

# Minutes

## Cabinet

Date: 12 February 2018

Venue: Mezzanine Rooms 1 & 2, County Hall, Aylesbury

Time: 10.40 am to 12.30 pm

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr M Tett (in the Chair).

Mr M Appleyard, Mr N Brown, Mr J Chilver, Mr P Irwin, Mrs J Teesdale and Mr C Harriss

### **OTHER MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr D Watson and Mrs P Birchley

### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Ms N Beagle, Mr R Ambrose, Mr N Gibson and Ms L Forsythe

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from;

Mr B Chapple- Mr C Harriss, Deputy Cabinet Member, attended as substitute

Mr W Whyte - Ms J Teesdale, Deputy Cabinet Member, attended as substitute

Lin Hazel - no substitute present

Mr M Shaw - Mr P Irwin, Deputy Cabinet Member, attended as substitute

Ms S Ashmead - Ms L Forsythe, Deputy Monitoring Officer and Corporate Governance  
Lawyer, attended as substitute

Ms R Shimmin - Mr N Gibson, Executive Director TEE, attended as substitute

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

### **3 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2018 were agreed to be a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **4 HOT TOPICS**

Cabinet' attention was brought to the following;

- The Transportation portfolios were aware that roads around the County were not in the best condition currently. It was advised weather conditions were hindering the pothole repairs. Cabinet were asked to note that this would continue to be a priority over the next few months. All were reminded to continue to report potholes on the website.
- The County Council continued to be engaged with the Department for Transport and Highways England in delivering improved transport routes between Oxford and Cambridge as well as consulting with local residents to continue to provide services.

### **5 QUESTION TIME**

None.

### **6 FORWARD PLAN FOR CABINET AND CABINET MEMBERS**

The report was noted by Cabinet.

### **7 CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS**

The report was noted by Cabinet.

### **8 SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME & INQUIRY WORK PROGRAMME**

Cabinet highlighted that content for future Finance, Performance and Resources (FPR) Select Committee meetings had not been outlined in the work programme. It was confirmed by Mr D Watson, Chairman for the FPR Committee, that the recommendations outlined in the budget scrutiny report would inform the content for future select committee meetings. Details would be finalised at the FPR Select Committee meeting in March 2018 and the work programme would be updated.

The report was noted by Cabinet.

### **9 BUDGET SCRUTINY REPORT**

Mr D Watson, Chairman of the Finance, Performance and Resources (FPR) Select Committee attended the meeting to present the report. During discussion points were highlighted as follows:

- 12 recommendations had been devised following the budget scrutiny exercise, as outlined in the report.
- Recommendation 10, E-book Pilot Study; Cabinet noted that E-books were already provided within the library service and therefore were unclear why a pilot study was required. This would be explored in more detail outside of the meeting.

**ACTION: Mr Watson**

- Recommendation 10, Home to School Transport provision; Cabinet were concerned about phasing out all non-statutory transportation provision and noted it was important that parents were consulted before any service was removed. It was agreed that any change in service would be implemented in phases.
- Recommendation 12, Weed spraying of footways; Cabinet agreed that this continued to be a problem across the County, it was noted that the difficulty in removing such weeds was due to the chemicals required being used in the public domain, as legally organisations were only able to use certain resources to dispose of the weeds. It was suggested that further investigation would be required to determine other options to remove, potentially linking up with District Councils when sweeping pathways and gullies.
- Recommendation 11, Gully Survey; Cabinet noted that although gully clearing was part of the flooding issue, there was often a knock on effect from water pooling elsewhere, in ditches and land drainage which would need to be taken into account.
- It was highlighted that funds had been allocated in the budget (£300k previously plus a further £125k to deal with such issues as gully cleaning/ jet patching of roads) which would help to address the issue. Gully cleaning information was also available via the Transport for Bucks Members Portal.
- Recommendation 3, Liaison between County Council and District Council when budgets overlap; It was noted the recommendation asked for a more coordinated approach to financial planning at County Council and District Council levels when relating to the same revenue stream. Cabinet agreed with the recommendation to liaise with District Councils
- Recommendation 4, Mandatory Exit interviews; the background to this item was that throughout the budget scrutiny exercise there were a number of interim heads of service. The Committee had agreed that there should be organisational stability and therefore feedback provided by leavers would be essential to highlight recurring issues to improve retention.
- Recommendation 5, ICT and Digital systems; It was noted that a new Technology Strategy was being developed and that the service were currently recruiting to a new Head of Digital and Director of Digital post.
- Cabinet asked that the report be amended, p65, to state that “81% of the Resources **external** income came from schools”

