

**Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet  
held on 11 September 2023  
from 1.00 pm**

**Present:** R Eggleston (Chairman)  
A Bennett (Vice-Chair)

AM Cooke

I Gibson

C Hobbs

**Also Present:** Councillors R Bates, A Eves and M Kennedy

The Chairman welcomed Cllrs Bates, Eves, and Kenny to the meeting.

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

None.

**2. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

No apologies were received as all Members were present.

**3. TO BE AGREED BY GENERAL AFFIRMATION THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 26 JUNE 2023.**

The Cabinet agreed the minutes and they were signed by the Chairman.

**4. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN AGREES TO TAKE AS URGENT BUSINESS.**

None.

**5. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION (LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND).**

Simon Hughes, Director People and Commercial Services introduced the report. He highlighted that temporary accommodation reduces the cost of nightly paid accommodation and enables vulnerable people to remain in their existing communities while more permanent housing is found.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Customer Services proposed the recommendations, noted the challenges for Local Authorities in providing temporary accommodation and the additional pressures on families when accommodation is provided outside the district.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Economy and Housing seconded the recommendations and highlighted the importance of having the right balance of temporary accommodation.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Revenues and Benefits advised the purchases would provide assets of value and an income stream.

The Leader noted that supporting the homeless is a key statutory responsibility for the Council. He thanked the housing team for their work which is often challenging. As there were no further comments, he took the Members to a vote on the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

## **RESOLVED**

That Cabinet agreed to:

- i) The further purchase of property for Temporary Accommodation following the award of Local Authority Housing Fund 1 by allocating a £2.08m to the Temporary Accommodation Capital Reserve.
- ii) In accordance with the Constitution, use of the reserve will be delegated to the Director of People and Commercial Services to operate, reflecting the principles in this report.
- iii) In order to enable Officers to progress with further work, in principle LAHF 2 is to be funded with an expected cost of circa £1m. The final amount will be formally approved in the next appropriate Cabinet Budget Management report.

## **6. FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2022/23.**

Before the report was presented to Cabinet for debate, Councillors attending the meeting (not being members of Cabinet) were asked for their contributions. Cllr Eves expressed concern over the costs of using agency staff and the outsourcing of services. She queried the expenditure on Ukrainian refugees and requested an update on the St John's Park Masterplan.

Louise Duffield, Director of Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report and advised agency staff were used in the legal department to cover interim positions but that permanent recruitment was underway. The balance of the budget for the Ukrainian refugees was £51,000 and the officers were awaiting costs for St John's Park Masterplan. She confirmed that due to officers taking advantage of changing interest rates through the Treasury Management Strategy the predicted overspend had changed to an underspend of £715,000.

Judy Holmes, Deputy Chief Executive confirmed funds were passported to the Council by WSCC for the Ukrainian refugees and have been used to provide local services, such as language classes, transport, and cafes.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Revenues and Benefits proposed the recommendations, noting the underspend was due to the excellent treasury management, but advised inflation would continue to add to costs.

The recommendations were seconded by the Leader. He noted that the outturn was better than expected and had laid good groundwork for the upcoming year's work. There would still be some inflationary pressures this year and the exceptional income from the treasury management may not continue to support the budget.

As there were no further comments, the Leader took the Members to a vote on the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

## **RESOLVED**

That Cabinet noted the contents of the report and agreed to:

- i) The update to Specific Reserves in Appendix C;
- ii) The updated phasing of the approved capital programme as detailed in Appendix E;
- (i) That the overall position for 2022/23 is a surplus of £715,000; and
- (iv) Recommend to Council that balance of interest (including additional Dividend income) totalling £715,000 is transferred to the General Reserve and set aside to support the forecast budget gap in 2024/25.

## **7. SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING - BUDGET GUIDELINES FOR 2024/25.**

Louise Duffield, Director of Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report explaining that it contained high level observations at the start of the budget setting process, and that government settlements are often specified at short notice.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Revenues and Benefits proposed the recommendations, noting that the budget would be finalised by the Council at its meeting in February. She advised that a cross party working group would also be convened as part of the budget setting process and noted the continuing challenging economic circumstances.

The Leader seconded the recommendations, noting good engagement by all political parties would result in a set of proposals that all parties could agree to. As there were no further comments, the Leader took the Members to a vote on the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

### **RESOLVED**

That Cabinet agreed to:

- i) Endorse the guidelines set out within this report and
- ii) Use these principles in preparing the 2024/25 Corporate Plan and Budget.

