

**TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL****CABINET**

MINUTES of the meeting held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS, at 6.30 pm on Thursday, 8 December 2022

**Present: Councillor Ben Chapelard (Chair)  
Councillors Warne (Vice-Chair), Hall, Everitt, Fitzsimmons, Hayward, Pound and Rutland**

**Officers in Attendance:** William Benson (Chief Executive), Lee Colyer (Director of Finance, Policy and Development (Section 151 Officer)), Jane Fineman (Head of Finance and Procurement), Renee Dillon (Democratic and Executive Support Manager), Pamela Grover-Morgan (Performance and Governance Manager), Claudette Valmond (Head of Legal Partnership and Interim Monitoring Officer) and Caroline Britt (Democratic Services Officer), Ben Garland (JIRP Panel), Bharat Khanna (JIRP Panel)

**Other Members in Attendance:** Councillors Sankey

**LEADERS INTRODUCTION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

CAB84/22 Councillor Ben Chapelard, Leader of the Council welcomed listeners to the meeting which this time was being held in the Town Hall. However, it was hoped that Cabinet would go back on tour in the new year.

Councillor Justine Rutland, Cabinet Member for Tunbridge Wells Town and Local Areas was pleased to announce that on 6 December the Council had received notice that the Council's United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan had been agreed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The Department had not requested any changes to the Tunbridge Wells Plan. Due to the time it had taken for the Plan to be agreed, it was expected that the Council would receive some flexibility for the delivery/spend timescale.

The projects identified in the Plan for year one were as follows:

- Community Grants Programme
- Sherwood Lake Improvements
- Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Community Kitchen
- Royal Tunbridge Wells Street Scene Improvements
- Creative Tunbridge Wells
- Visit Tunbridge Wells
- West Kent Business Support Programme

Some of the projects would be delivered by the Council, others by agreed Partners e.g. Kent High Weald Partnership. Where necessary, grant agreements would be signed between TWBC and the relevant Partner. Further details would be shared with the Local Partnership Group for final sign off. The Group would also assist with the monitoring of the projects.

The Council was currently awaiting agreement from Defra for the Rural England Prosperity Fund Addendum that was submitted on 30 November.

## **APOLOGIES**

CAB85/22 There were no apologies.

## **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

CAB86/22 There were no disclosable pecuniary or other significant interests declared at the meeting.

## **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK**

CAB87/22 There were no visiting Members who had registered as wishing to speak.

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 17 NOVEMBER 2022**

CAB88/22 Members reviewed the minutes. No amendments were proposed.

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting dated 17 November 2022 be approved as a correct record.

## **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

CAB89/22 There were no questions from members of the Council.

## **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

CAB90/22 There were no questions from members of the public.

## **CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN AS AT 29 NOVEMBER 2022**

CAB91/22 Members considered the plan. It was noted that additional items related to the modifications consultation of the Local Plan were likely to come forward and would be added to the Forward Plan in due course.

**RESOLVED** – That the Forward Plan as at 29 November 2022 be noted.

## **\*JIRP REVIEW PAPER**

CAB92/22 Councillor David Hayward Cabinet Member for Governance and Transparency introduced the item. Lee Colyer, Director of Finance, Policy and Development introduced Ben Garland from JIRP who provided a brief summary of the report.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- The report included three options for Cabinet:
  - o Option A – Keep the current scheme
  - o Option B – Implement the JIRP recommendations
  - o Option C – For Members to determine an alternative scheme
- Whilst Full Council was the ultimate decision maker, Cabinet had the opportunity to propose a scheme.
- At the Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board, there was general support to keep the current scheme, but the ambiguity around minority group leaders within Cabinet should be resolved.

- One way to resolve this issue was for Cabinet to add a new condition that 'no Cabinet Member would be entitled to the minority group leader's allowance'. If Cabinet agreed this, a supplementary appendix could be issued for Full Council on Wednesday 14 December 2022.
- The existing conditions would remain except for ambiguity related to minority group leader's allowance.

**RESOLVED** - That Full Council be recommended: That Members determine an alternative scheme (Option C) – to keep the current scheme but to add a new condition that no Cabinet Member will be entitled to a minority group leader's allowance.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To comply with the requirement to undertake a full review of Member Allowances every four years.

### **DRAFT BUDGET 2023/24 & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE 2020/21 TO 2025/26**

CAB93/22 Councillor Christopher Hall, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance introduced Lee Colyer, Director of Finance, Policy and Development who presented the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- The budget deficit inherited on 25 May 2022 was £2.649m, it was now down to £1.4m. Progress was being made but there was more to be done and more difficult decisions to make.
- The interactive consultation was easy to follow and residents were encouraged to take part.

**RESOLVED** – That the Draft Budget 2023/24 be agreed for public consultation.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To commence a public consultation on the Council's proposed budget for 2023/24

### **CALCULATION OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE**

CAB94/22 Councillor Christopher Hall, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance introduced Jane Fineman, Head of Finance, Procurement and Parking who presented the report as set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- Tunbridge Wells had a disproportionate number of lower band properties compared to other Councils which was why our tax base was lower than neighbouring boroughs.
- The majority of the Council's properties were in band C, rather than band D (the mid-point).
- It remained disappointing that the bands still only went as far as H (equivalent to 2 x band D). Central Government were yet to follow the example of Wales and extend the bands to I, J or K.

