

CABINET

Decision Notices and Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 19 October 2017 at 5.00pm at Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford

PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2017

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2017)

Present: Councillors S Davies (Leader and Chair), L D Carter, A R H England, R C Evans, A D McClements, J C Minor, R A Overton, S A W Reynolds and P R Watling.

Also Present: Councillors A J Eade (Conservative Group Leader) and Councillor W L Tomlinson (Liberal Democrat/Independent Group Leader)

CB-125 Apologies for Absence

None.

CB-126 Christian Chandler

The Leader invited the Cabinet and all those in attendance to join him in observing one minute's silence in memory of Christian Chandler, a local 13 year old, who had tragically lost his life in a road traffic collision on Monday 16 October 2017.

CB-127 Declarations of Interest

None

CB-128 Minutes

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CB-129 2017/18 Financial Management Report

Key Decision identified as **Financial Management Report** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 20 September 2017.

Reserved for Council

Councillor L D Carter, Cabinet Member: Finance, Commercial Services & Economic Development, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Finance & Human Resources and Chief Financial Officer.

It was reported that the net projected outturn position for 2017/18 was estimated to be within budget. This was a positive position given that £13.8m savings were required to balance the 2017/18 budget, and currently left £4m uncommitted balance in the central contingency. Senior Managers would aim to sustain this position if

possible, so that the one-off contingency benefit was available to support the medium term budget strategy. However, it was noted that potentially the Council could face significant financial pressures if, for example, the winter was particularly hard or if the NHS faced significant winter pressures.

Children's Safeguarding and Early Help & Support continued to be key areas of focus and both had cost improvement plans in place to reduce costs and deliver savings. These plans were monitored on a regular basis both by senior managers and Cabinet Members. Members noted that projections took into account the specific contingency of £2.5m earmarked in the 2017/18 budget strategy for Early Help & Support pressures and the £2.5m Improved Better Care Funding available.

A number of variations from the approved budget were reported, including some beneficial variances. The key areas highlighted were:

- A benefit of £2.5m relating to Treasury Management activities - the majority of which related to benefits from low interest rates for short term borrowing.
- Children's Safeguarding was a key pressure with an overspend of £2.4m being reported which was an increase of £1.4m since the last report. This mainly related to the cost of placements for Looked after Children and the cost of social workers. A four year model was in place, designed to deliver efficiencies over the remainder of the year and medium term.
- Early Help & Support – the service was currently projecting an overspend of £0.9m mainly relating to the purchase of care packages.

It was noted that the capital programme totalled £102.9m which included all approvals since the budget was set. At the time of compiling the report projected spend was 98% of the budget allocation. Some new allocations, virements and slippage had been identified which would go to Full Council in November for formal approval.

Sales Ledger and Business Rates collection were ahead of the targets set. The level of outstanding Council Tax debt was slightly behind the target set for the year.

The Department for Communities and Local Government was seeking applications from authorities to pilot 100% Business Rates Retention in 2018/19 and to pilot new pooling models. The Cabinet Member reported that discussions had commenced with Shropshire and Herefordshire Councils to assess whether submission of a joint business case could be beneficial. The deadline for submission of business cases was Friday 27 October but assessing the potential financial implications and developing associated governance arrangements were complex issues which were still being discussed. Delegated authority to the Managing Director after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Commercial Services and Economic Development to apply for Business Rates pilot status jointly with one or more other councils if an acceptable business case can be developed is therefore requested.

The Conservative Group Leader commented on the overspend relating to Children's Safeguarding which was a nationwide problem and raised the potential for regional or conglomerate working on the issue. He also welcomed the bid to pilot 100%

Business Rates Retention in 2018/19, appreciated the complexity of putting the business case together, and hoped for a successful bid.

Councillor W L Tomlinson (Liberal Democrat/Independent Group Leader) noted pressures on the budget from Children's Safeguarding and Early Help & Support, particularly noting that an aging population was unlikely to reduce pressure in the latter service area. He also anticipated budgetary pressure as a result of the roll out of Universal Credit.

The Leader reflected on discussions at the recent Local Government Association Conference which he had attended which identified Adult Social Care, Looked After Children, uncertainty on Business Rates and the Better Care Fund as key budget pressures. He particularly welcomed the Chairman of the LGA Community Wellbeing Board, Cllr Izzi Seccombe's, challenge to the government to provide additional funding.

RESOLVED that -

- (a) it be noted that 2017/18 revenue spending is currently projected to be within budget and work will continue with SMT to sustain this position;**
- (b) the position in relation to capital spend be noted and TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that the new allocations, virements and slippage detailed in Appendix 3 of the report be approved;**
- (c) the collection rates for NNDR, council tax and sales ledger be noted; and**
- (d) delegated authority be granted to the Managing Director, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Commercial Services and Economic Development to apply for Business Rates pilot status jointly with one or more other councils if an acceptable business case is developed.**

CB-130 Pride in Our High Streets - Supporting Business

Key Decision identified as **Pride in Your High Street 2** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 20 September 2017.

Councillor L D Carter, Cabinet Member: Finance, Commercial Services & Economic Development, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Business, Development & Employment. It was reported that despite the Council having to deliver £96m of ongoing savings in response to Government cuts, investing in High Streets and local communities remained a priority. The report set out proposals to invest a further £700k into the six high streets of Wellington, Ironbridge, Newport, Oakengates, Dawley and Madeley.

The first phase of the Pride In Your High Street programme had comprised two elements of funding to support events and activities around high streets and local centres funding c.30 projects to increase footfall and achieve economic outcomes.

The proposed second phase of the programme was targeted at the six Borough Town high streets and sought to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the change of household spending patterns, shopping culture and recreation trends which resulted in the High Streets nationally being under threat. The report set out the initiatives that would be delivered by the Pride in Our High Streets programme, the eligibility criteria for each and also how the Council would support the branding and marketing of high streets to make the most of the market role and potential of each high street and maximise the footfall from both the local and regional visitor markets.

The second phase of the programme would comprise £700,000, incorporating £200,000 of underspend from the first phase. The importance of engaging more young people in revitalising and visiting our local high streets had already been identified and Cabinet had previously approved the use of £100,000 of this funding to deliver the Young High Street Challenge.

Members noted that experience had shown that the most successful high street regeneration schemes were the result of local action and small projects and particularly reflected upon the Empty Unit Incentive Package Property and Façade Improvement.

Following calls from the Conservative Group Leader and Liberal Democrat/Independent Group Leader for the commissioning of a research study, Members were advised that there was already a lot of national level data available which could be shared to this end.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Cabinet agrees that Pride in Our High Streets is implemented as set out within the report.**
- (b) delegated authority is given to the Assistant Director Business, Development & Employment in consultation with Assistant Director Finance & Human Resources and the Cabinet member for Finance and Service Delivery to approve grant funding packages as set out within the report.**

The meeting ended at 5.32pm

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Jonathan Eatough
Assistant Director: Governance, Procurement & Commissioning
Date: 25 October 2017

Signed:

Date: