

FULL COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Full Council held on Thursday, 4 March 2021 at 6.00 pm by Remote Meeting

Present: Councillors S Bentley, K T Blundell, M Boylan, A J Burford, S P Burrell, E M Callear, L D Carter, E J Carter, C Cassar, G H Cook, S Davies, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, A R H England, N A M England, R C Evans, V A Fletcher, I T W Fletcher, C Healy, V J Holt, M B Hosken, T L B Janke, A S Jhawar, J Jones, R T Kiernan, J E Lavery, A Lawrence, J Loveridge, A D McClements, R Mehta, K Middleton, L A Murray, T J Nelson, G L Offland, R A Overton, S J Reynolds, G C W Reynolds, S A W Reynolds, H Rhodes, K S Sahota, P J Scott, J M Seymour, C F Smith, M J Smith, B J Thompson, W L Tomlinson, K T Tomlinson, C R Turley, P Watling, D R W White and D Wright

Apologies: Councillors E J Greenaway

122 Prayers and Reflections

The Reverend Molly Chitokwindo, representing Telford Methodist Church, said prayers.

123 Declarations of Interest

None.

124 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

125 Leader's Report & Announcements

The Leader thanked all those who had been involved in the vaccination effort across the Borough and noted that, after a slow start, the vaccination rates in the Borough were above the regional and national averages. He stated that there had been a number of gaps in appointments due to the national booking system and noted that he had offered help to the government with the aim of getting the appointments filled.

The Leader advised that there had been an increase in the number of rapid testing centres in the Borough. Over 400 laptops had been distributed to local school children and children were due to return to school the following week.

In regards to flooding in the Borough, the Council had written again to the government regarding permanent flood defences in Ironbridge, noting that the temporary defences had been in place for over 15 years.

The previous day, the Government had announced its budget. The Council would do all it could to support businesses, including enhancing support where possible. The Leader expressed disappointment that there was no fix for adult social care and children's safeguarding funding from government. The Government had also not provided grants to councils allowing them to freeze council tax.

126 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor noted that due to current lockdown restrictions, he had not been able to attend engagements in person, however, he had continued to attend events virtually. The Mayor highlighted his attendance at the Holocaust Memorial Day, the Chinese New Year Celebrations and the West Midland Cadets & Reserve Forces Presentation.

127 Public Questions

No questions were received.

128 Cabinet Decisions Made Since the Last Meeting of the Council

Members received the report on the Cabinet decisions made since the last meeting of the Council.

Safer, Cleaner Neighbourhoods Through Appropriate Use of Our Enforcement Powers

Councillor W L Tomlinson requested a review into the Council's bulk collection charges to maximise the number of residents who would be able to access this service for free.

Councillor R A Overton, Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Community Safety and Customer Services stated that fly tipping was a blight and that current bulk collection discounts were generous.

Councillor N A Dugmore asked if the whole Borough would be covered under the enforcement powers, including rural areas.

Councillor R A Overton confirmed that where there was an issue, the Council would address it. Councillor Overton highlighted the available partnerships that Town and Parish Councils could be part of and stated that the whole Borough was covered by enforcement action.

Councillor T J Nelson asked when the capacity of Hortonwood Recycling Centre would be increased.

Councillor R A Overton stated that a written response would be provided.

129 Councillor Questions On Notice

The following questions were asked under Council Procedure Rule 6.2.2:-

- a) Councillor P J Scott asked the following question of Councillor R A Overton, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Community Safety & Customer Services:

'We are still seeing rogue scrap dealers driving around the area especially in Newport. What is the council doing to stop this from happening and what is the success rate to date? What can the residents do to assist in stopping rogue dealers in the area?'

Councillor R A Overton confirmed that scrap dealers must be licensed by the Council and that the Council worked closely with the police where there had been reports of unlicensed collections. There were regular social media posts in regards to bulk collections. There had been 9 reports of unlicensed collections in the previous 2 years.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Scott noted that the police were often the first point of call for residents when they saw an unlicensed collector. Did the police automatically liaise with the Council?

Councillor Overton confirmed that the Council and the police worked closely on this issue.

- b) Councillor J Lavery asked the following question of Councillor R A Overton, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Community Safety & Customer Services:

'Further to the recent Council announcement in respect of the £1.5million Safer Communities Fund, could the Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Community Safety & Customer Services confirm that it will be data driven and that the local representations made in Donnington has been agreed as part of the Safer Communities Fund?'

Councillor R A Overton stated that this funding meant that the Council, working in partnership with the Police and Crime Commissioner, could tackle the root causes of crime. The scheme would utilise data from the community safety partnership and Councillor Overton noted that each plan would be area specific. Based on the data that had already been gathered, Donnington was one of the areas that had been confirmed as part of the programme.