**RESOLVED: Cabinet responded to the recommendations as follows:**

**1 - AGREED IN PART**

**2 - AGREED IN PART**

**3 - AGREED**

**4 - AGREED**

**5 - AGREED**

**6 - AGREED**

**7 - AGREED IN PART**

**8 - AGREED IN PART**

**9 - AGREED IN PART**

**10 - AGREED**

**11 - AGREED**

**12 - AGREED**

## **10 FINAL BUDGET**

Mr J Chilver, Cabinet Member for Resources and Mr R Ambrose, Director of Finance and Assets presented the report. During discussion key points were highlighted as follows:

### Revenue Budget

- Draft budget was initially agreed 18 December 2017.
- Provisional Local Government settlement was released 19 December 2017; which highlighted a rise in Council Tax referendum limit from 2% to 3%.
- Budget scrutiny review took place 09 - 12 January 2018; this led to recommendations and extra funding agreed as outlined in the reports pack.
- The report outlined the deteriorating funding position around Children's and Adults Social Care which resulted in release of corporate contingencies.
- Appendices 1-3 and 5 of the report incorporate all of the above points into consideration in the final proposals being recommended to Council for both the Revenue and Capital budgets.
- The Final Local Government finance settlement was released 6 February 2018; this included an additional sum £1.045m to be used for Adult Social Care services in 2018/19 only.
- Appendix 6 highlighted a schedule of fees and charges, which Cabinet would be asked to agree within the recommendation.

- Cabinet noted that whilst the County Council were reluctant to increase the Council Tax, unfortunately this was required to address the enormous pressures within Childrens and Adults Social Care Services. 3% of the rise in Council Tax would be used strictly to address the Adult Social Care pressures and the remaining 2.99% increase would relate to the general increase in line with inflation. Therefore, for 2018/19 the County Council were reluctantly proposing an increase in Total Council Tax of 5.99%.
- It was proposed by Mr N Brown, Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Public Health and supported by Mr M Tett that the proposal to implement further reduction in library hours be reversed and that a budget of £105k in 18/19 with full year effect of £140k to be restored, as libraries were an integral service which provided a valued interface with residents. Following discussion it was agreed funds were available in the budget and could be allocated as outlined above.
- Details on business rates retention were outlined in the report, splits in two-tier areas were yet to be agreed therefore the figures in the budget remained an estimate.
- It was advised that during pilots other Councils had experienced 50/50 splits, 60/40 splits and 70/30 splits in favour of the County Council.

### Capital Budget

- An unexpected pressure of £3.4m had risen relating to the Stoke Hammond bypass.
- The budget for the Aylesbury library project had risen due to unforeseen electrical works which were required.
- Resources budget; £14.5m over 4 years had been allocated for ICT to ensure fit for purpose ICT system and to provide a robust and secure system, able to embrace new technologies.
- Within the education and skills portfolio large amounts of money had been spent, from central Government grants, contributions from developers as well as the County Council. The restriction of funding from the County Council would result in it proving difficult to provide enough school places for children. Details were outlined on page109 of the report.
- There had been an increase to the roads capital budget from £10m to £15m, although it was highlighted that it would cost £11m per year to maintain the roads as they are, allowing £4m to make improvements.

