

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL**CABINET**

MINUTES of the meeting held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS, at 10.30 am on Thursday, 17 March 2022

**Present: Councillor Tom Dawlings (Chairman)
Councillors Scott (Vice-Chairman), March and McDermott**

Officers in Attendance: William Benson (Chief Executive), Lee Colyer (Director of Finance, Policy and Development (Section 151 Officer)), Katie Exon (Corporate Property Manager), Jane Fineman (Head of Finance and Procurement), Sue Oliver (Private Sector Housing Manager), Stuart Clifton (Housing Services Manager) and Caroline Britt (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors Hamilton and Pound

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

CAB138/21 The Chairman invited the Chief Executive to provide an update on the Borough Council's response to the conflict in Ukraine which included the following:

- The Government had recently announced and was in the process of implementing the details of how the UK could accommodate and support refugees.
- Details had already been issued for families currently in the UK where they could now bring over relatives from Ukraine.
- Details of a sponsorship scheme had now been announced. This would allow UK families to register to host refugees. Further details were currently being worked up.
- The Council had already set up a website that both directed residents to charities that were offering support and also provided a webform that allowed residents to register their interest in helping. This included providing accommodation.
- The Council had already received a very positive response.
- The Council were engaging locally and nationally with the clear message that across the board, people were willing to help.
- Nationally there were about 150,000 people that had registered their interest in helping/hosting, but as yet it was unknown as to how many of this number were within the Borough. Nor was it known how many Ukrainians that might want to come to this area.
- To date, 150 people had registered their interest via the TWBC website.
- Further information would follow in due course, but in the first instance it was hoped the portal for Ukrainians to seek permission to come to the UK would be launched week beginning 21 March 2022.
- TWBC would be recommending that residents register through the national portal as this would be the mechanism that would ensure the necessary checks and protocols would be undertaken.

APOLOGIES

CAB139/21 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fairweather. Councillor Hamilton joined the meeting at 11:00am.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

CAB140/21 Councillor March declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda item 13 – Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-26 and as advised by Legal would leave the meeting for this item.

NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK

CAB141/21 There were no visiting Members who had registered as wishing to speak.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 10 FEBRUARY 2022

CAB142/21 Members reviewed the minutes. No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting dated 10 February 2022 be approved as a correct record.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

CAB143/21 In advance of questions, the Chairman agreed that Councillor Pound be allowed to read the following statement (on behalf of all Labour, Liberal Democrat and Tunbridge Wells Alliance Members) as follows:

“As Councillor David Scott failed to attend Planning Committee last night to apologise for his breaches of the Code of Conduct and his quoted words about opposition Members, I can advise Cabinet today that no opposition party Member is willing to work with him in any capacity until he is removed as Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder”.

After the question submitted by Councillor Pound had been answered, Councillor Scott made the following comments in reply to the statement above:

- Immediately following receipt of a letter from the Monitoring Officer (also sent to opposition Members) a request was made to meet with the Monitoring Officer.
- Due to unforeseen circumstances the meeting was delayed and did not take place until Monday 14 March 2022.
- Following the meeting with the Monitoring Officer, a discussion with the Chair of Planning Committee took place. Given that there was only 48 hours until the next Planning Committee (16 March 2022), it was agreed that attendance would be at the following Planning Committee scheduled for 6 April 2022.

Pursuant to Cabinet Procedure Rule 28.3, Councillor Pound had submitted the question as follows:

“Is it the intention of this administration to run down access to and the utilisation of the TN2 Community Centre to the point that it gives up its lease or is there only a short-term lack of investment in resource, marketing, community engagement and competitive pricing – and if the latter, is there a

plan for its regeneration?”

Councillor Dawlings provided the following response:

“TWBC continues to support the TN2 facility which during Covid19 along with all other similar facilities, has been significantly impacted in terms of what services could and can be run viably from the centre.

In addition to this, the area around the TN2 has also seen significant new developments from TCHG’s new residential offer. This has changed the population makeup in terms of mix of housing ownership, which in turn has led to a change in service requirements for the area which has also impacted the TN2.

