

CABINET

Date and Time: Thursday 3 March 2022 at 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Fleet

Present:

Bailey, Clarke, Cockarill, Kinnell, Neighbour (Leader), Oliver, Quarterman and Radley

In attendance: Forster (left at 8.28pm)

Officers:

Patricia Hughes	Joint Chief Executive
Emma Foy	Head of Corporate Services and S151 Officer
Joanne Rayne	Finance Manager
Steve Bennett	Change & Digital Manager
Peter Summersell	Sustainability Officer
Kelly Watts	Housing Solutions Manager
Nicola Harpham	Strategy & Development Manager
Helen Vincent	Committee Services Officer

121 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the meetings held on 3 February and 8 February 2022 were signed as a correct record.

122 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received.

123 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

124 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that there would be a silent vigil at 7pm on Friday in Ghurkha Square for the conflict in the Ukraine.

Item 10 on the agenda was moved to the end following Member's agreement to move into exempt session.

125 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (ITEMS PERTAINING TO THE AGENDA)

None.

126 HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2022-27

Cabinet approval was requested for the adoption of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-27 attached as Appendix A to the report.

Cllr Bailey wanted to thank the task and finish group for the hard work putting the strategy together. The Chairman noted the comparative chart on rough sleepers across local authorities in Hampshire and requested data from Winchester Council to be supplied.

Members discussed the advice available from Central Government on guidance for future refugees and following recent experiences with the resettlement of Afghan families, Members felt assured that this position showed our ability to locate resources when required.

DECISION

That Cabinet approved the adoption of the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

127 HOUSING CAPITAL FUNDING FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY MEASURES IN NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING

This report set out a proposal to ringfence a proportion of the Council's housing capital funds to support Registered Provider's (housing associations) to provide additional energy efficiency measures in their new affordable homes.

Members discussed:

- All new affordable homes built to meet the legal position published in the future home standards for 2025.
- The opportunity of looking at our existing stock of affordable housing to implement targets for energy efficiency gain and to approach the planning team for further advice.
- The portfolio holder adapted the proposals following the Overview & Scrutiny Committees reservations and still believes this scheme is the right approach following further research.
- The number of houses being upgraded needs to be higher.
- Acknowledgement of all schemes coming forward to Cabinet following scrutinisation from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to allow identification of the value of individual schemes for wider assessment.
- If a scheme is successful with obvious benefits, then Cabinet approval will be sought for more funds from the ringfenced money for the scheme.

Cabinet were happy to learn that developers are keen to build energy efficient homes above and beyond the current standards and as such, Members agreed to continue with the scheme to promote positive information on what we need in the district for new affordable homes.

Cllr Radley moved an amendment to the recommendation to add that we use funds from the most restricted reserves to withdraw money in order to ensure we use the funding more strategically going forward and that there must be an obligation from the housing team to identify these.

DECISION

1. Cabinet approved a scheme to install additional energy efficiency measures in new build housing association affordable housing that will bring energy efficiency beyond the current building regulation standards.
2. That £250k of housing capital funds are ring-fenced up to March 2025 for this purpose, at which time the scheme will be reviewed.
3. Specific sites will be brought to Cabinet to approve the spend.
4. That funding the schemes brought before the Council, should come from the most restricted fund following identification by the housing team.

128 AMENDMENTS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE COMPLAINT POLICY

Members were presented with a report from the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Panel which provided guidance and advice on how the Council's Corporate Complaint Policy could be updated and improved. The report asked for Cabinet approval on the new Corporate Complaint Policy, to be supportive of the work that is ongoing to assist in the successful roll out and ongoing management of the Policy from April 2022.

Members were informed that the Council will continue to develop the system which provides a useful complaint form to enhance the customer experience for residents to submit complaints easily and quickly, but importantly, it will provide an internal tool to assist staff to manage, log, monitor and report cases.

Members discussed:

- The current 3-stage complaint process moving to a 2-stage process to provide a smoother process reflecting the guidance and advice from the Local Government Ombudsman.
- It would be helpful to our residents to have customer service standards of responses and delivery of services communicated to residents, to enable understanding of what to expect from a reasonable level of service. This would assist the complaints process and equally reduce the number of complaints.
- Updates to responses to emails to offer assurance that complaints are being dealt with.
- Complaints not to be taken negatively but to use as an opportunity to educate.
- The shorter process providing a better customer experience.
- To make cultural changes across all service areas.
- Sought clarification of anonymous complaints being dealt with sufficiently.

- Reassurance that the correct checks and balances are all in place for the new procedure are implement for assurance that the process is fit for purpose.

DECISION

1. Cabinet approved the adoption of the new Corporate Complaint Policy and supporting information published on the website.
2. Cabinet approved the intention to develop systems to help manage day to day complaints and provide high level trend data as part of the corporate suite of data provided on a quarterly basis to Overview and Scrutiny.

129 REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN POSITION

This report contained the capital and revenue outturn for the nine months ending 31 December 2021. The report also contained a full year (to 31st March 2022) capital and revenue outturn forecast and 2021/22 debt write offs above the delegated officer level.

Following the pandemic and the lost revenue from car parking, garden waste collections and leisure centre funding. This has meant the Council now faces a projected overspend but it is anticipated that once we drawdown on reserves we will break even by the end of the year.

Cllr Bailey thanked the Finance Team for their hard work through the recent challenges due to the pandemic and thanked them for their continued hard work keeping control of figures and spending.

DECISION

1. That Cabinet noted the report including the revised projections and significant revenue variations highlighted in paragraph 4.3 and Appendices 1 and 2.
2. That Cabinet noted the provisional full year revenue outturn position as of 31st December 2021 of an overspend of £488K overspend before any agreed drawdowns from earmarked reserves.
3. That Cabinet noted the provisional capital outturn position as of 31st December 2021. The forecast for total capital expenditure for the year ended 31st March is £21.1M.
4. That Cabinet noted the debt write off requests summarised in Section 6 to the value of £27,425.

130 URGENT DECISION: APPOINTMENT OF PSAA TO APPOINT EXTERNAL AUDITORS

The Joint Chief Executive gave a brief update on the associated appointment of PSAA to appoint (external audit services on our behalf and noted that this is a continuation of existing arrangements) External Auditors that was agreed under Urgency Provisions, on 21 February 2022, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Cabinet noted the Urgent Decision taken to appoint Public Sector Audit Appointments to procure external audit services on our behalf and noted that this is a continuation of existing arrangements.

131 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was considered and noted.

132 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

The following item contained exempt information.

DECISION

Members decided that the public interest in maintaining an exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the discussion of the matters referred to, on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

133 EASEMENT - EX TRAVIS PERKINS SITE IN HARTLEY WINTNEY

Cabinet approval was sought to grant an easement across land located to the front of Primrose House and the former Travis Perkins Builders Merchants, Albion Place, Hartley Wintney and to approve delegation of authority to negotiate the final terms of the easement.

This report and its appendices are exempt from publication.

Based on the fact when the report was put together and not all the facts were available at that time, Members agreed to make a change to the recommendation to give officers delegated authority to negotiate the best commercial value following further valuations. Members unanimously agreed.

DECISION

1. That Cabinet approved for officers to be given delegated authority to negotiate the best commercial value following further valuations.
2. That the Head of Environmental and Technical Services, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Finance be given delegated authority to negotiate the final terms of the agreement.

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm