

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Cabinet** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, NG24 1BY on Tuesday, 12 July 2022 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor D Lloyd (Chairman)

Councillor Mrs R Holloway, Councillor R Jackson, Councillor P Peacock and Councillor T Wendels

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor R Crowe, Councillor Mrs R Crowe, Councillor L Goff and Councillor P Rainbow

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor K Girling (Committee Member)

10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Sanjiv Kohli – Director – Resources and Deputy Chief Executive declared an Other Registerable Interest in Agenda Item No. 8 – Development of the Former Robin Hood Hotel, Newark, as a Director on the Board of Robin Hood Hotel Limited.

11 NOTIFICATION TO THOSE PRESENT THAT THE MEETING WILL BE RECORDED AND STREAMED ONLINE

The Leader and Chairman advised that the proceedings were being audio recorded and live streamed by the Council.

12 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 JUNE 2022

The minutes from the meeting held on 7 June 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

13 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN REPORT TO 31 MARCH 2022

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Performance & Finance presented a report which set out the 2021/22 financial outturn position on the Council's revenue and capital budgets, including: General Fund Revenue; Housing Revenue Account; Capital Programme; Provisions and Impaired Estimates on Debtors; Usable Reserves; and the Collection Fund. The report provided a summary of actual income and expenditure compared to the revised budget and how any surpluses / deficits had been allocated to / from reserves.

The accounts showed a favourable variance of £1.613m on service budgets with a total favourable variance of £2.044m which was broken down in the report. The Leader gave the context to the level of the positive variance and how this may be applied going forward.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the final outturn of revenue and capital spending for 2021/22 be approved;

- (b) the capital financing proposals as set out in paragraph 1.16 be approved;
- (c) the variations to the capital programme, as set out in paragraph 1.12 and Appendix E, be approved;
- (d) the net variations of £16.696m not spent in 2021/22 on the Capital Programme, be re-profiled and carried forward into 2022/23 as per appendices F and G;
- (e) the movement in Provisions and Impaired Estimates on Debtors be noted;
- (f) the creations of the new reserves, as outlined in paragraph 1.27, be approved; and
- (g) the individual contributions to, and withdrawals from, the revenue and capital Usable Reserves be approved.

Reasons for Decision

To approve the Financial Outturn position for the Council for the 2021/22 financial year.

14 COUNCIL'S ANNUAL BUDGET FOR 2023/2024 - OVERALL CORPORATE BUDGET STRATEGY

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Performance & Finance presented a report which set out the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Budget Strategy for 2023/24 prior to detailed work commencing on preparation of the budget. The Council's Constitution required that the Council's Section 151 Officer presents a report on the overall budget strategy to the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee for consideration. The Policy & Improvement Committee considered this report at their meeting held on 13 June 2022 and did not change any recommendations.

The budget process would result in setting the budget and the Council Tax for 2023/24 and the Housing Revenue Account budget and the rent setting for 2023/34.

The Strategy took into consideration agreed financial policies on Budgeting and Council Tax, Reserves and Provisions, Value for Money and also a set of budget principles which set out the approach to be taken to the budget process. These policies had been reviewed and updated as appropriate and were attached as appendices to the report.

The current Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was approved on 8 March 2022. The report set out a summary of the financial forecast identified within the current MTFP assuming that Council Tax at average Band D would increase by the same rate as in the 2022/23 financial year, namely 1.94%.

The report also set out a number of underlying assumptions which would be applied in compiling the draft budget for 2023/24 including staff costs, provision for inflation and fees and charges. The Cabinet welcomed the ongoing monitoring of inflationary increases in costs, which if required, would be subject to a further report to the Cabinet.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) the overall General Fund & HRA budget strategy be approved;
- (b) the consultation process with Members be noted;
- (c) Budget officers continue work on the assessment of various budget proposals affecting services for consideration in setting the Council's budget; and
- (d) Budget managers work with finance officers in identifying further efficiency savings, increasing income from fees and charges and in identifying new sources of income.

Reasons for Decision

To enable the Council's budget process to proceed encompassing agreed assumptions.

15 CORPORATE ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (KEY DECISION)

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Performance & Finance presented a report which sought approval for the adoption of a proposed Corporate Asset Management Strategy. The Strategy covered a range of requirements the Council had to achieve as a property owner including sustainability, repairs / compliance, tenanted estate management, parking services and construction project management. It was considered that an effective asset management strategy was integral for the delivery of corporate aims and objectives and although the Council had a number of processes within the proposed strategy in place, these had not been formally adopted. The Cabinet welcomed the proposed Strategy and the sustainable approach to managing its property portfolio.

AGREED (unanimously) that the adoption of the Corporate Asset Management Strategy at Appendix A to the report be approved.

