

CABINET

Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Monday, 24th February, 2020 at 1.00 pm

Present: Councillor Jason Zadrozny in the Chair;

Councillors Samantha Deakin, Tom Hollis,
Rachel Madden, David Martin, Matthew Relf,
Helen-Ann Smith, Daniel Williamson and
John Wilmott.

Apology for Absence: Councillors Kier Barsby.

Officers Present: Craig Bonar, Lynn Cain, Carol Cooper-Smith,
Ruth Dennis, Louise Ellis, Katherine Green,
Jemma Handley, Theresa Hodgkinson,
Peter Hudson, Mike Joy, Nicky Moss,
Paul Parkinson and Shane Wright.

In Attendance: Councillors David Hennigan and Sarah Madigan.

CA.48 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

CA.49 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 27 January 2020 be received and approved as a correct record.

CA.50 Scrutiny Review: Impact of Universal Credit

Members were presented with the final recommendations resulting from the Scrutiny Review of the Impact of Universal Credit undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee between July 2019 and January 2020.

Members considered the alternative option of declining to accept the final recommendations but acknowledged that longer term planning to mitigate against the impact of Universal Credit on Ashfield residents and the Council's finances was imperative.

RESOLVED

that having considered the report, the following recommendations be approved subject to the Universal Credit seminar being classified as optional rather than mandatory as originally presented:-

- a) the hardship being experienced by Ashfield residents and the current and anticipated financial impact to the Council, as a result of the introduction of Universal Credit welfare scheme, be noted;
- b) a seminar be organised for all Councillors to equip themselves with the necessary knowledge and skills to support residents raising issues concerning Universal Credit;
- c) a letter be sent to local MPs, and the relevant ministerial department, outlining the difficulties claimants in Ashfield have experienced following the introduction of Universal Credit;
- d) joint working with partners such as the Department of Work and Pensions and the Citizens Advice Bureau be enhanced to ensure important information is efficiently shared;
- e) the Housing Management and Tenancy Services Team be recognised and commended for the extensive work undertaken in supporting Universal Credit claimants and responding to welfare reforms;
- f) the Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan be reviewed, taking into consideration the impact the introduction of Universal Credit will have on Housing and other Council services;
- g) the Welfare Reform Reserve Fund be reviewed to ensure sufficient funding remains available to support claimants and maintain adequate staffing levels;
- h) all publically displayed information regarding Universal Credit and wider welfare reforms be reviewed to ensure maximum visibility and relevancy;
- i) consideration be given to software and hardware requirements that could assist in improving the Council's efficiency and effectiveness in managing Universal Credit cases and supporting claimants.

Reason:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee added Impact of Universal Credit to the Scrutiny Workplan 2019/20 in June 2019, and conducted a review from July 2019 to January 2020. At the Committee's January meeting, a set of recommendations were approved to be presented to Cabinet in February 2020.

(At this point in the proceedings and in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.1 (Order of Business), the Chairman advised Members that he was intending to take agenda items 8 to 11 prior to agenda items 5 to 7. Cabinet duly concurred with this course of action.)

CA.51 Approval to Consult on the Draft Kirkby Town Centre Spatial Masterplan

Cabinet were requested to approve the facilitation of a public and stakeholder consultation on the Draft Kirkby Town Centre Spatial Masterplan for 3 weeks commencing Monday, 2nd March 2020.

Members considered the alternative option of declining to approve the consultation but this option was not recommended as participation with the public and stakeholders would enable valuable feedback and consequently, the Spatial masterplan would ultimately hold more weight as a material planning consideration in the detailed formulation of subsequent projects where funding would need to be secured.

RESOLVED that

- a) the undertaking of a public and stakeholder consultation on the Draft Kirkby Town Centre Spatial Masterplan for a period of 3 weeks during March 2020, be approved;
- b) the Kirkby Town Centre Spatial Masterplan be approved in principle, subject to delegated authority being granted to the Director of Place and Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place, Planning and Regeneration, to make minor amendments to the Masterplan prior to adoption.

Reason:

To enable the Council to carry out public and stakeholder consultation. Consultation will allow the Spatial Masterplan to have the greatest weight in the planning system once formally adopted.

CA.52 The Stations Masterplans

Cabinet approval was sought to undertake a public and stakeholder consultation on a draft Maid Marian Line Economic Growth Feasibility Study, also presented for adoption as a basis for future action for linking the Kirkby and Sutton Parkway stations to the proposed HS2 train station at Toton.

Members considered the alternative option of declining to carry out the proposed consultation or adopting the Maid Marian Line Economic Growth Feasibility Study. However, these options were not recommended as they would reduce the weight of the Maid Marian Line Economic Growth Feasibility Study in the planning process and disadvantage the Council in accessing funding and potential transport connectivity opportunities for the economic benefit of Kirkby and Sutton-in Ashfield.

