budgets for 2022/23 to 2023/24, summarised at Appendix G, as the basis for future planning;
14. minimum level for balances of £500k to be held for each of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, General Capital Fund and Housing Capital Fund;
15. Cabinet be authorised to release funding from the General Contingency budget and that the release of funding for Specific Contingency items be delegated to the Corporate Management Team in consultation with the Leader of the Council;
16. proposed HRA Expenditure level of £14,745,710 for 2021/22 (Appendix D);

17. rents for Council House Tenants in General Accommodation for 2021/22 be set at an average of £89.25 (2020/21 £87.93), over a 48 week rent year (including a 1.5% increase);
18. rents for Council House Tenants due for 52 weeks in 2021/22 be collected over 48 weeks;
19. the HRA deficit of £342,610 be financed through a transfer from Housing Revenue Account Balances in 2021/22 (Appendix D);
20. the proposed 5 year General Fund Capital Programme of £30.732m, as detailed in Appendix I to the report;
21. the proposed 5 year Housing Capital Programme of £33.742m, as detailed in Appendix J to the report;
22. to delegate authority to Cabinet to approve/add new capital schemes to the capital programme where grant funding is received or there is no net additional cost to the Council;
23. the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, the Treasury Management Policy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy and Annual Investment Statement 2021/22 (as detailed at Appendix N);
24. the Prudential and Treasury Indicators and Limits for 2021/22 to 2023/24 contained within Appendix N;
25. adoption of the Treasury Management Practices contained within ANNEX 8;
26. the detailed criteria of the Investment Strategy 2021/22 contained in the Treasury Management Strategy within ANNEX 4; and
27. the Corporate Capital Strategy and associated Action Plan (as detailed at Appendix O).
28. the current funding of £35,000 held in the CIL neighbourhood reserve be released to create a budget in 2021/22 for Cabinet to allocate on a neighbourhood project basis.

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor R Pritchard)

94 CLIMATE CHANGE DECLARATION UPDATE

The Leader of the Council presented the report which:

1. updated Cabinet on progress delivering the Climate Emergency which was declared at the Full Council meeting on the 19th November 2019; and
2. provided a road map that would meet the Council's target of becoming net-zero carbon for its activities by 2050 with an aspiration to achieve 2030 should the council be financially able to do so.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. approved the release of contingency money to deliver Step 1 in the approach outlined in the report;
2. approved the procurement and appointment of a specialist;

3. agreed that once full council had elected a new Leader, at its meeting on 23 February 2021, to take leadership on 1 March 2021, Councillor D Cook write to the new Leader to recommend and supporting scrutiny's recommendation that we designate a portfolio lead for climate change and that portfolio lead also has a member champion and that we also then look to let the portfolio lead and member champion form a working group to meet the aspirations of scrutiny and look to consult with the public; and
4. approved the recommendation to report back to Cabinet and the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on the outcomes of Stage 1, when ready.

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor M Cook)

95 WRITE OFFS 01 APRIL 2020 TO 31 DECEMBER 2020

The Report of the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Finance proposed that Members endorsed the amount of debt written off for the period 01 April 2020 to 31 December 2020.

RESOLVED That Cabinet endorsed the amount of debt written off for the period of 1st April 2020 to 31 December 2020 set out in Appendix A-E.

(Moved by Councillor R Pritchard and seconded by Councillor D Cook)

96 CASTLE REVIEW 2020

The Portfolio Holder for Heritage and Regeneration presented to Cabinet the Castle Review that had been prepared in 2020 and which updated the previous 2018 version taking into account improving the commerciality of the venue. The Portfolio Holder thanked Officers and members of the Heritage working group for their input.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approved:

1. the Castle Review undertaken in 2020 as detailed in the report and set out in Appendix 1; and
2. the action plan and timetable for the delivery of the review recommendations as set out in Appendix 3.

(Moved by Councillor J Oates and seconded by Councillor D Cook)

97 MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATEMENT 2019/20

The Portfolio Holder for Regulatory and Community Safety report set out the Council's Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2019/20 for Cabinet's approval. The report had been previously considered by the Audit and Governance Committee on 11 February 2021.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- Noted that the Audit and Governance Committee had endorsed the statement on 11th February 2021;
- Approved the Council's Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2019/20.

Leader