Reasons for Decision

The strategy will inform policies enabling the Council to develop action plans, agree priorities and make decisions to meet the longer-term objectives of the Council in the Community Plan. The strategy will be a cornerstone of the Council's financial and service planning and will support the delivery of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

16 DEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMER ROBIN HOOD HOTEL, NEWARK

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Performance & Finance presented a report which updated the Cabinet on the final development of the former Robin Hood Hotel with final completion dates and financial performance.

It was reported that final completion took place on 18 March 2021, with the sale of the whole demise to Knights Frank Investment Management (KFIM) on 13 April 2021. The financial performance of Robin Hood Hotel Ltd.'s delivery of the development project and the Council's 50% share was summarised in the report. The report also detailed the legal and leasing agreements with KFIM for the whole site, including the commercial units.

The Cabinet welcomed the success of the project with the financial risk returned in full. The Business Manager – Financial Services advised that the Business Rates liability for the three commercial units amounted to £88,856.55 since March 2021.

AGREED (unanimously):

- (a) To establish a reduced, revised capital budget for landlord incentives of £167,000 (from £275,000);
- (b) To note the successful delivery of the 66 room Travelodge Hotel and reputable tenants for the 3 commercial units;
- (c) To note that the Council's actual loan value required for the development of the whole demise was £3.146m, against the capital loan budget of £3.300m, therefore a capital borrowing requirement reduction of £0.154m;
- (d) To note the final financial position of the development of the former Robin Hood Hotel and the positive contribution from the development, to the Council's general fund of £163,930;
- (e) To note the ongoing positive estimated revenue return per year to the Council that the letting of the 3 commercial units will generate; and
- (f) To approve the revision of the current capital budget by a reduction of £108,000 from £275,000 to £167,000 for landlord incentives, in respect of the 3 commercial units.

Reasons for Decision

The final outcomes and completion dates of the joint venture company RHH Newark Limited (RHH Ltd.) and returns on the Council's 50% share of the investment together with the positive impacts on the Council's General Fund account.

17 PLAN REVIEW PROGRESS REPORT

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development & Visitors presented a report which provided an update on progress on the Amended Allocations & Development Management DPD and progress on the associated Gypsy & Traveller Pitch Delivery Strategy.

It was noted that there was no requirement as part of the DPD to allocate more general market or employment land and it had been anticipated that a draft DPD would be presented to this meeting, but this was contingent on the wider Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pitch delivery work being completed. There had been a number of delays in the investigatory work relating to the potential sites for GRT pitch provision. Therefore, officers were not in a position to recommend its publication until such time as the Pitch Delivery work was further advanced. The Cabinet welcomed the discounting of the Trent Lane site for GRT pitch provision and the £1m bid submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Homes & Communities Traveller Site Fund. A revised Plan Review timetable was set out in the report.

The report also detailed the current priorities within the Planning Policy & Infrastructure Business Unit and set out the rationale for appointing a Full-Time Planner (Policy) to be funded from the Neighbourhood Planning Reserve.

AGREED (unanimously):

- (a) to note and support the contents of the report;
- (b) to adopt the amendment to the Plan Review timetable (Local Development Scheme) as set in Section 3 of the report, to come into force on 19 July 2022;
- (c) to request that the Chief Executive call an Extraordinary Full Council meeting be held on 21 September 2022 to agree publication of the Amended Allocations & Development Management DPD; and
- (d) to approve an additional Full Time Planner (Policy) post, to be funded for 2022/23 and 2023/24 from the Neighbourhood Plan Reserve and from 2024/25 from the Council's base budget, with £45,520 being added into the base budget, inclusive of any future pay awards.

Reasons for Decision

1. To allow Cabinet to note progress on the Plan Review.
2. To agree an amendment to the timetable so that the Local Development Scheme can be updated to comply with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and appropriate regulations.
3. To allow the Council to agree to the publication of the Amended Allocations & Development Management DPD in September 2022.

4. To allow the appointment of an additional Planner (Policy) to the establishment in order to continue to meet the aspirations of the Council and emerging changes and challenges through planning reform.

Options Considered

A lack of available sites, as a result of market failure, has led the Council to conclude that only a comprehensive Pitch Delivery Strategy, which includes intervention from the Council to facilitate additional sites, will allow the delivery of sufficient sites and pitches for our Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

18 NEWARK & SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL LETTINGS STANDARD ENHANCEMENTS (HRA) - RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PILOT (KEY DECISION)

The Portfolio Holder for Homes & Health presented a report which outlined the outcomes of the empty homes standard pilot which took place between 1 October 2021 and 31 March 2022 and sought to adopt the decoration preparation and starting well fund as part of the Empty Homes Standard.