## **8. CLAIR HALL: UPDATE.**

Before the report was presented to Cabinet for debate, Councillors attending the meeting (not being members of Cabinet) were asked for their contributions. Cllr Kenny confirmed his support for the recommendations, noting the openness of the process and urged the Cabinet and officers to look at all proposals for the benefit of the town.

On behalf of Cllr Chapman, Cllr Eves asked how and when the decision would be taken on the choice of model one or three.

The Leader advised that model three involved the redevelopment of the site and more work was required before the final informed decision could be made. Noting in an ideal situation the Council would work with adjacent landowners.

Louise Duffield, Director of Resources and Organisational Development then introduced the report noting the importance of evidence-based decision-making and the inclusion of the local community's ideas following recent engagement.

The Leader proposed an amendment to the recommendations, amending the recommendations to read:

- i) Subject to iv) and v) below, recommends to Council, in principle, the regeneration of Clair Hall by way of a mixed-use development to provide a new cultural facility, funded through then land value. This agreement is subject to due diligence, a clear evidence base and further work and governance, as set out in the body of this report.
- ii) Asks Officers to report to Cabinet, (and to Council as appropriate) in a timely manner, as proposals mature. The next milestone is likely to be formal recommendations for the procurement of a cultural operator and partner.
- iii) Agree that a cross-party, politically balanced, Executive Steering Group is established, to enable Member input and consensus building, whilst also progressing at pace. The terms of reference are set out at Appendix A.
- iv) Agree that Officers should request, and assess the viability, of any alternative community proposals in presenting their conclusions to the Cabinet and Executive Steering Group for consideration. Cabinet and the Executive Steering Group may request that any community bidders give a formal presentation to them so that their plan can be tested.
- i) Agrees to wait until Cabinet and the Executive Steering Group has duly and properly considered over a reasonably prompt timescale any community proposals before proceeding with any procurement.

He advised the amended recommendations would give the local community an opportunity to propose an alternative scheme.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Revenues and Benefits proposed the revised recommendation, thanking the officers for their engagement with the local community, and she welcomed a cross party steering group.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Customer Services seconded the amended recommendations and thanked the public who attended the recent engagement sessions and confirmed alternative viable proposals would be investigated.

The Deputy Leader, as the portfolio holder for Communities and Communications supported Cabinet's commitment to transparency and the set up a politically balanced steering group.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Economy and Housing noted the attendance of the recent engagement sessions at Clair Hall.

As there were no further comments, the Leader took the Members to a vote on the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

## **RESOLVED**

That Cabinet approved the recommendations as amended.

- 9. TO CONSIDER WHETHER TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING DURING CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 100A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT INVOLVES THE LIKELY DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION AS DEFINED IN PARAGRAPH 3 OF PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 12A OF THE SAID ACT.**

Cabinet agreed unanimously to move to a closed session at 1.39pm and upon completion of the exempt business, it returned to the open session at 1.55pm.

**10. REVENUES AND BENEFITS LINE OF BUSINESS CLOUD PROCUREMENT.**

The exempt annexe contained project costings. These costings are commercially sensitive and exempt from publication under paragraph 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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

**RESOLVED**

That Cabinet:

- i) Agreed the proposal to procure the Capita One Revenues and Benefits cloud system.
- (ii) Agreed that the award of the contract be delegated to the Director of People and Commercial Services once a suitable procurement route is identified.

**11. REVENUES AND BENEFITS PRINTING AND MAILING SOLUTION PROCUREMENT.**

The exempt annexe contained project costings. These costings are commercially sensitive and exempt from publication under paragraph 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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

**RESOLVED**

That Cabinet:

- i) Approved the procurement of a new printing contract for the Revenues and Benefits department, and;
- ii) Agreed that the award of the contract be delegated to the Director of People and Commercial Services.

**12. ELECTORAL PRINT AND MAIL PROCUREMENT – INTENTION TO TENDER.**

The exempt annexe contained project costings. These costings are commercially sensitive and exempt from publication under paragraph 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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

**RESOLVED**

That Cabinet:

- (i) Agreed that the Council participates in a collaborative Electoral Print and Mail procurement exercise with the other Councils participating in the Shared Procurement Service;

- (ii) Agreed the Council go out to open market for the purpose of awarding a six-year Electoral Print and Mail Contract;
- (iii) Agreed that the authority to award the Council's Contract be delegated to the Director of Resources and Organisational Development, following a legally compliant procurement process.

The meeting finished at 1.56 pm

Chairman