

## **CABINET**

Wednesday, 9th December, 2020

Time of Commencement: 2.00 pm

<b>Present:-</b>	Councillor Simon Tagg – Chair
Councillors	Stephen Sweeney, Trevor Johnson, Helena Maxfield, Paul Northcott and Jill Waring
Officers	Martin Hamilton, Jan Willis, Simon McEneny, Daniel Dickinson and Denise French

### 51. **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

### 52. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

### 53. **MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> November be agreed as a correct record.

### 54. **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 that in response to the Tier 3 restrictions, the Council had maintained its focus on support for businesses and support for vulnerable people.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency, Councillor Stephen Sweeney, outlined the support for businesses which included a number of grants to businesses impacted by the pandemic. Councillor Sweeney referred to Council permission for three Special Markets to run during December in Newcastle and the measures in place to ensure they could operate in a Covid secure way through social distancing and the presence of Marshalls. There were two markets taking place on Sundays and the Leader reminded the meeting that parking on Council car parks was free of charge on Sundays.

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

The Rough Sleeper Team would undertake a sweep each Thursday morning and could be contacted by phone if anyone was concerned about someone who appeared to be rough sleeping.

There were some other Council services that were impacted by current restrictions but less than with previous measures. J2 Leisure Centre was open for personal fitness training and swimming but not for group activities; an extensive online offer was available to J2 members. Customer Services continued to be available online and over the phone but there were restrictions on face to face contact. The Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling, Councillor Trevor Johnson noted that residual waste levels had reduced over the past six weeks and recycling levels had increased.

A number of growth and regeneration schemes were being progressed including the Town Investment Plan for Kildgrove which had been submitted to Government.

The report outlined the financial position including funding received from the Government and the position regarding lost income from fees and charges.

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

55. **2021/22 DRAFT SAVINGS PROPOSALS**

Councillor Sweeney informed the meeting that the Audit had now been complete and an unqualified opinion received on the accounts and Value for Money audit. He thanked the finance staff.

Cabinet considered the first draft proposals to balance the revenue budget 2021/22 and the proposed capital programme for 2021/22 to 2023/24.

The Council's draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) had been endorsed by Cabinet at the last meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and indicated there would be a budget 'gap' of £1.079m in respect of the budget 2021/22. Councillor Sweeney introduced the report which outlined measures to reduce this gap including savings arising from the Comprehensive Spending Review and public sector pay freeze; various Government support streams including towards the Council Tax collection fund deficit and Business Rates deficit; an extension to the Income Compensation Scheme for fees and charges for the first quarter of 2021/22 and further funding towards temporary accommodation costs.

The Capital Programme was presented and included updated funding assumptions. Councillor Sweeney referred to the service area for Leisure which related to the reopening of Kildgrove Leisure Centre. The significant spending in 2022/23 in Streetscene referred to the works at the Crematorium.

The Council had commissioned a full organisational review – the One Council Programme – which would look at how services were delivered in the future. Regular updates would be made to Cabinet and the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee who would also be given the opportunity to comment on the draft Savings Proposals at their next meeting in January 2021.

**Resolved:** that:

1. The first draft proposals as set out in the Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to the report be noted.
2. The amendment to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) funding gap as a result of public sector pay freeze assumptions be noted.
3. The first draft proposals be referred to the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee for their views.
4. A supplementary revenue estimate of £250k be approved for the blueprint and mobilisation phase of the "One Council" programme.

**56. NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE LOCAL AIR QUALITY PLAN - OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE**

Councillor Johnson presented the Air Quality report which set out how the Council, along with Stoke on Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council, proposed to meet the legal requirements of two directives served under the provisions of The Environment Act 1995. The directives required both councils to jointly investigate EU exceedances of nitrogen dioxide on roads and what measures could be introduced to achieve compliance. In Newcastle under Lyme Borough there had been one exceedance and this was on the A53 Etruria Road between Victoria Street and Basford Park Road, the main route between Newcastle and Hanley. The report outlined the preferred option which would see the introduction of a virtual bus gate limiting use by certain vehicles including cars during peak times. Cabinet discussed making an exemption for low emission vehicles which was agreed; and seeking the support of the local MP regarding urging Government to reconsider the need for the action.

The second directive required this Borough Council to implement a bus engine retrofit programme and progress with this was outlined in the report.

