

## **CABINET**

**Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 5 November 2020  
at 10.00 am in Remote Meeting**

**PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY, 11 NOVEMBER 2020**

**(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2020)**

**Present:** Councillors 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, D Wright and S Davies (Chair).

**Also Present:** Cllr W L Tomlinson (Liberal Democrats / Independent Group Leader) and Cllr N A Dugmore (Conservative Group Leader)

### **CAB-31 Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **CAB-32 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

### **CAB-33 Leader's Announcements**

The Leader stated that this was a difficult time for communities and residents and the administration had made a commitment to be on the side of residents and businesses and to do all that it could to support them throughout the pandemic. The Leader noted that England was now in a second period of lockdown, and that the rules on this occasion were different to previously. The Leader stated that the Telford & Wrekin website contained a huge amount of information and urged residents to contact their local ward member should they need assistance. The Leader stated that the Government should use the lockdown to fix the track, trace and isolate system and ensure that it was a localised service. The Leader noted that the Cabinet was supportive of the lockdown.

### **CAB-34 Financial Management Report 2020/21**

**Key Decision** identified as **Financial Management Report 2020/21** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 13 August 2020.

**Recommendation for Full Council – Not Subject to Call-In**

Cllr R C Evans presented the report of the Chief Financial Officer. The impact of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) on the country was significant and placed increased demand on many Council services, particularly those

supporting the most vulnerable. The projected pressure was estimated to be around £26.9m, including council tax and business rate shortfalls. The Council had received £15.2m of Government National Emergency Response Funding, which left a residual pressure of £11.7m. There had been considerable work by Council officers to improve the position since the last report to Cabinet in July 2020.

It was noted that there were still many uncertainties and that the projections may change. Cabinet Members acknowledged the Council's long track record of active financial management and it remains in a strong financial position.

There were a number of variations from the approved budget, the majority of which related to Covid-19. The projected spend on capital projects was 90.6% of the allocated budget at the time of writing the report.

Cabinet Members noted that as well as Covid-19, the impact of Brexit and Local Government Financial System reform being delayed until April 2022 meant it was difficult to accurately project the Council's financial position in future years.

The Income monitoring position was noted; Covid-19 had significantly impacted on collection rates, with Business Rates, Council Tax and Sales Ledger all behind target. Debt recovery action had been suspended earlier in the year as part of a range of support provided to residents and businesses.

Cabinet Members called for the government to provide funding for the additional expenditure the Council had incurred during the pandemic. Cabinet Members discussed the impact of the pandemic on an already weak foundation of government funding, following ten years of austerity. The Leader highlighted the situation in regards to free school meals and noted that the funding that had been provided from central government had long since run out and it was disingenuous of the local MPs to suggest that free school meals were being provided currently by central government.

The Conservative Group Leader noted that all Local Authorities were in a similar position and stated that the budget had been prepared prior to the pandemic so it was difficult to compare the position to previous years. The Liberal Democrat / Independent Group Leader raised the financial difficulties that other Authorities found themselves in and praised the strong financial position of the Council.

**RESOLVED that:**

- a) **The 2020/21 revenue budget position which had been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, be noted**
- b) **The allocation of the budget contingency and balances detailed in Section 5.1 of the report be RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**
- c) **The position in relation to capital spend and the recommendations that Full Council approve the changes to the capital programme**

detailed in Appendix 3 of the report be **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

- d) The projected collection rates for NNDR, council tax and sales ledger be noted

**CAB-35 Housing Investment Programme - Business Case for Investment**

**Key Decision** identified as **Housing Investment Programme** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 27 October 2020.

**Recommendation for Full Council – Not Subject to Call-In**

Councillor D Wright, Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport and Infrastructure presented the report of the Chief Executive Officer, which focussed on Nuplace Limited, the Council's wholly owned housing company, and provided an update on achievements over the last year, and committed developments. The report also presented an updated Business Case.

Nuplace's growing housing portfolio provided a range of homes across the Borough with houses available within North and South Telford and Newport. Over 1000 people were now living in Nuplace properties across the Borough. Lettings across the portfolio remained strong, with voids of 1.88% cumulatively since the first site opened, well below the predicted level of 3%.

The programme had also resulted in over 23 acres of brownfield land being regenerated, delivered added value in terms of local employment, apprenticeships, supply chain development and the delivery of a range of community projects. The Council also benefits from Council Tax and New Homes Bonus as appropriate on the housing stock delivered. This was estimated to have generated a cumulative net incremental income of £4.4m to the Council. The report outlined the future plans of the company which included renovation and restoration of some historic buildings in the Borough, such as New College Wellington.

Members welcomed the report, and expressed pride in the programme and the provision for local people, particularly noting other authorities were seeking to replicate the scheme. Members particularly welcomed the regeneration of heritage buildings and sustainable homes.

The Conservative Group Leader asked a question in relation to profit and Teckal exemptions, it was confirmed that there was not a significant risk in relation to this.

**RESOLVED – that**

- a) the revised **Business Case** included in **Appendix 1** of the report be approved

- b) the allocation of £38.5m from the Regeneration and Investment Fund to support the developments as set out in the report be approved
- c) the approval of an extension to the Nuplace Loan Facilities Agreement of £36m, the rate and terms to be delegated for approval to the Council's s151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance & Governance be **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**
- d) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Housing Investment Programme Board to:
  - i) agree and enter into where necessary any documents, as required, to implement the recommendations contained within the revised Business Case
  - ii) agree and enter into where necessary any agreements, as required, for the disposal or acquisition of land required to give effect to the recommendations contained within the Business Case
- e) authority be delegated to the Associate Director: Policy & Governance to seal or sign any documents required to give effect to the recommendations contained within the report.

**CAB-36 Get Building Fund - Stronger Communities - New College, Wellington**

**Key Decision** identified as **Get Building Fund – Stronger Communities - New College, Wellington** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 27 October 2020.

**Recommendation for Full Council – Not Subject to Call-In**

Councillor D Wright, Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport and Infrastructure presented the report of the Director: Prosperity & Investment. The report sought the approval for the redevelopment of the New College, Wellington site, whilst protecting the historic frontage of the main college building. The proposals would also bring forward a neighbouring piece of land for development. The scheme would progress in conjunction with the Wrekin Housing Group and would see the development of an extra care facility as well as bungalows.

The scheme would benefit from LEP funding and match funding had been secured from the delivery partner of the Wrekin Housing Group.

Cabinet Members welcomed the scheme and noted the significant impact this scheme would have on this area of Wellington. Members considered this was

an imaginative proposal and would secure much needed specialist accommodation for residents. **RESOLVED** – that

- a) the formal acceptance of the Get Building Fund award, appropriate changes to the capital programme as set out in paragraph 6.2 of the report, and the entering into a back to back Funding Agreement with the delivery partner be **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**
- b) the tender and procurement of a contractor for the delivery of the development proposals as detailed in the report, subject to Full Council agreement of CAB-26a, be approved
- c) the sale of land at New College as set out in paragraph 5.6 of the report be approved
- d) authority be delegated to the Director of Prosperity & Investment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport & Infrastructure to enter into all necessary legal agreements to enable this programme to proceed be **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

The meeting ended at 11.02 am

**Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices**

Anthea Lowe  
Associate Director: Policy & Governance  
Date: **Wednesday, 11 NOVEMBER 2020**

Signed .....

Date: Thursday, 3 December 2020