

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

CABINET

These minutes are draft until confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting.

Thursday, 7th November, 2019

Present:

Councillor Dine Romero	Council Leader and Liberal Democrat Group Leader
Councillor Rob Appleyard	Cabinet Member for Adult Services
Councillor Tim Ball	Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning, and Economic Development
Councillor Neil Butters	Cabinet Member for Transport Services
Councillor Paul Crossley	Cabinet Member for Community Services
Councillor Kevin Guy	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Councillor Richard Samuel	Deputy Council Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources
Councillor Sarah Warren	Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Neighbourhood Services
Councillor David Wood	Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Joanna Wright	Cabinet Member for Transport Services

30 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

31 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Senior Democratic Services Officer drew attention to the evacuation procedure as set out in the Agenda.

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

During the debate on agenda item 16 Council House Building Programme Update the Council Leader declared an other interest in this item as she is the Council's shareholder representative for Aequus Development Limited. The Council Leader would abstain from debating and voting on this item.

34 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was none.

35 QUESTIONS FROM PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

There were 8 questions from Councillors and 2 questions from members of the public.

[Copies of the questions and responses, including supplementary questions and responses if any, have been placed on the Minute book at Democratic Services and are available on the Council's website.]

36 STATEMENTS, DEPUTATIONS OR PETITIONS FROM PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS

Robin Kerr made a statement (attached as Appendix to these Minutes) about two recommendations from the LGA Peer Review.

Councillor Shaun Hughes presented to the Cabinet a suggestion/idea for Somer Valley mass transport solution.

The Council Leader and Councillor Neil Butters (Cabinet Member for Transport Services) thanked Councillor Hughes for his statement and said that they would consider this matter after the General Election.

Councillor Sarah Moore made a statement about student purpose built accommodations where she invited the Cabinet to take action against those property developers who may take advantage of demand, and overcharge students with the rent fees. Councillor Moore expressed her concern that, for those reasons, social housing could be put in jeopardy.

Councillor Tim Ball (Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning, and Economic Development) thanked Councillor Moore for her statement and invited her to discuss different policies related to this matter.

Councillor Eleanor Jackson presented a petition asking the Cabinet to reconsider closure of 11 children's community playgrounds. Councillor Jackson read out a statement in support of the petition (attached as Appendix to these Minutes).

Councillor Paul Crossley (Cabinet Member for Community Services) said that 11 children's playgrounds have not been closed. Some of them have been re-purposed. The Council would be looking to imaginative playgrounds by providing new play area equipment so that a range of children could use these facilities (such as the first wheelchair friendly roundabout). In some instances the Council would consider working with Town and Parish Councils. Councillor Crossley also said that there has been consultation with a wide range of people and no decisions have been made yet.

Councillor Richard Samuel (Cabinet Member for Resources) said that the Council would be spending £325,000 on improvement of play facilities in this financial year.

Councillor Eleanor Jackson added that residents may not be aware of the future spending on improvement of play areas and suggested better communication with the residents.

37 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS CABINET MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 12th September 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

38 CONSIDERATION OF SINGLE MEMBER ITEMS REQUISITIONED TO CABINET

There were none.

39 MATTERS REFERRED BY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY BODIES

There were none.

40 SINGLE MEMBER CABINET DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE PREVIOUS CABINET MEETING

The Cabinet agreed to note the report.

41 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, CASH LIMITS AND VIREMENTS - APRIL 2019 TO SEPTEMBER 2019

Councillor Richard Samuel introduced the report by taking the Cabinet through the Executive summary of the report.

Revenue budget

The Revenue budget outturn was forecast to be £0.08m under budget, which was a favourable movement of £1.76m from Quarter 1.

Nevertheless, there continues to be further adverse movements in service revenue budgets; key areas of risk were additional demand in Children's Services £0.84m, and £0.35m shortfall in income from the Councils Housing Delivery Vehicle. The Children's Services budget has a forecast £1.9m over budget position after 2019/20 budget rebasing; this was due to increases in specialist Health and Social Care placements. Also, Commercial Estate income has not increased in line with budgeted income levels due to a slowing down of high street retail income and fewer acquisition options creating a £1m budget pressure. Across all portfolios the forecast over budget position excluding corporate budgets was £2.68m.

This adverse position has been mitigated by a £2.76m favourable forecast on the Councils Corporate Budgets largely attributable to an under budget position on capital financing from re-phasing of capital expenditure and lower than budgeted cost of capital from beneficial interest rates for borrowing.

Of the overall savings target for 2019/20 of £8.9m, £0.9m (10%) would not be delivered and would impact on the 2020/21 budget; £5.1m (57%) was forecast to be delivered by the year-end, and £2.9m (33%) has been delivered. To provide mitigation to delays in delivering savings and over budget areas Directors have put cost reduction plans in place to minimise spend wherever possible, which would further improve the year-end position. These would need to continue to be reviewed to ensure that the Council remains within the approved budget by the year-end.

