

CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2020

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

Councillors Ray Ballman, Paul Dixon, Jim Grant, Vinay Manro, and Jane Milner Barry attended the meeting in respect of Minutes 33, 34, 35, 38 and 39.

30. Declarations of Interest.

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

31. Minutes.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 21st October 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

32. Public Question Time

Mr Roy Worman submitted several questions to which written answers were provided. Mr Worman asked supplementary questions relating to the costs of recyclates, the payments to PPS Ltd and the future level of green waste subscriptions. Councillor Mary Martin, in her capacity as a director of PPS Ltd., Councillor Maureen Penny, Cabinet Member for Highways, Maintenance, and Waste Services; Councillor Keith Williams, Cabinet Member for Climate Change; and the Director of Operations responded at the meeting.

33. Swindon Borough Council Covid-19 Response Update

The Leader of the Council, along with the Chief Executive and the Director of Public Health submitted a joint to introduce an update to Cabinet about the reintroduction of lockdown measures in England on 5th November 2020.

The Director of Public Health provided an update at the meeting, which included an overview of the pandemic's progress in Swindon, the current infection rates in Swindon, and an outline of the steps the Council was taking to allow shops and other businesses to reopen safely, especially over the Christmas period.

Councillors Russell Holland (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Commercialisation, Education and Skills) and Vinay Manro asked questions about core messages and the monitoring of the Orbital Shopping Centre. The Director of Public Health confirmed the core messages that everyone should wash their hands, wear a face covering, and maintain social distancing along with the arrangements for working with shops to ensure they adhered to the regulations.

Resolved: That the steps taken by the Council to respond to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and any additional briefing provided by the Director of Public Health be noted.

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

34. Swindon's Country Parks Strategic Improvement Plan

Councillor Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for the Town Centre, Culture, and Heritage along with the Director of Strategic Development submitted a joint report setting out Swindon's ambition for the Council-owned Country Parks, and seeking to create a sustainable operating model in order to provide long-term enjoyment of these facilities for the residents of and visitors to Swindon.

Councillor Heenan summarised the four-year plan on which permission to consult was being sought as well as stating why all the parks were of importance to the Borough. Councillor Jim Grant asked questions on the following issues, to which Councillor Heenan responded.

- 1) Why were there some specific commitments to Coate before the consultation?
These were either beneficial now or were necessary to ensure long-term goals, such as the café, could be realised.
- 2) Could there be clarification of the s.106 funding exchanges between Badbury Park and Moredon? This was determined by an earlier Cabinet decision (Minute 77, 22nd April 2020) and Officers would provide a full written response.
- 3) Would Council-owned country parks remain Council-owned? The Cabinet confirmed that they would.

Resolved: (1) That the Director of Strategic Development be authorised:

(a) In consultation with the Cabinet Member for Town Centre, Culture and Heritage, to develop a four year Strategic Improvement Plan for Swindon's Country Parks by summer 2021, which will, when approved, incorporate the priorities set out at recommendation 2(b) below, and which will preserve them as viable and financially sustainable assets that contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents and Swindon's overall recreational offer.

(b) In agreement with the Corporate Director of Finance and Assets, to allocate a budget of up to £50K from the Council's feasibility funding to secure investigative reports to support the development of the Parks Strategic Delivery Plan, business Country Parks.

(c) To hold a four-week consultation during spring 2021 to allow local residents to provide feedback on, and assist in identifying, the key improvements to be included within the Parks Strategic Improvement Plan.

(2) That it be agreed that in addition to the Parks Strategic Improvement Plan consultation, the three priorities for the Council at Coate Water are:

- (a) the cleaning of the Diving Board,
- (b) an exemplar inclusive and accessible play area and,
- (c) a new waterside Restaurant and Café.

(3) That it be agreed that Lydiard House and Hotel will focus on Events and Weddings, and will not reopen until further notice due to the operational cost incurred by current Covid-19 requirements.

(4) That it be agreed that income from Lydiard and Coate Water parking will be ring-fenced to those parklands for their future maintenance and improvements.

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

35. Budget Management Update (December) and Draft Budget 2021/22

Councillor Russell Holland, 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 presenting the 2020/21 revenue budget forecast out-turn and the latest position regarding the budget for 2021/22. In addition, this report meets the requirement to publish initial proposals for the Budgetary and Policy Framework at least two months before the Framework must be adopted.

Councillor Holland summarised the government support the Council had received so far to cope with the extra expenditure and lost income owing to Covid-19. However, he warned Cabinet of the difficulties still to be faced in completing the draft 2021/222 budget, as there were already significant demand-led pressures before the pandemic. Councillor Holland proposed the following amendment, which the Leader of the Council seconded: 'To insert a new recommendation at 2.5 "Authorise the Cabinet Member for Commercialisation, Education and Skills, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Finance and Assets, to agree the Collection Fund Balance and draft Council Tax Base, following the receipt of the Necessary information from central government," and to renumber the subsequent recommendations.'

