

CABINET

Wednesday, 12th February, 2020
Time of Commencement: 2.00 pm

Present:- Councillor Simon Tagg – Chair

Councillors S. Sweeney, T. Johnson, H. Maxfield,
P. Northcott and J Waring

Officers David Adams, Martin Hamilton, Jan
Willis, Geoff Durham, Daniel Dickinson
and Phil Jones

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies from Members.

The Leader welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Councillor Helena Maxfield who had been appointed as Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing.

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 15 January, 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

4. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS AND STRATEGIES 2020/21

A report was submitted to Cabinet asking to recommend the 2020/21 General Fund Revenue Budget and the 2020/21 Capital Programme to Full Council at its meeting on 19 February, 2020.

The Revenue Budget and Capital Programme were considered by the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 16 January, 2020.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency, Councillor Stephen Sweeney thanked officers for their hard work in preparing the Budget and Capital Programme.

Members were advised that the Borough Council's element of Council Tax would, this year, be an increase of 2.55% which equated to 10p per week or less for 82% of households.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3 which showed factors giving rise to the budget gap and savings and funding strategies.

The Leader, Councillor Simon Tagg stated that this was a positive budget and referred Members to paragraph 4.5, the Borough Growth Fund. Members' attention was drawn to a supplementary paper presented at the meeting which expanded upon the four bullet points contained within paragraph 4.5 of the published agenda:

Borough Growth Fund

4.5 The savings and funding strategies identified in the table above and in Appendix 1 will enable further investment of £250,000 in the Council's priorities as per the Council Plan 2018-2022 via the Borough Growth Fund. In accordance with the 'Statutory Guidance on the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts', the 'Borough Growth' fund will continue to be used to provide pump-priming investment in initiatives that are forecast to generate on-going revenue savings through reducing the costs of service delivery or through the generation of additional income. The Council's Section 151 Officer will determine whether any proposed use of the fund complies with this guidance on a case-by-case basis. Priorities for 2020/21 are:

Council Modernisation – Local Services That Work For Local People (£80,000)

As part of the Council's commitment to introducing streamlined and speedy processes to improve services to residents, we will embed digitalisation in everything we do, and we will take the first steps to introduce AI and Robotics into service delivery.

At the same time, we are investing in creating a workforce fit for the future by developing the skills of our staff and also investing in apprenticeship opportunities.

We will implement a Workforce Development Plan based around the ethos of 'One Council'.

Building Financial Sustainability (£50,000)

With our Executive Director for Commercial Development & Economic Growth now in place the Council has embraced commercial working practices to reduce costs and generate income.

We will use innovative models to ensure that when development opportunities arise the Council retains an income stream or reinvests the income into other opportunities.

Recycling and Climate Change (£50,000)

2020 will see the launch of the new Recycling Service, which will make it easier for residents to recycle and finally put this area of the Council's business on a sound financial footing.

As part of the Council's commitment to a sustainable environment, we will plant more trees as part of a Borough-wide Carbon Capture Parks Initiative and also make bids for funding in the next round of the Government's Urban Tree Challenge and Woodland Carbon Guarantee.

We will develop a Sustainable Environment Strategy that will address the recommendations of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

Town Centres (£70,000)

The Council will invest to support the Town Deal Bids for Kidsgrove & Newcastle and the Future High Street Fund (FHSF) bid for Newcastle town centre to create a legacy of schemes to take advantage of further funding opportunities.

We will support the next phase of the rejuvenation of the historic Market and continue to implement the Council's Car Park Strategy and use promotion of 'Experience Newcastle' to increase income from car parks, market stalls and bring empty Council properties back into use.

The Leader advised that, in relation to the above, the former registrars building at Sidmouth Avenue was a good example of taking a commercial approach to property.

The Council's new Recycling Service would be rolled out from May, 2020. In addition, single use plastics would be phased out.

Members all welcomed the budget, Councillor Northcott stated that it was a prudent and safe budget and also ambitious. Councillors Johnson and Waring were pleased to see additional money in the Borough Growth Fund.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the Revenue and Capital Budgets as detailed in the report and in the report to Cabinet dated 15 January 2020 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
 - (ii) That the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 to 2024/25 (Appendix 2) be recommend to Full Council for approval.
 - (iii) That the strategy for ensuring a balanced revenue outturn position for 2019/20 be approved.
 - (iv) That the 2020/21 Borough Growth Fund priorities as set out at paragraph 4.5 be approved.
 - (v) 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 recommended to Full Council for approval.
 - (vi) 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.
 - (vii) That the proposed change in accounting policy for Minimum Revenue Provision from the straight line basis to the annuity basis (as per the Treasury Management Strategy) be approved.
 - (viii) 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 recommended to Full Council for approval.
 - (ix) That the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy (Appendix 6), updated for 2020/21, be recommended to Full Council for approval.

- (x) That the Capital Strategy (Appendix 8) for 2020-30 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
- (xi) That the Treasury Management Strategy (Appendix 9) for 2020/21 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
- (xii) That the Investment Strategy (Appendix 10) for 2020/21 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
- (xiii) That the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Appendix 11) for 2020/21 be recommended to Full Council for approval.

5. DRAFT JOINT LOCAL PLAN

A report was submitted to Cabinet to advise on the completion and outcome of the previous formal consultation on the 'preferred options' stage of the Joint Local Plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, Councillor Paul Northcott advised Members that he was adding an additional recommendation (v) to commission extra work on Policies SH01, SH03 and H07.

Part one of the consultation had been considered by the Economy Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee and by the Planning Committee.

