

**Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet
held on Monday, 1st June, 2020
from 4.06 pm - 5.07 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 A Bennett, P Brown, P Chapman, R Eggleston,
A Eves, S Hatton, J Henwood, J Knight, M Pulfer, R Bates,
M Cornish and I Gibson

The Leader commented that this is the first council meeting held under the Covid 19 legislation. He advised that only Cabinet Members and Senior Officers have their cameras turned on but other Democratic Services Officers and observers are present at the meeting.

1. VIRTUAL MEETINGS EXPLANATION

Tom Clark, Head of Regulatory Services, advised that new regulations have recently been introduced to enable the Council to hold its meetings to include those participants attending remotely. To ensure the smooth running of such remote meetings it has been necessary to amend some of the Council procedure rules and such rules have been amended by me / the Head of Regulatory Services in accordance with urgency powers in the scheme of officer delegation to keep the Constitution legally updated.

The Leader commenced the roll call to confirm the Members present.

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

Councillor Hillier declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 6, 7 and 8 as he is a Member of West Sussex County Council.

3. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

None.

4. TO CONFIRM MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 16TH MARCH 2020.

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

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

None.

6. IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS ON THE COUNCIL.

Kathryn Hall, Chief Executive introduced the report. She highlighted that the report understated the issues faced by the Council and the community over past 12 weeks. The dynamic and fast-moving pace from the start of the pandemic probably meant the Council and its partners needed to constantly evaluate responses to the crisis. Members were advised that since the report had been drafted there had been many changes, including the introduction of the new test and trace service, further changes in support to local businesses, and the need to undertake work to comply with Government guidance for safe urban spaces and town centres.

The Leader confirmed the significant impact of the pandemic on everyone nationally and sent condolences to the families of those residents of Mid Sussex who have lost their lives. He thanked the key workers across the District. He confirmed the role of the Council in the emergency response and thanked all council staff for their part in providing support to the community and for the delivery of key services. He highlighted key aspects of the work undertaken by the Council (as outlined in the report). He confirmed that the Council has been in regular contact with stake holders and local MPs. The Leader highlighted the significant challenge in the months ahead given the financial impact of the crisis on the Council. He stated that the Council was currently experiencing reductions in income of between £600k and £700k per month.

The Deputy Leader noted the future detrimental impact of the pandemic on the Council and highlighted the increased use of the Council's website and virtual channels for communications. She asked whether these alternative modes of communication were providing the residents and businesses with all the information they needed.

Simon Hughes, Head of Digital and Customer Services noted that people were turning more towards on-line services for information by using social media and web sites. He confirmed the Council is ensuring it is still effective in assisting people who are in crisis and unable to use on line services.

The Cabinet Member for Community welcomed the report and noted the partnership working with the Sussex Resilience Forum, and West Sussex County Council on the Hub to protect shielded people. He confirmed ongoing work on the issue of rough sleepers. He asked about the impact on the Council's staff and he expressed concern of the financial impact on the pandemic on the Council. He noted the priority was to protect frontline services, to support businesses and community, and the vulnerable and shielded people.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning noted the work to support rough sleepers during the crisis, and the importance of this work going forwards.

The Leader acknowledged the community spirit in Mid Sussex.

The Cabinet Member for Customer Services noted that all teams had gone above and beyond in these exceptional circumstances. She expressed concerns for the future impact on the Council's finances which was unknown.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Service Delivery highlighted that the pandemic has changed the way the staff work, and they have demonstrated resilience in relation to the challenges.

Several Cabinet Members praised the officers and staff for their hard work.

The Chief Executive thanked the Members for their comments and noted that all staff had shown their heroic capabilities and the Management Team was very grateful for their commitment. Staff welfare is always a priority and staff are being supported to adapt to new ways of working through regular contact and communication to prevent isolation.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth highlighted the Council's communications during the crisis and highlighted the challenges of supporting vulnerable people. He also noted the support given to the local economy.

