

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 8 July 2021 at 10.00 am in Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT

PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY, 14 JULY 2021

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY, 19 JULY 2021)

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

Also Present: Councillors W L Tomlinson (Liberal Democrats / Independent Group Leader) and A Lawrence (Conservative Group Deputy Leader).

Apologies: Councillors L D Carter and S Davies

CAB-85 Declarations of Interest

None.

CAB-86 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CAB-87 Leader's Announcements

The Deputy Leader announced that the Council had been named the Cooperative Council of the Year. He thanked officers and everybody that had voted for the Council to win this award. The award added to the growing list of recent achievements for the Authority, which included the Outstanding Ofsted result. It was also announced that the Council was a finalist for the MJ Local Authority of the Year award.

CAB-88 2021/22 Financial Monitoring

Councillor R C Evans, Cabinet Member for Council Finance & Governance presented the report of the Director: Finance & Human Resources, Chief Finance Officer.

This was the first Financial Monitoring Report for 2021/22, as expected, there were residual COVID-19 pressures, which included income shortfalls in relation to restricted opening at facilities in the early part of the year and potential impacts on business rates collection; a key funding stream for the Council. It was too early in the year to accurately predict the ongoing impact of Coronavirus and the speed at which the economy would recover; the position would continue to be monitored and updates provided throughout the year.

The projected service pressures stood at £4.24m. With the additional £1m anticipated funding shortfalls related to business rates (which would result in a deficit balance carried forward to next year on the collection fund), the total pressure was £5.24m against which the £5.18m emergency response funding would be applied. This would leave a residual projection of an overspend of £0.06m by year-end. This was before using the Council's budget contingency.

It was early in the year and projections would be updated and refined, taking into account the release of lockdown and any residual impact of Covid-19 on service areas.

As well as the potential ongoing impact of Covid-19, the funding outlook for the medium term remained uncertain due to the impact of the major changes to the Local Government Finance System being deferred until at least April 2022 with no confirmed date for implementation; changes to the New Homes bonus system, expected to come into force in 2022/23; and changes to the Adult Social Care (ASC) funding through the long awaited ASC Green paper also expected.

It was unclear whether the Government would announce another one-year "spending round" or a medium-term Comprehensive Spending Review later in 2021, this would inform the Council's 2022/23 and medium term Service & Financial Planning Strategy. However, it was likely that with the significant increase in the Government's debt as a result of responding to the pandemic that the financial climate ahead would remain one of significant financial challenge over the medium-term for local authorities.

Members welcomed the report noting the Council's relatively strong financial position despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat/Independent Group expressed support and noted the need for a medium-term finance settlement from the Government.

RESOLVED that –

i) The 2021/22 revenue budget position which continued to be impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic be noted.

ii) The increase in the Councillors Pride Fund to £5k per ward member for 2021/22 and 2022/23 be approved.

iii) The position in relation to capital spend be noted and recommend that Full Council approve the changes to the capital programme detailed in Appendix 3.

iv) The collection rates for NNDR, council tax and sales ledger be noted.

CAB-89 Pride in Our High Streets

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

The Pride in Our High Streets scheme was entering its seventh year, having launched in 2015. The scheme had developed into a nationally recognised model for investment in high streets and had had a visible and lasting impact on the Borough's high streets with 30 empty retail premises brought back into use, creating more than 100 local high street jobs to date (and many more in the supply chain), and leveraging more than £1.32m of private sector investment.

Investment into façade improvements had seen the transformation of many shop frontages to give the Borough's high streets visual appeal and the programme had seen businesses supported to diversify and support for start-ups to help recovery from COVID.

Through the Young High Street Challenge, over 1000 young people had been directly engaged in the future of Telford's high streets. The Council had been working with town and parish councils and established a programme of activity to promote and celebrate the high streets as the latest lockdown was eased, residents were encouraged to be 'loyal to local'.

The report set out the blueprint for the delivery of Phase Three of the Pride in Our High Streets scheme which would see £4.8m invested over the following two years with an initial funding package of £2.5m to be invested in 2021/2022.

Phase 3 recognised the continuing problems faced by high streets and sets high street regeneration in a new context reflecting the on-going impact of COVID and the continued growth of on-line shopping which posed both challenges and opportunities. The new programme would consolidate and build on success, maintaining elements of the existing programme alongside new initiatives including new digital and environmental grant schemes, a property improvement voucher scheme, improvements to the public realm and initiatives that would enhance our high streets as more than retail destinations.

Members thanked officers for their work on the scheme.

Members praised the scheme and the impact it had had on the Borough's high streets. The scheme had been transformative and brought new life to the district centres.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat/Independent Group expressed support for the report. The Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group, noted that the scheme had real benefits.

RESOLVED that –

i) The successful delivery and outcomes of the Phase 2 Pride in Our High Street programme be noted.

ii) Proposals for Phase 3 of the Programme be approved and responsibility be delegated to the Director Housing, Employment & Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood, Commercial Services & Regeneration for Place Plan delivery and grant funding approvals.

CAB-90 Representation on Outside Bodies

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

The report requested Cabinet approval for nominations to Outside Bodies and to authorise the Monitoring Officer to give effect to nominations to Outside Bodies as notified to her in writing by the Leader.

It was noted that Granville Country Park (Local Nature Reserve) Management Committee had received two nominations; Councillor Chris Turley and Councillor Nigel Dugmore. Only one appointment was made to this Outside Body.

RESOLVED that –

i) That the nominations to represent the Council on Outside Bodies, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be considered and representation for 2021-22 be approved.

ii) That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to give effect to nominations to Outside Bodies as notified to her in writing by the Leader.

CAB-91 Customer Services & Digital Peer Challenge

Councillor R A Overton, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Community Safety and Customer Services, presented the report of the Director for Communities, Customer and Commercial Services.

The report summarised the feedback from a Customer Services and Digital Peer Challenge that was carried out by the Local Government Association (LGA) in May 2021.

Overall feedback was very positive, with the peer challenge team recognising the Council's focus on good customer service and the commitment of Members and staff at all levels to 'get things right for residents'. The team also praised the extensive range of ways the Authority sought feedback from customers and the desire to engage and involve people, with the suggestion

that the Council could go even further in co-designing services with customers, partners and staff.

The peer challenge team noted the Council's ambition and the range of actions underway, whilst stressing the importance of prioritising and regularly evaluating their effectiveness.

RESOLVED that –

the feedback and recommendations from the Local Government Association Customer Services and Digital Peer Challenge be noted and the proposed actions to respond to these, as set out in Section 5 of the report be approved.

The meeting ended at 10.33 am

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Anthea Lowe
Associate Director: Policy & Governance
Date: **Wednesday, 14 JULY 2021**

Signed

Date: Thursday, 16 September 2021