

**Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet
held on Monday, 8th February, 2021
from 4.00 pm - 5.10 pm**

Present: J Ash-Edwards (Chair)
J Llewellyn-Burke (Vice-Chair)

J Belsey
R de Mierre

S Hillier
A MacNaughton

N Webster

Also Present: Councillors R Bates, R Clarke, A Eves, I Gibson, S Hatton,
J Henwood and R Salisbury

1. ROLL CALL AND VIRTUAL MEETING EXPLANATION.

The Leader introduced the meeting and advised that only Cabinet Members and Senior Officers have their cameras turned on, but other Democratic Services Officers and observers were present at the meeting. The Leader conducted the roll call to confirm the Members present.

Tom Clark, Head of Regulatory Services advised that regulations were introduced last April to enable the Council to hold its meetings to include those participants attending remotely. Members have control over their own microphones and are called to speak at the discretion of the Leader.

2. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY MATTER ON THE AGENDA.

Councillor Belsey declared a prejudicial interest in item 8 as he is the Chairman of AGE UK East Grinstead.

3. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

No apologies were received.

4. TO CONFIRM MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 23 NOVEMBER 2020.

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2020 were agreed as a correct record and electronically signed by the Leader.

5. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS THAT THE LEADER AGREES TO TAKE AS URGENT BUSINESS.

The Leader advised that a report on Ansty Village Centre S106 release of funds was to be discussed as urgent business.

Emma Sheridan, Business Unit Leader for Community Services, Policy and Performance introduced the report. She confirmed the funds had been received after the publication of the agenda and the funds were required imminently to meet tight planning deadlines for stage 1 of the build. They could only be used for this purpose and the amount exceeded the jurisdiction of the Cabinet Member.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth welcomed the report. He noted the good work completed by the Ansty Village Centre Trust (AVCT) which benefited Ansty and the surrounding communities. He expressed concern over the amount of matched funding raised by the Sports and Social Club compared to the contributions already made to the project by the Council.

The Business Unit Leader highlighted that the S106 specifically requested funds for this site; if the money was not used it would have to be returned. The pandemic had severely impacted the intended fundraising efforts of the Sports and Social Club, who are aware they need to raise more funds. Officers would continue to provide support and the Club was committed to ongoing fundraising.

The Cabinet Member for Customer Services congratulated the Club on their fundraising efforts to date and the Business Unit Leader confirmed that a report on the remaining funds would be produced when the S106 money is received and additional funds are requested by the organisation.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning confirmed that Covid had severely impacted their fundraising efforts. It is an important development for the whole of the District as many people use the facilities. He supported the recommendations.

The Cabinet Member for Community also supported the recommendations. He noted it was a long-term project and the site will provide sporting opportunities for people of all ages and abilities from across the District.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth noted that projects do run over predicted cost and expressed concern that not all figures had been correct in the report of 2019. AVCT had made great achievements and he supported the recommendations.

The Leader confirmed the Sports and Social Club's strong track record of fund raising and it was important to support them. The facility supports a wider catchment area across the District and will assist people post-Covid to return to sporting activities. He reiterated that the money from developer was for a specific purpose.

The Leader took Members to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

Cabinet agreed to the Release of S106 contributions to:

- (a) award £128,040 to the Ansty Village Centre Trust
- (b) award £74,613 to the Ansty Community Sports Club

6. DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN AND BUDGET FOR 2021/22.

Peter Stuart, Head of Corporate Resources introduced the report. He noted that the settlement had been announced and there were no changes to the draft to be

considered by Council at the next meeting. The report had been scrutinised. He explained how National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) is designed to reward Local Authorities which encourage business growth and the increased revenue from the Rampion site. The money received is a bonus for encouraging the renewable energy site. The figures would be adjusted for 2021/22 based on projections due to the sites at Rampion and DPD. It was likely that the Council may not have to use general reserves next year (2021/22). A reset was introduced to NNDR in 2014 which has not been activated but if activated it removes any growth over the notional need of the Council. If the reset is triggered it would affect 2022/23. He is confident it will shortly be triggered and less NNDR income will be received in the following years, and then there will be an extra draw on general reserves. He will provide an update for Members in MIS.

