

CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2019

PRESENT:- Councillors David Renard (Chair), Oliver Donachie, Dale Heenan, Russell Holland, Mary Martin, Cathy Martyn, Maureen Penny, Gary Sumner and Keith Williams

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brian Ford

Councillor Jim Grant attended the meeting in respect of Minute Nos. 56 and 61.
Councillor Bob Wright attended the meeting in respect of Minute Nos. 56, 57 and 60.

53. Declarations of Interest.

The Chair reminded members of the need to declare known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

54. Minutes.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2018, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

55. Public Question Time.

Mrs Sarah Church had submitted written questions regarding the future of the splash park and mini-golf course at Coate Water Country and also the budget proposal to achieve a total saving of £267,000 to offset the cuts to the Public Health Grant.

Councillor Oliver Donachie, the Cabinet Member for Economic Prosperity, and Councillor Mary Martin, the Cabinet Member for Children and School Attainment, had prepared written responses to Mrs Church's questions and these were available and circulated at the meeting.

The Cabinet Members responded to supplementary questions put by Mrs Church at the meeting in respect of each of these same topics.

56. Budget 2019/20 and Beyond

Councillor Russell Holland, the Cabinet Member for Finance, and the Director of Finance, submitted joint report proposing a Budget for 2019/20 and setting out the financial context for 2020/21 and beyond.

It was noted that, under the Council's Constitution, the Cabinet is required to recommend a budget to Council as part of its formal Council Tax Setting responsibilities.

Councillor Holland introduced the report, advising the meeting of responses that had been received to the Council's public consultation on its budget proposals and placing the draft budget and the proposed increase in Council Tax in the context of

the key financial challenges, particularly the continuing challenges facing Children's Services and the measures being taken to mitigate that budget pressure, and his own confidence that the Council's budget strategy will secure the long term viability of its service provision for Swindon residents.

Following his introduction of the report, Councillor Holland, supported by Councillors Oliver Donachie, Gary Sumner and the Leader of the Council, and the Director of Finance, responded to questions put by Councillors Jim Grant and Bob Wright on (i) the focussing of the Vision and budget proposals on social deprivation and the provision of more social housing and improved social services, (ii) the responses to issues raised by the Scrutiny Committee in respect of the approach to fees and charges and the surplus on the collection fund, (iii) provision for the delivery of the Council's cultural offer objectives, and (iv) the Council's Reserves Policy.

Resolved – (1) That the following be noted:

- a) The medium term financial context and impact on Swindon of the draft Local Government Finance settlement;
 - b) The projected out-turn for 2018/19;
 - c) The consultation feedback, summarised in Appendix 3, in relation to the Budget proposals presented to Cabinet in December 2018;
 - d) That the detailed Dedicated Schools budget for 2019/20 has been set within the provisional funding envelope of £184.7m;
 - e) That, in line with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, the Director of Finance, in his Section 151 capacity, confirms the robustness of the estimates underlying the recommended Budget and having reviewed the financial risks being faced by the Council concludes that the proposed minimum level of general reserves is adequate in the context of the earmarked reserves held, specific contingencies and the proposed budget risk contingency of £3.5m.
- (2) That the 2018/19 virements, set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be agreed.
- (3) That the medium term financial strategy, set out in Appendix 6 to the report, be endorsed.
- (4) That the specific reserves held in support of the 2019/20 Revenue Budget, set out in Appendix 5 to the report, be agreed.
- (5) That the Director of Finance be authorised to balance any changes between the provisional local government finance settlement and the final numbers expected to be released by mid-February by adjusting the Budget Risk Contingency.
- (6) That Council be recommended that, subject to any changes resulting from the Government's announcement of the final local government finance settlement for 2019/20:
- a) The 2019/20 Budget be set at £142.497m.
 - b) The council tax be increased by 3.99%, comprising 2.99% for the basic amount of council tax and a specific adult social care precept of 1%.
 - c) It be determined that the proposed increase in the basic amount of Council Tax for 2019/20 is not excessive in accordance with Schedule 5 of the Localism Act 2011 and therefore does not trigger the requirement for a referendum.
- (7) That the respondents to the Council's budget consultation exercise be thanked for their contribution.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

57.

Capital Programme 2019/2020

Councillor Russell Holland, the Cabinet Member for Finance, and the Director of Finance, submitted joint report advising Cabinet of the new Capital Programme requirements for the year 2019/20 and the Capital Strategy for 2019/20 to 2023/24.

Councillor Holland responded to questions put by Councillors Dale Heenan and Bob Wright regarding (i) alternative budget proposals received in response to the formal consultation, (ii) provision to alleviate recognised traffic management problems in Rodbourne, and (iii) the approval of the Local Transport Plan Capital Programme for 2019/20.

Resolved – (1) That the Devolved Formula Capital Grant is distributed once it has been received from Government as detailed in paragraph 3.12 of the report.

(2) That a budget of £1.018m be approved for the schemes referred to in paragraphs 3.3 to 3.12 of the report and detailed at Appendix 1 to the report.

(3) That a total budget of £5.074m be approved for the 2019/20 local priority Highways and Transport schemes, referred to in paragraphs 3.13 to 3.22 of the report and detailed at Appendix 2 to the report.

(4) That a total budget of £3.676m be approved for 2018/19 for Corporate & Property schemes, as referred to in paragraphs 3.23 to 3.32 of the report and detailed at Appendix 3 to the report.

(5) That a total budget requirement of £1.317m be approved for Children's & Older Peoples proposals, as referred to in paragraphs 3.33 to 3.36 of the report and detailed at Appendix 4 to the report.

(6) That the use of CIL receipts be approved to support the existing capital programme of works at Junction 16, as detailed in paragraph 3.37.

(7) That the Capital Strategy 2019/20 – 2023/24, attached at Appendix 5 to the report, be approved.

(8) That Council be recommended to approve the Investment Strategy, attached as Annexe 3 to Appendix 5 of the report.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

58.

Treasury Strategy Statement 2019/20

Councillor Russell Holland, the Cabinet Member for Finance, and the Director of Finance, submitted a joint report advising Cabinet of the Treasury Management Strategy for 2019/20, including Prudential Indicators up to 2023/24, the Annual Investment Strategy, and the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement.

Resolved – (1) That Council be recommended:

a) To approve the Treasury Management Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and Prudential Indicators, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

b) To approve the terms of the UK Municipal Bond Agency, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

(2) That the loan facilities to Swindon Music Services, outlined in paragraph 3.23 of the report, be approved.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

59. Housing Revenue Account - Rents and Charges 2019/20

Councillor Cathy Martyn, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety, and the Corporate Director, Communities and Housing, submitted a joint report presenting to Cabinet the proposed rents, service charges, support charges for 2019/20 and proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2019/20.

Resolved – That Council be recommended that:

- a) The proposed average rent for Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwellings for 2019/20 of £78.60 per week (52 week basis), which is a decrease of 1.0%, be approved. This will be an average decrease of £0.79 per week (52 week basis). The range of decreases is shown in paragraph 3.8.
- b) The Corporate Director, Communities and Housing seek authority from the Secretary of State to extend the permission for the use of the Housing Revenue Account for payments to the Council's tenants under the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme, and provide a budget of £200k in 2019/20 as detailed at paragraph 3.22 of the report.
- c) The housing related support charges for 2019/20 and service charges for 2019/20, as outlined in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.
- d) Leaseholder service charges are set for 2019/20, as shown in Appendix 3 to the report.
- e) Based on the proposals within this report, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) proposed budget 2019/20, shown in Appendix 4, be approved and that the HRA Capital Budget and Funding be also approved, as shown in Appendix 5 to the report, and that, as set out in 3.17 of the report, the tenure of the final 10 properties at Sussex Place to change tenure from shared ownership to affordable rent.
- f) The draft 3 year capital projects and planned maintenance programme be approved at an indicative funding level of £15.398m (2018/19 prices) for 2019/20, as referenced in Appendix 6 to the report.
- g) Rents charged on General Fund properties are reduced in line with Government guidance on Housing Revenue Account rents by 1% for 2019/20. Service charges for General Fund properties, as shown in Appendix 7, are approved.
- h) The charges for Private Sector Leased (PSL) accommodation for those accepted as homeless outlined, as reference in Appendix 7, be approved.
- i) Any underspend or overspend on the 2018/19 Housing Revenue Account be managed through the general revenue reserves.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

60. Swindon Pay Policy Statement 2019

Councillor Keith Williams, the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Customer Services, and the Director of Performance, Organisational Improvement and Communications, submitted a joint report setting out the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2019 / 2020 for consideration by Cabinet, prior to referral to Full Council for approval.

It was noted that the Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to agree and publish a Pay Policy Statement by 1st April each year.

Councillor Williams, supported by the Corporate Director, Communities and Housing, responded to a matter raised by Councillor Bob Wright regarding an apparent disparity in the levels of remuneration in some service areas, when compared with neighbouring authorities, and the difficulties that this can present when recruiting to vacant posts.

