

CABINET

Date and Time: Thursday 4 February 2021 at 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Fleet

Present:

Ambler, Bailey, Cockarill, Kinnell, Neighbour, Oliver, Quarterman and Radley

In attendance: Axam, Farmer, Forster, Kennett, Smith and Worlock

Officers: Foy, Hughes, Phillips and Vincent

95 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of 7 January 2021 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

96 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

97 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

98 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman asked Joint Chief Executive to update Cabinet on any recent emergency decisions taken to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Joint Chief Executive announced recent emergency decisions made:

1. In consultation with Cabinet, local discretionary grant payments will be made to a small number of business who pay business rates to their landowner, but as they do not pay business rates directly to the council, are unable to make valid claims under other schemes.
2. Further to a competitive quotation process, the appointment of specialist professional support to help make informed decisions regarding our Leisure Centre contract, at a cost of £4,000 over a 5 month period.
3. Hart District Council has offered Hampshire County Council the use of the Hart Council Offices, as a location for the delivery of the Community Lateral Flow Testing Scheme. Details will be announced, once confirmed.
4. With ongoing work for a vaccination centre opening in Fleet, Hart has entered into a licence agreement with Richmond Surgery to enable their use of the Harlington, whilst also providing visitors an allocation of free car parking spaces.

99 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (ITEMS PERTAINING TO THE AGENDA)

None.

100 CIVIC REGENERATION WORKING GROUP MINUTES

The meeting held on 5 January 2021 were noted.

101 CIVIC REGENERATION WORKING GROUP

Members were updated on the progress of the Civic Quarter regeneration project to date (with reference to previous updates), work undertaken, findings and recommendation for next steps. Overview & Scrutiny considered this report at its January meeting.

Members were advised that the community engagement strategy was done through a competitive procurement process which went to tender. Updates were documented in the minutes and a tender summary was delivered. Documentation of this would be provided.

DECISION

1. Cabinet noted the advice provided by Create Streets, regarding the proposed public engagement strategy and that Officers are working to refine the potential questions and provide context for the public as to the reasons why the Working Group wish to engage.
2. Members were happy that any potential redevelopment will be considered alongside its position with the town and any potential impact on Fleet Town as a whole.

102 DRAFT BUDGET 2021/22

Members were presented with a summary of the revenue and capital budget proposals for 2021/2022 to enable Cabinet to recommend to Council its proposed draft budget and Council Tax levels. The report included the statutory statement of the Head of Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer) to Council on the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves.

The proposed budget referenced numbers included in the provisional finance settlement for 2021/2022 which was published on December 17th 2020. Members were asked to note that the Government's multi-year Spending Review, due in 2019 was once again replaced by a short-term Spending Round, meaning, in substance, any budget to be proposed will only be for one-year only. No figures have been made available for local government funding beyond 2021/22, either nationally or locally. This report therefore cannot give any realistic projection for 2022/2023, however indicative budget requirements have

been entered. Overview & Scrutiny Committee were thanked for their structured debate on this draft budget at the meeting held in January.

Members were advised that this time next year will be more challenging and serious decisions would need to be made once the full impact of COVID can be assessed with the addition to budget pressures from the reduction in the new homes bonus settlement. It was confirmed that there was no significant change in the final settlement figure received from the Government and the shortfall would be covered from reserves for this year.

Members considered:

- Budgets to allow for claiming compensation due to COVID.
- Policy positions made on assumptions of returning to business as normal.
- Income is equal to expenditure with pre-sets and adjustments added for funding element.
- Approved budgets by Council in February 2020 to be reallocated due to COVID.
- 0.5% being the rate of inflation used to reflect charges and a full list of fees and charges will go to Council.
- Collection fund surplus is not in the budget for 2021/2022.
- Level of support given on the council tax base will be provided at next month's Council.
- Planning preapplication charges increase is higher than the inflation rate.
- Increase in household parking permits for a second car.
- Forecasts expected on track of terms of budget and structural deficit are broadly in line with forecasts predicted.
- Cost reduction and the impact this will have on services to residents.

Members acknowledged the support and hard work of the financial team and commended the work done to put the budget together to manage the deficit caused by the impact of the COVID crises. The Chairman stated that Members need to be prepared to defend residents against the financial pressures the Council faces.

RECOMMENDATION to Council

1. That the level of Council Tax for 2021/22 be increased by £5 (2.9%) and set at £181.84 for a band D property.
2. That the summary revenue budget for 2021/22 as set out in paragraph 12 of this report be approved.
3. That the capital programme for 2021/22 as detailed in Appendix 1 be approved.
4. That no changes be made to the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2021/22 but that a full review of this takes place and is reported to Council in September 2021.

103 CAPITAL STRATEGY, TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT, AND ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

Members received the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2020/21, which incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy and Prudential and Treasury Indicators and the Asset Management Plan. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement had been considered at the January meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy remain the same in policy but have been updated for the latest reported figures. Cabinet was asked to accept the Local Council Tax base for 2021/2022 for onward recommendation to Council.

Members acknowledged the possibility of the Bank of England introducing a negative bank rate and decided a strategy would need to be agreed for undermanaged money.

Members considered the issues and agreed the recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION to Council

1. The Capital Strategy be approved.
2. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement be approved, noting the change to allow the Council to invest in Medium-Term Notes and Long-Term Multi Asset Diverse Funds.
3. The Asset Management Plan be approved.

104 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was considered and amended:

- 1 Inclusion of the Business Case for the Housing Company next month after this has been to Overview & Scrutiny Committee next week.
- 2 Clarification required for the omission of the Climate Change action plan.
- 3 Inclusion of COVID Emergency Decisions in the forthcoming months.

The meeting closed at 8.02 pm