



Cabinet decision notice

The following decision(s) were taken by Cabinet at its meeting held on **15 February 2022**. Decisions will (unless called-in) become effective at 5pm on 21 February 2022.

Agenda item no. 8

Budget Scrutiny 2022 report

(a) Decisions

Cabinet were asked to consider the recommendations of the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group which was formed to scrutinise the Draft Revenue Budget 2022/23 and Capital Programme 2022-2026 that Cabinet approved on 6 January 2022.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group, as well as the supporting Officers, be thanked for their work and subsequent recommendations.**
- (2) That Cabinet's responses to the Budget Scrutiny report 2022 and recommendations, as detailed at the meeting, be noted.**

Note: a complete breakdown of the scrutiny recommendations and Cabinet's responses can be found [here](#).

(b) Reasons for decisions

For Cabinet to consider the recommendations of the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group.

(c) Alternative options considered

None. Cabinet was asked to consider these recommendations and provided a response which can be found [here](#).

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

Agenda item no. 9

Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2024/25 and Capital Programme



(a) Decisions

Cabinet received a report on the 3-year revenue budget for 2022/23 to 2024/25 and 4-year capital programme for Buckinghamshire Council covering the period to 2025/26. These proposals were based on the latest known funding position, service budget pressures and the key financial risks facing the Council both now and in the future. They also took account of the findings from the recent budget scrutiny inquiry.

The Council Tax Resolution report would be presented as a separate report as part of the budget to Council in February and would contain the final information from the other precepting authorities leading to the total Council Tax for the area, which Full Council would be required to approve.

The report included Special Expenses that were particular costs specific to an area not covered by a local town or parish council (e.g. recreational grounds, allotments, community centres markets etc.) There were three special expense areas within the overall Council area; High Wycombe Town Committee, West Wycombe Church Yard and Aylesbury Town. The proposed budgets and precepts were presented in Appendix 5.

Although the current Government's 3-year Spending Review covered a 3-year period, the Local Government Settlement announcements were only for 2022/23. This reflected the significant changes that were planned to Local Government funding for 2023/24. These changes would not impact the quantum of funding available to Local Government, but rather the mechanism (the Fair Funding Review) and policy objectives (Levelling Up) to be funded through the previously announced funding envelope.

Whilst recognising the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on Local Authorities the provisional settlement did not include any specific funding for the ongoing impacts of the pandemic. Given the current Government approach of one-off interventions when circumstances required national policy intervention it was likely that if impacts increased in future years then specific one-off funding would be announced alongside any response measures.

RESOLVED –

That Council be recommended to:

- (1) Approve the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme (Appendices 1-3).**
- (2) Approve the 'Special Expenses' budgets, precepts and associated services for Aylesbury Town, High Wycombe Town and West Wycombe Church Yard (Appendices 5 & 6).**
- (3) Support the proposal to delegate to Cabinet decisions to add up to £100m to the Capital Programme, to be funded by Prudential Borrowing, subject to a robust business case being approved.**
- (4) Approve the Council Tax Reduction Scheme Policy (Appendix 7).**
- (5) Delegate authority to the Leader, in consultation with the s.151 Officer, to make any technical changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme as required from legislation concerning the £150 Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme, together with**

any changes required to implement any new discretionary schemes linked to the discretionary funding allocated.

- (6) Approve the Schedule of Fees & Charges as set out in Appendix 8.**
- (7) Note that a supplementary report, the formal Council Tax Resolution, will accompany the final budget to full Council.**

(b) Reasons for decisions

To set a robust and legal revenue budget and capital programme for Buckinghamshire Council within the prescribed timeframe.

To ensure the Council is able to make appropriate additions to the capital programme in a timely manner.

Please note: this decision has been forwarded to full Council on 23 February, 2022, and as such is not subject to call-in.

(c) Alternative options considered

Not applicable.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

Agenda item no. 10

Capital and Investment Strategy

(a) Decisions

Cabinet considered a report on the Capital and Investment Strategy that full Council was required to approve on an annual basis. The draft Capital and Investment Strategy (Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report) provided the framework within which the Council would deliver its Corporate Plan objectives through the effective investment of its limited capital resources. As well as the Council's immediate statutory responsibilities, the strategy also played an important role in regeneration and growth, affordable housing and climate change agendas, especially in the context of a post-Covid recovery and the significant housing growth in the area.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Capital and Investment Strategy (Appendix 1) be agreed.**
- (2) That Council be recommended to APPROVE the Capital and Investment Strategy.**

(b) Reasons for decisions

The Council is required to approve its Capital & Investment Strategy on an annual basis.

Please note: this decision has been forwarded to full Council on 23 February, 2022, and as such is not subject to call-in.

(c) Alternative options considered

Not applicable.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

Agenda item no. 11

Buckinghamshire Council Homelessness Strategy

(a) Decisions

The Transitional Arrangements No.2 Regulations 2008 required a new Buckinghamshire Council Homelessness Strategy to be in place by 1 April 2022. Following delays arising from the pandemic and service restructure, work had now been undertaken to develop a new draft strategy for consideration and adoption. To ensure that the Council could adopt its new Homelessness Strategy within a reasonable timeframe, Cabinet was asked to consider and comment on the draft strategy ahead of a public consultation process, with a view to the final version of the Strategy being submitted to full Council for consideration and adoption on 27 April 2022. The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had been updated and notified of the timetable for adopting the Strategy by the end of April 2022.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the draft Buckinghamshire Council Homelessness Strategy be noted.**
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Leader of the Council to make any final amendments to the draft Strategy (following feedback from Members and the completion of the public consultation exercise), and to agree the final version of the Strategy in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Regulatory Services.**
- (3) That the final version of the Homelessness Strategy, as agreed by the Leader of the Council, be submitted to full Council for consideration and adoption.**

(b) Reasons for decisions

The recommended course of action and timetable would ensure that the Buckinghamshire Council Homelessness Strategy was in place in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Transitional Arrangements No.2 Regulations 2008.

(c) Alternative options considered

The other options considered are detailed at paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 of the Cabinet report.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

Agenda item no. 12

Withdrawal from the London Housing Consortium Joint Committee

(a) Decisions

The Council had been a Constituent Authority of the London Housing Consortium (LHC) since May 2006 and had nominated Elected Members to serve on the LHC Joint Committee. The rationale for joining the LHC Joint Committee had been to work collaboratively with other London Councils to improve the procurement of housing and construction products and services. The London Housing Consortium had been set up for that purpose in 1966.

The Council no longer relied on LHC for procurement solutions, preferring instead to use a mixture of its own procurement capability, main contractor services, alternative procurement consortia and sometimes including LHC. LHC surpluses were now shared widely across the country resulting in a reduced annual return for the Council. As a Constituent Member of LHC the council received an annual community benefit fund from LHC surpluses (conditional on attendances by Elected Members at LHC meetings) of £10,000. It was envisaged that in a new LHC corporate entity such funds would continue to be available for former LHC Constituent Authorities.

Much had changed in the operations of the LHC in recent years and Members of the LHC Joint Committee recognised that the dynamic nature of LHC as a commercial enterprise was at odds with the democratic and regulatory processes that were required by local authorities. It was felt that LHC would benefit from having more autonomy around its governance and organisational design, Job design and reward, Future provision of pension and financial modelling and risk management.

Consequently, the members of the LHC Joint Committee had asked for a review of LHC governance arrangements which concluded that the LHC Joint Committee be disbanded, and a new corporate entity established by LHC. If the current lead authority, LB Hillingdon, withdrew from the Joint Committee and two or more Constituent Authorities wished the Joint Committee to continue, then one of them would have to act as lead authority. The requirements for the lead authority were set out in the LHC Constitution.