Councillor Jim Grant asked a series of questions relating to the level of government funding in general, the payment for adult social care and the response to Covid-19. The Leader of the Council and the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Commercialisation, Education and Skills responded at the meeting. Councillor Holland emphasised that there was an urgent need for a wider debate in the country to determine what level of care should be provided and how it should be financed.

Resolved: (1) That the 2020/21 revenue budget forecast out-turn for each service area set out in Table 1 of the joint report and at Appendix 1 be noted;
(2) That the virements set out in Appendix 2 be approved;
(3) That £150,000 from the Hardship grant awarded in March 2020 be allocated to the Swindon Emergency Assistance Fund, in order to help those in financial hardship through provision of necessities or provide financial guidance to such individuals;
(4) That it be noted that the update on the financial outlook and that the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021/22 has yet to be published and therefore the funding position for that year remains uncertain;
(5) That the Cabinet Member for Commercialisation, Education and Skills, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Finance and Assets, be authorised to agree the Collection Fund Balance and draft Council Tax Base, following the receipt of the necessary information from central government;
(6) That it be approved that consultation commences for budget proposals set out in Appendix 3 with the outcome of that consultation being reported to Cabinet in February

- 2021 prior to considering the final budget to be recommended to Council;
- (7) That the change to Empty Homes Premium for properties that are unoccupied or unfurnished for more than 10 years be approved; and
- (8) That it be approved that the local Council Tax Support scheme will remain unchanged, apart from any increases in allowances or non-dependent deductions.

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

36. Capital Monitoring Quarter 2 Update

Councillor Russell Holland, 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 presenting the year-end monitoring position for the Council's capital programme and some proposed changes to the programme.

Councillor Holland drew Members' attention to funding for projects at Coate that were referred in a previous report on this agenda as well as other schemes to be undertaken in various wards.

Resolved: (1) That the 2020/21 year-end projected out-turn position as set out in Tables 1 & 2 and Appendices 1 and 2 be noted.

(2) That the amendments to the current approved capital programme budgets as detailed at paragraphs 3.3 to 3.4 in the joint report be approved;

(a) That the budget for Fessey House (line 50) be reduced by £1m to reflect revised cost estimates, and

(b) That the budgets for North Star Roundabout and Transfer Bridges (lines 112 and 113) be amalgamated into one budget for works along the Great Western corridor.

(3) That the additions to the programme detailed at paragraphs 3.7 to 3.19 of the joint report be approved. This further update to the Capital Programme can be accommodated within the approved capital financing revenue budget and prudential indicators as set out in the 2020/21 Budget approved by Council.

(a) That £37k of developers' S106 contributions be allocated to improve the footway between Berkeley Farm and the entrance to Wood Farm,

(b) That £308k of developers' S106 be allocated to link the traffic signals along the route between Thamesdown drive and A419 / Cricklade Road junction,

(c) That £106k of grant funding be allocated to install 22 on-street charging points in 8 residential locations in SN1,

(d) That £27k of developers' S106 be allocated to add to the existing Tadpole Farm transport scheme line 117,

(e) That £1m of grant funding be allocated to provide mobile classrooms at Crowdys Special School,

(f) That £77k of developers' S106 be allocated to provide 2 tear old provision at Shaw Ridge Primary School and Nursery,

(g) That £28k of developers' S106 be allocated to repair play park equipment at Lydiard Park,

(h) That £21k of developers' S106 together with £67k of borrowing be allocated to introduce raised earth mounds at the Lawns that will reduce anti-social behaviour in the area,

- (i) That £1m of grant funding be allocated to be spent on enabling infrastructure for Kimmerfields,
- (j) That £1.87m of developers' S106 be allocated to add to the existing Package 2 – Nythe Road Junction and Piccadilly Roundabout, line 80, this is to address the revised costs of the project, and
- (k) That £5k of developers' S106 contributions be allocated to add to the existing ASC & Health Community Equipment Store IT budget, line 44.
- (l) That £340k of developers' S106 contributions be allocated to provide Wanborough traffic calming measures.
- (4) That the transfer of CIL and S106 contributions that have been received by the Council to the relevant Parish Council for them to deliver the works required by the s106 agreement, as detailed in paragraph 3.20 of the joint report and at Appendix 3, be approved.
- (5) That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director of Finance and Assets & Director of Strategic Development for the distribution of future CIL & s106 receipts to Parish Councils, as detailed in paragraph 3.21 of the joint report.
- (6) That the contents of Appendix 4 regarding the 2019-20 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) be noted and that it be approved that this should be published on the Council's website.
- (7) That the annual retention of 5% of the total annual CIL receipts to cover administration costs per paragraph 3.25 to 3.26 below be approved.
- (8) That the intention to allocate CIL receipts to support capital programme proposals that will be taken to Cabinet in February 2021 as part of the annual capital budget setting process be approved.

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

37. Treasury Management - mid-year update report

Councillor Russell Holland, 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 setting out the Council's mid-year Treasury Management performance for 2020/21.

The Leader of the Council noted that the report had been reviewed by the Audit Committee, but the Chair of Audit was unable to be present at Cabinet.

