

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2020 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Dickins (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Dyball, Maskell and Thornton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. McArthur

Cllrs. Edwards-Winsor, Griffiths, McGarvey and Purves were also present.

135. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of Cabinet held on 15 October 2020 and 27 October 2020 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

136. Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

137. Questions from Members (maximum 15 minutes)

There were none.

138. Matters referred from Council, Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee, CIL Spending Board or Cabinet Advisory Committees

There were none.

139. Report on Special Urgency Decisions

Members considered the report detailing the two urgent decisions that were taken in compliance with Part 13, paragraph 12(d) of the Council's Constitution. The urgent decisions were also classified as 'Key Decisions' and as such, subject to a notice period of 28 days and 'call-in.'

The Chairman of Scrutiny Committee's consent had been given under Regulation 11 and notices had been published of the decisions as soon as they were made. Under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the Chairman of the Council had agreed that the decisions proposed were reasonable in all the circumstances and were to be treated as matters of urgency and not be subject to call-in.

A Member asked the Chairman to outline the full amount for which the Council would be liable if Sencio should not survive. He indicated that he would provide a written answer but also set out that Sencio had applied for new streams of funding.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

140. Budget Setting 2021/22

The Finance & Investment Portfolio Holder presented the report which was the final stage of the budget process that had seen significant Member involvement. The 2021/22 Budget Setting process had been more challenging than recent years due to the ongoing financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The process had also been shortened to enable savings to be implemented prior to April 2021. The Council Tax for 2021/22 would be set at the Council meeting on 23 February 2021. If approved, the net expenditure budget for 2021/22 would be £16.879m.

The Chairman answered questions from a ward Member related to the future of shared services and the vehicle replacement programme.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance and Trading set out that the report contained various appendices including growth and saving/additional income proposals (SCIAs) listed in Appendix D and detailed in Appendix E.

Appendix H (i), (ii) and (iii) set out the Capital Programme 2021-24, Capital Programme bids and the Capital Strategy 2021/22.

Appendix J contained a review of reserves which included three recommendations including:

- Any variance in the 2021/22 budget is put into the Budget Stabilisation Reserve or absorbed by the reserve;
- The General Fund Reserve be increased from £1.5m to £1.7m to remain as a 10% working balance, and
- Reserves for Sewage, Carry Forward Items, Asset Maintenance, IT Asset Maintenance, Action and Development and others are reduced with £789,000 transferred to the Budget Stabilisation Reserve and £200,000 transferred to the General Fund Reserve.

Cabinet - 5 November 2020

He explained that the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement had not yet been announced, and the actual Council Tax Base and other tax setting issues would be reported to Cabinet and Council in February 2021. The report also included his opinion, as the Statutory Finance Officer, on the robustness of the budget estimates and adequacy of reserves.

He explained that based on the changes detailed within the report, the Council would once again have a balanced 10-year budget.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That

- a) the growth and savings/additional income proposals as set out in Appendix D be included in the budget;
- b) as relates to further growth and saving suggestions put forward by the Advisory Committees listed in Appendix F
 - i) no further suggestion be supported and incorporated into the current budget cycle;
 - ii) the suggestion of a community lottery be discussed further with the Portfolio Holder and Chief Officer;
 - iii) the suggestions of charging for housing register referrals, charging for the private sector management service, hiring out Lullingstone Golf Course and providing services on behalf of the County Council not be taken any further;
- c) it be recommended to Council that the
 - i) summary of the Council Expenditure for 2021/22 set out in Appendix G be approved;
 - ii) 10 year budget 2021/22 to 2030/31 which was the guiding framework for the detailed approval of future years' budgets set out in Appendix B to the report, including the growth and savings proposals set out in Appendix D to the report, and that where possible any variations during and between years be met from the Budget Stabilisation Reserve;
 - iii) Capital Programme 2021/24 and funding method set out in Appendix H(i) and Capital Strategy 2021/22 set out in Appendix H(iii), be approved; and

- iv) changes to reserves and provisions set out in Appendix J, be approved.

141. Infrastructure Funding Statement Priorities

The Portfolio Holder presented the report which looked at the proposed priorities for the Council's new Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) which was required to be reported to Government by the end of the year, following the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) legislation.

The Planning Policy Team Leader (Infrastructure) answered questions from ward Members about the CIL and s.106 systems. She also indicated that the Development & Conservation Advisory Committee had considered the same report.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That

- a) the criteria for prioritising infrastructure projects for funding in the Infrastructure Funding Statement, as set out at paragraph 35 of the report, be agreed; and
- b) the specific projects and types of Infrastructure recommended in paragraphs 38, 41, 50, 52, 54, 58, and 60 of the report, be identified in the Infrastructure Funding Statement as having a priority for full or partial funding.

142. Financial Results 2020/21 To the end of August 2020

The Finance & Investment Portfolio Holder presented the report on the Council's 2020/21 financial results to the end of August 2020, which showed the year end position to be an unfavourable variance of £3.0m which was largely due to COVID-19. This represented 19.4% of the net service expenditure totally £15.581m. He went on to further explain that Government had issued a sales, fees and charges compensation scheme, to recover some of the income that had been lost due to the Coronavirus.

To date, the council had requested compensation of £1.2m which would reduce the end of year forecast to £1.8m. It was expected that the full year claim for compensation would be £2.3m, which could leave a deficit of £0.7m.

The Head of Finance answered questions on this item and indicated that the Finance & Investment Advisory Committee had considered the same report.

Cabinet - 5 November 2020

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS

This notice was published on 6 November 2020. The decisions contained in Minutes 139 and 142 take effect immediately. The decision contained in Minute 141 takes effect on 16 November 2020. The decision contained in Minute 140 is a reference to Council.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.02 PM

CHAIRMAN