

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 18 June 2020 at 10.00 am in Remote Meeting

PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY, 24 JUNE 2020

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY, 29 JUNE 2020)

Present: Councillors S Davies (Chair), R A Overton (Vice-Chair), A J Burford, E M Callear, L D Carter, R C Evans, C Healy, S A W Reynolds, P Watling and D Wright.

Also Present: Cllr A J Eade (Conservative Group Leader) and Cllr W L Tomlinson (Liberal Democrats / Independent Group Leader)

CAB-1 Declarations of Interest

None.

CAB-2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CAB-3 Service & Financial Planning Report - 2019/20 Outturn

Key Decision identified as **2019/20 Outturn Report and Initial Trends for 2020/21** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 20 May 2020.

Councillor R C Evans, Cabinet Member for Finance, Commercial Services and the Economy presented the report of the Director: Finance & Human Resources, Chief Finance Officer.

Cabinet Members noted that despite the significant financial impacts relating to the flooding of Ironbridge Gorge and the start of the coronavirus (CV-19) pandemic, the Council had ended the year in a positive financial position. The Council had not had to make any use of unplanned reserves in 2019/20 and had retained a prudent level of balances. This would support the Council in the current uncertain time.

The gross revenue budget for 2019/20 was £398m and the net budget was £121m. The revenue outturn position was within budget with a final net underspend of £0.146m (which was equivalent to only -0.12% of net budget) after the proposed transfers to reserves and balances had been made. This position had been achieved after delivering £6.1m of budget savings in 2019/20, on top of the £117m made in the previous 10 years giving a total of £123m - equivalent to around £1,500pa for every home in the Borough.

The funding outlook for the medium term was very uncertain. The Government had confirmed that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the planned review of local government finance system would not be implemented. However, there had been no confirmation of the funding levels for 2021/22, and it was anticipated that the Council would need to identify £4.6m savings in 2020/21 and around £18.4m of further savings in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

The key areas of pressures during 2019/20 were noted. It was reported that:

- Children's Safeguarding & Early Help ended the year with a service overspend of £3.7m. Spend during the year was higher than the budget as there was an increasing number of more expensive specialist placements for looked after children with complex and severe behavioural or emotional health needs over the course of the year. The Council had invested additional funding of £4.958m into the Children's Safeguarding & Family Support budget over the next year highlighting the very high priority placed by the Council on safeguarding children. A cost improvement plan was in place which was monitored on a regular basis by senior managers and Cabinet Members.
- Adult Social Care ended the year with a service overspend of £2.6m. As reported throughout the year, the cost of purchasing care packages from external providers and high demand led to a pressure of £4.9m. This was mitigated by additional income totalling £1.7m from CCG funding and client contributions. As part of the 2020/21 budget strategy, the Council had committed additional investment totalling £3.926m into the Adult Social Care budget over the next three years. The Service also had a Cost Improvement Plan in place to deliver better outcomes and efficiencies

The Capital Outturn position 2019/20 was noted; capital spend ended the year at £41.84m against an approved estimate of £53.17m which was largely due to re-phasing expenditure into 2020/21.

The income monitoring position was noted; overall cash collection was behind the targets set for Council Tax, Business Rates and Sales Ledger. The Covid-19 pandemic had impacted on some taxpayers ability to pay in March 2020, which would continue into 2020/21. Ultimately, all debt would be pursued and collected at the end of the financial year with appropriate recovery avenues pursued at appropriate times.

It was noted that 2019/20 was the fifth year of operation for NuPlace Ltd, the Council's wholly owned housing investment company. NuPlace was a separate legal entity and as such prepared its own accounts but as NuPlace was wholly owned by the Council, consolidated group accounts were also prepared. The unaudited accounts showed that NuPlace had generated an operating profit before taxation of £0.573m in 2019/20 but as expected no dividend was distributed. The Council also received income from NuPlace totalling £1.2m during 2019/20 net of additional interest and other marginal costs.

It was reported that the draft formal statement of accounts would be considered at the Audit committee in mid-June 2020 and would be audited by Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditors, during June and July, the accounts would also be available for public inspection for 30 working days following this. Summaries of the outturn on revenue and capital along with major variations were shown as appendices to the report.

Cabinet Members welcomed the efforts made by officers and the local community during the current pandemic. A discussion was held regarding Adult Social Care and Cabinet Members stated that further funding was required from government for this essential service area.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to COUNCIL that –

- (a) the Revenue outturn position for 2019/20 and related virements in Appendix 3 of the report which is subject to audit by the Council's external auditors be approved;**
- (b) the transfers to reserves and associated approval to the relevant Assistant Directors to spend the reserves detailed in section 5 of the report be approved;**
- (c) the Capital outturn position and related supplementary estimates, re-phasing and virements shown in Appendix 4 of the report and as summarised in the report be approved;**
- (d) that delegated authority be granted to the Director: Finance & HR to make any changes required as the outturn is finalised (including the calculation of section 31 grants), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance and Governance;**
- (e) the performance against income targets be noted; and**
- (f) the 2020/21 Public Health Grant be approved and the 2020/21 budget strategy be updated accordingly**

CAB-4 Telford & Wrekin's Specialist & Supported Accommodation Strategy 2020-2025

Key Decision identified as **Specialist Housing Strategy: Promoting Independence, Health & Wellbeing** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 20 May 2020.

