

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Executive

(to be confirmed at the next meeting)

Date: Monday, 5 July 2021

Venue: Council Chamber - Civic Offices

Present:

S D T Woodward, Policy and Resources (Executive Leader)
T M Cartwright, MBE, Health and Public Protection (Deputy
Executive Leader)
I Bastable, Streetscene
F Birkett, Housing
Mrs S M Walker, Leisure and Community

Also in attendance:

R H Price, JP, for item 8(2)



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S D Martin.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on Monday 07 June 2021 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. EXECUTIVE LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Executive Leader announced that at the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic, part of the Council's Response and Recovery Plan was to prepare an emergency budget - which was done in Summer 2020. Expenditure controls were also put in place to help manage what was expected to be a very significant impact on the Council's finances. The Executive Leader went on to explain that a report on this evening's agenda would show that this was indeed the case and that net costs were over £2.5m higher than was planned in the budget that was set in February this year.

The Executive Leader stated that the focus through the last year has been to keep vital services running, as far as possible, in a Covid secure way and in order to do this the emergency budget planned to draw over £1m from the Council's reserves. However, the government actually stepped up and said they would support Councils financially and the Executive Leader was pleased to confirm that this was indeed the case last year and that there was a wide range of funding streams which totalled nearly £5m. This has meant that, fortunately, the Council does not need to tap into reserves this year after all.

The Executive Leader stressed that it is important that we do not become complacent and think that we don't have a financial challenge ahead of us. Well before the Pandemic occurred, the Council's Medium-Term Finance Strategy was very clear that an under-lying funding gap existed, and this is what the Council has been addressing through the Opportunities Plan work. The reviews of coastal parking charges, CCTV arrangements and garden waste all seek to address the underlying financial gap which was there and predicted before the pandemic struck. It also gives capacity to address the future priorities for the Borough and although the need to do this was not born out of the pandemic, it will undoubtedly put further pressure on the need to create solutions to ensure that the Council remains in a strong fiscal position. As an example, the Executive Leader stated that a year ago the town centre parking income exceeded £2m per annum. In the last year, little more than one third of this amount was collected and, given the permanent impact that the pandemic has had on the high street it is highly unlikely that we will see a return to pre-pandemic levels.

The Executive Leader stated that other services have also suffered, such as housing support, trade waste, property rents, collection rates for non-domestic rates and council tax. At the same time, we know there will be increasing costs in areas such as waste collection when the Government's new waste strategy is implemented along with local priorities such as net zero for the

Council's carbon footprint. There will be a full review, as always, when the Council considers the Medium-Term Finance Strategy in the autumn.

The Executive Leader concluded by stating that he felt that it was important to clarify for members, and indeed the public, that a one off positive financial support from the government does not mean that the longer term financial pressures have gone away, and that he was sure they have not.

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

Policy & Resources Scrutiny Panel – 28 June 2021

Item 6 – Capital & Treasury Management Outturn 2020/21

The Panel considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer on the capital & treasury management outturn for 2020/21.

At the request of the Chairman, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer gave the Panel a brief explanation on the Council's Commercial Investment Portfolio. There were several questions regarding the impact of the Pandemic on the investment portfolio. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer explained that there is always a level of risk when investing in commercial properties, however he reassured the Panel that the investments that the Council have made are low risk.

RESOLVED that the Panel recommends to the Executive at its meeting in 5 July, that it endorses the recommendations as set out in the report.

Item 7 – General Fund & Housing Revenue Account Outturn 2020/21

The Panel considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer on the general fund and housing revenue account outturn for 2020/21.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor S Woodward, Executive Member for Policy and Resources, addressed the Committee on this item. He reminded the Panel that whilst the level of government funding during the Pandemic has enabled the Council not to have to use its reserves this year, the Council was already facing financial pressure prior to Covid-19 and therefore any plans for further income streams that the Council has considered or implemented will need to continue in order to meet the on-going financial pressures that will be placed on the Council for several years to come.

RESOLVED that the Panel recommends to the Executive, at its meeting on 5 July 2021, that it endorses the recommendations set out in the report.

8. POLICY AND RESOURCES

- (1) Variation to Construction of new units at Faraday Business Park, Daedalus

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- (a) agrees to the two-stage process for providing office accommodation in Units 15 and 16 (set out in paragraphs 17 - 23 of the Executive Briefing Paper) and the required increase in the capital budget of up to £550,000;
 - (b) approves a variation to the current construction contract, at an estimated cost of £165,000, to allow for the stage one office works to be undertaken;
 - (c) grants delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Regeneration following consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive Officer and the Executive Member for Policy & Resources to award a contract(s) for the stage two office works, at an estimated cost of up to £385,000; and
 - (d) additionally, note that an additional capital budget of £50,000 is required to cover minor variations to the scheme following the award of the construction contract.
- (2) Complaints Policy and Unreasonable Complaint Behaviour Policy Updates

At the invitation of the Executive Leader, Councillor R H Price, JP, addressed the Executive on this item.

During the discussion on this item it was noted at paragraph 20 of the report that, in addition to the Housing Ombudsman providing a free service, the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) also provides a free service.

It was agreed during the discussion of this item that:

- (i) at paragraph 10 of the Complaints Policy, as detailed at Appendix A to the report, the contact details for the Housing Ombudsman be added alongside the contact details for the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman;
- (ii) bullet point 6 of paragraph 15 of the Unreasonable Complaints Policy, as detailed at Appendix B to the report, be amended to allow more than one witness to be present when personal contact takes place in dealing with unreasonable complaint behaviour;
- (iii) paragraph 3 of the Unreasonable Complaints Policy, as detailed at Appendix B to the report, be amended to reflect that in the event of a

complaint being escalated to Stage 2, the Director of the department will review the complaint process, not the complaint; and

- (iv) a further report be brought for consideration regarding safeguarding of Members when they are the subject of persistent, vexatious or abusive people.

RESOLVED that, subject to (i) to (iv), as outlined above, the Executive adopts:

- (a) the updated Complaints Policy as set out in Appendix A to the report; and
- (b) the updated Unreasonable Complaint Behaviour Policy, as set out in Appendix B to the report.

(3) General Fund & Housing Revenue Account Outturn 2020/21

The comments of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel were taken into account in considering this item.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- (a) approves the carry forward of £51,900 to fund the completion of the committed General Fund expenditure programmes in 2021/22, as contained in this report;
- (b) approves the carry forward of £470,000 for the HRA Capital Programme to re-align budget and expenditure phasing and to support the forthcoming programme for 2021/22; and
- (c) notes the contents of the report.

(4) Capital & Treasury Management Outturn 2020/21

The comments of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel were taken into account in considering this item.

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- (a) approves the General Fund capital programme for 2020/21 to be financed as set out in this report;
- (b) agrees that the additional expenditure incurred, amounting to £90,086 be financed retrospectively from unallocated capital resources; and
- (c) notes the treasury management activity for 2020/21.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm
and ended at 6.29 pm).