TWBC has continued to run the TN2 Community Centre 3 evenings a week with a full programme in place. TWBC has also offered other groups such as Badminton to use the Centre during the day to enable them to undertake their activity which suited the needs of the client. Men’s Shed have also continued using their facility during the day too.

There is still 14 years left to run on the lease from the YMCA to TWBC and there is no break clause in the lease allowing TWBC to hand back the building during this period.

The adult education service is shortly about to close as it moves back to the Amelia Scott. Due to decreasing use of the service in 2019 the Library held a public consultation and consequently reduced the opening hours.

Despite all these changes, TWBC will continue to support the TN2 and engage with stakeholders on this building to ensure it continues to deliver a community benefit longer term and what this could eventually look like.

Supplementary Question:

In the light of the examples given and the activities that are taking place:

- Does the Council find it acceptable that the centre was only open 3 evenings a week and not open at the weekends for public bookings and the only access during the day was via the key holders.
- Does the Council find it acceptable that the sports hall was not listed as a sports hall on the Sport England site. In addition it was missing from the recent strategic outcomes report.
- Does the Council find it acceptable that there was no plan to let out, utilise or maintain the undercroft when KCC moved the pottery back to the new Amelia Scott building.
- Does the Council find it acceptable that TN2 room hire was more expensive than St Philips Church.
- Does the Council find it acceptable that being empty during the week, unbookable at weekends local residents did not consider it an option for use.
- That ultimately the centre was being run down by stealth.

Councillor Dawlings confirmed the Centre was not being run down by stealth. Ultimately this was a matter for the local Councillors for Sherwood and the Head of Facilities at TWBC who was responsible for the management of the facility.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

CAB144/21 There were no questions from members of the public.

CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN AS AT 8 MARCH 2022

CAB145/21 Members considered the plan. No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan as at 8 March 2022 be noted.

TOWN HALL - APPOINTMENT OF CO-WORKING TENDERER

CAB146/21 Katie Exon, Corporate Property Manager introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- The Council were now in a good position to move forward and the enhancements made would be good news for the town.
- The Town Hall would continue to be the responsibility of the Council.
- Work was currently taking place to repair the roof and the windows.
- Working with the co-partner, the internal of the building would be refurbished which would include the creation of common facilities e.g. a coffee shop that would be for the use of the Council and co-workers.
- The standard of facilities would be the same for the Council and co-workers.
- Access for residents to the Council would remain unchanged.
- Access to Councillors and officers would also remain unchanged.
- The facilities developed in the Town Hall would be limited for the use of Council staff, tenants and their visitors. Facilities in the Amelia Scott would however be open to the public.
- The Civic Way outside the Amelia Scott was now pedestrianised with the view that the buildings would flow together.
- There would be an income stream for the Council for the use of 2/3rds of the building for co-working. This would come in the form of cost sharing for the running costs of what was an expensive building to maintain. This would significantly help to balance the revenue budget.
- Engagement was important and it was recognised the Town Forum were not as informed as they should have been.

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

RESOLVED –

1. That the Co-working provider supplier D is awarded the tender to take a lease of part of the Town Hall as outlined in the report, subject to agreed negotiations of the heads of terms be approved.
2. That the Head of Economic Development and Property, in consultation with the S151 Officer and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance be delegated to negotiate and finalise the heads of terms with the preferred provider for co-working space be approved.
3. That the Head of Mid Kent Legal Services be given authority to complete all necessary deeds, leases and agreements and other

legal documentation and formalities required to deliver the release and management of the Town Hall for co-working space be approved.

4. That in line with the Full Council decision of October 2021, the release of the approved budget be delegated to the Head of Economic Development and Property, S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance to enter into contract with a co-working provider who has satisfied the Council's due diligence and provided a sound business case be approved.
5. That in line with the Full Council decision of October 2021 delegated responsibility be given to the S151 Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance for the identification of the source of the funding which may include borrowing or external funding be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION: Entering into an agreement with a co-working provider to take a lease in part will allow investment that will both preserve and improve the building. It will further represent savings in operational costs, provide an income and provide wider community and economic benefits for the town.

