

CABINET

Wednesday, 3rd February, 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 and Sarah Wilkes

77. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

79. MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th January 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

80. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS AND STRATEGIES 2021-22

Cabinet considered a report on Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2021/22. The draft budgets were based on the assumptions set out in the 5 year Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2021/22 to 2025/26. There were also a number of Strategies submitted – Flexible Use of Capital Receipts, Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy.

The Leader introduced the item and drew attention to the Borough Growth Fund for 2021/22 with priorities including £100k for the Environmental Sustainability Strategy; £50k to provide specialist support to address community concerns around odour; £100k for the One Council programme to transform public access to council services and provide some efficiency savings and £70k for Town Centre recovery following the pandemic.

The impact on the Council tax payer would be a £5 increase on Band D equivalent properties.

The Council's Balances and Reserves had been reviewed and it was recommended that there be a minimum General Fund balance of £3m and an Income Reserve of £0.100m to safeguard financial resilience and to reflect the ongoing impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Councillor Sweeney, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency, reported that the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee had reviewed the budget and strategies at their meeting on 18th January. He also referred to the public consultation on the budget which highlighted the following areas as most important to residents; the consultation had also found that residents felt services should be protected as far as possible even if a Council tax increase was required:

- Town Centre regeneration
- Refuse Collection
- Parks, playgrounds and open spaces
- Recycling Facilities
- Street cleansing

The budget included funding for the refurbishment of Kidsgrove Sports Centre. He endorsed the budget for recommendation to full Council on 24th February.

Resolved:

- (a) That the Revenue and Capital Budgets as detailed in this report and in the report to Cabinet dated 13 January 2021 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
- (b) That the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26 (Appendix 2) be recommended to Full Council for approval.
- (c) That the strategy for ensuring a balanced revenue outturn position for 2020/21 be approved.
- (d) That the calculation of the Council Tax base and the Council Tax increase to be proposed for 2021/22 of £5 per Band D equivalent property be recommended to Full Council for approval.
- (e) That the risk assessment at Appendix 3 and the Section 151 Officer's recommendation on the level of reserves and contingencies provisionally required to be maintained in 2021/22 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
- (f) That the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy (Appendix 6), updated for 2021/22, be recommended to Full Council for approval.
- (g) The Borough Growth Fund Priorities for 2021/22 be approved.
- (h) That the Capital Strategy (Appendix 7) for 2021-31 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
- (i) That the Treasury Management Strategy (Appendix 8) for 2021/22 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
- (j) That the Investment Strategy (Appendix 9) for 2021/22 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
- (k) That the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Appendix 10) for 2021/2022 be recommended to Full Council for approval.

81. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT - THIRD QUARTER (OCTOBER - DECEMBER) 2020-21

Cabinet considered a report detailing the financial position and Council performance for quarter 3. The report outlined the broad financial position and how services had performed during quarter 3 – October – December 2020. Councillor Sweeney explained that the financial picture was as expected and the Council was on track to report a balanced outturn on both revenue and capital budgets. Councillor Northcott, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, referred to Appendix A which set out the revised Capital Programme based on changes as a result of the pandemic and its financial impact on the Council. The funding for the works to Brampton Museum had

increased slightly and was to fund expansion works which would include some space for events.

The performance for Quarter 3 was presented with a total of 18 indicators monitored for the period. Councillor Johnson, Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling, referred to the number of missed kerbside collections which was above the target. The individual figures needed to be taken in the context of the overall volume of 1,640,364 total collections over the quarter which included the Christmas and New Year period when staff had worked over the weekend to manage a backlog due to the bad weather conditions. Levels of street and environmental cleanliness had performed highly.

In relation to percentage of unmet calls to the Contact Centre this was explained due to the continuing high volume of calls this Quarter arising from various reasons including embedding the new recycling service, the Elections Campaign, Council Tax recovery and calls relating to the Newcastle Housing Advice Service. It was expected that there would continue to be a high volume of calls to the Contact Centre during Quarter 4 as Council Tax bills would be sent out and due to the forthcoming election for a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire.

Councillor Northcott noted the planning team continued to perform well and all targets were met.

Councillor Maxfield, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing, explained that the Council was continuing in its Navigator role for temporary accommodation and some rough sleepers who had previously refused accommodation were now engaging with services. The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol had been active for 17 nights in January.

Councillor Waring, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage explained how the Museum remained closed but live talks had been carried out online which were popular. J2 was also closed but online classes were being offered; membership numbers had reduced but it was hoped this would improve when facilities could open.

Councillor Sweeney referred to the successful Artisan Markets held before Christmas in a Covid secure way. The Town Centre officer was keeping in contact with stall holders in preparation for future markets and was providing lots of information through social media.

Resolved:

That the contents of the report together with Appendices A and B be noted and Cabinet will continue to monitor and Challenge the Council's performance alongside its financial performance for the same period.

82. PLANNING AGREEMENTS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

Cabinet considered a report that outlined how contributions from Section 106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) could be used in future. The Planning White Paper – Planning for the Future – was issued in August 2020 and one of the proposals related to a review of the S106 and CIL process. Councillor Northcott introduced the report which proposed that a review of the use of S106 and CIL be undertaken in the light of the White Paper; also to reflect any update of the

Infrastructure Delivery Plan in view of the Council's decision to now undertake a Borough Local Plan and a review of the Council's Supplementary Planning Document on Developer Contributions be also undertaken.

Resolved:

(a) That Cabinet will review the use of S106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy in light of the findings of the Planning White Paper review and the emerging Borough Local Plan.

(b) A review be undertaken of the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document adopted in 2007 with particular focus on the role which contributions have on supporting local communities and especially those with an adopted Neighbourhood Plan in place.

83. HOUSING SELF BUILD REGISTER

Cabinet considered a report that outlined the current status of the Council's Self-Build register and proposed opportunities to improve engagement with prospective developers and land owners. Councillor Northcott explained the provisions in the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016) which required the Council to keep a register of those wanting to acquire plots of land to develop a self or custom build house. Councils must have sufficient 'shovel ready' plots available to meet demand. There were Regulations from 2016 that allowed Councils to set local eligibility criteria. The Council faced three issues relating to how the Register of interested people was kept; how serviceable plots were identified; and how the Council addressed its duty to show how the need was met on an annual basis. The report proposed a review to ensure these issues could be addressed.

Resolved:

That the creation of a Local Connection Test be approved and a new Register be implemented to comprise Parts 1 and 2 and the Register including a charging schedule be administered on an ongoing basis.

84. 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.

85. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Business.

COUNCILLOR SIMON TAGG
Chair

Meeting concluded at 2.38 pm