- c) Councillor G C W Reynolds asked the following question of Councillor C Healy, Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy, Historic and Natural Environment and Climate Change:

'It has recently been reported that global warming will reach 1.5 degrees, considered to be the threshold of no return, ten years earlier than previously projected. Whilst I recognise the work the council is doing to limit its own carbon footprint, that will have limited effect without national and international action. With that in mind, can the council take any action to ensure national government acts with more commitment and urgency on this hugely important issue?'

Councillor C Healy, Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy, Historic and Natural Environment and Climate Change stated that the Council was committed to reducing its carbon footprint and had made significant progress on this. An update would be provided to the Cabinet in March. There was much more that central government could do and highlighted a range of measures.

d) Councillor G Offland asked the following question of Councillor S Davies, Leader:

'I am concerned to hear that the MP for Shrewsbury is again attacking Telford and Wrekin Council and continues with his campaign to downgrade of our Telford Hospital and to close the Women & Children's Unit. Could the Leader give us an update on the Council's current position on this?'

The Leader thanked all of the NHS staff who had worked so hard over the last 12 months. The Council's position on this matter was clear; there should be not be a closure of the A&E in the fastest growing town in the country, which would leave Telford as the largest town without an A&E. The pandemic was an opportunity for a review to take place and the Leader called upon the Borough's MPs to work with the Council to prevent the closure.

e) Councillor J Seymour asked the following question of Councillor S Davies, Leader:

'When will Council employees that were redeployed to assist in the Covid-19 vaccination and testing programmes return to their normal duties?'

The Leader stated that the Council had trained and deployed 175 members of staff to work in testing sites across the Borough, from a diverse range of services. The Council would run these services until at least the end of June, in line with the government's roadmap. Staff would then return to their normal roles and the Council would look to recruit local people on a fixed term for these facilities. In regards to the vaccine centre at the Telford International Centre, a number of Council officers were seconded as project managers to support the setting up of the site, however, moving forward, the vaccination centre would operate without Council resources.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Seymour asked how long the vaccination centre would stay open for.

The Leader advised that the centre would be open for as long as required by the Department of Health. He noted that there was still a huge amount of work to do, for example, providing second doses to residents and potential boosters.

- f) Councillor N A Dugmore asked the following question of Councillor S Davies, Leader:

‘What are the production and postage costs of the recently announced ward newsletters?’

The Leader advised 44p per household.

Councillor Dugmore asked where this cost appeared in the Council budget.

The Leader advised that the cost of the newsletters would be made of out the existing budget. In a recent residents survey, 90% of residents felt that the Council’s communication during Covid had been effective and the newsletters would be a way of keeping in touch with local residents.

130 Service & Financial Planning 2021/22

Councillor R C Evans, Cabinet Member: Council Finance & Governance, presented a series of reports from the Chief Executive, the Chief Financial Officer, , The Director: Prosperity & Investment, The Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services and the Director: Policy, Customer & Commercial Services. The reports, detailed the Revenue Budget, medium term Capital Strategy and Programme, the Investment and Treasury Management Strategies and Prudential Indicators, formed the Council’s overall Medium Term Service & Financial Planning framework, identified the service priorities and budget for 2021/22 and the formal resolutions to set the level of the Council Tax in each parish area across the Borough for 2021/22. The reports included details of savings proposals and investments for 2021/22 and set out the proposed approach to developing the further savings that would be required through to 2023/24.

The Overview and Revenue Budget report set out the severe financial challenges facing the Council. By the end of this financial year, the Council would have made savings of £126.4m per annum. The Council had sought to do this in ways that protected front line services as far as possible and where services to the public were affected to do this in as compassionate a way as possible.

Following the publication of its draft budget proposals in early January a one month consultation period commenced.

Attached to the report were a number of appendices, including savings proposals, the Pay Policy Statement 2021/22, analysis of base budget movements, and details of Reserves and Balances.

The Council's Chief Financial Officer was required to give a view on the robustness of the Council's financial strategy, including the use of balances, and this was appended to the report. This had concluded that the Council was pursuing a sound financial strategy in the context of the most prolonged and challenging financial position it had ever faced due to the combined effect of Government grant cuts and increased service pressures.

The Capital Strategy and Capital Programme reports presented the Council's Capital Strategy for 2021/22 and a capital programme of £228.532m that included the proposed investments contained in the overall budget strategy. It also set out the Council's proposed planned Building Maintenance programme.