**RESOLVED** –

1. That the Tunbridge Wells Tax Base for 2023/24, as set out at in Appendix B to the report be approved.

2. That delegated authority be given to the s151 officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance to give notice of any further council tax premiums that are provided for within the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill, should it be given Royal Assent be approved.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To comply with the provisions of Statutory Instruments 2012 No 2914 – The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations

## **CAPITAL MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 2**

CAB95/22 Councillor Christopher Hall, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance introduced Jane Fineman, Head of Finance, Procurement and Parking who presented the report as set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- Para 4.5 provided details of projects with a request that the budgets for these schemes be deferred into the next financial year.
- The Disabled Facilities Grant money (£1.7m) was given to the Council by Government but without much discussion as to need and the level of resources required from Kent County Council to make the appropriate assessments. It was therefore difficult to know the impact the money might make on residents with disabilities as the numbers of those that could benefit were not known.
- The Acquisition Sites Sports Strategy was not yet in a position to be taken forward but there should be no impact on the budget for next year.
- Work on the Town Hall conversion was progressing according to schedule and was tied up with the new lease.
- There was no plan significantly set aside for the Asset Acquisition Fund so this would also not affect the budget.
- Details of the Housing Renewal Advances were included in Appendix E. To date the Council had made advances of £26,735 with repayments in of approximately £26,000.
- Details of funds used to bring empty properties back into use were not known.

### **RESOLVED –**

1. That the actual gross and net expenditure for the year and the sources of finance, as shown in Appendices B to D to the report, be noted.
2. That the proposed variations to the Capital programme, set out in paragraph 4.3 to 4.4 of the report be approved; and
3. That the proposed movement between years set out in note 4.5 of the report 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 2

CAB96/22 Councillor Christopher Hall, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance introduced Jane Fineman, Head of Finance, Procurement and Parking who presented the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- The utility costs were detailed in Appendix E of the report. The figure of £820k were the costs that were directly paid by the Council. The £302k was the amount paid by British Land on behalf of the Council for Royal Victoria Place and the Meadow Road car park.

### RESOLVED –

1. That at Quarter 2 net expenditure on services year to date was £6,709,000, £320,000 less than budget be noted;
2. That by year end the Council anticipated net expenditure of £15,757,000 on services, £512,000 over budget, an increase of £212,000 on Quarter 1, be noted;
3. That by year end the Council anticipated receiving an increase in funding of £750,000 due to additional investment interest. Overall, an improvement to budget of £238,000 to reduce the budget deficit that was to be met from reserves be noted.

### REASON FOR DECISION:

To show the actual expenditure on services compared to the revised budget for the period ending 30 September 2022, and the forecast outturn position, highlighting significant variances from the revised annual budget.

## TREASURY AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR MANAGEMENT REPORT - QUARTER 2

CAB97/22 Councillor Christopher Hall, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance introduced Jane Fineman, Head of Finance, Procurement and Parking who presented the report as set out in the agenda.

### RESOLVED –

1. That the Treasury Management and Prudential Indicator position as at 30 September 2022 be noted; and
2. That the forecast for investment and bank interest is £1,195,000, an increase of £750,000 from the approved budget of £445,000 and a further improvement of £450,000 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.

## PERFORMANCE SUMMARY QUARTER 2

CAB98/22 Councillor Christopher Hall, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance introduced Pamela Grover-Morgan, Performance and Governance Manager

who presented the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- It was noted that underperforming indicators did not mean underperforming staff.
- From January, Planning and Housing would be introducing new management dashboards which would be reviewed quarterly for planning and monthly for housing.
- The table in Appendix B that showed residents in receipt of out of work benefits, whilst an interesting statistic, there was nothing included that reflected the struggles currently being experienced by residents who were working poor and were not in receipt of any benefits.
- The Community Support Fund would hopefully make a big difference. This fund had £100k that would be used to help and support residents in need.

**RESOLVED –**

1. That the summary of project performance over quarter two 2022/23 as at Appendix A be noted;
2. That the summary of service performance over quarter two 2022/23 as at Appendix B be noted; and
3. That the Recovery Plans for quarter two 2022/23 as at Appendices C-H 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.

**COMPLAINTS SUMMARY QUARTERS 1 & 2**

CAB99/22 Councillor Christopher Hall, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance introduced Pamela Grover-Morgan, Performance and Governance Manager who presented the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- It was noted that parks and leisure had been performing well.
- The graph on Page 167 compared complaints for the equivalent period last year (period 1 of 2021/22). The nature of complaint varied a lot and ranged from staff conduct to a missed collection. It was agreed that further details would be provided after the meeting.
- It was noted that since April 2022, the waste collection rate had increased significantly.

**RESOLVED –** That the Council's position on complaints performance at the end of Period 1 (1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022) be noted.

**REASON FOR DECISION:**

To enable Cabinet to understand the Council's current performance in relation to complaints handling.

**DRAFT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023/24**

CAB100/22 Councillor Christopher Hall, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance introduced Lee Colyer, Director of Finance, Policy and Development who presented the report set out in the agenda

**RESOLVED** – That the Draft Asset Management Plan 2023/24 be agreed for public consultation

**REASON FOR DECISION:**

To commence a public consultation on how the Council manages its assets.

**URGENT BUSINESS**

CAB101/22 There was no urgent business.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

CAB102/22 The next meeting would be held on Thursday 9 February 2023 commencing at 6:30pm.

**NOTES:**

The meeting concluded at 7.45 pm.