

CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2020

PRESENT:- Councillors David Renard (Chair), Brian Ford, Dale Heenan, Russell Holland, Robert Jandy, Cathy Martyn, Maureen Penny, Gary Sumner and Keith Williams

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mary Martin

Councillor Jim Grant attended the meeting in respect of Minutes 25 and 28. Councillor Jane Milner-Barry attended the meeting in respect of Minutes 28 and 29.

22. Declarations of Interest.

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. The following declarations were made:

Councillor Russell Holland made a personal but non-prejudicial declaration regarding Minute 28 – The Future of Swindon's Cultural Offer- in that his wife was a Trustee of Swindon Dance.

Councillor Robert Jandy made a personal but non-prejudicial declaration of interest regarding Minute 28 - The Future of Swindon's Cultural Offer - in that he is Chair of Swindon Dance.

23. Minutes.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

At the Chair's invitation, the Director of Public Health informed Cabinet about the latest local outbreak and the steps the Council and its partners were taking to manage it. Councillor Brian Ford, the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health, reported how officers briefed him on a daily basis. In response to a question from Councillor Grant, the Director of Public Health confirmed how the Council was accounting for cases in its data.

24. Public Question Time.

Mr Roy Worman, Swindon resident, submitted a question about the response to questions at September's meeting. The Leader and Councillor Cathy Martyn, Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety had provided written responses. Mr Worman asked supplementary questions regarding which officers had Covid-19 related enforcement powers, which source of statistics was the Council using, and if the government funding for Covid-19 was not sufficient, how this would affect the Council's finances. The Leader, Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Commercialisation, Education, and Skills along with the Director of Public Health responded at the meeting.

The Director of Public Health undertook to provide a written response to Mr Worman with a) the public link to the government data source and b) further details of which Council officers had enforcement powers.

Luke Tremblin submitted a question about the benefits in reducing carbon emissions from the provision of dedicated cycle path from Highworth to Swindon. Councillor Keith Williams, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, had provided a written response. Luke Tremblin asked a supplementary question about how to be involved in the consultation on any cycle route from an early stage and a request for information as well as how the Council accounted for the carbon impact of incinerating waste. Councillor Williams responded at the meeting and invited Luke Tremblin to send his question about where to find information by email as the internet connection had not been clear.

25. Budget Management Update (October)

Councillor Russell Holland, the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Commercialisation, Education and Skills along with the Corporate Director of Finance and Assets submitted a joint report providing Cabinet with the 2020/21 revenue budget forecast out-turn. Councillor Holland reminded Cabinet that while the gap had reduced slightly for 2020/21, there was still uncertainty about future financial years and the Council would still have to make some difficult decisions.

Councillor Jim Grant asked a number of questions to which the Leader, Councillor Holland and the Corporate Director of Finance and Assets responded at the meeting covering:

- Had the Secretary of State responded to the letter the Leader had sent subsequent to July's Council Resolution (Council Minute 24, 2020/21)? The Leader had not received a reply.
- Was the government's funding in-line with the projected income shortfall and how would the finances be affected by a second wave? The shortfall projections had been accurate so far but the process was to claim lost income a quarter in arrears. There would be additional loss of income and increased spending for the Council to manage as well as seeking additional support from government.
- Would there still be a draft Council budget in December 2020? That was the intention, as well as awaiting the outcome of the government's comprehensive spending review.

Resolved: (1) That the 2020/21 revenue budget forecast out-turn for each service area set out in Table 1 and Appendix 1 to the main report be noted;

(2) That it be noted that the Corporate Management Team will continue to mitigate the current forecast overspend;

(3) That the update on the financial outlook for future years be noted;

(4) That the virements set out in Appendix 2 to the main report be noted; and

(5) That the allocation of section 106 funding as set out in paragraph 3.16 be approved.

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

26. Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Plan

The Councillor Cathy Martyn, Cabinet Member Housing and Public Safety along with the Director of Housing submitted a joint report setting out the Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Plan 'MTFP' over the next 30 years. Councillor Martyn drew Cabinet's attention to the details in the report, in particular the £104m remaining debt, the impact of the government's four-year rent reductions, the projected shortfall over five years for capital works and the borrowing requirement to fund the affordable development programme.

Resolved: (1) That the Medium Term Financial Plan set out at Appendix 1 to the main report be endorsed and.

(2) That it be noted that the plan will be updated annually to take into account Central Government policies that have an impact of the Housing Revenue Account as well as the Council's annual budget setting process.

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

27. Annual Review of Local Ombudsman Complaints

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) submitted a joint report following the receipt of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGO) Annual Review for 2019/20, which gives the total number of complaints and enquiries received by the LGO with regard to Swindon Borough Council. The joint report also highlighted the annual summary of statistics on the complaints made to the LGO regarding the Authority for the year ended 31st March 2020.

