

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on Tuesday, 9 February 2021 in Virtual Meeting - Zoom Webinar, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council at 6.30 pm

Members of the Cabinet in attendance: Councillor K Rhatigan (Chair), Councillor S Bound, Councillor R Bean, Councillor H Eachus, Councillor H Golding, Councillor J Izett, Councillor T Robinson and Councillor M Ruffell

41/20 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

42/20 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

43/20 Urgent matters

There were no urgent matters.

44/20 Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2021 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

45/20 Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Update Report 2021/22 to 2024/25

The Leader of the Council gave his thanks to the officer team and S151 Officer for the work involved to provide a robust Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and budget.

Cabinet considered the report which provided an update to the MTFS and a summary of revenue budget proposals for 2021/22. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Improvement stated that the proposals had been widely consulted on, and based on feedback, some proposals had been reconsidered with charging for disabled parking, pest control charges and phased reduction for parish council grass cutting being removed from the updated budget proposals. She added that given the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, a balanced budget had been achieved. Furthermore the council plan remained the focus point for prioritising spend to what mattered to residents such as weekly bin collections, supporting vulnerable residents, eradicating rough sleeping, safer neighbourhoods, and providing efficient and flexible services. She added that this could be supported partly by the significant amount of annual income received from investment returns. She further added that the council remained a low tax council.

Visiting Councillors K Taylor, Harvey and McCormick were invited to address the meeting.

Councillor Taylor was pleased that the proposal for charges for disabled parking had been removed but requested that cabinet reconsider proposals for an increase in charges for those residents over 60 for allotment charges and an increase in outdoor bowling charges of which both activities were of particular importance to older age groups. She also asked for reconsideration of bin charges particularly in relation to the concession for those in receipt of benefits and felt that it was unfair to align bin charges with those in Hart which was a more affluent area. She also considered that the charges for bulk waste were excessive which could lead to an increase in illegal waste carriers.

The Cabinet member for Environment and Enforcement responded to the comments regarding bins. She stated that she took on board the comments but added that recycling bins were still free, most household waste bins were purchased for new developments and should be provided by the developer as part of the house purchase. She added that charges even aligned with Hart, were still reasonable compared to charges by other local authorities and bulky waste was a discretionary service and the charges were reasonable. She further added that a lot of work and communication had been undertaken in relation to illegal waste carriers.

Councillor Harvey thanked officers for the time and effort that had been spent to produce the budget and appreciated the challenges that had been faced. He was concerned regarding the lack of response to the consultation and would have welcomed a response from the Cabinet to his emails regarding the budget proposals. He was concerned regarding the proposal for staff redundancies particularly in relation to frontline services such as the operations team where the demands on the team due to new developments were increasing. He also raised concern regarding the proposal to charge for parking in rural car parks which could have a detrimental effect on the community in its economic recovery due to the pandemic.

Cabinet Members responded to the comments and clarified that there was no intention of redundancies, they were vacant posts. The operations team was important and a new depot was being developed at Down Grange and welfare facilities were being enhanced at Wade Road. Weekly meetings were being held with the Union and staff would be redeployed where possible.

Councillor McCormick asked what the rationale was behind discontinuing the shuttle bus when there is a climate emergency and the aim is to encourage people not to use cars but to encourage people in and out of the town centre and the Leisure Park. He added that he considered it would be an opportunity to introduce a green bus route with electric buses to promote Basingstoke and increase recovery in two key areas of the town.

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Natural Environment responded that the shuttle bus caused people to drive into Basingstoke, park and then travel a short distance to their destination. He added that most people who used the shuttle bus came from outside of the borough so it was not of benefit to residents by helping with transport, reducing numbers on the road or reducing air pollution so was not achieving what it should. He also highlighted planning for mass rapid transport around the vicinity of junction 7 of the M3 into Basingstoke to take

people out of cars and transport people in a cost effective, clean way without a substantial public subsidy.