RESOLVED that

- a) the undertaking of a public and stakeholder consultation for 4 weeks on a draft Maid Marian Line Economic Growth Feasibility Study, be approved;
- b) the Maid Marian Line Economic Growth Feasibility Study be approved in principle subject to delegated authority being granted to the Director of Place and Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place, Planning and Regeneration, to make any minor changes to the Study prior to publication;

- c) the final Maid Marian Line Economic Growth Feasibility Study (including stations masterplans) be adopted as a basis for future action for linking the Kirkby and Sutton Parkway stations to the proposed HS2 train station at Toton, and to capitalise on the economic, social and environmental potential for development and improvement around the station locations;
- d) delegated authority be also granted to the Director of Place and Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place, Planning and Regeneration, to produce an action plan for the Study as required.

Reasons:

- 1) To carry out public and stakeholder consultation. Consultation will allow the Maid Marian Line Economic Growth Feasibility Study to have the greatest weight in the planning system once formally adopted.
- 2) To provide a spatial and economic framework which will allow the station locations to respond positively to the economic, social and environmental opportunities of the Maid Marian Line.
- 3) To provide a framework for future private/public investment in the areas around Kirkby and Sutton Parkway Stations.
- 4) To inform decisions in the emerging Local Plan.

CA.53 Regeneration Shared Service Dissolution

Cabinet were advised about the joint intention by Mansfield District Council and Ashfield District Council to dissolve the shared Regeneration Service and to consider the request for approval.

Members considered the alternative option of continuing with the shared service. This was not considered prudent, as the circumstances were now very different to when the shared service was created, meaning that in-house was the most appropriate delivery model for both Councils.

RESOLVED that

- a) the decision to dissolve the Regeneration Shared Service between Mansfield District Council and Ashfield District Council with effect from 2 April 2020, be formally approved;
- b) the Chief Executive be authorised to formally serve written notice on Mansfield District Council in accordance with the Service Level Agreement.

Reasons:

Since 2012 the Council's regeneration service has been delivered by Mansfield District Council on a shared service basis. The report recommended to dissolve the shared service and this will conclude following a period of consultation. The intention is for the service to return in-house and sit solely within each single local authority from 2nd April 2020.

Council will continue to work very closely with Mansfield District Council and other Partners. The decision to end the shared service was due to circumstances within Ashfield and Mansfield being very different to how they were in 2012, and an opportunity for the Council to further develop and improve the service.

CA.54 Internal Audit Provision by the Central Midlands Audit Partnership - Partnership Extension

Cabinet were requested to consider the extension of the Council's partnership arrangement for Internal Audit services with the Central Midlands Audit Partnership (CMAP) for a further 5 years.

Members considered the alternative option of declining to extend the partnership but it was not recommended as it has proven to be successful and all existing Partners were intending, subject to their own approval processes, to extend their membership of CMAP.

RESOLVED that

- a) the extension of the Council's partnership arrangement for Internal Audit services with the Central Midlands Audit Partnership (CMAP) for a further 5 years, be approved;
- b) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) to finalise and approve the terms of a revised Partnership Agreement;
- c) delegated authority be further granted to the Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) to finalise, approve and sign an Information Management Agreement between the members of the Partnership.

Reasons:

1. The Cabinet approved the Council joining CMAP, commencing on 1 January 2016, for a term ending on 31 March 2020. The Partnership arrangement has proven to be a successful, resilient, sustainable and cost effective internal audit provision and the recommendation was therefore seeking to extend the Partnership for a further 5 years.
2. The Partnership Agreement requires some minor amendments to bring it up to date and by entering into an Information Management Agreement, the Council and the Partnership will ensure compliance with data protection requirements.

(During consideration of this item, Councillor Matthew Relf left the meeting at 1.56pm)

CA.55 Annual Budget & Council Tax 2020/21 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Update

Cabinet were presented with the Council's Annual Budget, the Council Tax proposals for 2020/21 and a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) update.

(At this point in the proceedings, all Members present at the meeting declared a general Non Pecuniary/Other Interest in respect of items related to the setting of the Council Tax for 2020/2021.)

The Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services, following consideration of the Annual Budget and MTFS update at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20 February 2020, took the opportunity to feedback the responses and suggestions raised by Members as follows:-

- a thank you be extended to the Corporate Finance Manager and Finance Team for the production of an excellent budget and the associated medium term planning strategy;
- concerns raised regarding the levels of fraud surrounding 'Single Person Council Tax Discount' with acknowledgement that a county-wide group has been established to tackle the problem;
- a desire to raise awareness and more fully advertise the commercial services offered by the Council (i.e. pest control) through the Council's media platforms;
- a further review should be undertaken to consider further savings around printing requirements including the use of paper copy committee agendas;
- the importance of the Council recognising the impact (i.e. wellbeing and work/life balance) on existing staff being required to cover gaps in staffing as part of the 'vacancy factor'.