Capital budget

The capital budget was currently showing an expected under budget position of £34.6m mainly due to re-phasing of Bath Quays, ACL/ADL loan drawdowns and Roman Baths Archway Project into future financial years to reflect revised project spend profiles.

Following a review of the Modern Library programme options for Central Bath, which were paused last year, it has been proposed not to proceed with the remodelling of the Podium site and closure of the existing one stop shop in Manvers Street due to financial viability. The Modern Libraries project has saved £0.45m in recurring savings to date but the further £0.35m outlined in the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2020/21 would no longer be delivered and would be reflected in next year's budget. The Capital Programme would be adjusted as a result to remove the £3m allocated to the scheme. Capital spend to date of £0.362m would revert to revenue and would be funded from the Capital Financing Reserve

Council Tax and Business Rates

The current forecast Council's share of the year end Collection Fund position was:

- Council Tax – Surplus of £0.82m (2018/19 Surplus £0.69m)
- Business Rates – Surplus of £1.21m (2018/19 Surplus £0.76m)

Council Reserves

The current forecast revenue position would not require use of the Budget Contingency Reserve (which was set up to mitigate budget risk). The Council's reserve levels would continue to be monitored during the remainder of the financial year.

Councillor Richard Samuel thanked the officers who prepared the report

Councillor Richard Samuel moved the recommendations.

Councillor Dine Romero seconded the motion by saying that she was delighted that Public Libraries scheme would be abandoned. Councillor Romero also thanked the officers who prepared the report.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the Cabinet agreed to:

- 2.1 To note the 2019/20 forecast under budget of £0.08m (as at the end of September 2019) and the recovery plan actions outlined in Appendix 1;
- 2.2 To note that Recovery Plans are in place and these will continually be reviewed to ensure that the Council remains within the approved budget;
- 2.3 To approve the revenue virements listed for approval in Appendix 3(i) and to note those virements listed for information only;
- 2.4 To note the capital year-end forecast detailed in paragraph 3.14 of this report;
- 2.5 To note the changes in the capital programme including capital schemes that have been agreed for full approval under delegation listed in Appendix 4(i);
- 2.6 To approve the removal of £3.0m provisional capital scheme for Modern Libraries relating the Podium re-modelling as an integrated Library and One Stop Shop;
- 2.7 To note that the associated one-off revenue reversion costs of £0.362m of the Library scheme will be funded from the Capital Financing Reserve;
- 2.8 To note that the remaining savings target of £0.35m for the Modern Libraries programme will be removed as part of the 2020/21 revenue budget proposals.

Councillor Richard Samuel introduced the report by saying that this was a regular report that the Cabinet have received in accordance with CIPFA code of guidance for the first 6 months of this financial year.

Councillor Samuel said that borrowings have remained well within Prudential limits that the Council has set; the credit rating was at AA, which was above the benchmark of A- ; £61m have been invested by the Council; investments in money market funds have increased in the last quarter by £9.4m due to re-investment. Overall, the performance has remained sound against the benchmarks.

Councillor Richard Samuel moved the recommendations subject to changes in recommendation 2.3 which should read: 'This Treasury Management Report and attached appendices are reported to the next meeting of the Full Council and Corporate Audit Committee.'

Councillor Neil Butters seconded the motion by welcoming the comprehensive report from officers.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the Cabinet agreed to:

2.1 The Treasury Management Report to 30th September 2019, prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Code of Practice, is noted.

2.2 The Treasury Management Indicators to 30th September 2019 are noted.

2.3 This Treasury Management Report and attached appendices are reported to next meetings of the Full Council and Corporate Audit Committee.

43 LGA PEER REVIEW ACTION PLAN

Will Godfrey (Chief Executive) said that the LGA Peer Review process was really important for the Council to get some external perspective on how the organisation was performing. There were some really strong and positive messages in the report about performance frameworks, Medium Term Financial Plan, and those were the issues that the Council should be focused on getting them right. Will Godfrey also said that the Council should embrace positively the recommendations in the report over the next few months.

Councillor Dine Romero introduced the report by saying that she was grateful to have this review with this administration as a baseline to develop and build Council's commitment to its residents, which includes better engagement with residents. The action plan would need a proper 'buy-in' from officers of the Council and also from all elected Members of the Council. The LGA Peer Review team identified quite a few strengths which the Council can be proud of. Councillor Romero thanked the LGA Team for their hard work for producing a fair assessment.

Councillor Dine Romero moved the recommendations.

Councillor Paul Crossley seconded the motion by saying that the LGA process had started over a decade ago, and it had become a real part of Local Government. As a Council we should be proud that many of B&NES Councillors have become LGA Peer reviewers and have participated in reviews of other Councils. This reflected credit on all Councillors in B&NES. Councillor Crossley highlighted the engagement of 3rd sector and volunteers in everyday life of B&NES, such as litter picking and maintenance by Friends of Henrietta Park group.

