

CABINET

Wednesday, 11th November, 2020

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, Jan Willis, Simon McEneny, Daniel Dickinson and Denise French

38. **APOLOGIES**

There were no Apologies for Absence.

39. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

40. **MINUTES**

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 14th October be agreed as a correct record.

41. **CORONAVIRUS UPDATE**

Cabinet considered a report on the actions being taken across the Council in response to the Coronavirus restrictions on the Borough.

The report outlined the two key areas where work had been stepped up as a priority in response to the current national restrictions:

- (1) Support for Businesses – the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency, Councillor Stephen Sweeney, outlined the range of funding available to local businesses, funded by the Government. Some non-discretionary grant payments had already been made.
- (2) Support for Vulnerable People – the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing, Councillor Helena Maxfield, outlined the increased work to support vulnerable people:
 - the support service delivered through the Realise Foundation had stepped up its support via the call centre and web portal;
 - Revenues and Benefits staff were processing applications for payments under the scheme to support those required to self-isolate and subsequently unable to work and the Test and Trace Self Isolations Support Scheme was also available to support those in receipt of

particular benefits who were required to self-isolate but would lose income by so doing;

- The Homelessness Team continued its support for those sleeping rough or at risk of homelessness.

In addition, the Severe Weather Protocol was also in place.

There had been an impact on some Council Services although this was less severe than previously. The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage, Councillor Jill Waring, updated that both J2 and the Brampton Museum were currently closed but were offering online services. A recent initiative included online exercise classes available to staff. Face to face services at Castle House had been restricted with Customer Services available on line or over the phone.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Recycling, Councillor Trevor Johnson, reported that all frontline services were running. There was some delay with food hygiene inspections due to the additional pressure and workload on that team.

In terms of economic recovery the Council was making preparations for a successful reopening of Newcastle town centre and other high streets in the Borough in time for Christmas.

The financial support from the Government was outlined. The Leader reported that the Council continued to work closely with Members of Parliament and the Local Government Association to lobby for ongoing support.

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

42. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2021/22 TO 2025/26

Cabinet considered the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) outlining financial forecasts for the period 2021/22 to 2025/26 and how the Council would allocate its resources over the medium term to deliver its objectives.

Councillor Sweeney reported that, to date, funding of £2,409,600m had been received from Government. The current projections anticipated a figure of over £4m would be received in grant funding and compensation for lost income. The Coronavirus pandemic would continue to impact negatively on the financial position of the Council and the effect on the Collection Fund was unclear at the moment.

The Capital Strategy had been agreed in February 2020 and was for a ten year period. The Strategy had been reviewed and updated in light of the impact of the pandemic, expected capital receipts and the decision to progress the Kidsgrove Sports Centre refurbishment project. Work on the 2021/22 budget was at an advanced stage and draft proposals would be presented to Cabinet and Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee in December.

The Leader noted the thoroughness of the MTFS and thanked those staff who had worked to produce the Strategy; other Members endorsed those thanks.

Resolved: That:

1. The draft Medium Term Financial Strategy be endorsed.
2. The funding gap of £1.790m in 2021/22 and £5.911m over the 5 year period covered by the MTFS be noted.
3. The approach to develop savings and income generation proposals in the medium term be agreed.

4. The current uncertainty regarding the medium term impact of Covid and local government funding and the need for scenario planning and identification of savings options for best, worst and medium case scenarios be noted.
5. The draft MTFs be referred to Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee for their views.

43. KIDSGROVE TOWN DEAL

Cabinet considered an update on work to produce the Town Investment Plan for the Kidsgrove Town Deal area and the next steps in its delivery. A video had been produced highlighting the key proposals and this was played at the meeting.

The Leader outlined the 3 strategic objectives and their associated projects:

- Objective 1: this related to driving growth and opportunity through enhanced enterprise infrastructure and included a project around enabling an employment site at Chatterley Valley and investment in enterprise units;
- Objective 2: this focused on creating a connected, accessible town centre and included upgrades to the train station and canal enhancements;
- Objective 3: this was about maximising leisure and recreation opportunities with a key project relating to the Kidsgrove Sports Centre along with improvements to parks.

The Council had been awarded Advance Town Deal funding and some had already been allocated towards a sports pitch at the school which had received planning permission on 10th November; funds were also allocated to the Leisure Centre refurbishment which was progressing well with handover due from the County Council.

Resolved: That:

1. Cabinet formally endorses the Kidsgrove Town Deal Investment Plan and will receive a further report on the outcome of the Town Investment Plan submission at the point that this is received from government;
2. The Executive Director Commercial Development & Economic Growth is authorised to work within existing Council resources to continue to support the Town Deal Board and other organisations as necessary to progress development of projects in the Kidsgrove Town Deal Investment; and
3. That a multi-disciplinary officer group is established to oversee delivery of the Kidsgrove Town Investment Plan and will report into the Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Service Improvement, People and Partnerships and then into Cabinet.

44. FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT SECOND QUARTER (JULY - SEPTEMBER) 2020 - 2021

Cabinet considered a report on the Knutton Masterplan. The document had been jointly commissioned and overseen by the Borough and County Councils and Aspire Housing. The Masterplan assessed opportunities to bring forward new housing investment and improve community facilities and the physical environment in Knutton. The key features of the Plan were outlined and included a new village hall, creation of a village green and play facilities along with redevelopment of a number of sites for housing and replacement office business accommodation. There were also a number of highway reconfigurations and improvements.