The governance review leading to the proposal to withdraw from the LHC Joint Committee had identified new governance arrangements that were more appropriate to the current and future operations of LHC. In establishing a new corporate entity LHC would be seeking participation from client organisations and other interested parties from across Great

Britain, from local authorities, housing associations and other relevant sectors. The design of the new LHC corporate entity would look to continue to offer grant funding to those Authorities continuing to participate in LHC and would encourage current Constituent Authorities to consider participation in the new corporate entity.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That Buckinghamshire Council withdraws as one of the ten Constituent Authorities of the LHC Joint Committee, as well as from the LHC Joint Committee, resulting in its potential disbandment in December 2022 at the earliest, thereby foregoing the £10,000 p.a. income from the LHC Joint Committee.**
- (2) That Buckinghamshire Council would consider at a future meeting, the options for continued participation in the new LHC corporate entity when it is known in March 2022.**

(b) Reasons for decisions

The reasons for the decision are detailed at Sections 1-3 of the Cabinet report.

(c) Alternative options considered

The other options considered are detailed at Section 5 of the Cabinet report.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

Councillors Chilver and Naylor declared a personal interest as the 2 Council appointees onto the London Housing Consortium Joint Committee (procurement partnership).

Agenda item no. 13

Future High Streets

(a) Decisions

In June 2021, the Council had received from MHCLG the first tranche of Wycombe's Future High Streets grant ('FHS'). This had been reported to Cabinet in July 2021, and progress had been made on part of the approved 3-year FHS development programme (two vacant shop acquisitions had been acquired and were undergoing re-purposing). It had not been possible to secure another targeted Year 1 project, although this might emerge again as a project in 2022/23.

Meanwhile, it was proposed that an alternative project be substituted (subject to Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities approval), to achieve Year 1 spend profile and thereby secure Year 2 grant. The proposed substitute project comprised the Council co-investing (alongside Eden's owners the long leasehold owners of the centre, the freeholders being the Council), in the proposed re-purposing of Eden's 13,000sqm (140,000sqft) House of Fraser building to further economic activity and vitality in the town

centre, as well as bringing forward much needed housing and associated benefits with repurposing underutilised space in the town centre.

House of Fraser occupied the building on a temporary short-term arrangement and there was no certainty that they would remain as tenant. Eden were in on-going discussions with them but regarded it as prudent to look at alternative options.

The disposal of 6-8 Frogmoor would facilitate the redevelopment of Chiltern Shopping Centre for predominantly residential development, that would increase economic activity in the town centre and reduce pressures on housing need elsewhere. Work was ongoing with the other tenants and operators that might be affected by the proposed redevelopment of the Chiltern Centre. The terms of the proposed Eden co-investment, along with the terms of the proposed disposal of 6-8 Frogmoor to Dandara, which formed part of their redevelopment proposals, were set out in detail in the Confidential Appendix.

The proposed investment and disposal would have a twofold regeneration benefit to the Council and the town centre. The redevelopment would also generate a capital receipt (from the disposal of 6-8 Frogmoor) and CIL/Section 106 monies for the Council. Cabinet asked the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets to look at the potential for reinvesting some of these monies in the regeneration of Frogmoor.

RESOLVED –

That the Director of Property and Assets, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets, and the Section 151 Officer, be authorised to:

- (1) Agree Heads of Terms, authorise and undertake necessary due diligence, agree contracts and exchange and complete contracts for the investment of Wycombe's Future High Street monies into the Eden Centre for the reasons set out in the public report and confidential appendix.**
- (2) Agree the Heads of Terms, agree contracts, exchange, and complete the disposal of 6-8 Frogmoor, High Wycombe, for the reasons set out in the public report and confidential appendix.**

(b) Reasons for decisions

The initial July 2021 Cabinet report on Future High Streets ('FHS') envisaged the need for further Cabinet approvals, to authorise other FHS projects.

(c) Alternative options considered

- (i) Do nothing – This was not the recommended option because the proposed investment in Eden would reinforce it as the main retail destination in the town centre and the Chiltern Centre was likely to continue to decline as a retail destination and a comprehensive development was unlikely to be achieved. Furthermore, the amount of residential development and thereby the economic activity and regeneration outcomes would be reduced

- (ii) Negotiate an alternative deal – This was not the recommended option for the reasons set out in the report.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

For further information please contact: Craig Saunders -
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You can view upcoming decisions to be made and all decisions taken on the Council's website [here](#).