The Leader noted the benefits of this element of a green recovery and the probable use of general reserves in future years.

The Deputy Leader highlighted the uncertainty of the current climate for longer-term planning. She acknowledged fiscal certainty concerns regarding the benefits of renewable energy sites and whether the Council might accept more applications for renewable energy sites.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth welcomed an MIS update for Members and asked if the settlement and reset might happen at the same time, as the Council needs to plan soon for 2023/2024.

The Cabinet Member for Community also expressed concern with the uncertainty regarding the reset and further development of the rural areas of the District.

The Cabinet Member for Customer Services thanked the Head of Corporate Resources for his clear explanation. She expressed concern at the Council's increased expenditure due to Covid and asked if that had been considered. She noted that West Sussex County Council had received more funding from central Government.

The Head of Corporate Resources confirmed the Council retains the additional funds from Rampion until the reset is activated and the base line need is adjusted or changes are made to the NNDR system, i.e. rates for virtual businesses. The revenue is secure for the coming year. Local Authorities would like more certainty with NNDR funding. It would be too late when the settlement figure is released and more might be known when the next Budget is announced. The additional expenditure, due to Covid, had not been considered and appeals for some types of facility were still in progress. Figures for 2021/22 are known and partly for 2022/23.

The Leader advised it was difficult to make forecasts and recommend budgets in these uncertain times. The Council has a strong track record and has diversified its income to ensure a strong financial position. Covid has had a severe impact reducing income and increasing cost, the bounce back of the economy is uncertain following the roll out of vaccinations. Key services have kept running, paid from reserves, which is not sustainable in the longer term. Action must be taken to maintain reserves. He thanked the Scrutiny Committee and advised that the Head of Corporate Resources should make a minor change to recommendation (iii) changing short term to medium term.

He took the Members to the recommendations, including the update to recommendation (iii) which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

The Cabinet recommend to Council the proposals for 2021/22 as set out in the report to the Scrutiny Committee and as amended by this report, specifically:

- i. The financial outlook facing the Council given the extent of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- ii. The proposed increase in Council Tax;
- iii. The strategy to use General Reserve to balance the budget over the medium term;
- iv. The proposed Capital Programme; and
- v. The service commentaries

7. BUDGET MANAGEMENT 2020/21 - PROGRESS REPORT APRIL TO DECEMBER 2020.

Peter Stuart, Head of Corporate Resources introduced the report. He highlighted the overspend of 1.9m in the year. He noted the setting up a small reserve to finance support to the Leisure Centres which are costly when shut but a good income stream when open. Figures will change due to the current climate, any assumptions made may need to be revised and the overspend may change. General Reserves have been used to absorb the impact.

The Leader noted the adverse impact caused by the additional lockdowns.

The Deputy Leader expressed concern about future income due to pressures on industrial rents by the pandemic.

The Head of Corporate Resources confirmed some businesses made contact about their rent and the Council is in constant contact with its tenants. Some people have applied for grants, but the applications rate could be higher. He was pleased to be able to fund minor capital projects in the current climate. The Council must keep investing in recreation centres. The public art project funded by S106 funds was controversial, but the money had been allocated for that purpose and officers conducted extensive research. The works at St John Park recreation ground was an ongoing commitment to improve that site using S106 monies.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth expressed concern over the increase in figures to the year end.

The Cabinet Member for Customer Services was saddened to see the writing off of Horsham District Council's contribution and sought reassurance that everything had been done to obtain payment. She queried whether the figures for industrial rents were based on invoices or income.

The Head of Corporate Resources advised he would provide detailed figures to Cabinet and expenditure can be an annual cost incurred at one particular time. All income is budgeted on creation of invoices, bad debts are only written off after all avenues to seek payment have been exhausted. Horsham District Council were never happy with the partnership but the other partner had paid their bill in full.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning asked whether the income derived from temporary accommodation should be listed separately. The temporary

accommodation is an asset and the temporary accommodation expenditure would have been higher, it would show the reduction in costs to the Council.