The standard of homes at re-letting was identified as an area for review and the Council found property condition featured strongly in complaints and insight feedback. The Empty Homes Standard was ready for a review and there was a call from the Council and tenants to make our homes better. There was also an opportunity to set aside efficiency savings from bringing housing back into the Council to trial a pilot and adopt some or both elements if successful. The success of the pilot was reported to the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee who fully supported the recommendations being made to the Cabinet.

The pilot scheme included decoration preparation in addition to the revised core lettings standard and an additional sum of up to £500 per property to meet individual tenant needs to help them “start well” in their tenancy.

AGREED (unanimously):

- (a) to adopt the decoration preparation and starting well fund as part of the Empty Homes Standard; and.
- (b) to approve additional funding of £275,000 being transferred to base budgets to facilitate the service improvement from the Efficiency Savings reserve.

Reasons for Decision

This initiative supports the enhancements to the empty home standard, specifically decoration preparation and allocation of up to £500 per property, becoming permanent features. These enhancements contribute to the Community Plan objective to ‘create more and better quality homes thorough our roles as landlord, developer and planning authority’.

19 COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME AWARDS

The Portfolio Holder for Homes & Health presented a report which proposed a number of grant awards following applications made under the District Councils Community Grant Scheme.

In order to streamline and make the grant scheme more widely accessible, the Full Council took the decision to launch the new Community Grant Scheme. The new scheme replaces the Parish and Town Councils Initiative Fund and the Community and Arts Grant scheme with a budget of £100,000. The scheme enabled local community partners to develop initiatives and projects that support the Council's Community Plan Objectives.

Twenty-one applications were received for the first round of grants and the summary of applications was contained in the Appendix to the report, together with the recommendation of the Portfolio Holder. Of the twenty-one applications received, twenty were recommended for approval, and one deferred to the next round for further information.

AGREED (unanimously) that the recommendations of the Portfolio Holders, as detailed in the Appendix to the report, be agreed in order that the proposed projects can proceed.

Reasons for Decision

To support the delivery of projects and initiatives which benefit local communities.

Options Considered

Each application was considered by the relevant Portfolio Holder based on the primary focus of the proposals. Only suitable applications had been recommended for approval.

20 HOUSING MAINTENANCE & ASSET MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURE

The Portfolio Holder for Homes & Health presented a report which sought approval for a restructure within the Housing Maintenance & Asset Management Business Unit. The issues driving the proposed restructure were set out in the report and included challenges around recruitment, a gap in succession planning and the need to address increasing workloads. The full proposals were set out in the report, with some appendices being exempt from publication. It was noted that the overall cost of the proposals in 2022/23, excluding unresolved pay awards, was £96,606.

AGREED (unanimously):

- (a) to approve the deletion of x6 posts and, in principle, agreement for the x7 new posts and the revised grading of the Stores Supervisor;
- (b) the approval is subject to Job Descriptions/Job Evaluations agreed and within cost parameters of 5%; and

- (c) the above proposals are considered and feedback provided prior to consultation with the recognised Trades Unions and affected employees.

Reasons for Decision

The proposals will ensure the service is sufficiently resourced; create a staff succession framework and prepare for future work on building safety, decent homes two and the decarbonisation of Council homes which aligns to the Community Plan objective to create more and better quality homes through our roles as landlord, developer and planning authority.

The proposed staffing model enables succession planning and the ability to 'grow our own' for managerial posts, which will bring advantages going forward.

21 ENVIRO-CRIME ENFORCEMENT (KEY DECISION)

The Portfolio Holder for Cleaner, Safer, Greener presented a report concerning the future provision of enviro-crime enforcement and sought approval to commence a procurement exercise as well as extending the current pilot with Waste Investigations, Support and Enforcement (WISE).

The report provided a summary of the pilot to date and the enforcement actions taken since the first seven months of the contract. It was noted that the current agreement with WISE allowed the Council to receive a percentage return on the income from Fixed Penalty Notices issued. Based on current activity, the estimate was that the Council would receive approximately £10,000 over the pilot period and this surplus would be reinvested in cleaner, safer, greener activities.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

- (a) approval be given in principle to commence a procurement exercise for an outsourced environmental enforcement initiative, subject to a further report at the end of the one year pilot; and
- (b) the current pilot project be extended for a further three months to allow the completion of a procurement exercise if necessary.

Reasons for Decision

The recommendations will allow for the enviro-crime pilot enforcement to continue supporting the Council's cleaner safer greener agenda.

Options Considered

Given the success of the scheme and in order to continue with the level of enforcement, to formalise a contract which would build upon lessons learnt from the pilot.

Meeting closed at 6.54 pm.

Chairman