Resolved: To note

- 1) The revised Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2024/25 as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.
- 2) The aims and objectives of the Medium Term Financial Strategy which will be presented to Council for approval on 25 February 2021.
- 3) The formal budget public consultation began on 11 November 2020 and ended on 3 January 2021. The internal consultation on staffing proposals commenced on 14 December 2020 and ended on 22 January 2021. Following the consultation, the budget proposals have been revised as shown in paragraph 1.6 and the outcome of the consultation is summarised in section 20 and Appendix 6 of the report.
- 4) The budget proposals are based on the assumptions detailed within the Medium Term Financial Strategy and that this includes a Council Tax increase of £5.00 in 2021/22, allowable under general powers to increase Council Tax without a referendum.
- 5) That further proposals will need to be considered to address future years budget gap in 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- 6) That the Financial Policies have been reviewed and the updated Financial Policies are detailed in Appendix 4 of the report.

Recommendation to Council: That Council

Note:

- 7) The S151 Officer's (Executive Director of Corporate Services) statutory report regarding the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of reserves detailed in section 13 of the report.
- 8) That the Executive Director of Corporate Services (S151 Officer) on the 8 January 2021 calculated the Council Tax base for the whole Council area at 66,627.2 Band D equivalents and for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a parish precept relates as per Appendix 2 (available for final report to Council).
- 9) The county, police and fire authority precepts detailed in Appendix 3 (available for final report to Council).
- 10) That as the billing authority, the Council has not been notified by any major precepting authority that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2021/22 is excessive and the billing authority is therefore not required to hold a referendum, in accordance with section 52ZK of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

- 11) The risks and sensitivities within the financial forecasts highlighted in section 10 and in Appendix 5 of the report.
- 12) That the final government grant settlement figures may not be finalised before the budget is approved and therefore any adjustments to the final figures will be matched by an allocation to or from the MTFS Risk Reserve in accordance with financial policies.

Determine:

- 13) That for the purposes of section 35 (2) (d) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, any expenses incurred by the Borough Council in the financial year 2021/22 in performing functions in a part of the district which elsewhere in the district are performed by a Parish Council, shall not be special expenses of the Borough Council.
- 14) That its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2021/22 (£131.42 at Band D) reflects a £5.00 (3.96%) increase which is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Approve:

- 15) The net Council Tax requirement of £8.76M for 2021/22, the revenue estimates including the budget proposals in section 6 and contributions to and from reserves as summarised in sections 7 and 9 of the report.
- 16) The Medium Term Financial Strategy, as shown in Appendix 1 of the report.
- 17) The updated financial policies set out in Appendix 4 of the report including the revised New Homes Bonus Grant allocation policy.
- 18) That the requirement for Council Tax for Borough purposes for 2021/22 be £131.42 Band D equivalent as set out in Appendix 3 (available for final report to Council).
- 19) The 2021/22 net income budget of £0.08M for the Joint Manydown Committee as set out in section 15 of the report and that the net income is shared equally between the Council and Hampshire County Council.
- 20) The Council Tax Resolution as set out in Appendix 3 (available for final report to Council) which brings together the Borough's Council Tax Requirement and that of the other major preceptors (Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Fire and Rescue and The Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire) and sets the Council Tax charges for 2021/22.
- 21) That the S151 Officer (Executive Director of Corporate Services) be given delegated authority to implement any variation necessary to the overall level of 2021/22 Council Taxes in the event that any of the precepting authorities

change their precept calculation from that expected and reported at the Council meeting.

- 22) The updated Financial Regulations as detailed in Appendix 7 of the report for inclusion in the council's constitution.
- 23) The Summary Priority Plans and updated Council Plan as shown in Appendices 8 and 9 of the report.

46/20 **Capital Programme Update and Strategy 2020/21 to 2024/25**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Improvement introduced the report which provided an update on the capital programme and Capital Programme Strategy for 2020/21 to 2024/25. She stated that the capital programme was key to support and enable communities to develop the infrastructure they need to thrive and it was positive to see schemes in the capital programme to be delivered in the future, with a proposal of an additional £20 million to be added to the programme. She highlighted the varied schemes within the programme such as CCTV to deter fly tipping, upgrading play areas and move-on accommodation for rough sleepers. She also added that the capital programme was fully funded up to 2024/25. The past year had been challenging and therefore funding for some schemes required rephasing. She highlighted the importance of the strategy as a vital part of how capital investment was financed, managed, allocated and how spending was prioritised.

Councillor McCormick addressed Cabinet and asked the following:

- Was there money for the ice rink if money was needed to be put aside and where would it come from? He was happy to accept a written answer.
- Clarification regarding the two amounts of £1 million for parking and climate emergency as budget amendment roll forwards as they couldn't be implemented due to the pandemic and could similar increased investment be expected going forward particularly for climate change?
- Was there any provision for local energy initiatives?