The Draft Local Plan would be opened up to full consultation giving everyone chance to comment. The Thistleberry Residents Association had already provided comments.

Councillor Northcott informed Members of a number of points that had been raised by the Planning Committee on the 12 February.

Councillor Helena Maxfield welcomed the report stating that it was an excellent and interesting opportunity to ask questions and gain information.

Members acknowledged the enormous amount of work that had gone into this so far.

Councillor Sweeney stated that the meeting of the Planning Committee had been very productive.

The Leader endorsed Councillor Northcott's amendment and stated that the two part approach was the best method. The Leader thanked Jemma March and officers for their hard work to date.

Resolved: (i) That Cabinet notes the responses to the previous

consultation exercise carried out on the Preferred Options Consultation Document (full copy of the Preferred Options Consultation and Responses Document is attached to this pack as background information), and that the document be published on the relevant Joint Local Plan web page.

- (ii) That the presentation of the Draft Local Plan in two parts be agreed, with Part One for strategic and development management policies to be consulted upon in Spring 2020 and Part Two for proposed site allocations be consulted upon Autumn 2020.
- (iii) That approval is given for:
 - (a) The Draft Joint Local Plan Part One Strategy and Policies Consultation document (attached as Appendix 1 to this report) to be published for formal public consultation during Spring 2020.
 - (b) That the consultation be carried out in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- (iv) That the results of the consultation exercise be reported back to Cabinet in Summer 2020 to inform the next stage of plan preparation (Part 2 Site Allocations) in partnership with Stoke-on-Trent City Council.
- (v) That during the consultation period the Cabinet commission additional work on SH01: Housing Numbers, SH03: Rural Settlement Hierarchy and H07: Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation to inform the final plan.

6. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT POLICY AND WORKPLACE DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY REVIEWS

A report was submitted to Cabinet to reaffirm the role of the Borough Council in safeguarding children and adults at risk of abuse and neglect and in supporting staff who may be affected by domestic abuse.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing, Councillor Helena Maxfield stated that this was a revision of the Policy already in place.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraph 2.1.3 which summarised the amendments to the Safeguarding Policy.

The previous holder of this Portfolio, Councillor Jill Waring advised that this was a statutory duty and that this Council was doing a good job in safeguarding Borough residents and Council staff.

The Leader stated that there were issues with data protection and referred to the Data Protection Act, 1998 and added that Parliament needed to look at the Data Protection Laws. In respect of this, the Leader proposed an extra resolution (iii), that he write to the Newcastle Members of Parliament.

Councillor Northcott stated that the welfare and safety of children was paramount and barriers should be overcome to intervene when necessary.

A copy of the procedures was appended to the report.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That Cabinet approve the reviewed and updated version of the Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk of Abuse or Neglect Policy for the Borough Council in Newcastle-under-Lyme.
 - (ii) That Cabinet approve the reviewed and updated version of the Workplace Domestic Abuse Policy for the Borough Council in Newcastle-under-Lyme.
 - (iii) That the Leader of the Council write to the Borough MP's asking that they raise Data Protection and Safeguarding in Parliament with a view to reviewing the respective laws.

7. FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT TO THE END OF QUARTER 3 (OCT-DEC) 2019-20

A report was submitted to Cabinet, providing the Financial and Performance Review Report for quarter three 2019/20.

Councillor Sweeney introduced the first part of the report, drawing Members' attention to page 201 which outlined the current financial position.

The Leader introduced the performance part of the report, commencing at page 205 of the agenda and the indicators commencing at page 208 of the agenda.

All of the indicators for Priority One - Local Services that Work for Local People were on target or had not changed. Councillor Johnson stated that he was hopeful that the New Recycling Service would commence the roll-out by the end of April.

The Leader referred to paragraph 1.3 – the average number of days per employee lost to sickness which was not on target but was heading in the right direction.

The indicators for Priority Two – Growing our People and Places were all on target. Councillor Northcott stated that there was phenomenal performance across the board. Thanks were expressed to Sim Manley who had been the Interim Head of Planning who had held the team together. Councillor Northcott also thanked Jemma March and her team for their work on the Joint Local Plan.

The Leader also thanked Mr Manley, Ms March and her team for their hard work. Reference was made to the ongoing progress of the Keele University Growth Corridor adding that regular meetings were taking place with regard to transport and sequencing of development.

The indicators for Priority Three – A Healthy, Active and Safe Borough showed that the number of people accessing leisure and recreational facilities and the net growth in J2 membership were not on target. Councillor Maxfield advised that procedures were in place and there were having a positive effect.

The Leader stated that CCTV was moving forward with locations for the cameras having been agreed.

The indicators for Priority Four – A Town Centre for All showed that the average stall occupancy for markets was not on target. However, Councillor Sweeney advised Members that the number of followers on Twitter had increased to over 90,000. In addition, there would be an H G Wells themed market, antiques market and food markets would be returning. Councillor Sweeney added that electricity points were being installed on the market stalls which will allow for evening trading.

The Leader added that there was a lot of activity going on within Priority Four with the Town Boards, Future High Street Fund and the Borough Growth Fund. In addition, Kidsgrove Sports Centre was also key to the Town Deal. The Leader stated that 'A Town Centre for All' referred to both of the towns within the Borough.

Reference was made to target 4.1, payment for car parks. Councillor Sweeney stated that the target may need amending as people were using other ways of paying for a ticket

Resolved: That Members note the contents of the attached report and continue to monitor and challenge the Council's performance alongside its financial performance for the same period.

8. 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.

9. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Business.

COUNCILLOR SIMON TAGG
Chair

Meeting concluded at 2.45 pm