PERFORMANCE SUMMARY QUARTER 3

CAB147/21 Lee Colyer, Director of Finance, Policy and Development introduced the report set out in the agenda.

RESOLVED –

1. That the summary of project performance over quarter 3 2021/2022 at Appendix A be noted.
2. That the summary of service performance over quarter 3 2021/22 at Appendix B be noted
3. That the Recovery Plans for quarter 3 2021/22 at Appendices C-J be noted

REASON FOR DECISION: To monitor the effectiveness of the council's actions and plans to meet all of the objectives within the Five-Year Plan, highlight underperforming areas, and propose actions to remedy any underperformance to ensure the key objectives are met.

CAPITAL MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 3

CAB148/21 Jane Fineman, Head of Finance, Procurement and Parking introduced the report set out in the agenda.

RESOLVED –

1. That the actual gross and net expenditure for the year and the sources of income as shown in Appendices B to D be noted
2. That the inclusion of new schemes into the Capital Programme as set out in notes 4.3 to 4.5 be noted.
3. That the proposed movement between years set out in note 4.6 be approved
4. That the new Capital Applications detailed in Appendices L and M be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION: Managing and forecasting capital expenditure effectively was vital in order to support all of the services provided by the Council.

REVENUE MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 3

CAB149/21 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 finance team were congratulated on balancing the budget this year without having to use reserves.
- The economy in the town and across the Borough in general was starting to recover – the number of premises being occupied and the recent announcements related to the cinema site and the BHS store were very welcome.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Quarter 3 next expenditure on services year to date was £10,094,000, £745,000 less than budget be noted.
2. That by year end the Council anticipates net expenditure of £15,349,000 on services and this forecast is £325,000 under budget, an improvement of £315,000 since Quarter 2 be noted.
3. That by year end the Council anticipates receiving an increase in funding of £1,712,000, an improvement of £240,000 since Quarter 2. Overall, an improvement to budget of £2,037,000 which will reduce the budget deficit that was to be met from reserves to a forecast of £963,000 be noted.
4. That write offs as set out in Paragraph 2.24 and detailed in Appendix J be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION: To show the actual expenditure on services compared to the revised budget for the period ending 31 December 2021, and the forecast outturn position, highlighting significant variances from the revised annual budget.

TREASURY AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 3

CAB150/21 Jane Fineman, Head of Finance, Procurement and Parking introduced the report set out in the agenda.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Treasury Management and Prudential Indicator position for 2021/22 be noted.
2. That the forecast for investment and bank interest is £462,000, an increase of £100,000 from the approved budget of £362,000, and a further improvement of £30,000 from the Quarter 2 projection be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: Ensuring effective cash flow management was vital in order to support all the services provided by the Council. The interest received from investments was an important source of income in helping to

set a balanced budget.

HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2021-2026

CAB151/21 Sue Oliver, Private Sector Housing Manager introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussions and questions from Members included the following:

- Although there were 63 visits to the website, only 13 replies to the consultation were received.
- Of those who replied to the consultation, most were largely supportive.
- Comments were received that related to actions to do more to help the homeless.
- Additional information was requested on the reasons why people became homeless and the links to the organisations who could help.
- Other comments related to requests for an increased supply of affordable homes, incentives for landlords and access to the private rented sector.
- Another key comment related to looking at what present and future generations might need and the role of retirement homes.
- The Local Plan would deliver more social and affordable housing. In the last year, approximately 660 new houses were delivered of which 270 were affordable/social housing.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026 at Appendix A be adopted.
2. That the Housing Advisory Panel reviews and evaluates the action plans that sit under the four key ambitions every six months, to ensure that the Council's priorities remain in the right direction and reflect local and national priorities be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION: Having a current Strategy would mean the Council was complying with the Homelessness Act 2002, the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy and that ambitions and aims are in place for the next five years.

URGENT BUSINESS

CAB152/21 There was no urgent business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

CAB153/21 The next meeting would be held on Thursday 14 April 2022 commencing at 10:30am at the Town Hall, Tunbridge Wells.

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 11.30 am.