

CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 5 JUNE 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 Councillor Brian Ford

1. Lisa Hall, Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer

On behalf of members, the Leader of the Council welcomed Lisa Hall, the Council's newly-appointed Chief Legal Officer, to her first Swindon Borough Council Cabinet meeting and wished her every success in her new role.

2. Declarations of Interest.

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

Councillors Dale Heenan and Cathy Martyn declared a personal but non-prejudicial interest in relation to paragraph 3.6.1 of the Capital Monitoring report (Minute 7) as were both trustees of organisations that used that facility.

3. Minutes.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2019, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4. Public Question Time.

Mr Peter Amies submitted two questions about Cabinet Members' comments concerning enforcement action against envirocrime. As Mr Amies was not at the meeting, the Leader confirmed that Cabinet Members would provide a written response within five working days.

5. Exempt Items - Exclusion of Press and Public.

Resolved – That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the discussion of the matters referred to in the item listed below, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the respective paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Item Nos.	Paragraph No.	Minute No.
12	3	12

6.

Budget Management 2018/19

Councillor Russell Holland, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Education and Skills, and the Director of Finance submitted a joint report providing Cabinet with the provisional revenue position for 2018/19, subject to audit by Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditors.

Councillor Holland introduced the report and thanked officers for their work in delivering the 2018/19 budget, which was assisted greatly by a one-off VAT repayment. He advised Cabinet that the pressure remained to ensure spending remained within agreed limits for 2019/20 while Cabinet Members and officers prepared plans for 2020/21.

Resolved:-

- 1) That the 2018/19 revenue out-turn for each service area set out in Table 1 and Appendix 1 be noted;
- 2) That the underspend on the General Fund of £587k has resulted in an increase in the General Reserve to £6.6m be noted and that the Chief Executive be asked to thank all staff for helping achieve this;
- 3) That the flexible use of capital receipts in 2018/19, as set out in Appendix 2 be noted.

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

7.

Capital Programme Monitoring Out-Turn 2018/19

Councillor Russell Holland, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Education and Skills, and the Director of Finance submitted a joint report presenting to Cabinet the capital programme position as at the end of 2018/19 and some proposed changes to the programme.

Resolved:-

- 1) That the latest 2018/19 Capital Programme position as at financial year end as detailed in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.4 be noted.
- 2) That the changes to the programme in sections 3.5 to 3.6 be approved.

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

8.

Treasury Performance Management 2018/19

Councillor Russell Holland, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Education and Skills, and the Director of Finance submitted a joint report setting out to Cabinet the Treasury Management performance for 2018/19.

Councillor Holland introduced the joint report and invited Cabinet to note that Treasury Management was an ongoing task in order to finance the Council's capital programme.

Resolved:-

- 1) That the 2018/19 Treasury Management performance as detailed at paragraphs 3.1 to 3.21 and the Prudential Indicators shown at Appendix 2 be noted.

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

9. Debt Management

In accordance with the requirement of the Council's Debt Management Policy, Councillor Russell Holland, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Education and Skills, and the Director of Finance and the Head of Revenues & Benefits submitted the annual report of debts written off in 2018/19.

Councillor Holland introduced the joint report and invited Cabinet to note the reduction in the use of bailiffs since 2013. He added that the recent slight increase should be considered alongside the Borough's growing population. Councillor Holland pointed out that the Borough has various means to assist those with difficulties and he encouraged those with such concerns to contact the Council as soon as possible. The Leader of the Council thanked officers for their work in continuing to ensure high collection rates.

Councillor Oliver Donachie sought clarification on the term Oracle, the nature of debts recorded as miscellaneous and the amounts written off. Councillor Holland and the Head of Revenues and Benefits responded at the meeting.

Resolved:-

- 1) That it be noted that the collection rates for Council Tax, Housing Rents and Car Parking Penalty Charge Notices improved and Business Rates collection remained at a high level (see appendix one).
- 2) That it be noted that the number of Car Parking Penalty Charge Notices being referred to Enforcement Agents (or Bailiffs) reduced in 2018/19. That it also be noted that the number of Council Tax debts referred to Enforcement Agents did increase, although the number of households involved was lower

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

10. Financial Inclusion Policy

Councillor Russell Holland, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Education and Skills, and the Director of Finance and the Head of Revenues & Benefits, submitted a joint report setting out the progress on the Council's Financial Inclusion policy.

Councillor Holland introduced the joint report and thanked the Borough's Social Inclusion officer for his work. Councillor Holland outlined some of the measures the Council had taken including literature to alert residents to loan sharks, the use of money mentors to assist people in securing benefits, support for the Swindon Foodbank, credit unions, and the save as you earn scheme for Council staff. He invited Cabinet to look at the work of the Swindon Social Enterprise network and asked for support for the proposals to encourage staff to join credit unions as well as to have access to loans from them. The Leader of the Council thanked officers

for their work in assisting vulnerable residents.

Resolved:-

1. That the progress being made in relation to Financial Inclusion be noted.
2. That the Head of Revenues & Benefits & Director of Performance, Organisational Improvement & Communications be authorised to:
 - 2.1. Encourage Swindon Borough Council staff to join Credit Unions.
 - 2.2. In addition to being authorised to operate a 'Save as You Earn' scheme, be authorised to carry out such consultations as may be necessary and operate arrangements where employees can undertake loans from Credit Unions approved by the Head of Revenues & Benefits & Director of Performance, Organisational Improvement & Communications and to repay these by salary deductions.

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

11. Councillors' Allowances 2020/21 - Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel

Mr Keith Strickland, Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel, submitted a report inviting Cabinet to consider recommendations arising from meetings of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the level of Councillors' Allowances in Swindon for 2020/2021.

As Mr Strickland could not be present, the Leader of the Council introduced the report and summarised the limited recommendations that Council would be asked to consider. Councillor Holland supported the recommendations and noted the benefits of the allowances in making being a councillor accessible to a wider range of the public.

The Leader of the Council at the request of Cabinet Members asked for confirmation that there was parity of Special Responsibility between all the Committee Chairs, including the Chair of Licensing.

Resolved:-

1. That the thorough and comprehensive review undertaken by the Independent Remuneration Panel be noted, and the Panel Chair and members be thanked for their work.
2. That the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on Councillors' Allowances for 2020/2021, as set out in paragraph 3.5 be considered, and that these recommendations be referred the Council.
3. That, if the recommendations be approved by Council, the Chief Legal Officer be authorised to introduce a revised Councillors' Allowances Scheme for 2020/2021, based on the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

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

12. Operational management of town centre premises

Councillor Keith Williams, the Cabinet Member for Customer Services and Operational Excellence and the Head of Property Assets submitted a joint report for Cabinet to consider options on how to operate premises leased to a third party in the town centre over the next 5 years.

Councillor Williams introduced the report and responded to questions from Councillors Oliver Donachie, Dale Heenan, Russell Holland, Mary Martin, and Gary Sumner concerning the operational management of the town centre premises referred to in the restricted report.

Resolved:-

1. That Option Two as set out in the main body of the report be approved, for the reasons identified in the main body of the report.
2. That the Director of Finance and Head of Property Assets be authorised to complete the necessary agreements required to implement Option Two, on such terms and conditions that are considered appropriate in order to protect the Council's interests.

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