

CABINET

Meeting - 12 December 2018

Present: N Naylor (Leader)
J Read (Deputy Leader)
B Gibbs, P Hogan, D Smith and L Sullivan

175. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 17 October and 28 November 2018 were approved and signed by the Cabinet Leader as a correct record.

176. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

177. 28 DAY NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Cabinet received a copy of the 28 day Notice prepared in accordance with Regulation 9 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 setting out the key (and non-key) decisions the Cabinet was intending to make at public and private meetings.

RESOLVED that the 28 Day Notice be noted.

178. DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2019/20

The Cabinet were presented with the draft revenue expenditure budget for 2019/20. It was the responsibility of the Cabinet to prepare a revenue budget for approval by Full Council which would form the basis of setting the council tax. Members of the Cabinet considered the draft revenue service budget for 2019/20 report which included the context of the overall financial position facing the Council for the coming year, and the implications of the establishment of a unitary authority 2020/21.

It was explained that regardless of the decision to create a new district unitary authority in Buckinghamshire from 2020/21 this did not affect the requirement the Council had to set a legal and prudent budget for 2019/20 that addressed the Council's aims and objectives. It would be necessary at a corporate level to make provision for the initial transition costs to the new unitary authority that would be incurred in 2019/20, this would be done when setting the final budget in February 2019 when there was more clarity around the transition process.

Members noted the revenue service budget outturn for 2017/18 which was summarised in the Appendix. There was an overspend of £33,180 in the current year which related to two factors; higher costs of temporary accommodation and delay in letting Capswood office space. However, as both these risks had been identified early in the financial year other offsetting savings had been identified to minimise the net overspend.

Within the draft budget the Council Tax Base was 33,186 which was a 1.48% increase on the council tax base for 2018/19. The working assumption was that the budget would result in a £5 increase in council tax, which would be the maximum under the arrangements in place for the current year. This also assumed at this stage the use of £55k of general reserves, but the likelihood was that this would not be required in the final budget. This would be reviewed in February once the referendum limits for council tax in 2019/20 have been announced by Government. The final settlement from Central Government had been delayed due to Brexit negotiations and the final draft budgets would reflect the settlement and would be consolidated for consideration by the Cabinet in February.

In response to a question about the future transition costs for a unitary council, Members noted that the February budget would include this Council's contribution to the cost for 19/20 which would be funded out of reserves. There could be a further cost implication if any staff were seconded to the Implementation Team and their post had to be backfilled. Transition costs would run over a number of years.

RESOLVED that it be agreed that the report is to form the basis of the draft revenue budget for 2019/20, and is updated to reflect the outcomes of the Local Government Finance Settlement and related announcements.

179. **SOUTH BUCKS COUNTRY PARK**

The Cabinet received a report which sought approval for the site (former Academy 9 hole golf site) to be designated a Country Park under the Countryside Act 1968 and for the Scheme to be implemented, following the determination of the planning application at the November Planning Committee.

Members were informed that a number of conditions on the development had been imposed by the Planning Committee, some of which would be discharged before the physical construction commenced and others discharged during or after the development. The next steps would be to conclude the contractual arrangements with the construction company. A meeting was being arranged with the South Buckinghamshire Members Advisory Panel in January 2019 to brief Members on the final contract. The construction period was anticipated to commence in February 2019. Discussions were also taking place with the British Cycling Federation regarding any financial contributions to the scheme in respect of the enclosed cycle track, and cycle trails.

Following a question regarding the cost of material that would be imported to landscape Members were informed that the developer absorbed all the costs. This should result in an income to the Council over and above the construction costs of at least £750k, plus reimbursement of cost incurred to date in achieving planning permission. The Council would account for the VAT on the construction costs even though it was not making any payment of these costs, but the income it received did not attract VAT. There would be a positive cash flow. There would be some costs in securing the site, basic maintenance and carrying out inspections. Operating costs above the current budget provision would be offset by income streams, such as the franchise on the café and parking charges and this aspect would be assessed during 2019. Overall it should be a better facility for residents at a lower cost to the Council tax payer.

A further question was asked about whether there would be a long term liability with the park and reference was made to another area in South Bucks owned by the County Council as an example. Members were informed that the South Bucks Country Park would bring an income into the Council and also would contribute towards the Council's aim of promoting and supporting healthy lifestyles by encouraging exercise and physical activities. A Member asked whether the Council was paying for non-domestic rates on the existing building. As it had not been demolished rates were being paid but represented a modest expenditure. Cabinet Members welcomed the report and

RESOLVED that:-

1. the Scheme to develop a Country Park is progressed in line with the approved planning application and the agreed tender.
2. The development be formally designated once complete as a Country Park in accordance with the Countryside Act 1968.

180. **POLICY ADVISORY GROUP MINUTES (AVAILABLE IN SUPPLEMENT PACK)**

The Policy Advisory Group Minutes were noted.

181. **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

182. **HS2 COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT FUND AND BUSINESS AND LOCAL ECONOMY FUND**

The Cabinet received a report which provided Members with background information relating to the HS2 Community and Environment Fund (CEF) and Business and Economy Fund (BLEF). The report sought endorsement for officers to explore opportunities for making applications for funding on behalf of the Council either individually or in partnership with other qualifying groups or organisations where appropriate, to make applications for funding. A combined total of £40million had been made available for these two funds over a period of 11 years throughout the Phase One construction period and for the first year of operation of HS2 services.

An independent grant management body called Groundwork was responsible for the administration of the funds. The Portfolio Holder reported that relevant teams across the Council could explore opportunities for making applications for funding and apply if appropriate. It was important to raise awareness of this funding to parish and town councils, local organisations and businesses and signpost those interested to the website. A briefing note would be prepared for this purpose.

RESOLVED:

1. That the background information relating to the funds be noted.
2. That officers explore opportunities for making applications for funding on behalf of the Council from the CEF and/or the BLEF and where appropriate, to make applications to the funds individually or in partnership with other qualifying groups or organisations.

The meeting terminated at 6.44 pm