

FAREHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Executive

(to be confirmed at the next meeting)

Date: Monday, 1 February 2021

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
S D Martin, Planning and Development
M J Ford, JP, Streetscene

Also in attendance:

L Keeble, for item 8(1)
P J Davies, for item 8(2)



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence given for this meeting.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Executive meeting held on 04 January 2021 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. EXECUTIVE LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Executive Leader announced that Members would be aware that the Local Plan consultation closed just before Christmas, and that it was appropriate to update Executive Members and the general public on the topic, given a Government announcement on the standard methodology which was made in the final few days of our consultation.

The Executive Leader advised that the Council received over 300 responses to the consultation and there were over 1,300 visitors to the Virtual Exhibition, which was trialled for the first time. Officers have been through every response and are in the process of preparing a summary to publish, in line with the regulations governing Local Plan preparation. A summary of the responses will be shared with the Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel later this month.

The Executive Leader went on to explain that the Publication Local Plan, which Full Council approved as the version to submit to Government for examination, was based on a level of housing need in a proposed revised standard methodology that the Government consulted upon in August of last year. The Council acknowledged the risk of consulting on the proposed lower figure, and the Local Development Scheme is written in such a way to state clearly that submission to Government would only take place when the Government confirms any changes to the standard methodology. Had the Council not consulted on the proposed, new methodology, we would have been severely criticised for consulting on housing numbers that are much higher than the government appear to be requiring. On the 16th December, two days before our consultation closed, the Government confirmed the use of the existing standard methodology and relied on housing need figures from 2014 (7 years ago) rather than the most recent figures which should have been used when calculating the housing requirement for Fareham.

The Executive Leader stated that, in specific terms, the Borough's annual housing need is now confirmed as 508 homes per year, as opposed to the figure of 403 homes per year that the Publication Local Plan was based upon. The consequence of this is that Council must revisit the housing requirement, and the proposed sites required to meet this higher number in an amended version of the Publication Local Plan. Through this process we will also need to revisit the unmet need arising from neighbouring authorities now that their housing numbers are also confirmed. Amendments may be put forward both in light of the Government announcement on housing need but also the responses we have received to this consultation and the Council will carefully consider alterations in order to add greater certainty to the plan being found sound at examination.

The Executive Leader announced that the intention is that a further consultation takes place on changes to the Publication Local Plan in early summer after the necessary technical work has been undertaken. The Local Development Scheme will be revised accordingly. This will be presented to Members for pre-scrutiny, Executive approval and then Council sign off during late spring.

The Executive Leader stated that it is also appropriate to advise the Executive and all Members of the outcome of the Housing Delivery Test for the years April 2017 – March 2020 which were published last month. Each year the Test looks back at housing completions over the previous years against Government-set housing requirements for the Borough. 79% of the homes that we needed for that period were built in the Borough, with the housing requirement we are judged against rising over each of the three years. The Housing Delivery Test results mean that we need to apply a 20% buffer to our five-year housing land supply and prepare a Housing Delivery Action Plan.

This means that we will need to find sites for, and grant planning permission for, more homes that can deliver in the short-term. The Local Plan will play a key role in this frontloading of housing delivery and this is why delivering the Local Plan will be a focus of the Action Plan that we must produce for Government in the next six months.

At the same time as the Housing Delivery Test targets for Fareham are rising year-on-year, the Borough has been unable to respond to this challenge due to our inability to issue many residential permissions since February 2019 due to the concern identified as to the impact of development-related nitrates on the protected habitats in the Solent.

At its peak, we had almost 1400 homes tied up in planning permissions that could not be issued solely because of the nitrates issue. Against an annual housing requirement of around 500 homes this backlog is clearly highly significant. The Council has been at the forefront of nitrate mitigation solutions working with landowners, developers, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Natural England and other local authorities to develop solutions that mean we can now issue permissions but still there is no single long-term solution at present time and work to ensure a continued supply of mitigation options and ‘nitrate credits’ continues.

Going forward, we know that due to the backlog of permissions that we have not been able to lawfully issue over the last three years, we face a difficult period over the next few years because of our likely poor performance against the ‘backward-looking’ Housing Delivery Test.

That is why we continue to lobby hard both through PfSH and separately as Fareham Borough Council to raise this issue with Government to ensure that they support us in the position that, despite our best efforts to issue planning permissions and proceed with the Local Plan , we are being penalised by events out of our control. I hope to be able to report some favourable outcomes from those discussions at a future meeting.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

5. PETITIONS

There were no petitions submitted at this meeting.

6. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations made at this meeting.

7. REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee – 14 January 2021****Minute 9 – Review of Statement of Licensing Policy**

Members received a report by the Head of Environmental Health which presented a revised, draft Statement of Licensing Policy for consideration following a 12-week period of consultation.

It was noted and agreed that at paragraph 2.9 of the revised draft policy, the planned date for the first homes to be occupied at Welborne should be checked with the Planning department and amended if it is no longer correct.

During the discussion of this item, it was agreed that at paragraph 5.9 of the revised draft policy the term “Coronavirus” should be replaced with “Covid-19” and that, in the same paragraph, the phrase “is still an issue” should be reworded to provide greater clarity of meaning.

It was discussed and agreed that at paragraph 5.16 of the revised draft policy, the reference to “plastic” drinking vessels should be reworded to say “non-glass drinking vessels” so that the use of non-sustainable materials is not promoted.

RESOLVED that, having considered the representations arising from the statutory consultation exercise and subject to the amendments outlined above, the Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee recommends to the Executive that the revised draft Statement of Licensing Policy 2021-2026 be approved and referred to Council for adoption.

This item was listed for consideration at item 8(4) of the agenda.

8. POLICY AND RESOURCES

- (1) Finance Strategy, Capital Programme, Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2021/22

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

A revised page 11 of the agenda pack was tabled at the meeting to show a corrected estimate figure of £2,731,105 for retained business rates and grants; a corrected total amount of £7,456,402 due from the council tax payers; and the correct date of the February Council meeting. A revised page 21 of the agenda pack was also tabled to include the corrected figure of £7,456,402 at Appendix A of the report.

A revised page 16 of the agenda pack was tabled at the meeting to confirm that the net rates payable from National Non-Domestic rates for 2021/22 (after transitional arrangements and reliefs) is £ 43,985,447.

RESOLVED that the Executive approves and recommends to the meeting of the Council to be held on 26 February 2021:

- (a) the capital programme and financing of £53,902,000;
- (b) an overall revised revenue budget for 2020/21 of £9,606,500;
- (c) a revenue budget for 2021/22 of £10,271,900;
- (d) a council tax for Fareham Borough Council for 2021/22 of £170.22 per band D property, which represents a £5.00 increase when compared to the current year and is within referendum limits; and
- (e) an unchanged Council Tax Support scheme for 2021/22

(2) Housing Revenue Account 2021/22

At the invitation of the Executive Leader, Councillor P Davies addressed the Executive on this item.

RESOLVED that the Executive approves and recommends to the meeting of the Council to be held on 26 February 2021 that:

- (a) rents be approved for Council Dwellings as set out in paragraph 21 of the report with effect from 01 April 2021;
- (b) rents for Council garages be increased by 1.5% with effect from 01 April 2021;
- (c) the revised budget for 2020/21 be approved; and
- (d) the base budget for 2021/22 be approved.

(3) Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22

A revised page 53 of the agenda pack was tabled at the meeting to correct the net rate of return on commercial investments, as detailed in the table provided at paragraph 77 of the report.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- (a) endorses the draft Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy for 2021/22, attached as Appendix A to the report; and

(b) agrees to submit the report to Council for approval.

(4) Review of Statement of Licensing Policy

The comments of the Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee were taken into account in considering this item.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

(a) agrees the updated Licensing Policy, as detailed in Appendix A to the report; and

(b) recommends the policy to Council for adoption.

9. EXECUTIVE APPOINTMENTS

RESOLVED to appoint Executive Members to the following bodies for the remainder of the current municipal year:

(i) Portchester Crematorium Joint Committee – Councillor M J Ford, JP;
and

(ii) Joint Member Shared Coastal Management Board – Councillor S D Martin.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm
and ended at 6.36 pm).

FAREHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to the Executive for Decision 01 February 2021

Portfolio:	Policy and Resources
Subject:	Finance Strategy, Capital Programme, Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2021/22
Report of:	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Corporate Priorities:	A dynamic, prudent and progressive Council

Purpose:

This report seeks final confirmation of the recommendations to be made to Council, on 26 February 2021, in respect of the revenue budget, capital programme and council tax for 2021/22.

Executive summary:

On 4 January 2021, the Executive reviewed the Council's overall finance strategy and considered proposals relating to the capital programme, revenue budgets and the council tax for 2021/22. This report updates the Council's budgets to reflect the decisions taken on 4 January 2021.

The capital programme for the years 2020/21 to 2024/25 will be £53,902,000.

The revenue budget for 2021/22 will be £10,271,900. With retained business rates and grants estimated to be £2,731,105 and a surplus from the collection fund of £84,393, the total amount due from the council tax payers will be £7,456,402.

Taking these changes into consideration, the council tax for 2021/22 will be £170.22 per Band D property. This represents an increase from the council tax set for 2020/21 but would be within the referendum limit set by the Government.

Recommendation/Recommended Option:

It is recommended that the Executive approves and recommends to the meeting of the Council to be held on 26 February 2021:

- (a) the capital programme and financing of £53,902,000;
- (b) an overall revised revenue budget for 2020/21 of £9,606,500;
- (c) a revenue budget for 2021/22 of £10,271,900;

SPENDING RESERVE

19. The spending reserve exists to cover unforeseen changes in revenue expenditure.
20. The current balance on the reserve stands at £5,164,700 which is £2,738,700 over the minimum required balance of 5% of Gross Expenditure as set out in the approved Medium Term Finance Strategy.
21. It is important to note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic the revised budget for 2020/21 and base budget for 2021/22 will require almost all of the surplus to be used to offset the additional cost to the council of the pandemic.
22. As well as the requirement to use reserves to balance the budget for 2021/22, the Finance Strategy covers the period through to 2024/25 and is showing a projected shortfall of £1.7m in the final 3 years of the strategy.
23. There remains the unknown of the finance position after the outcome of the Fair Funding Review so any further use of reserves must be carefully considered.

COUNCIL TAX AND NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATE BASE

24. The council tax base for 2021/22 is 43,804.5 Band D equivalent properties.
25. The net rates payable from National Non-Domestic Rates for 2021/22 (after Transitional arrangements and reliefs) is £43,985,447.

COUNCIL TAX FOR 2021/22

26. With a net budget for 2021/22 of £12,838,400 a use of reserves and government COVID-19 funding the overall budget position is £10,271,900. With government grant of £153,700, use of business rates of £2,577,405 and with a contribution from the balance on the collection fund of £84,393 amount due from council tax payers will be £7,456,402. This is shown in the following table:

	Base Budget 2020/21	Base Budget 2021/22	Variation
	£	£	£
Total Budget	9,606,500	10,271,900	665,400
Less:			
Government Support	-2,456,665	-2,731,105	-274,440
Collection Fund deficit	47,033	-84,393	-131,426
Total due from Council Tax Payers	7,196,868	7,456,402	+259,534
Council Tax base	43,559.3	43,804.5	
Council Tax (Band D)	£165.22	£170.22	
Cash Increase	+ £5.00	+ £5.00	

	Budget 2020/21 £	Revised 2020/21 £	Budget 2021/22 £
NET BUDGET	9,606,500	9,606,500	10,271,900
EXTERNAL SUPPORT			
Lower Tier Services Grant	0	0	153,700
Non-Domestic Rates	2,456,665	2,456,665	2,577,405
Revenue Support Grant	0	0	0
	2,456,665	2,456,665	2,731,105
COLLECTION FUND BALANCE	47,033	47,033	-84,393
AMOUNT DUE FROM COUNCIL TAX PAYERS	7,196,868	7,196,868	7,456,402
COUNCIL TAX BASE	43,559.3		43,804.5
COUNCIL TAX PER BAND D PROPERTY	£165.22		£170.22
CASH INCREASE	£5.00		£5.00
PERCENTAGE INCREASE	3.22%		3.03%

Minute Item 8(3)

Revised Page 53 – Item 8(3) – Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22

Council does not normally associate particular assets with particular liabilities, this guidance is difficult to comply with. However, the following investments could be described as being funded by borrowing. The remainder of the Council's investments are funded by usable reserves and income received in advance of expenditure.

Investments Funded by Borrowing £'000	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Revised	2021/22 Estimate
Treasury Management Investments	0	0	0
Commercial Investments	31,790	31,042	30,272
Total	31,336	31,042	30,272

77. *Investment Indicator 3 - Rate of return received:* This indicator shows the investment income received less the associated costs, including the cost of borrowing where appropriate, as a proportion of the sum initially invested.

Investments Net Rate of Return	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Revised	2021/22 Estimate
Treasury Management Investments	3.0%	2.8%	3.5%
Commercial Investments	5.3%	4.4%	4.5%
Total	4.8%	4.1%	4.2%

CAPACITY AND SKILLS

Training

78. The CIPFA Code requires the responsible officer to ensure that members with responsibility for treasury management receive adequate training in treasury management. This especially applies to members responsible for scrutiny.
79. Treasury management officers regularly attend training courses, seminars and conferences provided by the Council's treasury management advisers and CIPFA.
80. Property services officers also regularly attend training courses, seminars and conferences provided RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors) accredited/approved providers.

Use of Treasury Management Consultants

81. The Council has appointed Arlingclose as treasury management advisers and receives specific advice on investment, debt and capital finance issues.
82. The Council recognises that responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the organisation at all times and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon our external service providers.
83. It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Council will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by

Revised Page 53 – Item 8(3) – Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22
which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented and
subjected to