

CABINET

18 JUNE 2019

PRESENT: Councillor A Macpherson (Leader); Councillors S Bowles (Deputy Leader), H Mordue, C Paternoster, Sir Beville Stanier Bt, P Strachan, J Ward and M Winn. Councillor Stuchbury attended also.

APOLOGY: Councillors P Irwin

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2019 be approved as a correct record.

2. FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RISK - MARCH 2019

Cabinet received a report that summarised the financial outturn for the end of March 2019 as well as the Corporate Plan report for the same period and the Risk Register. The full report could be viewed on the Council's website.

The Council had reported a surplus of £432,000 for the 2018-19 financial year, before the transfer from general fund balances. The forecast outturn was better than had been predicted by £353,000. A planned surplus of £240,000 had been assumed in the budget plans for 2018/2019. Consequently, general fund balances would be marginally higher than had been predicted as at the end of March, 2019. The Council's financial position continued to be robust. At the time the Cabinet report had been prepared, the final accounts for the financial year 2018/2019 were still subject to audit by the Council's external auditors. A detailed summary was submitted as part of the Cabinet report.

The Council's Corporate Plan set out four priorities, namely:

- Financially fit.
- Leading and shaping services.
- Customer and innovation.
- Community and Environment.

There were 17 themes under the four priorities and key projects and performance measures had been identified to enable progress with the priorities to be monitored. Cabinet received a report on these high level themes in order to assess whether or not they were on target. Of the 48 projects and measures, 31 were rated as green, 6 amber and 9 red. The Cabinet report summarised the position in relation to those in the red sector. It had been recognised that one of the principal risks to the Council was around recruitment and retention during the transition to unitary local government in Buckinghamshire. The situation was being monitored and Members would be kept apprised of the position.

Cabinet reviewed the position concerning the key risks shown on the Corporate Risk Register and the mitigation actions. As referred to above, the Register had been updated to reflect the impact of the move to unitary local government and also the potential risks of Brexit, the situation concerning which was still shrouded in uncertainty.

Cabinet asked that its thanks be passed to officers for the work undertaken to ensure that the Council remained in a financially fit position as it moved towards unitary local government.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the Financial Outturn and Corporate Plan Progress Reports and the Corporate Risk Register, be noted.

3. IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE

Cabinet received a report which sought agreement to the establishment of additional posts within the Development Management service in order to provide improved proactive customer focussed communications for applicants and other customers.

The development management service at AVDC continued to deal with the challenges of a national shortage of skilled planners and a very high workload associated with the Vale being an area of significant housing growth. The planners were working exceptionally hard and spent the majority of their time on site or writing up the reports necessary to issue decisions on applications.

This had meant that sometimes they were not available to take calls from applicants which could give the erroneous impression that an application was not being progressed, or that their enquiries were being ignored. This had led to applicants becoming frustrated with the Council and had triggered complaints, helping to respond to which could divert a planner's time from deciding applications, thus compounding the problem.

It had become noticeable that where developers used the Council's account manager service, they were better informed about the progress of their applications and were more likely to understand the reasons why their application had not been decided, or the reasons why consultees had concerns about their proposals. With this in mind it was proposed to establish a small team of staff who would undertake proactive communications with applicants in a similar way. This would improve customer service and provide reassurance to applicants.

The Cabinet report set out the costings of the proposal, which could be met from existing planning reserves.

RESOLVED –

That the proposals outlined in the Cabinet report be approved.

4. UPDATE ON CONCESSIONARY TRANSPORT REVIEW

A review of concessionary transport had been undertaken in 2018 and reported to Cabinet on 16 October 2018. A copy of that report was attached as Appendix 1 to the agenda. Part of the review had included mapping all known transport schemes in the Vale together with their criteria and locality served. (The Cabinet report in full including the earlier report was available for viewing on the Council's web site).

Following the cessation of the discretionary taxi token scheme, Cabinet had agreed to retain some of the ring-fenced concessionary transport budget for a limited time for the purpose of funding or pump priming new or existing community based transport schemes, which could service residents within the town of Aylesbury (who were the main recipients of the taxi token scheme).

Since the last report to Cabinet work had been pursued on trying to identify an alternative scheme to which the funds available for taxi tokens might be directed and details of these investigations were submitted. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to identify a suitable scheme towards which the funding might be made available and accordingly it was,

RESOLVED –

That the ring fenced remaining balance (£30,155) and the concessionary transport budget for 2019/20 (£33,500) be released into the wider Council budget.

5. CABINET - REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Members were informed that the current Cabinet appointments on Outside Bodies had been approved in 2015 for the four year life of the Council. However, the life of the Council, which included the Cabinet, had been extended for a further 12 months to enable the transition to the new Buckinghamshire Council. As such, it was therefore necessary to agree the continuance of the current Cabinet appointments on Outside Bodies for a further year.

RESOLVED –

That the life of the current Cabinet appointments to Outside Bodies be extended for a further 12 months to enable the transition to the new Buckinghamshire Council.