Resolved: (1) That it be noted that the original report was presented to and noted by the Audit Committee on the 27th October 2020 as part of the scrutiny process.
(2) That the mid-year Treasury Management performance.

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

38. Sheltered Housing Staffing Review

Councillor Cathy Martyn, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety, and the Director of Housing submitted a joint report seeking Cabinet's approval on the proposals to

change staffing arrangements within sheltered housing. These proposals would end recruitment of Residential Sheltered Housing Officer, and move to a non-residential service model. In addition, they would continue to provide support to tenants living in sheltered housing complexes with a dedicated team that incrementally becomes a non-residential model of employment.

The report is necessary to enable the Council to address the shortfall in service charge that funds the service; modernise working practices and reduce the overall workforce size; and release additional social rented accommodation that was formerly used as staff accommodation.

Councillors Paul Dixon and Ray Ballman asked the following question or made comments, to which Councillor Martyn and the Director of Housing responded at the meeting.

- 1) How widely did the Council measure itself? Just with those taking this approach? The Council looked at a range of local and regional providers as well as the national picture.
- 2) Why were Opposition Members' comments on the draft Cabinet Member Decision Note not included in the Cabinet report? The purpose in bringing the proposal to Cabinet and hence Scrutiny was to ensure a wider debate.
- 3) Could the service be funded by Adult Social Care or from other savings? This would require support from the general fund and would not address the recruitment issues the service already has. The proposals would support a resilient on-going service.
- 4) How would the same level of service be maintained? Currently there is an expectation that staff provide a 24/7 service, which they are not contracted to do, which has adversely affected recruitment. The proposals seek to provide a resilient service for all residents.

The Leader of the Council added that Councillor Martyn had been subject to rigorous challenge on these issues prior to bringing these reports.

Resolved: (1) That the proposals to end the recruitment of residential Sheltered Housing Officers be approved and the changes to a model of service delivery based on a cluster team model rather than a dedicated sheltered housing officer at the majority of schemes, as set out in the body of the report, be approved.

(2) That the Director of Housing be authorised to reallocate the former sheltered housing staff accommodation once it becomes vacant as outlined in the body of the report, ensuring that allocations are sensitive to the location and if appropriate allocated to under occupying households.

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

39. Accelerated Tree Planting in the Great Western Community Forest

Councillor Gary Sumner, the Cabinet Member for Strategic Infrastructure, Transport & Planning, and Councillor Keith Williams, the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, along with the Director of Strategic Development and the Head of Property Assets, submitted a joint report seeking authority for the Council to participate in a national 'Trees for Climate'

initiative. This would be as part of the developing Great Western Community Forest (GWCF). The report also sought approval for the principle of using Council owned land parcels for woodland planting.

Councillor Keith Williams outlined the scale of the proposed scheme and how it would contribute toward the Council's carbon reduction targets. Councillor Jane Milner-Barry, along with Cabinet Members Councillors Russell Holland, Mary Martin, and Dale Heenan asked a number of questions to which Councillor Williams and Councillor Gary Sumner responded.

- 1) Funding for tree maintenance – both existing and new? It was explained that it is only for planting and nurturing the new
- 2) Audits of existing trees and identification of sites for new planting? Both Councillor Williams and Councillor Sumner were considering a Strategic Tree Assessment similar to the SHEELA land assessment – a 'TREELAA' - to identify available sites as well as existing locations.
- 3) The need to use the correct, local species. Councillor Williams stated that the Council would address this through publicity.
- 4) The need for mature trees to reduce carbon. The Cabinet Members noted this point.
- 5) The ongoing need for tree maintenance and the consequences for habitats when this was done. The Council was already working with the Woodland Trust, which was keen to expand its coverage within Swindon. However, there would be ongoing budget considerations.

Resolved: (1) That the Director of Strategic Development, in consultation with the Chief Legal Officer, be authorised to enter into agreement with Cheshire West and Chester Council to progress the Council's involvement in England's Trees for Climate Initiative on such terms and conditions that are necessary in order to protect the Council's interests.

(2) That the Head of Property Assets, in consultation with the Director of Strategic Development, the Chief Legal Officer and the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning be authorised:

(a) To identify Council-owned land, which is assessed as suitable woodland planting and unsuitable for any alternative development. and

(b) To agree that such land where appropriate be used to deliver woodland planting, in accordance with the terms of the Trees for Climate Grant Funding Agreement, and that the sites identified from that exercise are taken forward in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Infrastructure, Transport & Planning, and the Cabinet Member for Climate Change.

(3) That, Subject to Recommendation 2(b) above, the Director of Strategic Development be authorised to commission tree planting on the land identified and approved for woodland planting in accordance with the Trees for Climate Grant Funding Agreement on such further terms and conditions that are necessary in order to protect the Council's interests.

(4) That the Director of Strategic Development be authorised to allocate the Trees for Climate funding that is being made available by Cheshire West and Chester Council to deliver woodland planting in accordance with the Grant Funding Agreement.

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

