

**Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet
held on Monday, 14th February, 2022
from 4.00 pm - 4.37 pm**

Present: J Ash-Edwards (Chair)

J Belsey
R de Mierre

S Hillier
R Salisbury

Absent: Councillors N Webster

Also Present: Councillors R Clarke, J Dabell and R Whittaker

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

None.

2. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from Cllr Webster.

3. TO CONFIRM MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 20 DECEMBER 2021.

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 December 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

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

None.

5. DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN AND BUDGET 2022/23.

Peter Stuart, Head of Corporate Resources introduced the report highlighting that following the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Finance and Performance in January there had been an update on the final settlement and some other minor amendments. The budget includes a figure for the projected income from car parking charges of £350,000; the National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) Pool has been finalised and it is anticipated this will not have any impact on the finances of the Council and an approach has been received from West Sussex County Council to replicate the 2021 -22 Council Tax Hardship Scheme. The county would provide 90% of the funds to run the scheme. He confirmed that the Revenue budget will have a reduced call on General Reserves than originally predicted. He noted changes to the capital programme with the park improvement plans and that the project will be extended as more Section 106 money becomes available.

The Leader welcomed the replication of the hardship fund and thanked the scrutiny committee for their consideration of the draft budget. He noted it was a strong budget which responded to post pandemic challenges. He highlighted the importance of continued support for the leisure centres, the centre for outdoor sports, and ongoing investment in community facilities which have been well used by residents during pandemic.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth declared that he is a West Sussex County Councillor. He endorsed the NNDR Pool which helped to support the local economy and welcomed the improvements to Victoria Park.

The Cabinet Member for Customer Services thanked the officers for the comprehensive report and welcomed the reduced draw on General Reserves. She noted that the Full Fibre project had received funds from the previous NNDR Pool.

The Head of Corporate Resources noted that the Council Tax Hardship Scheme will require sign off by the Cabinet Member, For the pool, £5 million extra income across the County area is forecast and this is best spent funding bigger projects where maximum benefit is achieved.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Service Delivery noted the report highlights the ongoing challenges with the pandemic and demonstrates a resilient Council. He noted the importance of the income from the leisure centres, revenue that helps the council to deliver services. He welcomed the changes to the capital programme, improvements to Victoria Park and other parks. He noted the importance of the Council continuing to invest in the other sports facilities within the District.

The Head of Corporate Resources confirmed a desire of the Council to upgrade the toilet facilities at The Orchards whilst regenerating the shopping centre. To upgrade the toilet facilities before the regeneration project has been agreed, he suggested bringing a report to the next Cabinet meeting with a proposal to install a Changing Places Toilet behind the existing facilities. This should facilitate a quick installation in the Spring or early Summer.

The Leader welcomed the proposal, particularly a Changing Places toilet in the town centre. As there were no further questions the Leader took the Members to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

Cabinet recommended to Council the proposals for 2022/23 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 short term;
- (iv) The proposed Capital Programme;
- (v) The service commentaries and supporting summary budget tables for each business unit; and,
- (vi) to note the membership of the West Sussex Business Rates Pool.

6. BUDGET MANAGEMENT 2021/22 - PROGRESS REPORT APRIL TO DECEMBER 2021.

Peter Stuart, Head of Corporate Resources introduced the report noting the modest recovery of the economy in the District. An overspend of £314,000 is forecast, this is dependent on a continued positive consumer outlook which may be impacted by increased energy costs and price / wage inflation. He noted that the 2021/22 salary claim had not been finalised and the extra funding from the Government for New Burdens; this funding is not ring fenced and goes to Specific Reserves.

The Leader welcomed the report which highlighted that the Council has used taxpayers' money to support services for local residents.

The Cabinet Member for Customer Services queried the above target receipts for commercial rents and the impact of potential increases in interest rates.

The Head of Corporate Resources confirmed the Estates Team had completed the rent reviews for all properties and the report has allowed for any potential increase in interest rates.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning welcomed the continued purchase of temporary accommodation.

As there were no further questions the Leader took the Members to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

Cabinet recommended to Council for approval:

- (i) that the use of the JE/Redundancy Specific Reserve be amended as detailed in paragraph 26;
- (ii) that £200,000 be transferred to the Efficiency Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 27;
- (iii) that £11,193 grant income relating to New Burdens LA Data Sharing Programme and the Housing Benefit Award Accuracy Initiative be transferred to Specific Reserves as detailed in paragraphs 28;
- (iv) that £63,409 grant income relating to Self Isolation Administration costs be transferred to Specific Reserves as detailed in paragraphs 29;
- (v) that £100,500 grant income relating to Discretionary Self Isolation be transferred to Specific Reserves as detailed in paragraphs 30;
- (vi) that £25,000 grant income relating to Rough Sleeping RSI 4 be transferred to Specific Reserves as detailed in paragraphs 31;
- (vii) that £100,100 grant income relating to New Burdens 4 Restart and Additional Restrictions Covid-19 be transferred to Specific Reserves as detailed in paragraphs 32;
- (viii) that £18,600 grant income relating to New Burdens 5 Post Payment Assurance, Reconciliation and Debt Recovery be transferred to Specific Reserves as detailed in paragraphs 33;
- (ix) that £59,093 grant income relating to Covid-19 Test and Trace Contain Management Outbreak Fund (COMF) be transferred to Specific Reserves as detailed in paragraphs 34;
- (x) that £70,000 grant income relating to Economic Recovery Fund be transferred to Specific Reserves as detailed in paragraphs 35;
- (xi) the variations to the Capital Programme contained in paragraph 44 in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure rule B3.

To note:
(xii) the remainder of the report.

7. CLAIR HALL SITE UPDATE.

Rafal Hejne, Interim Head of Organisational Development introduced the report, and he provided an update. He outlined the proposal to establish a Members' Steering Group for Clair Hall and confirmed the Council would follow the best practice previously used elsewhere for similar projects.

The Leader welcomed the report which set out the timescale and acted upon the mandate from the public consultation. He confirmed the public's clear preference for improvements and the involvement of Haywards Heath Town Council.

Following a question from the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning, the Interim Head of Organisational Development confirmed the timescales of the project were ambitious, noting it is a high priority project and once specialist experts were on board the timeline may change. He hopes to bring an interim report before the Summer and a final report in September to ensure progress as quickly as possible.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Service Delivery noted the importance of the site to the residents of Haywards Heath and the wider area.

The Cabinet Member for Customer Services asked when specialists would be commissioned, which sector would they be from and what new information they would need to gather.

The Interim Head of Organisational Development confirmed the intention was to have a number of specialists on board by the end of March to support this work. Some were already involved e.g. work on surveys. The key specialist advisor would be required to have good knowledge and experience working in the art and entertainment sector. They will help us understand how the market has changed since the pandemic and suggest further information we will need to gather to inform this work.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Growth noted the potential benefit to the town.

The Leader confirmed the great opportunity for the local area looked forward to the project progressing. As there were no further questions the Leader took the Members to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

Cabinet resolved to:

- (i) Establish Clair Hall Members' Steering Group to oversee and steer work to develop investment options for the Clair Hall site, and
- (ii) Noted the indicative timeline and progress of the work to date.

The meeting finished at 4.37 pm

Chairman