Members considered the alternative option of declining to accept the proposals and freeze its own Council Tax for 2020/21 however recognising the financial challenge faced beyond 2020/21 the proposed increase is considered appropriate in order to continue to provide the key services on which Ashfield residents rely.

RESOLVED

a) that Council be recommended to approve the following:

- a £5 (2.7%) increase in the level of the District's own Council Tax for 2020/21, setting the Band D equivalent at £190.46;
- the proposed 2020/21 Revenue (General Fund) and HRA Budgets as set out in the report (Sections 3 and 4);
- the proposed Capital Programme and associated borrowing 2019/20 to 2023/24 as set out in the report (Section 5);

- the 2019/20 Revised HRA and Capital Budgets as set out in the report (Sections 4 and 5);
 - the precept figures from Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Authority, Police and Crime Commissioner and the two Parish Council's within the District be incorporated, when known, into the Council Tax recommendation to Council on 5th March 2020;
 - to note the estimated financial challenge in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2021/2022 to 2024/25 and the planned approach to address the challenge (Section 6);
 - to bring an updated MTFS back to Cabinet after the 2019/20 Accounts have been closed and audited;
 - the proposed use of reserves as set out in this report (Table 5 (General Fund) and Table 9 (HRA)) and the creation of 5 new reserves and the amalgamation of 2 existing reserves (set out in Section 3.6);
 - acceptance of the comments and advice of the Corporate Finance Manager (Section 151 Officer), provided in compliance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, as to the robustness of the estimates included in the 2020/21 Budget and the adequacy of the reserves for which this budget provides. (Section 7);
 - to note that the proposed 2020/21 budgets reflect the agreed changes to Fees and Charges approved by Cabinet on 27th January 2020;
 - the use of in-year Capital Receipts up to 2020/21 to maximise capitalisation opportunities arising from service transformation to deliver efficiencies and improved services to residents and clients, and thereby minimise the impact of costs on the revenue budget as included in the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2018/19 approved by Council on 11th October 2018;
 - to note that additional recurrent and non-recurrent costs of progressing the Digital Service Transformation (DST) programme at a quicker pace than had previously been planned are not included within the proposed 2020/21 budget, and that a separate report detailing the programme, costs and payback periods and how the programme will be funded will be brought for consideration through the appropriate channels in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations;
- b) following feedback from Scrutiny Members as part of their consideration of the Annual Budget and MTFS update, the Director of Resources and Business Transformation be requested to present the results of the 2019 Employee Survey to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 26 March 2020.

Reason:

To recommend to Council approval of a £5 (2.7%) increase in the District Council's Council Tax for a Band D equivalent property, approval of the HRA and Capital Budget Revisions for 2019/20 and approval of the proposed 2020/21 Revenue and HRA Budgets and the Capital Programme 2019/20 to 2023/24. In accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council must set its annual budget by 10th March in the preceding financial year.

(During consideration of this item, Councillor Daniel Williamson left the room at 2.04pm and returned to the meeting at 2.06pm.)

CA.56 Treasury Management Strategy

Members were requested to consider the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for the financial year 2020/21 comprising the following:-

- Treasury Management Policy;
- Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS);
- Borrowing Strategy;
- Annual Investment Strategy;
- Minimum Revenue Provision Policy;
- Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Indicators;
- Treasury Management Practices: Risk Management.

As it is a requirement of the CIPFA Treasury Management Code for all Local Authorities to have a Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) and a requirement of MHCLG Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments to have an Investment Strategy, Members had no alternative options to consider.

RESOLVED that

- a) the content of the Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) for 2020/21, be received and noted;

- b) Council be recommended to approve the Treasury Management Policy Statement incorporating the following:
 - Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS)
 - Borrowing Strategy
 - Annual Investment Strategy
 - Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy;
 - Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Indicators
 - Treasury Management Practices: Risk Management.

Reason:

In accordance with Financial Regulation C.31, the Audit Committee is responsible for providing effective scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategy and policies and recommending approval to Cabinet and Council.

CA.57 Capital Strategy

Cabinet considered the Council's Proposed Capital Strategy prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

As it is a requirement of the CIPFA Prudential Code for all Local Authorities to have a Capital Strategy and a requirement of MHCLG Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments to have an Investment Strategy covering non-treasury management investments, Members did not have any alternative options to consider.

RESOLVED that

- a) the content of the Capital Strategy (CS) for 2020/21 including Annexes 1 to 3, as appended to the report, be received and noted;
- b) Council be recommended to approve the following:-
 - Capital Strategy;
 - Commercial Property Investment Strategy;
 - Commercial Property Indicators.

Reasons:

It is a requirement of the CIPFA Prudential Code for all Local Authorities to have a Capital Strategy approved by Full Council.

MHCLG Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments requires that Council has an Investment Strategy that covers non-treasury management investments and includes quantitative indicators approved by Full Council.

The meeting closed at 2.55 pm

Chairman.