

CABINET

Wednesday, 15th January, 2020
Time of Commencement: 2.00 pm

Present:-	Councillor Simon Tagg – Chair
Councillors	S. Sweeney, M. Holland, T. Johnson, P. Northcott and J Waring
Officers	Martin Hamilton, Geoff Durham, Simone Harris, Daniel Dickinson and Sarah Wilkes
Apologies	Councillor(s)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Dave Adams, Executive Director – Operational Services and Jan Willis, Interim Executive Director - Resources and Support Services.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December, 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

4. WELCOME

The Leader, Councillor Simon Tagg welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Mr Daniel Dickinson the Council's Head of Legal and Governance / Monitoring Officer.

5. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS AND STRATEGIES 2020/21

A report was submitted to Cabinet which reviewed progress on the completion of the revenue and capital budgets for 2020/21 following agreement of the 5 year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2020/21 to 2024/25.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency, Councillor Stephen Sweeney thanked everyone involved in the preparation of the budgets.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraphs 3.2 of the report which outlined measures to meet budget shortfalls after 2020/21.

The table at paragraph 4.2 showed the factors giving rise to the revenue funding gap for 2020/21. Paragraph 4.3 outlined savings and funding strategies for that period.

With regard to Council Tax, there would be a 2.55% rise amounting to £5 a year per band D property.

Councillor Sweeney advised that there had been 366 responses to the budget consultation. The responses were broadly in line with what the Council was currently doing.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraphs 8, 9 and 10- The Capital Strategy; Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy.

The Leader thanked everyone who had been involved in the preparation of the budgets and strategies. The Council was continuing to move forward. The introduction of the new recycling scheme and the regeneration of the town centre being two of the many things to achieve this.

The Leader stated that the budget was balanced again this year and he fully endorsed the report.

Members fully supported the report stating that it was an imaginative budget with a prudent approach to the Council's assets.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the progress on the completion of the Revenue and Capital Budgets and updated MTFFS Funding Strategy for 2020/21 (Appendix 1) be noted.
 - (ii) That the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 to 2024/25 (Appendix 2) be approved.
 - (iii) That the strategy for ensuring a balanced revenue outturn position for 2019/20 be noted.
 - (iv) That the calculation of the Council Tax base and the Council Tax increase to be proposed for 2020/21 of £5 (2.55%) per Band D equivalent property be noted.
 - (v) That the proposed Empty Homes Premium for long term empty properties (2-5 years 100%, 5-10 years 200% and 10 years plus 300%) be approved.
 - (vi) That the proposed change in accounting policy for Minimum Revenue Provision from the straight line basis to the annuity basis (as per the draft Treasury Management Strategy) be noted.
 - (vii) That the risk assessment at Appendix 3 and S151 Officer's recommendation on the level of reserves and contingencies provisionally required to be maintained in 2020/21 be noted.

- (viii) That the draft Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy (Appendix 6), updated for 2020/21, be noted.
- (ix) That the draft Capital Strategy (Appendix 8) for 2020-30 be noted.
- (x) That the draft Treasury Management Strategy (Appendix 9) for 2020/21 be noted.
- (xi) That the draft Investment Strategy (Appendix 10) for 2020/21 be noted.
- (xii) That the draft Budget and Council Tax proposals be referred to Finance, Assets and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee for comment before the final proposals are considered at Cabinet on 4 February 2020.

6. SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES 2020/21

A report was submitted to Cabinet seeking approval of the proposed scale of fees and charges to apply from April 2020.

Councillor Sweeney referred Member to Appendix 1 of the report advising that various fees and charges had been frozen for this year. Such fees included car parking charges and the market.

The Leader stated that all increases had been kept at or under 3% and said that it was a measured approach.

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage – Councillor Mark Holland stated that people valued the regeneration of the town centre and by freezing the parking charges it would encourage people to visit.

Resolved: That the fees and charges proposed to apply from 1 April, 2020, as set out in Appendix 1, be approved.

7. HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

A report was submitted to Cabinet bringing forward the final version of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Cabinet approval and adoption.

The Council's Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing, Councillor Jill Waring stated that there was more focus on prevention and that rough sleeping was the more extreme category of homelessness.

The Leader endorsed the report and stated that the views of the Economy, Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee would be considered prior to the

Strategy being adopted by the Executive Director – Commercial Development and Economic Growth and Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing.

Members welcomed and supported the Strategy stating that it clearly outlined the Council's obligations and gave a good indication on how the matter would be approached. Councillor Waring was commended for going out and about at 7.30am some mornings to meet people.

Councillor Sweeney stated that there was public perception of being a lot more homeless as the 'rough-sitters' were being included in their calculation.

The Leader stated that the perception needed to be addressed as did aggressive begging and the council had taken steps to address both issues.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the views of the Economy, Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee on the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 to 2025 be considered.
 - (ii) That the Executive Director - Commercial Development and Economic Growth in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing be authorised to adopt the final strategy following amendments - taking into account consultation comments.