The Leader confirmed that it is vital that that people have the support they need and noted that many agencies and community groups are currently involved in providing this support.

The Leader took the Members to the recommendations contained in the report, which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

Cabinet noted the contents of the report.

7. FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2019/20.

Peter Stuart, Head of Corporate Resources introduced the report. He confirmed that signs of income deterioration were evident at end of March.

The Leader confirmed the report strong financial position of the Council before COVID-19 but emphasised the impact of the crisis was likely to be significant.

The Deputy Leader thanked the officers for work during the year and noted the Council's income streams which were now under threat.

The Cabinet Member for Community highlighted the work and service investments the Council had made that should assist local communities in the recovery phase.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning noted the Council's work over the last 10 years which had made the Council financially resilient as it entered the pandemic. He emphasised that there were many challenges ahead.

The Leader noted the significant ongoing risk to income sources and that there would be future challenges ahead.

The Leader took the Members to the recommendations contained in the report, which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

Cabinet recommended to Council for approval:

- (i) that grant income as set out in paragraph 12 of this report be transferred to General Reserve;
- (ii) that grant income as set out in paragraph 13 to 18 of this report be transferred to Specific Reserves;
- (iii) that requests totalling £38,000 be transferred to Specific Reserves as set out in Table 1;
- (iv) that £50,000 be transferred to the Community Development Fund Specific Reserve from General Reserve as detailed in paragraph 20;
- (v) that balance of interest totalling £334,691 as set out in paragraph 21 is transferred to the General Reserve;
- (vi) that Dividend income totalling £16,962 as set out in paragraph 24 is transferred to the General Reserve;
- (vii) that the 2020/21 capital programme be increased by £1,291,000 as a result of slippage of some 2019/20 capital projects as detailed in Table 2.
- (viii) that the revenue overspend in 2020/21, totalling £10,000, be met from General Reserve.

8. PERFORMANCE OUTTURN 2019/20.

Peter Stuart, Head of Corporate Services introduced the end of year report. He highlighted the references to the pandemic and confirmed that there had been an impact on performance. Members were informed of the impact on NNDR collection and the demand for housing. He noted recommendation (iii) which sought to review the performance indicators and traffic light parameters to better reflect the current situation.

The Deputy Leader supported the review of the performance indicators.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Service Delivery noted the postponement of the food waste trial and thanked the officers for their hard work. He highlighted the new indicators for litter and detritus collections and the positive feedback from the public concerning waste collection services.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning noted pressure for temporary overnight accommodation due to the pandemic and providing accommodation for the homeless. He confirmed the ongoing demand for social housing.

The Cabinet Member for Customer Services welcomed the report and noted the challenges to the Council due to the pandemic. She highlighted the accuracy in carrying out Housing Benefit assessments and thanked the staff.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth noted the usefulness of the rag rating system to highlight areas where attention is required. He enquired how the Council could help households threatened with eviction.

The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed the Government's measures during the pandemic to eradicate homelessness. She highlighted the continuing work of the Council with those households who are homeless and stated that there would be an increased demand for assistance after the lockdown.

The Leader confirmed the increased importance for the improvements in fibre capability as businesses work differently in the future, and this included Council staff working from home. There is now a need for strong, reliable, fast connectivity.

The Leader took the Members to the recommendations contained in the report, which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

Cabinet noted:

- i) the Council's performance and progress with flagship activities in 2019/20 and identify any areas where further reporting or information is required;
- ii) the impact on Council Services of the COVID-19 Pandemic which was begun to be realised in March 2020 but will be seen more clearly in the 2020-21 Quarter 1 report to Cabinet; and
- iii) the proposals to review 2020-21 Performance Indicators and traffic light parameters, giving consideration to the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery, with recommendations to be presented as part of the Quarter 1 report.

The meeting finished at 5.07 pm

Chairman