

CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 12 JULY 2017

PRESENT:- Councillors David Renard (Chair), Russell Holland, Oliver Donachie, Toby Elliott, Fionuala Foley, Brian Ford, Mary Martin, Cathy Martyn and Garry Perkins.

An apology for absence was received from Councillors Keith Williams

Councillor Jim Grant, the Leader of the Labour Group, attended the meeting in respect of Minutes 20 and 24. Councillor Emma Bushell attended the meeting in respect of Minute 24.

15. Declarations of Interest.

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

16. Grenfell Tower, London

Further to his comments at the last meeting regarding the tragedy of the Grenfell Tower block fire in London, and recognising the national concern about renovation works to high-rise blocks of flats and general fire safety measures in place for all buildings, the Leader of the Council read out to the meeting a statement regarding providing an update of the position in Swindon. A copy of the Leader's statement is attached to the minutes at Appendix 1.

17. Minutes.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th June 2017 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

18. Public Question Time.

Mr Tim French, a resident of the Borough, asked about the Council's intentions with regard to the future replacement of its minibus fleet. The Leader of the Council advised that a written response would be provided.

19. 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 paragraphs 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 No.	Paragraph No.	Minute No.
10	3	24

20.**Budget Management Update**

Councillor Russell Holland, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Commercialisation, and the Corporate Director, Resources and Transformation, submitted a joint report presenting the 2017-18 Revenue Budget forecast out-turn and a Capital Programme update.

Councillor Jim Grant, the Leader of the Opposition, referred to the status of key budget risks, and asked, specifically, about the expected shortfall on the small scale house development building and the progress of the Euclid Street site development. Councillor Holland and Councillor Oliver Donachie, the Cabinet Member for the Economy and Skills, responded to the questions at the meeting.

Resolved – (1) That the projected Revenue Budget out-turn position for 2017-18, set out in Table 1 and Appendix 1 of the report, be noted.
(2) That the use of the budget risk contingency of £4.183m to mitigate the projected shortfall arising on the high risk savings proposals be approved.
(3) That the virements set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.
(4) That the use of the capital reserve to meet the infrastructure costs of establishing the new libraries operating model, as set out in paragraphs 3.12 and 3.13 of the report, be approved.

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

21.**Education Transport Policy 2018/19**

Councillors Fionuala Foley, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School Attainment, and Mary Martin, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Place, and the Head of Education and the Head of Highways and Transport, submitted a joint report setting out the Council's legal duties in relation to Education Transport and the results of the consultation on options for post 16 transport for mainstream students and students with a Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND). It was noted that the Education Transport Policy proposed for approval would be implemented for pupils attending education establishments from the start of the academic year 2018/19.

Councillor Foley advised the meeting that the figure in paragraph 5.1.2 of the covering report had been corrected following agenda despatch, that the amount of £3.2m should read £2.7m. She then presented the report, highlighting particular changes made to the policy with regard to the continuation of automatic discretionary subsidised support for pupils in the Ridegway area, and in the decision not to introduce an annual contribution from parents for post-16 SEND pupils' travel, both of which had been made in direct response to the consultation feedback. Councillor Mary Martin and the Leader commented on the detail of the report and the effectiveness of the consultation process undertaken in support of the review, with the Leader making particular reference to the effect of consultation outcomes in shaping the policy recommendations.

Resolved – (1) That the analysis of the consultation undertaken on the options for post 16 transport for mainstream students and students with a Special Educational

Need and Disability (SEND), attached at appendix 1 to the report, be noted.

(2) That the proposed Education Transport Policy 2018/19, attached to the report at Appendix 2, be approved, including:

- Changes to remove automatic discretionary subsidised support for pupils accessing mainstream Post 16 education, with the exception of the transport from the Ridgeway transport area to the Ridgeway 6th form for reasons set out in the body of the report, in response to the consultation and the need for young people to be able to access education the transport arrangements are maintained with an annual contribution of £495 (this is detailed within Part 1 of the report from paragraph 3.13 to paragraph 3.19).
- Changes relating to Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) 16 years to 25 years travel to offer a Personal Travel Budget (PTB), a bus pass. Options to increase independent travel training and more personal travel arrangements will be explored, but in response to the consultation there will be no introduction of an annual contribution from parents. (this is detailed within Part 2 of the report from paragraph 3.20 to paragraph 3.37).

(3) That the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Digitalisation be authorised to investigate and establish methods such as a travel app to assist parents when taking up personalised travel budgets.

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

22. Debt Management

In accordance with the requirement of the Council's Debt Management Policy, Councillor Russell Holland, the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Commercialisation, and the Director of Law & Democratic Services and the Head of Revenues & Benefits, submitted the annual report of debts written off in 2016/17.

Councillor Holland informed members that discussions were being held with the Department of Work and Pensions on how the Universal Credit was affecting the rate of housing rent arrears.

Resolved – That it be noted that:

1. The Collection rates for Council Tax and Miscellaneous Incomes improved in the financial year 2016/7, whilst the collection rates for Business Rates and Housing Rents reduced. All collection rates remain above average compared to other Unitary Authorities.
2. The work being undertaken to reduce Council Tax recovery proceedings and the use of Enforcement Agents has led to a 38% reduction in the number of summonses issued (a fall of 5,382) in the last 3 years. The number of referrals to bailiffs did increase slightly in 2016/7, but is still lower than in the financial years 2013/14 and 2014/15.

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

23. References from Other Council Bodies - Health and Wellbeing Board

Councillor Brian Ford, the Cabinet Member for Adults' Health and Social Care, and

the Director of Law and Democratic Services, submitted joint report inviting Cabinet to consider references from the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 24th May 2017 regarding (i) the development by NHS England and its partners of a toolkit to help health and social care organisations work together in identifying, assessing and supporting the wellbeing of carers and their families, this including a template Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) that local partners can use to help us work together in supporting Carers of all ages and their families, and (ii) the Better Care Fund planning process and resource allocation.

In response to a question by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ford expanded on how the Council was working with the Clinical Commissioning Group to ensure the most effective use the Better Care Fund.

Resolved – (1) That the intentions and principles of the Carers Memorandum of Understanding be supported.

(2) That, with reference to the Better Care Fund 2017-19:

- a) The proposed spend on the additional funding of £2.914m as outlined in the Spring Budget 2017 be agreed.
- b) The Director of Adult Services be authorised to produce the Better Care Fund Plan, in conjunction with the Accountable Officer of the Clinical Commissioning Group, in line with statutory guidance published by NHS England with the level of adult social care spending protected in line with spend in 2016/17 plus inflation of 1.79%.
- c) The Director of Adult Services, the Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer), and the Director of Law and Democratic Services be authorised to update the National Health Services 2004 Section 75 Agreement with the Better Care Fund agreed funding.

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

24. Site in South East Swindon - Proposed disposal and collaboration agreement

Councillor Toby Elliott, the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, and the Corporate Director, Economy, Regeneration and Skills, submitted a joint report proposing a collaboration between the Council and a major local business partner to develop a Council owned site in South East Swindon to provide good quality housing across a mix of tenures and investment in the community to maximise the benefits delivered through the residential development.

Councillor Emma Bushell, representing Walcot and Park North, and Councillor Jim Grant, the Leader of the Opposition, asked questions about engagement with Ward Members and the local community regarding the report proposals and other local projects and opportunities to use the same collaborative arrangements to facilitate developments elsewhere. Councillor Elliott responded to the questions at the meeting.

Resolved – (1) That the Head of Property Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, and the Corporate Director for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills, be authorised to negotiate terms for an option agreement with the business partner identified in the report for the disposal to the

partner of the site identified in the plan attached as an Appendix to the report, on the terms set out in the main body of the report and subject to Cabinet agreeing the final terms.

(2) That the Director of Law and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, Corporate Director for the Economy, Regeneration and Skills, and the Head of Property Assets, be authorised to enter into such necessary legal agreements to effect the transaction in order to protect the Council's interests and in compliance with Procurement and State Aid rules.