8. NEWCASTLE HOUSING ADVICE SERVICE

A report was submitted to Cabinet setting out the way forward for the provision of the Council's statutory homelessness, housing advice and housing register services for April, 2020 onwards.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing, Councillor Jill Waring advised Members that this was a statutory function which was currently delivered by Midland Heart under contract for the Borough. This contract would end on 31 March, 2020.

The contract was put out to tender but only one reply was received. It was therefore proposed to extend the current contract with Midland Heart for up to twelve months which would give the Council time to develop an in-house service.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the Executive Director - Commercial Development and Economic Growth in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency be authorised to extend the Newcastle Housing Advice contract with Midland Heart for 12 months.
 - (ii) That the Newcastle Housing Advice service be brought back in-house by 1st April 2021.

- (iii) That the Council works with Midland Heart to undertake the necessary consultations and development of processes to transfer the service effectively.
- (iv) That a temporary post be established to develop the in-house service.

9. UPDATE ON KIDSGROVE SPORTS CENTRE

A report was submitted to Cabinet updating Members on progress made regarding the re-opening of Kidsgrove Sports Centre.

The Leader stated that the Kidsgrove Sports Centre Refurbishment Cabinet Panel had met on Monday 13 January and it had been a productive meeting.

There would be a meeting with the Steering Group and results and costing for the target cost build cost estimate would be provided by Willmott Dixon which could then be used for business case assessments.

Members fully supported this and it was added that the project had cross-party support.

The Leader advised that contractors would be sourced through SCAPE which was a national construction framework. This would save time in following the usual route and a further advantage was that local contractors would be invited to tender.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the Council's commitment to sports & swimming provision in Kidsgrove be reaffirmed.
 - (ii) That the re-opening of the sports centre as the vehicle for delivery of this commitment, be agreed.
 - (iii) That the progress made by the Kidsgrove Community Interest Group in the development of the design and business model and the new Board membership be noted.
 - (iv) That the procurement of Willmott Dixon through the SCAPE national construction framework to establish a 'build out cost', with associated programme of work, be agreed.
 - (v) That delegated authority be given to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Service Improvement, People and Partnerships, along with the Executive Director - Commercial Investment and Economic Development to progress the next stages of the scheme in consultation with the Kidsgrove Sports Centre Steering Group. Further Cabinet reports will be presented upon completion of the detailed business case review in Spring, 2020.
 - (vi) That an all-party Cabinet panel be convened at the appropriate time to consider the revised cost estimates and business plan with a view

to Cabinet making a recommendation to Council on reopening the existing Kidsgrove Sport Centre.

10. COMMISSIONING OF OF DEBT, BENEFIT AND ADVICE SERVICES IN THE BOROUGH 2020-2022

A report was submitted to Cabinet setting out the options available for the provision of a Debt, Benefit and Advice Service for April, 2020 onwards when the current, extended contract expires at the end of March.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency, Councillor Stephen Sweeney advised that this was not a statutory obligation but was carried out by the Council.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the retender of a Debt, Benefit and Advice service for 2 years with an option to extend for a further 12 months subject to satisfactory performance and availability of funding, be agreed.
 - (ii) That the allocation of funding and proposal as set out in this report be approved and officers and the Chief Executive be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency to develop and finalise a specification, undertake the tendering process, and if required to complete any post tender negotiations and award the contract to the successful contractor.
 - (iii) That the requirement of the successful contractor to work with the Council to develop the service delivery in future years of the contract, be supported.

11. OUR BOROUGH HEROES 2020

A report was submitted to Cabinet seeking support to establish an 'Our Borough Heroes' event to celebrate people in the Borough who make exceptional contributions to the community.

The Leader advised that the Council had been in discussion with the Sentinel to explore the possibility of arranging an 'Our Borough Heroes' Programme.

Members' attention was drawn to Paragraph 3.1 of the report which outlined the categories of awards that would be given. Sponsorship would be sought from local businesses and partnerships for each of the awards.

Members fully supported this stating that there were a lot of great people in the Borough who were worthy of such awards. It would encourage and acknowledge what people were doing and would become a model for others.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That an 'Our Borough Heroes' event be established in partnership with The Sentinel.

- (ii) That sponsorship be sought for individual categories from partners and businesses in the Borough.
- (iii) That any shortfall in sponsorship be underwritten, up to a maximum of £15,000.

12. FORWARD PLAN

Consideration was given to the Forward Plan which listed upcoming key decisions to be made by the Cabinet.

Resolved: That the Forward Plan be received.

13. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Business.

14. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

Resolved:- That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration if the following matter because it is likely that there will be disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs contained within Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972.

15. SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES 2020/21 - CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX

Resolved: That the information contained within the confidential appendix be agreed.

16. NEWCASTLE HOUSING ADVICE SERVICE - CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX

Resolved: That the information contained within the confidential appendix be agreed.

COUNCILLOR SIMON TAGG
Chair

Meeting concluded at 2.40 pm