

CABINET

Decision Notices and Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 7 December 2017 at 5.00pm at Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford

PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY, 13 DECEMBER 2017

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY, 18 DECEMBER 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-131 Apologies for Absence

None.

CB-132 Declarations of Interest

None

CB-133 Minutes

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CB-134 2017/18 Financial Management Report

Key Decision identified as **Financial Management Report** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 8 November 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 despite £13.8m savings being required to balance the 2017/18 budget, which currently left £3.7m 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 anticipated requirement for £3.1m additional investment necessary in the current year – an increase of £0.6m 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 that an additional investment of £1.0m would be required in the current year mainly relating to the purchase of care packages.

It was noted that the capital programme totalled £101.2m which included all approvals since the budget was set. At the time of compiling the report projected spend was 97% of the budget allocation. Some new allocations and slippage had been identified which would go to Full Council in January 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.

Members welcomed the report and congratulated the Cabinet Member: Finance, Commercial Services & Economic Development, Senior Management Team and Finance Team for their management of the budget. Members also applauded the Partnership working that had taken place to support the retention of community services, the Council's success in keeping debt low, maintaining one of the lowest rates of Council Tax in the West Midlands, building houses, building up the business rate base and developing the commercial agenda. The Leader particularly lamented the lack of financial support for Adult Social Care in the chancellor's Budget; this was now a big issue across the country and he urged a united message for the government to deliver on this key priority.

RESOLVED that –

- 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;**
- the position in relation to capital spend be noted and TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that the new allocations and slippage detailed in Appendix 3 of the report be approved; and**

(c) the collection rates for NNDR, council tax and sales ledger be noted;

CB-135 **Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19 and Council Tax Support Hardship Policy**

Key Decision identified as **Council Tax Support Policy Review 2018/19** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 8 November 2017.

Reserved for Council

Councillor R A Overton, Cabinet Member: Housing & Enforcement, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Neighbourhood & Customer Services, which set out the proposed policies for 2018/19 in relation to Council Tax Support and the Council Tax Hardship Fund.

The national Council Tax Benefit scheme had been abolished and replaced with a new system of local Council Tax Support (CTS) in 2013. This meant that each local authority had to design and implement its own system to award council tax discounts to customers on low incomes. The Council was required to review the scheme annually and consultation had taken place in line with legislative requirements in 2016 when it was proposed that the Council would not consult again until 2019 at the earliest. A review of the 2017/18 scheme had taken place, and it was not proposed to make any changes for 2018/19 which would affect entitlement although some technical changes were required to keep the scheme functioning in line with the wider welfare benefits system.

The Hardship Fund had been invaluable over the last four years in providing additional support to the most financially vulnerable customers, however, take-up remained low. This was because a customer had to be in receipt of some Council Tax Support, no matter how minimal, to qualify, however, customers who had been subject to the benefit cap were nulled from the scheme. Therefore it was proposed to amend the hardship scheme for 2018/19 to allow the Council to help these customers. Additionally, more proactive use of the scheme would assist customers struggling to pay arrears relating to the previous year's council tax.

The scheme received full support from the Cabinet.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

- (a) that the Council Tax Support Scheme Policy for 2018/19, as shown at Appendix A of the report, be approved;
- (b) that the Council Tax Hardship Policy and accompanying funding continues in 2017/18.

CB-136 **Procurement Update**

Key Decision identified as **Procurement Update Report** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 8 November 2017.

Councillor L D Carter, Cabinet Member: Finance, Commercial Services & Economic Development, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Governance, Procurement & Commissioning which provided an update on the Council's Procurement Intentions Document and the latest information regarding effective procurement and contract management.

It was noted that council wide procurement continued to drive savings through robust competitive tendering and real time negotiation when brokering services.

All procurements, where possible, had an aspect of social value being delivered as an essential part of the outcome. The social value return on investment meant that less could be spent and more received with smart procurement. Bidders would be guided as to the type of social value that would most benefit the community or could offer solutions in line with their own corporate social responsibility priorities. An increase in social value outcomes helping our communities to help themselves, had been noted.

Additionally, the Procurement Team had updated all tender documents to reflect new GDPR regulations as set out in the report and officers could use these immediately. The Audit Team were also working on an easy read guide. All council contracts would need to be amended to show the legislative change between now and the end of April 2018.

The regular Procurement Intentions Document was set out at Appendix 1 to the report. The document presented up and coming procurements for the next few months.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) the procurement updates in the report be noted; and**
- (b) the Procurement Intentions Document (Appendix 1 to the report) be noted and, where indicated, authority be delegated to appropriate officers (as per the Contract Procedure Rules) to progress new procurements through the tender process to contract award.**

CB-137 Telford & Wrekin Local Plan

Key Decision identified as **Telford & Wrekin Local Plan** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 8 November 2017.

Councillor R A Overton, Cabinet Member: Housing & Enforcement, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Business, Development & Employment, which set out the proposed adoption of the Local Plan.