Cabinet members responded to the questions and agreed to provide a written answer in relation to funding for the ice rink. It was highlighted that funding for climate change cut across all portfolios and it was something the council wanted to be ambitious about to achieve targets. It was also confirmed that the funding for parking was being rolled forward and additional funding had been added for the future year.

Resolved: To note

- 1) The addition of £20.934M to the capital programme requiring approval to spend and the removal of capital scheme savings of £0.406M, which gives rise to a net increase of £20.528M to the overall capital programme as detailed in sections 4 to 5 and Appendix 2 of the report.
- 2) The revised capital programme which totals £89.638M as detailed in sections

2 to 8 and Appendix 1 of the report and the associated use of resources.

- 3) The rephrasing and slippage as set out in section 6 and as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report.
- 4) The capital programme remains fully funded up to 2024/25 based on the latest forecast of available resources.
- 5) That a review of the Capital Programme Strategy has been undertaken as detailed in section 9 and the updated Capital Programme Strategy is attached as Appendix 4 of the report.

Recommendation to Council: That Council

- 6) Agree the addition of £20.934M to the capital programme and the removal of scheme savings of £0.406M, which gives rise to a net increase of £20.528M to the overall capital programme as detailed in sections 4 to 5 and Appendix 2 of the report.
- 7) Approve the revised capital programme, which totals £89.638M (as detailed in paragraphs 2 to 8 and Appendix 1 of the report) and the associated use of resources.
- 8) Approve expenditure being incurred on capital schemes in accordance with the revised capital programme and Financial Procedures.
- 9) Approve the slippage and rephrasing as set out in section 6 and as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report.
- 10) Note that the capital programme remains fully funded up to 2024/25 based on the latest forecast of available resource.
- 11) Approve the Capital Programme Strategy detailed in Appendix 4 of the report.

47/20 **Property Investment Strategy Annual Property Plan 2021/22**

Cabinet considered a report which set out the proposed Annual Property Plan for the council's property investment portfolio.

The Cabinet Member for Property and Regeneration stated that property provided 12.39% of income, a significant contributor to the council's ability to provide services. He added that the Plan focused on key priorities aimed at ensuring that the portfolio was more balanced across sectors such as retail, industrial and offices, was of better quality, offered better opportunities for rental growth and was more defensive and less management intensive. He stated that JLL, leading property advisors, had been appointed to work with officers to evaluate assets, review underperforming properties that the council may seek to dispose of in the future and enable new development of existing but outmoded buildings and land. He concluded that benchmarking performance against other council's property portfolios and against a property index would also be undertaken as well as work to be undertaken to

improve the environmental performance of the portfolio including the use of renewal energy, better insulation and energy generation.

Visiting Member, Councillor McCormick addressed the meeting and was encouraged by the environmental performance of the portfolio. He referred to the loss of retail jobs in the borough stating that a lot of work was required to get people back into work and attract quality higher paying professional jobs into the town. He referred to expected annual income of £16.3 million and the level of risk given the percentage of income by rental value of industrial, retail and office and the threat posed by Brexit, Covid-19, and changes to ways of working and asked what risk mitigations were in place. He also referred to investment made for a new office building to be let to Eli Lilly of £8.9 million and asked what investment could be expected for the Aquadrome or town centre.

The Cabinet Member for Property and Regeneration responded that there had been a big impact on retail employment however the council were leading on a new town centre strategy and the council had been quick in its response for an economic recovery package due to Covid-19. He added that by building Eli Lilly a new HQ, high quality jobs had been retained in the borough. With regard to the vulnerability of the portfolio, JLL had advised that the property portfolio was robust because it was heavily weighted to industrial property which was prospering well with demand for renting warehouse accommodation. He also advised that in relation to the Aquadrome, budget provision was available for further investment in the Aquadrome to ensure it remained a good facility for residents.

Resolved: The Property Investment Strategy Annual Property Plan 2021-22 be approved.

Reason for the decision:

Implementation of the Plan will build on the work commenced in 2017/18 to increase the council's rental income and to work towards ensuring a more balanced & efficient property investment portfolio, providing a stable long term source of income which will contribute to the generation of additional income to meet the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

48/20 **Adoption of the Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy**

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Enforcement introduced the report which set out the feedback that had been received following consultation on the strategy and the key changes proposed as a result. She stated that the strategy culminated in a significant amount of work to date and would shape future work and actions. She thanked everyone who had contributed. She added that the targets set out in the climate emergency declaration were demanding and ambitious and recognised that the work undertaken to date set the framework for more actions to be developed and implemented which would require ongoing resource and commitment to achieve the targets. She highlighted the important steps that had been taken to reduce emissions such as moving electricity supply to green sources, rolling out electric vehicle charging points, the introduction of electric vehicles (EV) for the council's parking team and that climate change was considered in all decisions and included in other strategy documents. She concluded that there was a long way to go,

climate change was something that cut across all cabinet member's portfolios and the good work already undertaken would continue to be built on.

Members of the public, Miranda Chubb and Martin Heath were invited to address Cabinet with their comments.

Miranda Chubb referred to the Climate Emergency Action Plan and was appreciative of the time and effort involved to produce the strategy and action plan. She requested that the plan be reviewed and actions refined into SMART objectives with specific targets as not all of the actions had specific, measurable targets and metrics/KPI's to measure progress towards them. She also stated that it was not clear whether the action plan, if achieved, would result in the required 13.1% emissions reduction for the borough within the year.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Enforcement thanked the speaker for her comments. She stated that the action plan was a starting point and would be updated annually. She accepted that there were aspects of the plan that needed further development and detail which would be added over time. She added that the targets were ambitious and challenging and some of the actions required significant consideration and development. Overall progress of the plan would be monitored against targets by measuring the carbon footprint of the council as an organisation and also the borough as a whole based on the latest available data which would be reported annually. Where possible carbon emission reduction resulting from specific actions would also be measured however there were instances where it may not be possible such as the rollout of EV charging points. She added that timeframes for some actions had been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and were open to reviewing actions and amending and updating the plan as necessary. She added that she welcomed engagement and suggestions for actions and were working with local organisations.

Martin Heath was pleased that climate emergency was a priority across all portfolio's and felt that there was an opportunity to create well paid jobs, generate new revenue for the council, put Basingstoke at the vanguard of responding to the climate emergency and to make Basingstoke a better and cleaner place to live. Whilst he considered the report adequate he felt that it lacked ambition and vision and partially addressed the risks and threats but had no targets, or costed action plan. He also raised concern regarding the baseline figures used and felt that a number of different types of emissions had been excluded. He requested that the vision be reviewed with clear costed actions and responsibility for delivery.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Enforcement stated that she took on board his comments and reiterated that this was a starting point that would be continually reviewed.

The Cabinet Member for Homes and Families welcomed the report and stated that the climate emergency was a huge challenge. He highlighted the importance of working with partners and stakeholders as everyone had a part to play to address the climate emergency. He also stated that climate change needed to be reflected in the new Local Plan with pioneering new policies through planning to build new homes in a carbon neutral way, develop sustainable means of travel, improve biodiversity and help reduce social and health inequality.

Visiting Members Councillors Harvey and McCormick addressed the meeting. Councillor Harvey agreed that climate change was cross cutting and understood that the strategy was a starting point to address the climate emergency. He referred to the Green Infrastructure Strategy and how the actions of the strategy would fit with the climate change strategy. He considered that all strategies should feed into and become part of the climate change strategy and there needed to be ambition across all portfolios. Far reaching and wide consultation and engagement from all councillors was important to make the councils strategy a blueprint for others for building for the future and regeneration of existing buildings to improve energy efficiency and production.

Councillor McCormick referred to the quantities of performance metrics raised by previous speakers. Whilst appreciating this was the starting point for the strategy, he emphasised the importance of review of the document and the need to accelerate further if the bold objectives and targets were to be reached. He added that whilst it was good to have an action plan, action needed to be taken, residents would expect rapid progress and everything needed to be taken account of. He added there was a massive opportunity in terms of the emerging green economy and green tech, with Basingstoke being one of the fastest expanding tech hubs in the country. He welcomed the strategy and asked for some assurance of how it would be accelerated and how it would fit with HCC who have less ambitious targets.

Cabinet took on board the valuable comments raised.

Resolved: Note the responses to the consultation on the draft strategy and resultant amendments.

Recommendation to Council: That Council adopt the final Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy and the 20/21 Action Plan.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm.

Chairman