Councillor D Wright, Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport & Infrastructure presented the report of the Director: Housing, Employment & Infrastructure.

The report proposed the Council's Specialist & Supported Accommodation Strategy 2020-2025 (attached as Appendix 1 to the report). The strategy was

the culmination of work to understand the current and anticipated demand in housing specifically for vulnerable people. The strategy set out the Council's vision for the provision of such accommodation.

The objectives in the strategy included making best use of existing accommodation, development of a range of new accommodation and supporting people in their own accommodation.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report. Support for rough sleepers during the Covid-19 pandemic was noted and Members stated that this must continue after the pandemic.

RESOLVED – that;

- a) **Telford & Wrekin's Specialist & Supported Accommodation Strategy 2020-2025 outlined in Appendix 1 of the report be approved ;**
- b) **Authority be delegated to the Director for Housing, Employment & Infrastructure to develop Supplementary Planning Guidance to support the implementation of the Strategy.**

CAB-5 Telford & Wrekin Consultation Draft Housing Strategy 2020-2025

Key Decision identified as **Telford & Wrekin Housing Strategy, 2020-25** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 20 May 2020.

Councillor D Wright, Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport & Infrastructure presented the report of the Director: Housing, Employment & Infrastructure.

The report summarised the strategy for housing within the Borough. The strategy centred around three key objectives:

- Creation of sustainable, accessible, affordable and integrated communities
- Making the best use of existing homes and
- To provide homes to support and empower the most vulnerable people.

Cabinet Members welcomed the focus on making best use of existing homes and the use of grants to make improvements to homes, such as increasing their fuel efficiency.

RESOLVED that the launch of the Council's draft Housing Strategy, included at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

CAB-6 The Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

Non-Key Decision

Councillor R C Evans, Cabinet Member for Council Finance & Governance presented the joint report of the Chief Finance Officer and the Deputy Monitoring Officer.

Under the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015, the Council was required to produce an Annual Governance Statement, and it was best practice that it was signed by the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council. The Statement accompanied the Annual Accounts. The Statement included an action plan to ensure that the Council continued to improve its existing governance arrangements. The action plan attached to the 2018/19 statement (implemented during 2019/20) had been reviewed and updated and was appended to the report.

The Annual Governance Statement and Local Code of Good Governance outlined that the Council was continually reviewing and improving its procedures to maintain and demonstrate good corporate governance, and that it had in place robust systems of internal control. The Council could be assured that during 2019/20, including during organisational changes, periods of flooding response and the response to the global Covid-19 pandemic, the existing arrangements had continued to support proper governance. Assurance for the Annual Governance Statement was provided by all areas of the Council including senior management, Members, the Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer and internal audit.

The Council's current Code of Good Governance, had been approved on 29 May 2018 to reflect the CIPFA/SOLACE framework including revised principles, guidance and good practice received during the preceding year. A revision of the code would be presented to the Audit Committee during 2020/21.

RESOLVED – that the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20, attached as Appendix A to the report, be approved and that the information in the report be noted.

CAB-7 Representation on Outside Bodies 2020-21

Non-Key Decision

Councillor S Davies, Leader, presented the report of the Associate Director: Policy & Governance which set out the appointments to outside bodies that the Council was required to make for 2020/21. Nominations had been sought from the political groups for those appointments that were not by position. Following discussions with the political groups, a list of representatives for approval by Cabinet had been proposed, and this was tabled as Appendix 1.

RESOLVED – that the nominations to represent the Council on Outside Bodies for 2020/21, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be approved.

CAB-8 Local Growth Fund - Stronger Communities

Key Decision identified as **Delivering Stronger Communities** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 20 May 2020.

Councillor D Wright, Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport & Infrastructure presented the report of the Director: Housing, Employment & Infrastructure.

The report sought endorsement of a Strong Leader Decision in relation to the Stronger Communities programme. The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) had identified an anticipated underspend against the Local Growth Fund in November 2019 and launched a call for eligible projects. The Council's Stronger Communities proposal was approved for this funding by the LEP Board on 24 March 2020. The grant would be used to fund the purchase of land in the Station Quarter of Telford, bringing a brownfield site back into use.

RESOLVED – that;

- a) **The decisions taken as part of the Strong Leader Decision as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report (which is exempt from publication under paragraph 3, part 1, schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972) be endorsed;**
- b) **The decision to acquire the strategic site in the Telford Town Centre as set out in paragraph 4.7 of the report be endorsed;**
- c) **The delivery of the Stronger Communities package to deliver borough wide regeneration, job creation and new homes to directly meet housing need be endorsed.**

The meeting ended at 11.13 am

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Jonathan Eatough
Director: Governance
Date: **Wednesday, 24 JUNE 2020**

Signed

Date: Thursday, 9 July 2020