The adoption of the Local Plan would enable the Council to determine how and where development would take place in the Borough and would guide future planning decisions up to 2031. The Local Plan provided the Council and local

community with greater certainty regarding future development within the borough through a robust and up to date development plan.

The Council had a legal obligation to keep its development plan documents up-to-date. The new Telford & Wrekin Local Plan (the Local Plan) would supersede the current suite of development planning documents and guide future planning decisions up to 2031.

In order to be adopted by the Council and carry full weight as the development plan in the making of planning decisions, the Plan had first been found 'sound' by an independent Inspector at an Examination in Public in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Council had submitted its draft Plan to the Secretary of State in June 2016 with the Examination hearings taking place in January and February 2017. In issuing his report, the Inspector had accepted the 'proportional' distribution of new development between Telford, Newport and the rural area. He also accepted that there was no evidence to suggest that there were any constraints in terms of infrastructure that would prevent delivery of the plan. He had also endorsed the Council's approach to the provision of affordable housing and supported the Council's economic growth ambitions.

The Inspector had concluded that, subject to a number of modifications (appended to the report), the Plan was sound and could be adopted.

Members of the Cabinet welcomed the proposed Plan, noting that the Council would be one of the first third of Councils in the country to adopt its Local Plan which would provide the Council with greater certainty regarding future development within the Borough and help resist speculative development.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that:-

- (a) the recommendations set out in the Inspector's report on the Examination of the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan (Appendix 1 to the report) and his Schedule of Main Modifications (Appendix 2 to the report) be accepted.**
- (b) the further Local Plan Minor Modifications (Appendix 3 and 4 to the report) be agreed.**
- (c) the changes set out in the Inspector's Schedule of Main Modifications (Appendix 2 to the report), the Minor Modifications (Appendix 3 to the report) and Second Schedule of Minor Modifications (Appendix 4 to the report) be made to the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan (Appendix 5 to the report) and that the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan (Appendix 5 to the report), as amended by incorporating these changes, be adopted by the Council.**
- (d) the Policies Map (Appendix 7 to the report) be adopted to illustrate geographically the policies in the new Local Plan 2011-2031**

CB-138 Community Safety Partnership Strategy 2017-2019

Non Key Decision

Reserved for Council

Superintendent Tom Harding of West Mercia Police and the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership presented the report which set out the “Safer Telford and Wrekin Strategy 2017-19” for approval. The strategy was set against a background which had seen the election of a new Police and Crime Commissioner resulting in the new West Mercia Police and Crime Plan and many of the partnerships had undergone restructure. However, the partners were determined to minimise the effects of those restructures on the community and significant benefits had been gained from the appointment of the Council’s Partnerships Manager which had ensured related plans and strategies were aligned (eg, the West Mercia Police and Crime Plan 2016-21, the local Youth Justice Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy).

The Safer Telford and Wrekin Partnership was committed to reducing crime and its impact on communities, including the most vulnerable residents and victims of crime. Its overarching priority was to reduce crime, and the fear of crime, in the Borough. The priorities for 2017-2019 had been decided through analysis of recorded crime and through consultation with agencies. Whilst the Partnership recognised that other types of crime occurred in the Borough, it had agreed to concentrate on three areas in particular for the period of this strategy. The three priorities were:

- Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and its impact on victims;
- Addressing Domestic Abuse and its impact on victims; and
- Reducing the impact of crime, including fear of, on community wellbeing.

The Safer Telford and Wrekin Strategy outlined how the Partnership would address the three priority areas over two year period and the impact on the community. Progress against the priorities would be monitored and challenged through the Partnership’s performance framework.

A copy of the draft Safer Telford and Wrekin Strategy, which provided more detail on the priorities was appended to the report.

Members welcomed the report and applauded the choice of key priorities.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that the Safer Telford and Wrekin Strategy 2017-19 be approved.

CB-139 Strong Leader Report: Exercise of Voting Power for Wrekin Housing Trust EGM on 29 November 2017

Non Key Decision

The Leader advised the Cabinet about the recent exercise of his Strong Leader powers as set out in the report. On this occasion, the government had introduced new regulations to reduce public sector involvement in large housing providers

including Housing Associations as detailed in the report. The Chief Executive of The Wrekin Housing Group had written to the Assistant Director: Governance, Procurement and Commissioning asking the Council to consider changes to the governance structure of the Trust as it prepared for the change in the law. The Trust had been keen to make the changes before the new legislation became effective and this urgency had resulted in the Leader making the decision to support the changes under his Strong Leader powers.

The Council was represented on the Board of Wrekin Housing Trust and the Trust appreciated the value that this representation brought and were keen to retain and protect this on the Board of the proposed new Community Benefit Society. The Leader indicated his intention to appoint Councillor A D McClements to the new Trust Board.

RESOLVED that Councillor A D McClements be appointed to the Wrekin Housing Trust Board.

The meeting ended at 5.38pm

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Jonathan Eatough
Assistant Director: Governance, Procurement & Commissioning
Date: 13 December 2017

Signed:

Date: