

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Executive

(to be confirmed at the next meeting)

Date: Monday, 7 September 2020

Venue: Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting

Present:

S D T Woodward, Policy and Resources (Executive Leader)
T M Cartwright, MBE, Health and Public Protection (Deputy
Executive Leader)
F Birkett, Housing
Miss S M Bell, Leisure and Community
K D Evans, Planning and Development
S D Martin, Streetscene

Also in attendance:

Councillor S Cunningham: for item 10(3)
Councillor S Dugan: for item 10(3)
Councillor M J Ford: for item 10(3)
Councillor L Keeble: for items 10(2), 10(3)
Councillor Mrs K Mandry: for item 10(3)
Councillors R H Price, JP: for item 10(3)



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies given for this meeting.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 03 August 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. EXECUTIVE LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Executive Leader announced that Covid-19 has had a significant impact on every aspect of life and society in our borough and it is well reported how this has led to an immense impact on the UK economy. He stated that the Council prides itself on the prudent approach always taken in managing the Council finances, but for the first time that he can recall in Fareham's history, the Executive tonight will be considering an emergency mid-year budget.

The Executive Leader stated that the UK response to the pandemic has had a very significant and detrimental impact on Councils across the country. In February the Council agreed its budget for the year, £9.6m, and despite our strong financial standing, we see tonight that the projected impact of COVID is over £3.6m of unforeseen net costs.

Government support will go some way to closing that gap, but there will still be a need to draw heavily on reserves, so that the Council's vital public services can continue to be provided to its residents. The Executive Leader stated that if the Council hadn't adopted a prudent policy for retaining some reserves, the recommendations before us would be very different.

The Executive Leader stated he was warning Councillors that the financial shockwaves of the pandemic are expected to be felt beyond the current financial year, particularly as the economic consequences of COVID crystallise over the coming months, and we expect to see the medium term impacts at our next meeting in October. He stated that the Council's Medium Term Finance Strategy already predicted a funding gap in excess of £1.5m over 4 years and the early indications are that this gap will widen significantly, due to COVID.

Unless steps are taken to quickly to mitigate the funding gap, some of our public services will have to be cut. The Executive Leader stated that there are some quite straight-forward choices; council taxes are increased, services are cut or modest charges are introduced for demand-led services to generate new income.

The Executive Leader posed the question "What would it take to close a £1m funding gap? "

- We could stop all of our community and youth activities, (so shut down community centres, stop grants to community groups and all stop all community development work);
- We could move our waste collection and recycling collection to once a month

- We could stop cleaning the streets across the borough
- We could stop maintaining our parks and open spaces
- Or we could hold a referendum to increase council tax by £23 (a 14% increase)

He stated that clearly, these are not services that the Council is going to stop, but it is clear that the services provided, and that every household use, are exceptionally good value for money. As such, being forced to make savings by way of service cuts would have huge implications for all of our residents, if we don't act now, while we have time to do so.

In conclusion, the Executive Leader asked Members reflect on this context when considering some of the very difficult decisions that are ahead.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Miss S Bell declared a personal interest in respect of item 10(3) as she lives in Castle Street, near to one of the coastal car parks and she also sits on the St. Mary's Church Parish Hall as a Trustee.

5. POLICY AND RESOURCES

(1) Covid 19 Emergency Revised 2020/21 Budget

The Executive Leader brought item 10(2) Emergency Revised 2020/21 Budget forward on the Agenda.

The Executive Leader introduced this item stating that the Council's reserves as at 31 March 2020 totalled £155.3m, of which £45m (29%) are classed as useable reserves. The £110m of unusable reserves relate to accounting adjustments for issues such as property revaluations, and as the name suggests is unusable. Unusable reserves contain funds that cannot be used to provide services or used for day to day running costs. They can be categorised as reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses. Adjustment accounts that absorb the differences between applying proper accounting practices and the requirements of statutory arrangements for funding expenditure.

While £45m of usable reserves sounds very healthy, these funds relate to all aspects of the services that the Council provides, and the majority can only be used for certain purposes. For example, nearly half (over £20m) can only be used for capital purposes (such as new construction projects, purchasing large assets, etc). Another £11m, can only be used in relation to council housing.

That leaves £14m (9%) of the £155m, but two thirds of this (c.£9m) also has pre-existing commitments and restrictions about how it should be used. For example, £2.4m is funding received from former development sites for the maintenance of open space maintenance, £1.6m relates to business rates due to be paid to Government and other precepting Councils.

So, what remains, is c.£5m (3%) of the £155m, that can be used to meet any income shortfall in day to day spending. £1.1m of this will be used in 2020/21 to balance the budget in this year, and there is an expectation that £2.4m will be held at all times for unforeseen fluctuations in income or spending. As

previously stated, it is not wise to use reserves to meet shortfalls in revenue operations because, once spent, it cannot be used again. A very valid point was raised about replenishing reserves once used and, to do this, we would require cost reductions (from service cuts), or new income.

With reference to the Council's £290m of assets, £124m of these are Council houses, £83m relate to other land and buildings £64m relate to commercial/investment property, then there is a range of other assets (such as vehicles, plant, heritage assets, infrastructure, etc), that make up the balance. It is true that some of these assets could be sold to generate cash, but their use would be limited to new capital investments only. The cash raised could not be used to meet a shortfall in day to day funding.

The reality of the Council's financial position is that our prudent approach in the past has allowed the immediate impact of the COVID pandemic to be met from reserves, while maintaining funding for vital public services and still being able to invest in the priorities for the borough. However, the approach this year cannot be sustained as reserves are limited, as is the Council's ability to raise taxes without holding an expensive referendum. Difficult decisions do need to be taken to balance the budget for this, and future, years, if services to the public are to be protected. Fareham Council's services are delivered by levying a council tax of just £3 per week for the average home, almost the lowest in the country.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor L Keeble addressed the Executive on this item.

RESOLVED that the Executive approves:

- (a) the Covid-19 Finance Recovery Plan and actions contained therein (as set out from paragraph 55 of the report); and
- (b) recommends that the Council approves the following revised budgets:
 - i. the Emergency General Fund Revised Revenue budget for 2020/21;
 - ii. the use of £1,143,700 from the General Fund Revenue Reserve to balance the 2020/21 Revised Budget;
 - iii. the Emergency Housing Revenue Account Revised budget for 2020/21; and
 - iv. the Revised Capital Programme for 2020/21.

6. PETITIONS

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Head of Democratic Services gave an update in respect of the Petition "We the undersigned petition the council to Stop the proposed charges at our local water side car parks" which commenced on 27 August 2020.

The Head of Democratic Services stated that before she provided the Executive Members with the numbers of the petition, she wanted to explain the circumstances of a technical issue which affected the petition.

It came to light at the beginning of last week that some people were experiencing problems signing the ePetition and although we believed the matter to be resolved, some people did continue to experience intermittent problems.

The Head of Democratic Services explained that to counter this issue, those people who were having problems signing the Petition were offered the opportunity to submit their name and address via email or phone and the Committee Team have maintained a separate list of those numbers.

Following liaison with the Lead Petitioner, it was agreed that the Petition cut-off would be 5.30pm this evening and it was confirmed that we had received 1711 signatures. Of these, 1629 were received electronically via the online Petition.

The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that this number has not yet been verified to identify whether there are any duplicate signatories.

In accordance with the Council's petition scheme, it seems likely that this petition will trigger a Council debate, having reached a threshold of more than 1500 signatures. However, it had been explained to the Lead Petitioner, as this matter is brought before the Executive for consideration this evening, it is only right to provide this Petition overview to the Executive alongside their considerations.

The Petition will be brought before the Council at its next meeting, but The Head of Democratic Services pointed out that the Council cannot overturn an Executive decision which has already been made.

7. DEPUTATIONS

The Executive received deputations from the following people in respect of Item 10(3) – Parking Service Review who were thanked accordingly:

Sophie Carnaghan - written deputation
Angie Beck – written deputation
Pamela Charlwood – written deputation
Philip Warwick – video deputation
William Hutchison – written deputation
Anthony Gillam – written deputation
Lindsey Bailey – written deputation
Matthew Hall – video deputation
Maureen Levenson – written deputation
Christopher Wozencroft – written deputations
County Councillor Pal Hayre – written deputation
Mark Collins – video deputation

8. REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Policy & Resources Scrutiny Panel – 24 August 2020

Minute 6 – Parking Services Review

The Panel received deputations in respect of this item from Reverend Ian Meredith and Mrs Angela Whiting.

Councillor N J Walker declared a personal interest in this item as one of the deputees is known to him, and he lives off of Hospital Lane which is near to one of the sites identified.

Councillor J G Kelly declared a personal interest in this item as one of the deputees is known to him.

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Leisure and Community and received a presentation by the Project Co-Ordinator on a review of the Council's Parking Service.

At the invitation of the Chairman Councillor R H Price addressed the Panel on this item.

At the Invitation of the Chairman Councillor S Dugan addressed the Panel on this item.

At the invitation of the Chairman Councillor T M Cartwright, Executive Member for Health and Public Protection addressed the Panel on this item.

Members discussed the report at length and acknowledged that the Council has to take action to secure new revenue streams for the Council, to not only assist with the funding gap previously identified by the Council, but also to assist with the loss of revenue that the Council has experienced due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Members expressed a desire for the proposed charging schedule for the coastal car parks to be amended to allow users of these car parks the option to purchase a 1 hour or 2-hour parking ticket. They felt that the minimum 4 hour charge would be unfair to those who use these car parks for short stays, and would discourage these users from using the car parks, with the possibility of them parking in nearby roads. This alternative will then create parking problems elsewhere.

Members, whilst acknowledging the advantage of the proposed pay by app scheme, were keen to ensure that all pay machine continued to accept all types of payments, including cash as they felt that many residents would still use this as their preferred method. Councillor Price also requested that all pay machines be fitted with the multi-language option in order to make parking more accessible for foreign visitors.

Councillor Ford put forward an alternative proposal to the proposed scheme for coastal car parks that is to be presented to the Executive at its meeting on 7 September 2020, which was seconded and agreed upon by the Panel. The proposal is as follows:

Charge £1 per hour for the first 1 – 2 hours of parking

Charge £3 for up to 4 hours of parking

Charge an additional £3 for any period in excess of the 4 hours.

The total anyone would pay for parking would remain at £6, however it would provide more flexibility to those who only wish to use short stay parking.

The Director of Leisure and Community addressed the Panel and explained the reasoning behind the proposed minimum of 4 hours parking. She explained that to allow shorter periods for parking charges would severely affect the projected revenue income from the use of these car parks. She suggested that Officers undertake some scenario planning in preparation for the Executive meeting on 7 September 2020, so that they can demonstrate the impact that variations to the proposed scheme would have on the projected revenue income.

RESOLVED that the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive at its meeting on 7 September 2020:-

- (a) an amended charging scheme for the Coastal car parks which is
 - Charge £1 per hour for the first 1 – 2 hours of parking
 - Charge £3 for up to 4 hours of parking
 - Charge an additional £3 for any period in excess of the 4 hours;
- (b) that all pay machines, continue to accept all methods of payment in order not to disenfranchise any users of the car parks; and
- (c) to request that all pay machine be fitted with multi-language options in order to make parking easier for any foreign visitors.

Minute 7 – Osborn Road Multi Storey Car Park

The Panel considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer on proposals for the future of Osborn Road car park, which is to be determined by the Executive at its meeting on 7 September 2020.

Members agreed that the proposals put forward for the car park were the right option for the car park in this current economy. Members queried as to whether residents of Osborn Road would be consulted regarding the final design for the car park as they would be the most affected by the change. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer confirmed that a consultation on the design of the car park would take place as parking of the planning application that would be required for this proposal.

RESOLVED that the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel recommend the proposals contained within the draft Executive report to the Executive for endorsement at its meeting on 7 September 2020.

9. POLICY AND RESOURCES

(1) Parking Service Review

The Executive Leader brought item 10(3) Parking Service Review forward on the Agenda.

At the invitation of the Chairman, the following Councillors addressed the Executive on this item: Councillors S Cunningham; S Dugan; M J Ford; J Forrest (written); L Keeble; Mrs K Mandry and R J Price.

The Executive received deputations in respect of this item as detailed in item 5 of the agenda.

In considering this item, the Executive took account of the recommendations of the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Panel made at the panel meeting held on 24 August 2020.

Following debate on this item and taking into consideration the number and content of the deputations received, the comments which had been received and passed to the Executive for consideration together with the numbers who had signed the Petition and the comments received from Councillors in their representations, the Executive Leader made a proposal for new recommendations.

In respect of recommendations (a), (b) and (d), these remained as per the original recommendations outlined in the report.

In respect of the proposed recommendation (c), this was suggested following the numerous representations to reconsider both the cost of parking and to set a timeframe for charging during the day.

In respect of the original recommendation (e), following representations made, it was agreed that the upgrade to the Meon Shore car park would not proceed.

In respect of the original recommendation (f), following representations in respect of the high number of water sports enthusiasts who carry a large amount of water sport equipment, it was proposed that the recommendation to install height barriers would not proceed as a recommendation.

The original recommendations (g) and (h) remained in the proposed new recommendations.

Taking into consideration the comments made by several deputies and ward Councillors who made representations about the overnight parking of camper vans, a recommended proposal to ban overnight parking of camper vans was made. The Executive Leader also proposed that considerations be explored for options for coach parking in Portchester car parks.

Reflecting on the comments made by several deputies and ward Councillors making representations about the possibility of an introduction of offering season tickets to the car park users, the Executive Leader proposed that Officers report back to the Executive at a future meeting in respect of any potential concessionary or season ticket arrangements in individual car parks which is to include an option for a season ticket of £80 per year. The Executive Leader proposed that this figure would be recommended to be agreed in principle.

Taking into account the views of all who commented on the possible implementation of charging for parking, and as a commitment to maintaining out of town charges at the current rate, the Executive Leader proposed that no

new charging would be implemented apart from Fareham Town centre and the coastal car parks within the next five years.