Resolved – That Council be recommended to approve the Pay Policy Statement, and, if approved, to authorise the Director of Performance, Organisational Improvement and Communications to update the salary information on 1st April 2019 prior to publication.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

61. Library Strategy - Future Delivery Model

Further to Minute 10, Councillor Keith Williams, the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Customer Services, and the Corporate Director Children Services, submitted a joint report outlining the direction of travel for the delivery of core library services, following further investigation of the award route for a Public Service Mutual (PSM).

The report responded specifically to Cabinet's decision authorising officers to implement transition arrangements including the award route, for the Swindon Library and Information Service (SLIS) to become a PSM and to deliver the Swindon Library Strategy providing a comprehensive and efficient library service and to promote an increase in literacy and learning within communities.

Councillor Mary Martin, the former Cabinet Member for Communities, who had overseen the development of the original proposal to move to a PSM model for the delivery of library services, responded to a question put by Councillor Jim Grant to advise the meeting on the significant changed circumstances and technical issues that had led to the Transition Board's determination that it did not consider that it was the right time to move to a PSM model and that, instead, retaining the service in-house was the preferred option going forward.

Resolved - To authorise the Head of Libraries and Information Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Customer Services, the Head of Skills, Employment and Lifelong Learning and the Corporate Director Children Services to:

- a) Deliver the Swindon Library and Information Service as a service delivered directly by Swindon Borough Council and not to implement transition arrangements for the Swindon Library and Information Service to become a PSM at this time.
- b) Set out arrangements for how specific elements of the Swindon Library Strategy, planned to be developed through the PSM will be delivered directly by the Council.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to

the meeting.

62. School Admissions Arrangements 2020-21

Councillor Mary Martin, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School Attainment, and the Head of Education, submitted a joint report seeking Cabinet's agreement to put in place co-ordinated admission arrangements for the normal point of entry (Reception, Year 3, Year 7) and In-year admission arrangements for all Swindon Schools and Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools in Swindon for September 2020.

Resolved – (1) That the co-ordinated scheme of admission arrangements for the normal point of entry (Reception Year, Year 3 and Year 7) for all primary schools and secondary schools in Swindon from September 2020 be approved.

(2) That the co-ordinated In Year admission arrangements for all primary schools and secondary schools in Swindon from September 2020 be approved.

(3) That the admission numbers and arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools from September 2020 be approved and that it be noted that there was no opposition from Schools.

(4) That the reduction of the published admission number for Bridlewood Primary School from 60 to 30 for Reception for September 2019 be approved.

(5) That it be noted, when approved by Cabinet, these proposals are determined, and will be implemented by the Head of Education for Admissions from September 2019 for all applicants.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

63. SEND Home to School Transport

Councillor Mary Martin, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School Attainment, and the Head of Education, submitted a joint report outlining an opportunity to create a more independent living approach to travel to school for children and young people with special educational needs who live within the mileage limit that could make them ineligible for free travel to school.

It was noted that the report was necessary because as well as providing the opportunity for a more independent and self-sufficient approach to travel to and from school, it also will ensure the more efficient and effective use of the funding available whilst offering some cost reduction to the school transport budget.

It was also noted that children and young people with special educational needs, who live within the statutory mileage to their school, are not always entitled to be taken to school by minibus or taxi. This had been part of practice for some time but is not statutory.

Resolved – That Option A, outlined in the report, be agreed.

64. Statement of Community Involvement in the Planning Process

Councillor Gary Sumner, the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, and Head of Planning, Regulatory Services and Heritage, submitted a joint report seeking

Cabinet's approval to the adoption of the revised Swindon Borough Statement of Community Involvement in the Planning Process.

Resolved – (1) That the Revised Swindon Borough Statement of Community Involvement in the Planning Process, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted and the Head of Planning, Regulatory Services and Heritage authorised to make it available in accordance with the arrangements detailed in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

(2) That the Head of Planning, Regulatory Services and Heritage, in consultation with the interim Director of Law, be authorised to make minor changes to the content of the Statement of Community Involvement in the Planning Process, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning prior to publication.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.

65. Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policies

Councillor Cathy Martyn, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety, and the Director of Public Health, submitted a joint report seeking Cabinet approval to put in place a revised Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy so that these new powers may be used to better protect the residents of Swindon from poor housing conditions and 'rogue landlords'.

Resolved – (1) That the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2019, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

(2) That it be noted that the Director of Public Health, under delegated powers and in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety, will make amendments to those Policies as required in the future.

Councillors Mary Martin, Keith Williams and Gary Sumner made prejudicial declarations of interest, in their capacity as private landlords, and left the room during the discussion and voting on this item.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options are as set out in the report to the meeting.