

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE CABINET ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of the meeting held at the Committee Room A, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS, at 6.30 pm on Tuesday, 1 March 2022

Present: Councillor Tom Dawlings (Chairman)
Councillors Scott (Vice-Chairman), Holden, Simmons, Chapelard, Hickey, Goodship and Atkins

Officers in Attendance: Lee Colyer (Director of Finance, Policy and Development (Section 151 Officer)), Jane Clarke (Head of Policy and Governance), Jane Fineman (Head of Finance and Procurement), David Candlin (Head of Economic Development and Property), Katie Exon (Corporate Property Manager) and Caroline Britt (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors Ellis, Hayward and Pound

APOLOGIES

FG77/21 Apologies were received from Councillors Knight, Hall and Everitt. Councillor Chapelard joined the meeting at 7:25pm.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

FG78/21 There were no disclosable pecuniary or other significant interests declared at the meeting.

NOTIFICATION OF PERSONS WISHING TO SPEAK

FG79/21 Councillors Ellis, Pound and Hayward had registered to speak on Agenda Item 6.

Mr Adrian Berendt had registered to speak on Agenda Item 6 (statement to be read out on his behalf).

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 25 JANUARY 2022

FG80/21 No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the minutes dated 25 January 2022 be approved as a correct record.

FORWARD PLAN AS AT 14 FEBRUARY 2022

FG81/21 No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – The Forward Plan as at 14 February 2022 be noted.

TOWN HALL - APPOINTMENT OF CO-WORKING TENDERER

FG82/21 Katie Exon, Corporate Property Manager introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Registered Speakers:

- Councillor Ellis
- Councillor Pound
- Councillor Hayward
- Mr Adrian Berendt

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- Standard lease terms would include certain conditions that would allow termination of the contract if agreed conditions were not met. Details would also be included in the legal agreement.
- The lease was proposed to be contracted from the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 which would give the Council security of tenure.
- There would not be an automatic right of renewal at the end of the lease contract period.
- As part of the tender process the Council provided details showing an indication of how many dates the Council Chamber was used for public meetings. It further included a requirement for the Council to have priority booking rights so that the Council Chamber continued to meet the needs of the Council.
- £5m was the capital amount agreed by Full Council prior to receipt of the tenders. The tenders had now been received and were all well within the £5m envelope. Release of any of the £5m would be subject to the heads of terms and the agreement reached with the preferred contractor. The Council would work with the preferred contractor to manage the process, including costings, to deliver the capital works that had been agreed.
- A swipe card (security pass) system would be used to provide access to both the dedicated areas and shared areas of work. Further details would be available later.
- Outside organisations/groups would have to negotiate if they wanted to hire the space within the town hall.
- The preservation of the Town Hall and the provision of an income stream for the Council was congratulated.
- The new working practices that would be created by co working was seen as a positive step and one that would be beneficial to the Council.
- Co-working would bring an income stream to the Council and deliver cost savings that would allow the Council to remain at the Town Hall.

To note, the matter was decided in taking the exempt information set out in the Agenda as read.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report be supported.

PERFORMANCE SUMMARY QUARTER 3

FG83/21 Jane Clarke, Head of Policy and Governance introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- Figures not included in the statistics included contacts by the Economics Department at the Council to Businesses that numbered at least 350-400.
- Also, the Finance Department had undertaken a huge amount of work with over 10,000 payments made and significantly more applications received.
- It was noted that some levels of performance that were incredibly high were not reflected in the statistics.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report be supported.

CAPITAL MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 3

FG84/21 Jane Fineman, Head of Finance, Procurement and Parking introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- Although Reserves were tight the Council had the ability to use them to cover the £407k needed.
- Alternatively, the Council could choose to use its working capital (internal borrowing).
- The loans to Fusion had all been fully repaid. There was no outstanding debt.
- Loans from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) did not allow for third party borrowing.
- Capital projects had dropped off and this was due to a number of reasons. Covid had had a significant impact, including staff having to prioritise work related to the pandemic. Other issues included a lack in the availability of material, contractors and builders and obtaining the necessary legal agreements.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report be supported.

REVENUE MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 3

FG85/21 Jane Fineman, Head of Finance, Procurement and Parking introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- The new Secretary of State had indicated that there would be no more single year settlements, instead moving to multi-year settlements.
- The number of years was unknown but a multi-year settlement would bring certainty that would allow the Council to set out its own medium term strategy.
- This would mean the Council would be better informed when making

difficult decisions and allow those decisions to be brought forward over a period of time. This should avoid any unintended consequences and would ensure any changes to services were informed and robust.

- The Council was also waiting to receive details from Central Government for the replacement to the New Homes Bonus. There was likely to be some form of incentive to Councils for delivering housing and growth.
- Off street parking income was relatively evenly spread throughout the quarter.
- Requests for annual car parking permits had increased and the Council had sold more than had been sold pre pandemic. This was very positive.
- Less positive were the RVP and Meadow Road car parks which were still considerably below pre pandemic levels.
- Surface level car parks were also doing very well. Torrington Road was doing better than previously. Permits for the new Pantiles car park and at Linden Road were also doing well.
- The employment market was very buoyant at the moment which had resulted in a high turn over of staff.
- The Council's current staff were working very hard to bridge the staffing gaps.
- The Council had digitalised as many processes as possible and would continue to look for opportunities in this area.
- The deficit was originally in the region of £3m. The Council had found nearly £2m. Of the remainder, the majority would come from New Homes Bonus. This money had already been confirmed by Central Government so it would definitely be received.
- Beyond 2022/23, the Council as yet had no details of what it would receive from Central Government.
- It was right for the Council to be prudent until such time as future funding was known.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report be supported.

TREASURY AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 3

FG86/21 Jane Fineman, Head of Finance, Procurement and Parking introduced the report set out in the agenda.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report be supported.

URGENT BUSINESS

FG87/21 There was no urgent business.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

FG88/21 The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 29 March 2022.

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 7.55 pm.