In considering the comments made through Deputations and Ward Councillors' representations, the Executive Leader proposed that work is undertaken to investigate the provision of cycle racks to be installed at coastal car park locations, to assist with secure storage for those who wish to cycle to the destination for leisure and/or health purposes.

In recognising the comments made in respect of the potential for on-street parking issues, including current issues experienced by those parking on-street in residential areas and parking on grass verges, the Executive Leader proposed that liaison takes place with Hampshire County Council and Hampshire Police to address on-street parking issues which may transpire after the implementation of any car parking charges.

RESOLVED that the Executive agrees that:

- (a) a Pay-by-App option be introduced for all Pay & Display car parks in the Borough;
- (b) new Pay-on-Foot machines be installed in Osborn Road Multi-storey car park, Fareham shoppers' car park and Market Quay car park and a budget of £250,000 be allocated for this purpose;
- (c) a charge of £1 per hour up to a maximum of £6 per day be introduced in all coastal car parks in the Borough during the hours of 10am – 6pm;
- (d) new solar powered Pay and Display machines are installed in coastal car parks and a budget of £75,000 in total be allocated for this purpose;
- (e) Dragons' Teeth be installed at Monks Hill and Salterns car parks to prevent parking on the grass verges at a cost of £11,000 but height restriction barriers will not be installed;
- (f) a consultation exercise on Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) be undertaken outlining any required changes to parking restrictions and charges in all car parks where changes are proposed to current arrangements;
- (g) authority be delegated to the Director of Leisure and Community following consultation with the Executive Member for Health and Public Protection to conduct Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) consultations in free car parks where the limited waiting time limit is deemed too long;
- (h) authority be delegated to the Director of Leisure and Community following consultation with the Executive Member for Health and Public Protection to consider options for parking of coaches in Portchester car parks and to ban overnight camper van parking in coastal car parks;
- (i) Officers report back to a future meeting of the Executive on any potential concessionary or season ticket arrangements in individual car

parks which is to include an option (agreed in principle) for a season ticket of £80 per year;

- (j) Charging will not be implemented in any car parks other than Fareham Town Centre or coastal car parks across the Borough within the next five years;
- (k) work is undertaken to investigate the provision of cycle racks to be installed at coastal car parks;
- (l) liaison takes place with Hampshire County Council and Hampshire Police to address on-street parking issues which may transpire after the implementation of any car park charging; and
- (m) Meon Shore car park resurfacing will not go ahead as per the original recommendation (e) in the report to the Executive.

10. LEISURE AND COMMUNITY

- (1) Fareham Lottery

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- (a) agrees to establish a Community Lottery for Fareham; and
- (b) nominates One Community to continue to promote and support it.

11. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- (1) Local Development Scheme

At the invitation of the Chairman a written representation of Councillor J Forrest was read out.

RESOLVED that the Executive agrees:

- (a) to adopt the Fareham Borough Local Development Scheme (August 2020) as set out in Appendix A to the report; and
- (b) that the Director of Planning and Regeneration is authorised to make any necessary minor changes to the Local Development Scheme, providing that these do not change the overall direction, shape or emphasis of the document, prior to the document being published on the Council's website.

12. POLICY AND RESOURCES

- (1) Covid 19 Economic Recovery Plan

RESOLVED that the Executive approves the Covid-19 Economic Recovery Plan and the following actions therein:

- (a) to agree the five priority action plan areas within the Businesses and sectors, Town Centre and District Centres, Investment Projects, People and Communities, and Consultation and Communications themes;
- (b) to note that £103,270 has been allocated to the Council to support the delivery of the European Union Development Fund's Opening High Streets Safely action plan;
- (c) to agree for £14,000 from the Economic Development budget in 2020/21 to support the delivery of the action plan;
- (d) to agree a growth budget allocation of £31,000 in 2021/22 for the delivery of the remaining themed action plans; and
- (e) to note that officers will identify and apply for eligible national and regional funding opportunities to minimise the growth budget allocation above and will review its internal budget allocations to steer, where possible, existing resources to help deliver the agreed actions.

(2) Osborn Road Multi Storey Car Park

In considering this item, the Executive took into account the recommendations of the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Panel made at the panel meeting held on 24 August 2020.

RESOLVED that the Executive agrees that:

- (a) the outline proposal for the refurbishment of Osborn Road Multi Storey Car Park be approved; and
 - (b) the car park scheme be added to the capital programme.
- (3) Covid 19 Impact on Daedalus Faraday Business Park Investment Project

RESOLVED that following consideration of the potential impact(s) of Covid-19, the Executive agrees:

- (a) to continue funding of £5 million, as agreed by the Executive on 07 January 2019, to construct new industrial/business units at Faraday Business Park; and
- (b) the appointment of a contractor for the development is delegated to the Director of Planning and regeneration following consultation with the Executive Member for Policy and Resources.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm
and ended at 9.05 pm).