The Deputy Leader noted the importance of the Leisure Centres to the residents for wellbeing and socialising aspects and asked whether the application for funding to the National Leisure Fund was reflected in the budget.

The Head of Corporate Resources advised that income from temporary accommodation was listed as a net figure incorporating the Bed & Breakfast expenditure. A detailed report on the reduction in temporary accommodation costs could be produced to update Members in MIS. Funds from the National Leisure Fund were not included as they had not been received.

The Leader highlighted the improved service provided to the vulnerable people. He took the Members to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

The Cabinet noted the report and recommend to Council:

- (i) that £500,000 be transferred to a Leisure Covid Support Reserve from General Reserve as detailed in paragraph 19;
- (ii) that £38,170 grant income relating to Rough Sleepers Initiative be transferred to Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 32;
- (iii) that £76,500 grant income relating to New Burdens funding to cover the cost of administering the new Business grants in respect of Covid be transferred to Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 33;
- (iv) that £48,631 grant income relating to Local Authority Compliance and Enforcement grant be transferred to Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 34;
- (v) that £9,663 grant income relating to New Burdens funding for Housing Benefit Accuracy Award Initiative and Severe Disability Premium Gateway Initiative be transferred to Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 35;
- (vi) that £75,000 grant income relating to support in respect of Covid-19 preventative interventions delivered by Environmental Health teams be transferred to Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 36;
- (vii) that £61,418 grant income in respect of Journey to Work funding, to fund work being undertaken by the Employment Projects Co-ordinator be transferred to the Revenues and Benefits New Burdens Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 37;
- (viii) that £26,026 grant income to Implement the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme be transferred to the Revenues and Benefits New Burdens Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 38;
- (ix) the variations to the Capital Programme contained in paragraph 48 in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure rule B3;
- (x) that prior year debtors in respect of Horsham District Council's Contribution to the Census Partnership be written off as detailed in Appendix A of this report.

To note:

- (xi) the remainder of the report.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Service Delivery
was exited from the meeting to the waiting room at 5:01 pm.

8. AGE UK PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS.

Emma Sheridan, Business Unit Leader for Community Services, Policy and Performance introduced the report. She sought approval to extend the existing

agreements for AGE UK services within the District which continued to be critical to support vulnerable residents during the pandemic. The extension would bring the contracts in line with other agreements for other Community and Voluntary Sector organisations which are due to end in March 2022.

The Cabinet Member for Community confirmed it had been considered at a recent meeting of the Cabinet Grants Panel and supported the recommendations. The extension would give the organisations some certainty in these difficult times. The tackling of social isolation of the over 50s is important work for Age UK in the District and nationally.

The Cabinet Member for Customer Services expressed concern with the financial implications of the tendering process of West Sussex County Council (WSSC) for contracts after June 2021 and the extension of these contracts.

The Business Unit Leader confirmed that WSSC are currently tendering for many services, including this on-going work and the new contracts start next financial year. Officers are already talking to all parties with regards to the provision of services post-Covid and for 2022-23 onwards. This includes the possibility that organisations don't get a contract with WSSC and the impacts of reduced contract budgets under the current WSSC tender. It is expected that Age UK will be contracted for some services they are aware that it may be less or different that was the case previously. Officers are working closely with the organisations to discuss new ways of workings and how they plan to deliver services post Covid.

The Leader took Members to the recommendations which were agreed with 6 votes in favour.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet recommended to:

- (i) Extend Age UK East Grinstead an annual grant of £18,269 for one year, from Apr 2021 - Mar 2022.
- (ii) Extend Age UK West Sussex, Brighton & Hove an annual grant of £54,807 for one year, from Apr 2021 - Mar 2022.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Service Delivery
re-joined the meeting at 17.09

The meeting finished at 5.10 pm

Chairman