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

This page is intentionally left blank

At the last Cabinet Meeting I referred to the shocking and tragic events that had occurred in the Grenfell Tower block fire, which happened on the same day as our Cabinet meeting and I offered condolences on behalf of Cabinet.

As the scale of the disaster has unfolded it has raised national concern about renovation works to high-rise blocks of flats and general fire safety measures in place for all buildings. I thought it would be useful to give a update of the position in Swindon.

We have eight residential high-rise blocks of flats; six of these are 10-storey residential blocks located in the Parks and Penhill, George Hall Court a 7-storey sheltered housing scheme located in Park South and the David Murray John (DMJ) Tower which has residential accommodation to the top half of a 21-storey building located in the town centre. We have current robust Fire Risk Assessments in place for all our blocks, but naturally we have taken the opportunity to update these since the Grenfell Tower fire.

Due to the significant concern and media coverage, it was important to reassure residents about the fire safety measures that we already have in place for our high-rise blocks of flats. We've issued two press releases, written to all tenants and leaseholders, issued a leaflet with frequently asked questions and undertaken fire safety visits to the blocks with Ward Councillors; Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Safety, local MP's and Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service (DWFRS) and myself, to listen to any concerns residents may have about fire safety and answer questions. DWFRS continue to offer Safe & Well home visits to offer advice on keeping homes safe.

It is understood that the external cladding used on the Grenfell Tower created a risk to fire safety. We have notified the Department for Communities and Local Government that none of our high-rise blocks have been refurbished with the same Aluminium Composite Material panels or cladding that may have been a contributory factor for the rapid spread of fire at Grenfell.

Our high-rise blocks of flats are constructed to prevent the spread of flame between compartments (from one flat to another), in the event of a fire. The layout and design of our 10-storey high-rise blocks provides an intermediate lobby with a dry riser for fighting a fire and separate protected shaft with stairs for the means of escape. The DMJ Tower has two protected shafts with stairs and positive pressure fans, whilst George Hall Court has an automatic ventilation system to the stairwell that also operates when the fire alarm is activated to keep these clear from smoke in the event of a fire.

It is not a requirement to install a communal fire alarm to high-rise blocks, but we have put in this extra safety measure along with independent smoke detectors to provide early warning in the event of a fire. Currently, sprinkler systems and internal fire doors are not fitted within our residential high rise blocks and this will be a key consideration for future improvement and refurbishment works.

We have completed a full fire alarm test to the six 10-storey blocks with DWFRS since the Grenfell Tower fire and plan to complete the same exercise to George Hall Court and the DMJ Tower during July 2017.

We have approximately 90 medium-rise blocks of flats, which are generally 3 or 4 storeys high and just over 500 low-rise 2 storey blocks of flats. The medium and low-rise blocks of flats were also constructed with compartments to prevent the spread of flame, in the event of a fire. There are some non-standard doors fitted to leasehold flats, this is where leaseholders have replaced the fire door with their own front door and officers are taking urgent action with leaseholders to get these replaced with fire doors as quickly as possible.

Some tenants and Ward Councillors have raised concern about the External Wall Insulation fitted, as part of our on-going modernisation programme, to our non-traditional low-rise housing stock. We currently have a programme in place to refurbish approximately 220 properties in Pinehurst and Meadowcroft. We are planning joint fire safety visits with Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Rescue Service to meet with residents so that we can listen to their concerns and give advice on keeping homes safe.

To reiterate we have not fitted Aluminium Composite Material panels or cladding on any previous or current refurbishment programmes of work to our housing stock.

There has been some national concern that similar panels may have been used for schools specifically those buildings that are residential or are 4 storeys or more in height. We have notified the Education & Skills Funding Agency that all the council maintained schools have a Fire Risk Assessment, which are currently being reviewed. We have also briefed Head teachers about Aluminium Composite panels so that they can request an inspection if they have any concerns, and can be reassured about their buildings. It is important to note that none of the Council's school are residential and none are 4 or more storeys high.