Resolved: That:

1. The Knutton Masterplan be approved in principle for public consultation and the result of that consultation be reported back for Cabinet's consideration;
2. Opportunities be explored and taken to pursue funding through the Government's Town Deal programme for Newcastle to provide some of the resources necessary to deliver some of the investment proposals contained in the Knutton Masterplan.
3. When the outcome of the Newcastle Town Deal submission is known and therefore the fuller financial implications of delivering the Knutton masterplan are clearer, a more complete report is brought to Cabinet.
4. A Project Board be established to take forward the masterplan and any subsequent delivery plan, with membership including Newcastle Borough Council, Aspire Housing and Staffordshire County Council and that this council's representation to include officers, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency.
5. Discussions are held with Aspire Housing to explore options for the early redevelopment of the Borough Council-owned sites identified for possible housing development as a means for expediting the delivery of this aspect of the masterplan.
6. Should any suitable sites become available in the area that authority is given for the Council to directly purchase or work in partnership with Aspire to make appropriate purchases.

45. **PROPOSED EXTENSION TO NEWCASTLE CREMATORIUM GROUNDS AND DEVELOPMENT OF ADJACENT LAND OFF CHATTERLEY CLOSE**

Cabinet considered a report seeking approval to extend the grounds of Newcastle Crematorium into adjacent land within the Council's ownership and to develop the remainder of adjacent land for residential use with associated green infrastructure and community facilities.

Resolved: That:

1. The Masterplan to extend Newcastle Crematorium and to redevelop the remaining Council owned land off Chatterley Close is received.
2. The scheme to extend the grounds of the Crematorium is approved in principle.
3. The Executive Director - Commercial Development & Economic Growth is authorised to consult with appropriate stakeholders on the proposals in accordance with the Asset Management Strategy 2018-21 and to report the results to a future meeting of the Cabinet.
4. The Executive Director - Commercial Development & Economic Growth is authorised to engage consultancy support to prepare a hybrid planning application for the extension to the crematorium grounds (full) and, subject to the outcome of the consultation with stakeholders and public, residential development to the remainder of the site (outline).
5. Subject to a detailed financial analysis, the scheme to extend the crematorium grounds is funded from the capital receipt gained from the sale of the remaining land for development.
6. The Head of Operations is authorised to engage consultancy support to prepare an outline business case for an improved memorialisation offer in the crematorium grounds with a view to generating increased revenue and provision of £14,000 is made available for this support in the General Fund Capital Programme/Borough Growth Fund in 2020/21.

46. **NEWCASTLE CREMATORIUM - PROPOSED REFURBISHMENT OF THE CREMATORS**

Cabinet considered a report on options and funding strategies for the refurbishment of the cremators at Newcastle Crematorium. Councillor Johnson outlined the proposed works which it was anticipated would ensure the cremators would last a further ten years provided regular maintenance was undertaken.

Resolved: That:

1. The planned improvements at Bradwell Crematorium be supported.
2. The preferred option is approved and an exception to Council Contract Procedure Rules be agreed to enable a direct award of contract without a call for competition for the refurbishment of the Council's two cremators by the manufacturer and incumbent service provider as set out in the report.

47. LAND AT MARKET DRAYTON ROAD, LOGGERHEADS

Cabinet considered a report on the disposal of land at Market Drayton Road, Loggerheads. Councillor Northcott referred to the report that detailed the proposal to dispose of the land to Loggerheads Parish Council by way of a long lease. The land had been identified as a surplus site for disposal in the Borough Council's Asset Management Strategy 2018 – 22. The Parish Council wished to acquire it for community and sporting facilities.

Resolved: That:

1. The disposal of this land, by way of a long lease, to Loggerheads Parish Council for £1, be authorised.
2. The Executive Director – Commercial Development and Economic Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, be authorised to agree the terms and conditions of this lease with Loggerheads Parish Council.

48. FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT SECOND QUARTER (JULY - SEPTEMBER) 2020 - 2021

Cabinet considered a report detailing the financial position and Council performance for quarter 2. The report outlined broad financial information and service performance. Quarter 2 was the peak period of the Covid lockdown when a number of customer facing services were required to close or the customer base stopped using the service.

The report outlined funding support from Government and Councillor Sweeney referred to funding secured to date of £1.742m. To date a number of grant payments had been made. The Council had a good history of collection rates but the longer term impact on the Collection Fund would not be known until the following financial year.

The performance for Quarter 2 was presented with a total 17 indicators monitored for the period. The Leader explained the target relating to percentage of calls not answered had not been met due to a 25% increase in number of calls through the contact centre together with the introduction of the new Recycling Service and the Election canvass during the quarter both of which affected a high number of residents of the Borough. Sickness levels, staff turnover and staff vacancy rates were all low for the quarter. Both Council tax and Business Collection rates were now back on track.

Councillor Northcott reported performance was well within target in the indicators relating to Property and Planning and Development.

Councillor Maxfield reported that there were currently 21 cases being discussed at the ASB, Youth Violence and Gangs Case conference. Councillor Waring referred to the leisure and cultural facilities which had experienced significant impact by Covid 19 and when services had been required to close. The staff were working hard to be prepared for when the services could open.

In relation to Priority 4 'A Town Centre for All', there were 3 indicators relating to car park usage, footfall and stall occupancy for markets. These had all been impacted by Covid 19 although Councillor Sweeney reported that the markets that had been able to be held had performed extremely well and were very popular. He explained that a small business market was planned for December.

Resolved: That:

1. The contents of the attached report and 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.
2. The supplementary estimates (item 4.4 Appendix A) be noted and approved in order for them to be included in this year's budget.

49. **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.

50. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Business.

COUNCILLOR SIMON TAGG
Chair

Meeting concluded at 3.15 pm