Councillor Renard informed Cabinet of the Council's performance in relation to some other unitary councils as well as the measures set out in the report that the Council was taking to ensure ongoing improvement to ensure the Authority addresses complaints effectively. The Leader highlighted the greater role that the Corporate Management Team would be taking while Councillor Brian Ford, Cabinet Member for Adults and Health, set out the steps officers in his service area had taken to address complaints.

Resolved: (1) That the LGO's Annual Review 2019/20, including the summary of National Statistics and the trends across service areas in Swindon 2010-2020, attached at Appendix 1 to the main report be noted.

(2) That Cabinet's thanks to all officers for their efforts in dealing with complaints effectively be recorded.

(3) That the Chief Executive, Corporate Directors, Directors and Heads of Service be authorised to take appropriate actions to continue to ensure that, where possible, complaints are resolved internally before such matters are referred to the LGO and that requests for information from the LGO are dealt with promptly.

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

28. The Future of Swindon's Cultural Offer

Councillor Dale Heenan, the Cabinet Member for the Town Centre, Heritage, and Culture,

along with the Director for the Economy, Growth and Place submitted a joint report to update Cabinet on the progress being made on the Cultural Quarter feasibility study and to see support for the recommendations for taking the project forward. The report also seeks Cabinet's support for recommendations on the location of cultural assets to maximise the social and economic benefit of the project. Councillor Heenan summarised the proposal and emphasised to Cabinet that, if approved, this would be the basis to seek the funding.

Councillors Jim Grant and Jane Milner-Barry spoke or asked questions, to which the Leader, Councillor Heenan, and Councillor Gary Sumner – Cabinet Member for Strategic Initiatives, Transport and Planning - responded, covering:

- What is the plan for the Regents Street/Princess Street site? It will be a modular plan to allow for a new theatre and other elements to be added as funding is available.
- Would the projects be delivered and how? The emphasis was on securing private and public partners along with government grants and examples were given of existing work including the new Zurich Office and the plans for Signal Point and the Tri-Centre.
- How does this related to the 2013 Town Centre Masterplan? This is currently being refreshed alongside the Local Plan Review, with a significant programme of stakeholder engagement including developers and landowners.
- How bids for funding were better with cross-party support and how would Cabinet seek to engage with the Opposition group as it did for the 2013 Masterplan? The Cabinet would engage with the other party political groups.

Resolved: (1) That the preferred approach of pursuing four cultural projects consisting of a new theatre, a renewed Swindon Museum and Art Gallery, Media Production Centre and Dance Centre as set out in the Feasibility Study and 3.25 in the main body of the report to enhance cultural provision in the town centre be approved.

(2) That the preferred location of the new cultural quarter offer to be Kimmerfields, a mixed-use area of office, residential and culture, be approved.

(3) That it be approved that the preferred option for a new build theatre rather than a refurbishment of the existing Wyvern Theatre as set out in the Feasibility Study.

(4) That the delivery of an Investment Prospectus by March 2021 to set out potential funding options as detailed at 3.43 in the main body of the report be approved.

(5) That it be approved that the Swindon Museum & Art Gallery remain closed until social distancing is no longer required and that re-provision options are developed during the time that it is closed, noting that this is whilst work on the longer-term potential for relocation to a new venue is pursued.

(6) That the work on a masterplanning exercise for Princes Street be approved.

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

29. Carbon Neutral Strategy

Councillor Keith Williams, the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Director of Economy, Growth, and Place submitted a joint report setting out Swindon Borough Council's draft Carbon Reduction Strategy and seeking support for the measures proposed to reduce SBC's carbon emissions and to influence those of the wider borough. Councillor

Williams set out the cross-party approach that had been used to produce this draft, which would enter an extended consultation period and he welcomed contributions to help improve or strengthen it. The Director of Economy, Growth, and Place added how officers would be developing an implementation plan incorporating contributions from the consultation.

Councillor Jane Milner-Barry asked a series of questions, to which the Leader and Councillor Williams and officers responded, concerning:

- How could the proposals support the ambition for carbon reduction across the whole Borough for 2030, as set out in Council's January 2020 resolution (Council Minute 67, 2019/20)? Officers would be asked to examine the viability of the wider target. The Council was supporting the bus companies with electric vehicles as well as securing money for new charging points for residential areas in the town centre wards.
- How does the data account for the whole borough as well vehicles leased to parish councils? The Council's share of the borough carbon is quite low and the data only took into account vehicles based at the Waterside facility.
- Could there be a clear, early deadline for bringing the implementation plan to Members for approval? The intention was to bring the item for decision in January or February 2021.

Resolved: (1) That the objectives and content of the draft Carbon Reduction Strategy be approved for release for wider consultation. The draft strategy is summarised in the body of the report and contained in full in appendix 1.

(2) That the Cabinet Member be requested to bring back the amended Strategy for approval by Cabinet and Council in February 2021.

(3) That the Director of Economy, Growth and Place be authorised to be the lead officer for the delivery of this strategy.

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