The report on the Treasury Management Strategy detailed the Treasury Strategy to be adopted for 2021/22. The Strategy was set within the parameters of relevant statute, guidance and accounting standards. It was expected the Council may borrow up to £60.2m in 2021/22 based on the current capital programme plans, and would adopt a flexible approach to borrowing. The report also provided an update on the treasury management activities during 2020/21. The report also included the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement, which overall was in line with that previously agreed.

The report on Prudential Indicators sought approval of the prudential indicators for 2021/22 required under the Prudential Code of Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

Having been moved by Councillor Evans, the budget proposals were seconded by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Community Safety & Customer Services, Councillor R A Overton.

Councillor N A Dugmore, Leader of the main opposition group, responded to the budget proposals commenting on the level of debt and the proposed increase in Council Tax.

Councillor W L Tomlinson, Leader of the Liberal Democrat/Independent group commented on the savings made to date, concern over the lack of clarity on future government funding, and paid tribute to the work of officers in putting together the plans.

A number of members spoke to the budget, emphasising the need to protect vulnerable residents.

Councillor Evans responded at the end of the debate and a vote was taken on the budget proposals in reports 10.a to 10.d and the proposals were carried. In accordance with legal requirements and Council Procedure Rule 11.5 a recorded vote was taken to approve recommendations in report 10.e (Council Tax setting).

Voting was as follows:

For (34)

Councillors M Boylan, A J Burford, E M Callear, L D Carter, C Cassar, G H Cook, S Davies, A R H England, N A M England, R C Evans, C Healy, V J Holt, A S Jhawar, J Jones, J E Lavery, J Loveridge, A D McClements, R Mehta, K Middleton, G Offland, R A Overton, J Pinter, S J Reynolds, G C W Reynolds, S A W Reynolds, H Rhodes, K S Sahota, P J Scott, C F Smith, B J Thompson, C R Turley, P Watling, D R W White and D Wright

Against (0)

Abstain (14)

Councillors K T Blundell, S P Burrell, E J Carter, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, I T W Fletcher, V Fletcher, M B Hosken, T L B Janke, A Lawrence, T J Nelson, J M Seymour, K T Tomlinson and W L Tomlinson

RESOLVED that:

(i) Overview & Revenue Budget Report 2021/22 – 2023/24

- a) The service & financial planning strategy for 2021/22 set out in the set of reports in this agenda be approved**
- b) A Council Tax increase of 4.99% (made up of 3% in respect of the Government's Adult Social Care Precept and a general Council Tax increase of 1.99%) in 2021/22 be approved**
- c) The investment of a further £2.375m into Adult Social Care in 2021/22 be approved**
- d) The investment of £0.5m in crime and anti-social behaviour measures in both 2021/22 and 2022/23 be approved**
- e) The budget savings listed in Appendix 13 of the report totalling £5.900m in 2021/22 rising to £7.139m (after 'leakage') in 2022/23 be approved**
- f) Taking a measured approach to the use of available one-off resources of £0.173m in 2021/22 be approved**
- g) The continuation of work with partner organisations, including Town & Parish councils and Voluntary Sector and Community Groups to seek to identify ways to mitigate the impact of some of the cuts to services that we can no longer afford be approved and the availability of the £1.1m Invest to Save & Capacity Fund which is available to support partnership working be noted**
- h) The base budget, as set out in Appendix 6 of the report, be approved**
- i) The policy framework for Reserves and Balances outlined in Appendix 9 of this report, be approved**
- j) The CFO's robustness statement on Appendix 10 of the report be noted**
- k) The Risk Register included at Appendix 3 of the report be approved**
- l) The Council Tax Reduction Scheme included within Appendix 14 of the report, for adoption by Full Council on 4 March 2021, ready for implementation from 1 April 2021 be endorsed**

- m) The continuation of the Council Tax Reduction Hardship Assistance Policy, including an addendum for 2021/22, contained within Appendix 14 of the report be approved by Cabinet
- n) The revenue implications of the medium term capital programme for the period 2020/21 – 2023/24 set out in the Capital Strategy and Programme reports also included in the agenda pack be approved
- o) That authority be delegated to the Director: Finance & Human Resources, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance, to action any virements required following the final allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant and other related Grants and following completion of NNDR1 and final estimates of Business Rates Income as long as they are within the budget and policy framework
- p) The allocation of £9.65m from the Regeneration and Investment Fund to support the Property Investment Portfolio's Growth Fund be approved and that authority be delegated to the Director: Prosperity and Investment, after consultation with the Director: Finance & HR and the Cabinet Member for Finance & Governance to consider business cases through this fund
- q) The temporary re-purposing of £3m of the capital borrowing approved for Nuplace, to finance the acquisition and refurbishment of accommodation for vulnerable groups by the Council, with authority delegated to Director: Housing, Employment & Infrastructure after consultation with the Cabinet Member: Economy, Housing, Transport & Infrastructure be approved
- r) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director: Adult Social Care, Health Integration & Wellbeing after consultation with the Cabinet Member: Health & Social Care, to enter into the appropriate Section 256 and Section 75 Agreements under the NHS Act 2006 (as amended)
- s) That the Director: Policy & Governance be authorised to execute all necessary contact documentation including the affixing of the common seal of the council as appropriate to enable the council to enter into appropriate Section 256 and Section 75 Agreements under the NHS Act 2006.
- t) The option to extend the IGMT loan repayment period as outlined in section 27.1 of the report be approved, with terms delegated to the Director: Finance & HR and the Director: Prosperity & Investment after consultation with the Cabinet Member: Finance & Governance
- u) The suite of service & financial planning reports as the Council's Efficiency Strategy for 2021/22, including the summary document at Appendix 16 of the report, to enable new capital receipts generated in the six year period starting 1 April 2016 to be used to fund the revenue costs of reform as assumed throughout the reports be approved
- v) The initial projections for the potential budget gap through to 2023/24 be noted and to start work in order to identify options for how this could potentially be bridged.
- w) That authority be delegated to the Director: Finance & HR after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance & Governance to amend the use of balances in 2021/22 to accommodate any difference in funding between that currently assumed and the final grant allocations, once all final outstanding grant allocations are received

x) The Pay Policy for 2021/22 included as Annex 2 of Appendix 15 of the report be approved

(ii) 2021/22 Capital Strategy

The capital strategy for 2021/22 be approved

(iii) Capital Programme

a) That the report and associated capital estimates for 2020/21 and 2021/22 to 2023/24, which incorporates the Capital Programme (Annex I), the Planned Building Maintenance Programme (Annex II) and the two year Highways and Transport capital investment programme (Annex III) be approved;

b) that the following delegations, in line with the approved budgets and any variations or changes to schemes in these programmes which must remain within overall approved budgets, after consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Members be approved:

i) that the Director: Prosperity & Investment be authorised to deliver the planned programme of works within the 'Asset Management Plan' and Planned Building Maintenance Programme (Annex II)

ii) that the Director: Neighbourhood and Enforcement Services be authorised to deliver the Highways and Transport Capital Investment Programme

iii) that the Director: Communities, Customer and Commercial Services be authorised to allocate the block approvals for climate change initiatives

(iv) 2021/22 Investment Strategy

that the Investment Strategy for 2021/22 be approved;

(v) Treasury Management Strategy and Update 2020/21

a) The treasury management activities for the first half year be noted

b) The Treasury Management Policy Statement (Appendix A of the report) be noted

c) that the Treasury Strategy, including the Annual Investment Strategy for 2021/22 together with the associated treasury Prudential Indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, which will apply from 2020/21 onwards be approved;

(vi) 2021/22 Prudential Indicators

that the prudential indicators proposed in the report be approved.

(vii) Council Tax – Formal Resolutions for 2021/22

That the formal resolution to determine the levels of Council Tax for 2021/22 as detailed in the report be approved.

Councillor R C Evans, Cabinet Member for Council Finance and Governance presented the report of the Associate Director: Policy & Governance.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The reason for non-attendance at meetings of the authority as set out in paragraph 4.6 of the report, subject to the relevant Member notifying the Monitoring Officer of the need to rely upon it prior to the implementation of the '6 month rule' described in paragraph 4.4 of the report be approved
- b) The decision made in FC-131 (a) be reviewed no later than 31 March 2022
- c) The two appointments as set out in paragraph 4.8 of the report and the allowances associated with those roles be approved, with effect from 2021/22 municipal year
- d) The approach set out in paragraphs 4.13 – 4.16 of the report in relation to Member development and support be noted and endorsed
- e) The scrutiny update provided at paragraph 4.19 of the report be noted
- f) The updated terms of reference as detailed at paragraph 4.21 of the report be approved.

132 Notices of Motion

Councillor L D Carter formally moved, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7, the following Motion:

'This Council welcomes the Council's 4 year £50m Investment into Telford & Wrekin's Highways and calls upon the Government to reverse the planned 21% cut to its Highways Grant Funding Allocation for Telford & Wrekin'

The Motion was formally seconded by Councillor D Wright.

Following a robust debate, the Motion was approved by a majority vote.

RESOLVED - that the motion be approved

The meeting ended at 8.18 pm

Chairman:

Date: Thursday, 29 April 2021