**RESOLVED: Cabinet AGREED the below recommendations and SUPPORTED the recommendation to County Council.**

- 1. To restore the proposed savings relating to the planned reduction in Library opening hours (£105k in 2018/19 rising to £140k in 2019/20) and reduce the level of corporate contingencies to compensate for this**
- 2. To note the increase of total Council Tax to 5.99%, 2.99% general Council Tax and 3% to help to address Adult Social Care pressures**
- 3. Incorporation of the additional £1.045m adults grant (18/19 only) to fund the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme.**

## **11 Q3 2017/18 FINANCE MONITORING REPORT**

Mr J Chilver, Cabinet Member for Resources and Mr R Ambrose, Director of Finance and Assets, presented the report. During discussion key points were highlighted as follows:

### **Revenue Budget**

- There had been a slight forecast underspend of £338k, which masked the forecasts overspends in Health and Wellbeing £1.3m and Childrens Services £1.6m.
- A huge amount of work was undertaken within the Health & Wellbeing Portfolio whilst the overspend within Childrens services was due to an increase of looked after children and complex cases. Work was ongoing to manage these pressures.

### **Capital Budget**

- As outlined on page 259 of the report overall slippage was forecast at just over £20m, with £2m relating to two cancelled programmes. This £2m would be carried forward into the next financial year.
- As outlined on page 274 of the report there was a forecast General Fund balance of £25m, which was a significant improvement on previous years.
- Cabinet suggested that the traffic light system highlighting pressures be revised as significant slippage is not highlights as a risk.

**ACTION: Mr Ambrose**

## **RESOLVED**

**Cabinet NOTED the current financial position.**

## **12 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

19 February 2018.

**MARTIN TETT  
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

Response to Select Committee Scrutiny Inquiry

Inquiry Title	Budget Scrutiny Inquiry 2018
Select Committee Owner	Mr David Watson, Chairman – Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee
Date agreed by Select Committee	
Lead Cabinet Member	Mr Martin Tett, Leader
Lead Senior Officer (Director)	Mr Richard Ambrose, Director of Finance

Recommendation	Agreed Yes/No	BCC Cabinet / Partner Agency Response including proposed action	Responsible Cabinet Member (for BCC recs)	Senior Responsible Officer Owner	Action by date
1. That all Business Units across the Council should switch to timely monthly management accounting on an accruals basis including meaningful variance analysis/reporting.	In part	The Cabinet agrees that we need to ensure a disciplined approach to budget forecasting. Monthly accounts are currently produced on a timely basis, including variance analysis. The Director of Finance is leading a review of financial management across the organisation and will consider our forecasting methodology and reporting arrangements as part of that review.	Leader	Director of Finance	July 2018
2. That there should be improved level of visibility in individual budget lines across all portfolios for future Budget Scrutiny Inquiries. The financial data submitted should clearly identify the major costs of running the Council e.g. Home to School Transport, the EfW plant income and costs, on street parking revenue, Skills budget, number of Full Time Equivalent( FTEs) staff, costs of agency staff/interims, key drivers of demand in Social Care and associated unit costs. A high level Budget Book to enable more transparency for Members and the Public is proposed.	In part	As part of the review of financial management identified above, we are reviewing reporting arrangements to ensure that financial information is clearly aligned to individual services which will help improve accessibility of the data. We will also carry out research into best practice in other councils, including in relation to the use of budget books, and consider opportunities for improving visibility of the major costs of running the council.	Leader	Director of Finance	July 2018

