

CABINET

Wednesday, 13th January, 2021
Time of Commencement: 2.00 pm

Present:-	Councillor Simon Tagg – Chair
Councillors	Stephen Sweeney, Trevor Johnson, Helena Maxfield, Paul Northcott and Jill Waring
Officers	David Adams, Martin Hamilton, Simon McEneny, Daniel Dickinson, Denise French, Sarah Wilkes, Shawn Fleet and Jemma March

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

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 9th December 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

4. CORONAVIRUS RECOVERY UPDATE

Cabinet considered a report on actions being taken across the Council in response to Coronavirus restrictions and to ensure the Borough was well placed to recover from the Pandemic.

The Leader, Councillor Simon Tagg, introduced the report and updated that the current rate of infections across the Borough was now slightly lower than the figures in the report. There were currently 2 vaccination centres in the Borough with more planned.

The report outlined that the Council was maintaining its focus on support for businesses and support for vulnerable people.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency, Councillor Stephen Sweeney, outlined how the Council had paid out £4.5m the previous week to eligible businesses in the Leisure, Retail and Hospitality sectors using Government grant funding.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing, Councillor Helena Maxfield, outlined support for vulnerable people with three lines of work continuing to

have priority – support provided by Realise Foundation to those made vulnerable by the restrictions; payments for those required to self-isolate but who would lose income by so doing; and support for those sleeping rough or at risk of being made homeless. Additional accommodation was now available in St George’s Chambers for use in severe weather.

In relation to other Council services the Waste and Recycling Service was continuing on track with crews working at weekends over the Christmas period to ensure the service could be maintained. Councillor Johnson, Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling, had also been in touch with the County Council regarding ensuring grit bins were kept topped up.

J2 was now closed but classes being delivered online. The Brampton Museum was also closed and works to build the extension would commence shortly. The initial works for the redevelopment of Kidsgrove Leisure Centre had commenced.

In relation to economic recovery, the report outlined the successful bid under the Future High Streets Fund with provisional agreement of funding of just over £11m towards regeneration of Newcastle town centre and specific focus on the Rycroft site. The Council had also secured Advance Town Deal funding for Newcastle and Kidsgrove and the Town Investment Plan for Kidsgrove had been submitted to the Government.

Resolved: That the report be noted and the work being undertaken in response to the Coronavirus restrictions be endorsed.

5. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS AND STRATEGIES 2021/22

Cabinet considered a report on the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2021/22. The draft budgets were based on assumptions set out in the 5 year Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2021/22 to 2025/26. A series of draft documents were also submitted for consideration prior to submission to full Council for approval – Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy for 2021/31; the Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22 and the Investment Strategy for 2021/22.

Councillor Sweeney introduced the report. Cabinet had been kept updated on the impact of the pandemic which had resulted in lost income and additional costs. The Council had received various funding support streams from the Government as detailed in the report. The latest tranche of emergency Coronavirus funding in the sum of £0.408m meant the Council could forecast a balanced outturn to be presented at year end; any variance would be paid into or from the general fund reserve. The Government had also announced further financial support to local Councils for the first quarter of the forthcoming financial year.

Councillor Sweeney referred to the organisational review – the One Council programme – which was due to commence later in the month and would result in efficiencies and savings of circa £0.922m over a three year period and recurring. The Borough Growth Fund would benefit from investment of £0.250m arising from savings and funding strategies as set out in the report. These savings and funding strategies assumed a £5 per Band D equivalent property Council Tax increase. The Capital Programme included the refurbishment works to Kidsgrove Sports Centre in 2021/22 along with other schemes, funded as set out in the report.

Resolved:

- (a) That the progress on the completion of the Revenue and Capital Budgets and updated MTFS Funding Strategy for 2021/22 (Appendix 1) be noted.
- (b) That the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26 (Appendix 2) be approved.
- (c) That the strategy for ensuring a balanced revenue outturn position for 2020/21 be noted.
- (d) That the calculation of the Council Tax base and the Council Tax increase to be proposed for 2021/22 of £5 per year per Band D equivalent property be noted.
- (e) 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 2021/22 be noted.
- (f) That the draft Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy (Appendix 6), updated for 2021/22, be noted.
- (g) That the draft Capital Strategy (Appendix 7) for 2021-31 be noted.
- (h) That the draft Treasury Management Strategy (Appendix 8) for 2021/22 be noted.
- (i) That the draft Investment Strategy (Appendix 9) for 2021/22 be noted.
- (j) 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 3rd February 2021.

6. SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES 2021/22

Cabinet considered a report on proposed fees and charges to take effect from 1st April 2021. The Charging Policy approved in 2014 set out the criteria to be taken into account when establishing the amounts to be charged. Councillor Sweeney explained that the Medium Term Financial Strategy assumed an overall 3% increase in the amount of income raised from fees and charges in the forthcoming financial year. There were a number of fees and charges where it was proposed that fees be frozen and this included car park charges and planning fees. A separate review of Jubilee 2 was underway and it was proposed that fees and charges remain frozen pending the outcome of this review.

Resolved:

- (a) That the fees and charges proposed to apply from 1 April 2021, as set out in Appendix 1, be approved; and
- (b) That following the completion of a review of Jubilee 2 by Alliance Leisure, the Executive Director (Commercial Development & Economic Growth) in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder (Leisure, Culture and Heritage) be granted delegated authority to implement a revised membership pricing structure and offers to attract new memberships.

7. BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT, NEWCASTLE TOWN CENTRE - RE-BALLOT

Cabinet considered a report on the Newcastle under Lyme Business Improvement District (BID). The BID planned to hold a re-ballot for a further 5 year term until 2026. The report included a prospectus setting out the Aims and Objectives of the BID along with its Business Plan for the 5 year term, should the vote be successful.

Resolved: that

- (a) That Cabinet notes the requirements of the Council to operate the ballot (and collection of levy if vote is successful) in line with the regulations covering Business Improvement District (BID) ballots.

(b) The Prospectus and the Aims and Objectives of the BID and its Business Plan for the new BID duration 2021 to 2026 be noted.

(c) The BID be supported in its efforts for a successful ballot outcome.

(d) That the Portfolio Holder for Corporate & Service Improvements, People and Partnerships is authorised to vote Yes for each of the Council hereditaments to the BID proposal for a new term

8. NEWCASTLE TOWN DEAL

Cabinet considered an update on the work to produce a Town Investment Plan for the Newcastle Town Deal area. The Council had set up a Town Deal Board with membership from the public, private and voluntary sectors. A consultation process had been undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders. This led to priority projects within 4 strategic objectives:

- Objective 1: Digital – this would include digital infrastructure developments.
- Objective 2: Transport – this would include sustainable bus services; improved pedestrian and cycle access to Newcastle Town Centre; and electric vehicle charging points.
- Object 3: development of key sites – including sites in the Knutton Masterplan and Chesterton Cross Street development.
- Objective 4: Culture – development of The Astley International Centre for Performing Arts.

Resolved: That

(a) Cabinet notes the draft submission for the Newcastle Town Deal Investment Plan and grants authorisation to the Deputy Leader, Councillor Stephen Sweeney, to use his vote on the Town Deal Board in support of the Plan at the appropriate time.

(b) Officers be authorised to continue working with the Town Deal Board and other organisations as necessary to progress development and delivery of projects in the Newcastle Town Deal Investment Plan in readiness for submission to MHCLG and upon confirmation of the grant.

(c) The multi-disciplinary officer group established to support delivery of the Advance Town Deal Projects continues this role to support delivery of the Newcastle Town Investment Plan.

(d) The Executive Director Commercial Development and Economic Growth, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Portfolio Holder Corporate and Service Improvement. People and Partnerships are authorised to pursue delivery of the Newcastle Town Investment Plan.

9. LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

Cabinet considered a report on options for staying with, or separating from, Stoke on Trent Council on the development of a Joint Local Plan. Cabinet on 9th December had agreed to commence work on the option of a Borough Local Plan. Since that meeting engagement and consultation had taken place with various stakeholders and residents; and Lichfields Planning Consultancy had been engaged to carry out a review of options and issues.

Lichfields had produced a report on the key issues which summarised that a joint plan added complexity which caused delay so a Borough Plan should be able to progress more rapidly. They emphasised the importance of reviewing the evidence base to enable identification of those elements that could be re-used for a Borough plan. They referred to the Duty to Co-operate to ensure separation of the two plans.

Lichfields advised that a Borough Plan would need to address the historic issue of housing provision. They had outlined an indicative timetable which would see adoption in early 2023, which was seen as achievable for a Borough Plan.

The consultation showed residents support for a Borough Plan. Those representatives of the business community who responded were in favour of continuing with a joint Plan, mainly to avoid delay to the process. However, Lichfields felt a Borough Plan could be delivered within the timeframe. Consultees also referred to the Green Belt as an important issue for the Local Plan.

Cabinet discussed the report and the need for a Local Plan to be progressed to protect the Borough from development proposals. Members felt a Borough Plan would be more focused on the needs of the Borough and would take account of recent issues such as Brexit, Covid and the Planning White Paper 'Planning for the Future'. The Planning Committee had considered the Local Plan on 12th January and had supported the proposal for a Borough Plan.

Resolved: that

- (a) The Council withdraws from the preparation of a Joint Local Plan with Stoke on Trent City Council.
- (b) Work be commenced on the development of a Borough Local Plan, under the stewardship of a Member Steering Group chaired by the Leader of the Council or the relevant Portfolio Holder.
- (c) Provision be made in the Medium Term Financial Plan for the costs associated with delivering a Borough Local Plan amounting to £550,000 over the period 2021-23.

10. **TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION POLICY**

Cabinet considered a report and draft Temporary Accommodation Policy. The Policy set out the principle of how the Council would seek to meet its responsibilities to people who were homeless or threatened with homelessness in the Borough.

The Policy had been considered by the Health, Wellbeing and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee who supported the policy.

Resolved:

That the proposed Temporary Accommodation Policy be approved and Officers are supported to continue to develop a range of temporary accommodation options for the Borough for further consideration as appropriate.

11. **FORWARD PLAN**

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

Resolved: That the Forward Plan be received.

12. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Business.

13. **DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION**

Resolved:- That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following matter because it is likely that there will be disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972.

14. **SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES 2021/22 - CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX**

Cabinet considered the confidential appendix of fees and charges for 2021/22.

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

COUNCILLOR SIMON TAGG
Chair

Meeting concluded at 3.04 pm