Councillor Richard Samuel said that this was a good report with a message that this was a well-run Council although there were some areas where the Council could improve. Councillor Samuel also said that it was always difficult when the administration of the Council change, and aspirations have to adjust, but many things continue to operate such as day to day services to residents.

Councillor Eleanor Jackson commented that residents suggested that Fix My Street did not work, and she asked if that could be looked at.

Councillor Neil Butters said Fix My Street issues had been picked up and it should be sorted shortly.

Councillor Dine Romero added that aspirations of the new administration would depend on available resources and funding.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the Cabinet agreed to:

2.1 Endorse the recommendations outlined in the LGA Peer Report and agree for the report and action plan to be published on the Councils Website;

2.2 Agree to receive a six monthly monitoring report on progress against the Action Plan as outlined in Annex B;

2.3 Agree to invite the LGA Peer Review team back or a follow up visit in the summer of 2020 to review progress.

44 HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY (2019-2024) UPDATE

Councillor Tim Ball introduced the report by saying that this was a draft report which would return to the Cabinet in January 2020 for adoption. The relevant PDS Panel would have the opportunity to scrutinise this strategy.

Councillor Ball also said that Comments received about people resorting to living on the waterways as an alternative to rough sleeping or other forms of homelessness have been received. This was an area for further investigation, which was already being looked at and would be included in the updated action plan. A query has been raised about female-specific one-stop advice support and training provision along the lines of the Nelson Trust in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. Provision in that service has included housing and accommodation, prison in-reach, employment & training, prevention of child sexual exploitation and sex-working. Cross-directorate (Housing, Community Safety, Equalities, Children & Families) and multi-agency (Voluntary Sector, Offender Management) discussions were needed to look at the gaps such a service might fill and, if agreed that it would be of benefit, how financial resources might be found. The Nelson Trust has been receiving funding from a range of national and local sources and a similar approach would need to be taken in Bath & North East Somerset. It should be noted that local services were already offering support and advice on these issues, albeit not in one venue. Funding for 2020/21 for rough sleeping services was yet to be confirmed but assurances have been recently given that similar levels of funding could be expected. A business plan has been submitted to MHCLG setting out how this would be spent and a response was expected imminently. Further underwriting of day services to ensure rough sleepers have somewhere to go at any point of the day was also being considered by MHCLG.

Councillor Ball invited all Members of the Council to get engaged and comment on the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy before the next Cabinet meeting on 16th January 2020.

Councillor Tim Ball moved the recommendations.

Councillor Kevin Guy seconded the motion by encouraging as many people as possible to take part in the consultation. Councillor Guy also said that he has had pleasure of seeing officers from this Council and other organisations helping people. Councillor Guy added that sofa surfing, in particular with young children, was something that was overlooked in the report.

Councillor Richard Samuel said that it should be our aim to remove homelessness and rough sleeping from our authority, and house all of our citizens. Our aspirations should be ambitious – nobody in 2019 should be without a roof over their head, and we must do everything we can to help people.

Councillor Dine Romero agreed that the Council must ensure that nobody in B&NES should be without a roof over their head.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the Cabinet agreed to note the current consultation exercise and approach in regard to tackling homelessness and the priorities set out in the draft document.

45 COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING PROGRAMME UPDATE

Councillor Tim Ball said that this was a high level report and a more detailed report would come to future Cabinet and Council meetings. The programme would enable Council to have greater control over the homes being delivered, including:

- design and environmental standards, (eg carbon neutral)
- rent, (eg social rent)
- allocations and management. (eg greater control over who goes in)

Councillor Ball also said that after considering various options it was decided to investigate further the option to register with Homes England as a “developing Registered Provider”. This approach has had a number of benefits, including being able to access Government funding for affordable housing. The Council would commission independent advice on financial, legal and operational matters. Any established Registered Provider would work in partnership with ADL/ACL (who would take Council sites forward) with the resultant affordable housing being kept by the Registered Provider. The Council would be looking at some other options which may help local residents with housing, including shared-ownership schemes; equity partnership schemes and using empty properties for local cost rent.

Councillor Tim Ball moved for report to be noted.

Councillor Rob Appleyard seconded the motion by saying that thousands of people were looking to move into permanent homes which would not only help their health and wellbeing but also their children and families.

Councillor Richard Samuel said that this report has shown that good progress has been made in terms of the Council House Building Programme, and that he was looking forward for the Council having greater control over the homes being delivered.

The Cabinet noted the high-level programme plan and the options shortlisted for further investigation and detailed analysis.

NOTE: Councillor Dine Romero abstained from voting.

The meeting ended at 7.30 pm

Chair _____

Date Confirmed and Signed _____

Prepared by Democratic Services