

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE CABINET ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of the meeting held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS, at 6.30 pm on Wednesday, 21 September 2022

Present: Councillor Christopher Hall (Chair)
Councillors Hayward (Vice-Chair), Brice, Dawlings, Goodship, Knight, Morton, Pound and Rogers

Officers in Attendance: Claudette Valmond (Head of Legal Partnership and Interim Monitoring Officer), Lee Colyer (Director of Finance, Policy and Development (Section 151 Officer)), Jane Fineman (Head of Finance and Procurement), Mike Catling (Corporate Health and Safety Advisor), Max Horgan, John Strachan, Jane Clarke (Head of Policy and Governance) and Louise Kellam (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors

APOLOGIES

FG24/22 No apologies were received. Councillor Holden was not present at the meeting.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

FG25/22 There were no disclosable pecuniary or other significant interests declared at the meeting.

NOTIFICATION OF PERSONS WISHING TO SPEAK

FG26/22 Mr Robert Banks, member of the public had registered to speak on Agenda Item 12. Mr Banks was not present when Speakers were called for Agenda 12 and did not speak.

Councillor Bailey and Parish Councillor Blackwell had registered to speak on Agenda item 12.

To ensure speakers were not waiting in the Chamber too long, the Chair moved Item 12 forward to be heard as the first substantive item.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 12 JULY 2022

FG27/22 No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting dated 12 July 2022 be approved as a correct record.

FORWARD PLAN AS AT 23 AUGUST 2022

FG28/22 No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan as at 23 August 2022 be noted.

RESPONSE TO CAR PARKING CONSULTATION

FG29/22

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

Registered Speakers

Parish Councillor Blackwell
Councillor Bailey

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- The consultation questions focused on the proposed price increases for Yew Tree Road and Paddock Wood. The consultation didn't include specific questions relating to town centre car parks.
- If the Council implemented all the car parking charges proposed for Yew Tree Road, the income would be £45k per year. Of the £45k, £33,300 would come from charges for the first (currently free) 2 hour period. Income from Yew Tree car park was currently around £10k per year.
- Current income from Paddock Wood was approximately £26-27k per year. If the new charges were implemented, this figure would rise to £76k per year. Of this, £43k would come from charges for the first hour of parking.
- Maintenance charges for surface level car parks were combined so individual costs were not available but could be provided on request.
- The cost of a consultation for Dunorlan Car Park was not known to officers at the time of the meeting, but would depend on the form the consultation would take (informal or formal). An estimate of costs would be provided after the meeting. However, an informal consultation could be solely online via the TWBC website, which would be very cost-effective. Other options, including using local newspapers would incur further costs. There would be additional requirements if a formal consultation were to be carried out.
- The wording of Option 2 and in particular the final sentence put the onus of responsibility to Paddock Wood and Southborough Town Council. It was suggested this would not allow for wider discussion across the whole of the Borough. It was further suggested the final sentence be removed. Following further discussion and a vote by a show of hands, the final sentence of Option 2 would be retained. Option 2 would therefore be put forward as currently drafted.
- Without knowing the cost, it would be difficult to make a decision on whether to commence an informal consultation for Dunorlan Park. It was therefore suggested that Option 3 be removed.
- It was felt by some Members that the consultation was not sufficient in its scope and additionally that without knowing the true extent of the deficit, none of the options could be supported.
- There should be a better understanding of the current and projected income streams, including car parking and business rates before making any final decisions on whether to increase car parking charges.
- Included in the consultation was an option for a £10 increase in Council Tax. If this were to go ahead, it would raise a significant amount of money, more than would be achieved by increasing car

- parking charges.
- Discussions with Paddock Wood and Southborough Town Council needed to take place to establish their views on what the parking charge structure should be.
- When considering parking charges for Dunorlan, a request was made that charges should not apply at weekends.
- Car parking fees should be structured that would avoid abuse by commuters parking all day.
- Finding and delivering new income streams was difficult so there had to be a balance between the aspirations of the political parties and the reality of the current position of the Council and what it needed to deliver in order to maintain the required level of services.

A recorded vote was requested on each of the options put forward to Cabinet:

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Cllr Brice – For	Cllr Brice – For	Cllr Brice – For
Cllr Dawlings – Against	Cllr Dawlings – Against	Cllr Dawlings – Agair
Cllr Goodship – Against	Cllr Goodship – Against	Cllr Goodship – Agai
Cllr Knight – Against	Cllr Knight – For	Cllr Knight – Against
Cllr Morton – For	Cllr Morton – For	Cllr Morton – For
Cllr Pound – Against	Cllr Pound – Abstain	Cllr Pound – For
Cllr Rogers – Against	Cllr Rogers – Abstain	Cllr Rogers – Against
Cllr Hayward – Against	Cllr Hayward – For	Cllr Hayward – For
Cllr Hall – Against	Cllr Hall – For	Cllr Hall – For
For = 2	For = 5	For = 5
Against = 7	Against = 2	Against = 4
	Abstain = 2	

RESOLVED – That the recommendations to Cabinet for Options 2 and 3 as set out in the report be supported.

BUDGET PROJECTION AND STRATEGY 2023/24

FG30/22 Lee Colyer, Director of Finance, Policy and Development, introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- In relation to government assistance for local government energy costs, there were early indications that support would be given but no details had yet been received. TWBC was part of an energy procurement consortium, LASER, which meant costs were fixed every 6 months. The Council were waiting to see if this type of agreement/set up would be included in any assistance from central Government.
- Energy costs had already doubled (+£600,000) but so far the Council had effectively absorbed this increased cost.
- TWBC were a relatively small district council, but one that held significant assets that had a strong value. Additionally, the Council currently had reserves and no debt. The Council was therefore in a healthy position when looking at its balance sheet, but there was a structural deficit going forward, partly due to high inflation, and partly due to how local government was constrained in its ability to raise

- income to cover the increased costs of the services it had to provide.
- Looking at the Council's Tax Base, it showed the number of residential properties had increased by 6%, but the population (particularly working age) had stagnated. This meant the demographics had changed in terms of the number of people within each household.
- Housebuilding was not on the same level as other areas within the County e.g. Dartford.
- In terms of business rate growth, it was normal practice for the Council to wait until the end of the financial year before making an assumption of the level of growth it had received from business rates.

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

PERFORMANCE SUMMARY QUARTER 1

FG31/22 Jane Clarke, Head of Policy and Governance, introduced the report as set out in the agenda.

Questions and discussion from Members included the following:

- Figures within the report showing a drop in numbers of people approaching for housing assistance were taken from before the Gateway closed, so it wasn't in relation to this.
- The Housing Services Manager had restructured their approach to customers, so housing assistance applications were left open for longer rather than repeat customers applying more than once.
- Details about underperformance relating to the waste collection service were not available, details would be forwarded after the meeting.

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

REVENUE MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 1

FG32/22 Jane Fineman, Head of Finance, Procurement and Parking introduced the report as set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- The last pay review for Council staff was conducted 2 years ago. These reviews cost money, but another review had just been requested to address current concerns.
- In relation to the Council Tax assistance given to residents, there were two elements. All residents in Band A-D properties were in receipt of the £150. The second element was the relatively small discretionary amount (approximately £185,000) given by central government. The application process was ongoing and it was anticipated it would be distributed within the next couple of weeks. Discretionary grants of £150 would be paid to residents benefitting from the Council Tax Reduction Scheme in Bands E-H, or disabled/seriously impaired residents or carers in Bands E-H, as well as top ups (£48) to residents in Bands A-D if they were in Band 1 of the Council Tax Reduction

Scheme.

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

CAPITAL MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 1

FG33/22 Jane Fineman, Head of Finance, Procurement and Parking, introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- Contractually, where there was an expired contribution of Section 106 funding, the funds would be returned to the Developers. However, in practice, the Council went back to the Developer to renegotiate and extend the timescale. To date, no contributions had been returned, but there was one which may be returned in the near future as the Developers were currently not engaging with the Council so negotiations had stalled.

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

TREASURY AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 1

FG34/22 Jane Fineman, Head of Finance, Procurement and Parking, introduced the report as set out in the agenda.

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

ANNUAL CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

FG35/22 Mike Catling, Corporate Health and Safety Advisor, introduced the report as set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- Although there seemed to be a large number of 3rd party incidents reported at the Assembly Hall Theatre, it was still a small percentage of the total number of people that used this facility.
- Council staff who reported incidents of threats or violence were supported, although there was further education required to ensure all cases were captured.

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

URGENT BUSINESS

FG36/22 There was no urgent business.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

FG37/22 The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 11 October 2022.

GRANT OF LEASE TO ENABLE FUNDING

FG38/22 **RESOLVED** – That pursuant to Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Government (Access to Information) Variation Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they may involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Act, by virtue of the particular paragraphs shown on the agenda and on the attached report.

Max Horgan, Estates Surveyor, introduced the report as set out in the agenda.

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

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 8.30 pm.