**Resolved:** That:-

- (a) The comments made in relation to the North Staffordshire Local Air Quality Plan from Economy, Environment & Place Scrutiny Committee held on 12 November 2020 be received.
- (b) The Outline Business Case for the North Staffordshire Local Air Quality Plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide exceedances, including technical addenda, as contained in Appendices C and D, be approved for submission to Government, in line with the requirements of the Environment Act 1995 (Implementation of Measures for Nitrogen Dioxide Compliance) Air Quality Direction 2018 (the "2018 Direction") and subsequent amendments by the Secretary of State for the Environment.
- (c) Subject to approval of (b), Cabinet request a further report from the Head of Environmental Health Services in June 2021, setting out the Full Business Case, including the detailed costs and proposed funding bid to Government.
- (d) Subject to approval of (b), that Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Operational Services alongside Portfolio Holder for Environment & Recycling to enter into a legal agreement with Staffordshire County Council (SCC) and Stoke-on-Trent City Council (SOTCC) to jointly submit the Full Business Case and deliver the preferred option in line with the requirements of the Environment Act 1995 (Implementation of Measures for Nitrogen Dioxide Compliance) Air Quality Direction 2018 and subsequent amendments by the Secretary of State for the Environment.
- (e) The Chief Executive be authorised to enter into a contract to complete the Full Business Case (and inform the Cabinet Member for Environment and Recycling), by direct award to the supplier for the delivery of the Outline Business Case for the North Staffordshire Local Air Quality Plan.
- (f) The progress made in relation to the delivery of the Ministerial Direction requiring a bus retrofit scheme for busses operating on the A53 be noted.

(g) Cabinet supports an exemption for low emission vehicles to drive through the bus gate on the A53 Etruria Road and that this is in place from the implementation date.

(h) The Leader write to the local MP, A Bell, to request his support in urging the Government to reconsider the necessity for the works under the two ministerial directions due to the impact of Coronavirus on transport movements and air quality levels.

**57. LOCAL PLAN UPDATE**

Cabinet considered a report on options regarding the Local Plan.

Councillor Northcott introduced the report which outlined the expectation of Government that all authorities would have adopted development plans by December 2023. The Council had been undertaking work to produce a Joint Local Plan with Stoke on Trent City Council with the expectation that this would be in place in mid-2018. As this had not happened it was opportune to reconsider whether joint working was appropriate taking into account the economic and social impact of Covid 19 and the emerging post Brexit landscape. Any work to develop a Borough Local Plan would need to engage with partners.

**Resolved:** That:

Cabinet supports the option of commencing work on a Borough Local Plan, and agrees to

- Commission further advice on the impact of COVID and BREXIT on the local economy, and the local planning process; and
- Engage with the stakeholders identified in this report to better understand their position regarding a Borough Local Plan.

**58. SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY**

Cabinet considered a report on a Sustainable Environment Strategy and Action Plan for the Council and the Borough. Councillor Johnson referred to the Council's resolution in 2019 declaring a climate emergency and the commitment of Cabinet to deliver a sustainable environment strategy. The Leader reported how the work would be ongoing and would involve partners including Keele University and Staffordshire County Council. He particularly highlighted works to progress the carbon capture agenda especially in urban areas. Cabinet Members endorsed the work to tackle environmental issues facing the Borough.

**Resolved:** That:

- (a) The Sustainable Environment Strategy and Action Plan for the Council and Borough be approved.
- (b) views and support for the Strategy and Action Plan be sought from key local partners and the Economy, Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee

**59. BRAMPTON MUSEUM REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

Cabinet considered a report on the redevelopment project at Brampton Museum. Councillor Waring explained the report was seeking approval to award a contract for alterations and extension works at the Brampton Museum. Councillor Waring outlined the various sources of funding that had been awarded towards both capital works and programme funding and how this funding would be used. The project to install WiFi within the Museum was currently underway.

**Resolved:** That

The Executive Director for Commercial Development and Economic Growth in consultation with the Executive Director for Resources and Support Services and the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage be authorised to enter into a contract with Sandycroft Building Construction Ltd following a compliant procurement process, to undertake the alterations and extensions to Brampton Museum.

**60. PROPOSED RESIDENTS FUNERAL SERVICE**

Cabinet considered a report outlining proposals to offer a funeral service to residents. The report recognised concern at the rising costs of funerals and the associated hardship that could be caused at a distressing time. Councillor Johnson outlined the proposals including an end to end funeral service at a fixed cost which would be available to residents and a direct cremation option at a fixed cost open to all. The specification for the service was attached as an appendix to the report.

**Resolved:** That

- (a) The scheme to provide a residents funeral service, including a direct cremation option, be approved.
- (b) Authority be granted to the Head of Operations to invite tenders for the service and to accept the lowest suitable tender received.

**61. 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.

**62. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Business.

**COUNCILLOR SIMON TAGG**  
**Chair**

Meeting concluded at 3.15 pm