
CABINET

MINUTES of the Virtual Meeting held via Skype on Wednesday, 10 February 2021 from 7.00 pm - 7.24 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock (Vice-Chairman), Monique Bonney, Angela Harrison, Ben J Martin, Richard Palmer, Julian Saunders and Roger Truelove (Chairman).

DEPUTY CABINET MEMBERS: Councillors Derek Carnell, Elliott Jayes, Hannah Perkin, Sarah Stephen, Eddie Thomas and Ghlin Whelan.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Alister Andrews, Billy Attaway, Jayne Bolas, Martyn Cassell, David Clifford, Jo Mapp, Jo Millard, Larissa Reed, Nick Vickers, Emma Wiggins and Phil Wilson.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Steve Davey, Tim Gibson, Ken Ingleton, Carole Jackson, Pete Neal, Ken Rowles, Paul Stephen, Tim Valentine and Corrie Woodford.

APOLOGY: Councillor Alastair Gould.

444 INTRODUCTION

The Leader explained that the meeting would be conducted in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panel (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No. 392.

In welcoming all Members and members of the public, the Leader explained which Swale Borough Council (SBC) officers were in attendance.

445 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 December 2020 (Minute Nos. 346 – 358) and of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 26 January 2021 (Minutes Nos. 426 – 428) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

446 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

Part A recommendations for Council

447 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND 2021/22 BUDGET

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report which set out the council's budget proposals for 2021/22, the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the Capital Strategy. He updated Members on the Government support

received since December 2020, as advised at the Scrutiny Committee on 20 January 2021.

Referring to the table at paragraph 2.2 on page 6 of the report, the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance said that the settlement figure of £1,470,472 included Tranche 5 funding, a higher level of New Homes Bonus than expected and an unexpected new grant for lower tier Councils. He said that a further grant of £198k to meet the reduced costs of Council Tax income was also expected. He added that the settlement figure was over 50% greater than planned for, and this was a great relief. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance said that grants awarded were needs-based, SBC had high needs and the grants received had reduced the levels of savings required and demands on reserves to achieve a balanced budget for 2021/22. The call on reserves had now reduced from over £1million to £662k. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance said that it was not sustainable to balance a budget with reserves but in the current Covid-19 pandemic this was necessary.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance warned of future financial challenges but said that in recognition of the hard work by staff, a 2% pay increase had been agreed by the union and would be implemented in the next financial year.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance drew attention to the £4.95 per annum increase in Council Tax for a Band D property, taking the Swale precept to £184.32 per year, excluding Parish precepts. He reminded Members that SBC's precept was only part of the charge and said that Kent County Council's precept would increase by £67.50, the Police service by £15 and Kent Fire and Rescue by £1.52, for a Band D property, resulting in an overall rise of £88.98 (4.91%) per annum, excluding Parish precepts.

In drawing attention to Appendix II, the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance explained that the Budget Variations had been report to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee and would be considered at the next Full Council meeting on 24 February 2021.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance referred to paragraphs 2.9 and 2.10 which explained how CIPFA and Central Government discouraged borrowing for income generation purposes. He said that many Councils whose budgets had depended on declining property investments now found themselves in a difficult position. He referred to borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWL) and said that future capital borrowing might include PWL loans and internal borrowing. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance said that the previous administration had invested in the Sittingbourne Town Centre (STC) project and members of the current administration were seriously opposed to the project which they considered was a commercial risk. He said that nobody could have anticipated the current Covid-19 pandemic and he hoped for a major increase in demand for the leisure facilities provided at Bourne Place, Sittingbourne.

Referring to paragraph 2.14 on page 9 of the report, the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance spoke about the investment in Swale Rainbow Homes Ltd and said that the initial borrowing for the project could be financed by predictable and appropriate rental income whilst the property asset value would be expected to

increase significantly in the future. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance said that £3million was included in the Capital Programme for Swale House refurbishment but this figure was provisional. A report would be presented to a future Cabinet meeting, as the future use of Swale House, the level of savings from adaptations, the likely market for letting accommodation and capital investment priorities of the Council needed to be considered.

Finally, the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance said that borrowing had an impact on any revenue budget and investment in any capital projects needed a return. He proposed the recommendations 1 to 7 as set out in the report which were seconded by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning.

A Member drew attention that the Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board precept in the table in paragraph 3.3 on page 10 should be 3.6%, not 2%.

Recommended:

- (1) That the 2021/22 Revenue Budget proposals be approved.***
- (2) That the proposed Council Tax Band D increase of £184.32 for 2021/22 be approved.***
- (3) That the Medium Term Financial Plan be noted.***
- (4) That the Capital Strategy be approved.***
- (5) That the Capital Programme proposals be approved.***
- (6) That the additional amount of Council Tax for Parish Precepts be noted.***
- (7) That the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement as set out in Appendix VIII be approved.***

448 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2021/22

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and acknowledged the expertise and knowledge of the Finance team. He proposed the recommendation which was seconded by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning.

Recommended:

- (1) That the Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22 and the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators be approved.***

**449 Part B Reports for decision by Cabinet
SUPPLEMENTARY LITTER ENFORCEMENT CONTRACT AWARD**

The Cabinet Member for Environment introduced the report which summarised the procurement process of supplementary litter enforcement services and sought

Cabinet approval of the recommended contractor. He explained that the service included enforcement of littering and dog fouling. The Cabinet Member for Environment said that the service was funded by income received from Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) and additional income was ringfenced for environmental improvements. He said that positive feedback on the service had been received from the public.

The Cabinet Member for Environment said that four organisations had expressed an interest and two companies had submitted acceptable applications as set out at paragraph 2.6 on page 56 of the report. He said that LA Support Ltd scored highest on both price and quality. He proposed the recommendation which was seconded by the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing.

A Member was supportive of the service and asked if penalties in certain areas were analysed so that the public could be educated? In response, the Environmental Enforcement Manager explained that there was a monthly report of hot spots that enforcement officers went out to monitor and issued FPNs if necessary. She added that there were regular duty of care and litter campaigns and LA Support Ltd had agreed to support this.

Resolved:

(1) That the appointment of LA Support Ltd be approved as Supplementary Environmental Enforcement Services from 1 April 2021 for an initial period of 3 years with the option of two further one-year extensions (3+1+1years).

450 SOUTH THAMES GATEWAY BUILDING CONTROL BUSINESS PLAN 2021-2024

The Cabinet Member for Planning introduced the report which sought comments on the draft South Thames Gateway (STG) shared Building Control Partnership Business and Delivery Plans 2021 to 2024, and these would be referred to the Joint Committee. He thanked Councillor Tim Gibson for sitting on the STG Building Control Joint Committee and proposed the recommendation which was seconded by the Cabinet Member for Economy and Property.

Resolved:

(1) That the draft South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Business and Delivery Plans for 2021 to 2024 be approved.

(2) That should there be any amendments following consideration by the Joint Committee, the final plans be reported back for final approval.

Chairman

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel