

FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE CABINET ADVISORY BOARD

Tuesday, 8 June 2021

Present: Councillor Tom Dawlings (Chairman)
Councillors Scott (Vice-Chairman), Goodship, Scholes, Simmons, Chapelard, Hall,
Hickey, Everitt and Knight

Officers in Attendance: Lee Colyer (Director of Finance, Policy and Development (Section 151 Officer)), Jane Fineman (Head of Finance and Procurement), Jane Clarke (Head of Policy and Governance), Gary Rowland (Senior Lawyer Mid Kent Legal), Claudette Valmond (Principal Solicitor) and Caroline Britt (Democratic Services Officer)

APOLOGIES

FG1/21 There were no apologies. Councillor Chapelard joined the meeting at 7:00pm. Councillor Holden was not present.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

FG2/21 There were no disclosable pecuniary or other significant interests declared at the meeting.

NOTIFICATION OF VISITING PERSONS WISHING TO SPEAK

FG3/21 There were no visiting Members.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 16 FEBRUARY 2021

FG4/21 It was noted that there were a couple of typing errors included in the minutes.

No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the minutes dated 16 February 2021 be approved as a correct record.

FORWARD PLAN AS AT 20 MAY 2021

FG5/21 It was noted that the item titled ‘Roofing Works to the Town Hall and AHT’ was in Park Ward and not Pantiles and St Mark’s.

No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – The Forward Plan as at 20 May 2021 be noted.

STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

FG6/21 Lee Colyer, Director of Finance, Policy and Development introduced the report set out in the agenda.

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

REVENUE MANAGEMENT REPORT - QUARTER 4

FG7/21 Jane Fineman, Head of Finance, Procurement and Parking introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- There was concern that the figures as presented in the report may be difficult for some readers to understand and a request was made to see if there was a way for the information to be disseminated in a more user friendly format.
- Appendix C of the report provided details of all the key variances and tracked all the movements for every quarter.
- The Council was a complex organisation that delivered over 60 different services. Local Government Finance was equally complex and was heavily controlled by Central Government and CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) in terms of accounting requirements. The Finance team endeavoured to put in the information in the simplest form possible and were always available to Members to provide further details and clarification.
- The information was set out in compliance with CIPFA classification which was the standard required by the Council's external auditors.
- It was confirmed that this Cabinet Advisory Board was the scheduled meeting to consider quarter 4 outturns. It was not possible to prepare the quarter 4 outturns until substantial progress had been made in completing the Statutory Statement of Accounts. It was only within the past week that the Government notified the Council of the amounts of compensation to be recorded in the Collection Fund, this had a significant bearing on the overall financial outturn.
- Quarter 4 reports would not have been included at the March Cabinet Advisory Board (which had been cancelled) as this meeting was scheduled prior to the end of the Quarter 4 period and as such the figures would not have been available.
- Each year, TWBC's Local Magazine included an easily understood top level summary of the Council's outturn figures.
- The variances included in Appendix C were details of changes in the original budget.
- The Assembly Hall Theatre was listed under HR Customer Services and Culture.
- The income for the Assembly Hall Theatre was £1.785m under budget. Paragraphs 2.20 and 2.27 of the report outlined all the income and cost savings related to the Assembly Hall Theatre. A saving of £1.492m was forecast for quarter 3 which included staff savings of £242k, other expenditure totalling £1.344m (which was an additional £88k since quarter 3).
- The overspend of £312k on Consultants and Legal fees related to the Local Plan was partly covered by an underspend in Planning staff of £115k. Due to Planning staff savings the Council was able to fund the overspend from the revenue account, rather than use the Local Plan reserve.
- It was not easy to budget for the Local Plan so only a small amount (£25k a year) was put in the Revenue Budget. TWBC had a Local Plan reserve which was topped up with sufficient funds as and when needed.
- A further £500k had now been put into the Local Plan reserve, taking

the total to just over £1m which would be used over the next couple of years to cover the cost of taking the Plan forward.

- Under normal conditions TWBC would normally make a small profit from the ice rink.
- TWBC had issued grants to over 9,500 small businesses, totalling over £50m. Some Councils had outsourced this operation. TWBC undertook this work in-house. Central Government subsequently announced they would make a contribution to all Councils to help cover the cost of this work. Because the work had been undertaken in-house, TWBC were able to use the £300k received from Central Government to help reduce the deficit incurred last year.

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

CAPITAL MANAGEMENT REPORT - QUARTER 4

FG8/21 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 budget of £588k for the repairs to the Town Hall roof were for the roof alone and did not include the cost of installing solar panels.
- The Head of Service that dealt with property issues was David Candlin.

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

TREASURY AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR MANAGEMENT REPORT - QUARTER 4

FG9/21 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.

PERFORMANCE SUMMARY QUARTER 4 AND END OF YEAR

FG10/21 Jane Clarke, Head of Policy and Governance introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- Performance of the waste and street scene contract and in particular missed bins was not reported quarterly but details were made available to Members through briefings and service updates were given at the Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board.

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

COMPLAINTS SUMMARY QUARTERS 3 AND 4

FG11/21 Jane Clarke, Head of Policy and Governance introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- It was suggested that in order assess trends it would be helpful if figures going further back were included in the report.
- The key actions that came out of the Ombudsman's report related to the Council's record keeping.

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

REVISIONS TO THE COVERT SURVEILLANCE AND ACCESS TO COMMUNICATIONS DATA POLICY AND GUIDANCE NOTES

FG12/21 Gary Rowland, Senior Lawyer (Corporate Governance) introduced the report set out in the agenda.

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

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE USE OF RIPA

FG13/21 Gary Rowland, Senior Lawyer (Corporate Governance) introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- RIPA was not used during this fiscal year. The last time RIPA was applied for was in 2011.

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

URGENT BUSINESS

FG14/21 There was no urgent business.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

FG15/21 The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 13 July at 6:30pm.

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 7.34 pm.

An audio recording of this meeting is available on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council website.