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<p>3. That where there are figures in the County Council budget which will also be reflected in a District Council's budget, there should be liaison between financial colleagues to ensure that the relevant figures agree e.g. recycling credits, S106 funding.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>We fully agree that there should be liaison with partner agencies, including District Councils, where there are key dependencies. There is already good liaison on many of the areas identified by the Select Committee – however, we recognise that there may be occasions where relevant figures do not match as organisations have taken different views.</p>	<p>Leader</p>	<p>Director of Finance</p>	<p>November 2018</p>
<p>4. That mandatory face to face exit interviews should be undertaken for all staff on Range 10 or above, and where deemed appropriate, staff below that range and that the online exit interview process should be promoted more effectively to capture feedback from staff at other levels.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The opportunity for face to face exit interviews is already available for all staff. Further steps will be taken to promote this, as well as the online exit interview process, although clearly we cannot make it mandatory for leavers to participate in these interviews.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Resources</p>	<p>Director of HR</p>	<p>April 2018</p>
<p>5. That Cabinet ensures that there is clear and effective leadership and programme management in the area of ICT and ∞ Digital to ensure that the Council's systems are robust, fit for purpose and can share data, where appropriate. This should include a centralised approval system for ICT procurement to ensure value for money and an improved customer experience.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Cabinet agrees that effective leadership and governance arrangements are critical for the delivery of our technology strategy. We agree that it would be useful to ensure a centralised approval system, although will need to take care to ensure that such governance arrangements are designed in a way to be agile and responsive to service requirements.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Resources</p>	<p>Director of Technology</p>	<p>April 2018</p>
<p>6. That a realistic figure is included in the final Children's Services budget for legal fees.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>There is more work to do to fully understand our expenditure on legal fees in children's services. The Cabinet Member will consider realigning budgets within the overall portfolio budget envelope in order to make the appropriate provision for legal costs. The Cabinet has also proposed setting aside a contingency of £250k to manage the risks associated with this area of expenditure.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Children's Services</p>	<p>Executive Director of Children's Services</p>	<p>May 2018</p>



7. That the Fostering Service undertakes a benchmarking exercise on foster carers allowances and a best practice review of independent fostering agencies to better inform the Council's approach to recruiting additional in-house foster carers.	In part	As part of our Change for Children Programme, we have a specific focus on increasing our numbers of in-house foster carers. We know from previous research that, in making a choice, foster carers tends to focus on the wrap around support offered rather than the level of allowances. We will continue to review best practice from the public and private sectors and develop our approaches accordingly	Cabinet Member for Children's Services	Executive Director of Children's Services	Ongoing
8. That there should be a detailed independent review of the assumptions and cost drivers used to develop the Children's Services and Health and Wellbeing budgets, as well as a comprehensive review of processes and financial modelling to ensure more accurate forecasting of spend.	In part	Key drivers of expenditure in these areas are volume of demand and the cost of provision, both of which can be volatile. As a result, it is important to recognise that these budgets can be challenging to predict with accuracy. We have started a detailed review of the processes and methodologies underpinning our forecasting in these budget areas, in order to provide Members with greater confidence about the budget forecasts during the course of the year. The proposed budget also includes additional contingencies to reflect the high risks within Social Care.	Leader	Director of Finance	July 2018
9. That the provision of Home to School Transport, both mainstream and children with EHC Plans, by the Council meets national statutory guidelines only, that discretionary transport should be phased out and that parents/guardians are provided with reasonable notice for any policy changes.	In part	Whilst the Council does currently offer some home to school transport provision that goes beyond our statutory obligations, we are committed to achieving full cost recovery. We will also ensure clear consultation with parents and carers when considering any further changes in this area. Further work is needed to fully understand the financial model of the discretionary provision and to establish alternative options for parents and carers.	Cabinet Member for Education & Skills	Executive Director of Children's Services	September 2018
10. That as part of the Strategic Options Appraisal for redelivering Library Services, an e-book pilot study should be undertaken.	Yes	E-books are currently provided by our libraries; we will explore the further development of such options as part of the future direction of the library	Cabinet Member for Community Engagement & Public Health	Executive Director of Communities, Health & Adult	Ongoing

		service.		Social Care	
11. That, within existing resources, a comprehensive gully survey is undertaken throughout the County to identify accurately the number of gullies and locations and use this to inform the creation of an effective maintenance programme.	Yes	TfB have confirmed that they have accurate records of known gully locations but Cabinet understands the importance of a well maintained highway drainage system and so is allocating a further £125k to this service area in the proposed budget.	Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Transportation	Director of Growth, Strategy & Highways	September 2018
12. That sufficient budget is set aside to enable the introduction of a programme of weed management on footways across the County.	Yes	We recognise that we do not have the resources to undertake a full weed spraying programme. As an alternative, Cabinet is keen to explore options for pilot projects with District or Town/Parish Councils which could deliver other potential solutions. A sum of £125k has been set aside in the proposed budget to support such initiatives.	Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Transportation	Director of Growth, Strategy & Highways	May 2018