

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 30 January 2024 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 11.00am

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair
Councillor Dr Pete Sudbury (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Tim Bearder
Councillor Neil Fawcett
Councillor Andrew Gant
Councillor Kate Gregory
Councillor John Howson
Councillor Dan Levy
Councillor Dr Nathan Ley
Councillor Judy Roberts

Other Members in

Attendance: Councillors David Bartholomew, Ian Corkin and Eddie Reeves

Officers:

Whole of meeting Martin Reeves (Chief Executive), Stephen Chandler, Executive Director (People, Transformation and Performance), Lorna Baxter (Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer), Anita Bradley (Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Ansaf Azhar (Corporate Director Public Health & Community Safety), Bill Cotton (Corporate Director Environment & Place) Karen Fuller (Interim Corporate Director Adult Social Care), Lisa Lyons (Corporate Director Children's Services), Chris Reynolds (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

The Cabinet considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting, and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda, reports and schedule, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

18/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

There were none.

19/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

20/24 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 3)

There were no requests received.

21/24 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLANNING REPORT

(Agenda Item. 4)

Councillor Eddie Reeves, Chair of the Performance and Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee, presented the report and observations on the Budget and Business Planning Report.

Councillor Reeves thanked the Cabinet members and officers who had attended the Committee's meetings during consideration of the Budget report. He referred, in particular to the following observations:-

- The impact of the proposals for the workplace parking levy
- Concerns regarding the proposals for "delaying", particularly the need for consultations with trade unions and the impact of the proposals on the "Delivering the Future Together" initiative
- The need for clarity on the position regarding the High Needs Block funding in Children's Services
- The need for more priority to be given to developing career opportunities for staff in Children and Adults' services and the financial benefit to the Council.

The Chair thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their thorough report and said that the Cabinet would take on board the observations. She confirmed that the trade unions had been briefed on the budget proposals and there were national discussions taking place on Higher Needs education funding.

During discussion members commented on the need to consider the impact of the labour market on the recruitment and retention of staff in the County Council.

RESOLVED to note the report and observations of the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

22/24 BUDGET & BUSINESS PLANNING REPORT - 2024/25 - JANUARY 2024

(Agenda Item. 5)

Cabinet had before it a report setting out the Cabinet's revenue budget for 2024/25, medium term financial strategy to 2026/27, capital programme to 2033/34 plus supporting policies, strategies and information.

This report included the budget engagement and consultation 2024/25 findings the Cabinet's proposed Revenue Budget Strategy and the Capital & Investment Strategy (Section 5). Alongside this, the report also set out the Review of Charges for 2024/25 and the High Needs budget changes for 2024/25 to 2026/27

The Cabinet's revenue budget proposals took into consideration the latest information on the council's financial position outlined in this report. In finalising the proposals, Cabinet had taken into consideration feedback from Phase 1 of the public consultation on the revenue budget proposals and council tax increase. Feedback from Phase 2 was broadly consistent with Phase 1 and would be used to develop plans for 2025/26 onwards.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report. He began by thanking all those had been involved in the budget considerations including the Scrutiny Committee, members of the public who had participated in the consultation and the Executive Director of Resources, the Head of Financial Strategy and all staff in the Finance department for their work in preparing the report and recommendations.

Councillor Levy then outlined the main points in the report and referred to the recent Government announcement on additional funding for local government.

The Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer clarified a number of aspects of the Council's medium term financial strategy and the format of the recommendations that would be presented to the Council on 20 February 2024.

During discussion, members welcomed the provisions in the budget for special educational needs, particularly with regard to early intervention and the government grant for residential children's homes to be provided in the County. Members also commented on the implications of reductions in local government funding for the Council's strategic objectives, investment in infrastructure and provision of services to residents and the need to fund the shortfall in central government funding raising increased income through fees and charges.

In response to a question, Councillor Levy explained the priorities and sources of funding for capital projects as outlined in the report.

Councillor Howson moved and Councillor Sudbury seconded the following recommendations and they were approved:-

RESOLVED to

to:

- a) **approve the Review of Charges for 2024/25 and in relation to the Registration Service, charges also for 2025/26 (Annex A);**
- b) **approve the changes to the High Needs budget for 2024/25 – 2026/27 (Annex B Appendix 1);**
- c) **Receive the observations from Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee;**
- d) **approve the Financial Strategy for 2024/25 (Section 4.5);**
- e) **approve the Earmarked Reserves and General Balances Policy Statement 2024/25 (Section 4.6); and approve the creation of new reserves, as set out in Section 4.6, for:**
 - (i) Collection Fund**
 - (ii) IFRS9.**
- f) **delegate to the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, acting jointly, to make any appropriate changes to the proposed budget following any final funding changes as a result of the final Local Government Settlement and information from the district and city councils in relation to business rates or council tax.**

Councillor Sudbury moved and Councillor Roberts seconded the following recommendations and they were approved:-

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND Council to:

- g) **approve a Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2024/25 to 2026/27 as set out in Section 4.1 (which incorporates changes to the existing Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Section 4.2);**
- h) **agree the council tax and precept calculations for 2024/25 set out in Section 4.3 and in particular:**
 - (i) a precept of £498,633,415;**
 - (ii) a council tax for band D equivalent properties of £1,820.56.**

Councillor Howson moved and Councillor Roberts seconded the following recommendations and they were approved:-

RESOLVED to recommend Council to:

- i) **approve the Capital and Investment Strategy for 2024/25 - 2034/35 (Section 4.1) including;**
 - (i) the Minimum Revenue Provision Methodology Statement (Section 5.1 Annex 1);**

- (ii) the Prudential Indicators (Section 5.1 Annex 2) and**
- j) approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2024/25 (Section 5.2); and**
 - (i) continue to delegate the authority to withdraw or advance additional funds to/from external fund managers to the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer;**
 - (ii) approve that any further changes required to the 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy be delegated to the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance;**
 - (iii) approve the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators; and**
 - (iv) approve the Specified Investment and Non - Specified Investment instruments as set out in Section 5.2.**
- k) approve the new capital proposals for inclusion in the Capital Programme and proposed pipeline schemes (Section 5.3)**
- l) approve the capital programme (Section 5.4).**

.....in the Chair

Date of signing