

Cabinet
25 NOVEMBER 2021

Present: Councillors: Tony Hogben (Deputy Leader), Chris Brown, Philip Circus, Lynn Lambert, Richard Landeryou, Roger Noel, Claire Vickers and Tricia Youtan

Apologies: Councillors: Paul Clarke

Also Present: Councillors: Tony Bevis, Karen Burgess, Peter Burgess, Billy Greening, Jack Saheid and Jim Sanson

EX/44 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 7 October were approved as a correct record and signed by the Deputy Leader.

EX/45 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

EX/46 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Tony Hogben, Deputy Leader, paid tribute to Chris O'Leary, a longstanding and greatly valued member of staff who passed away a few days ago after contracting Covid-19. He had worked for the Council for over 30 years and won Employer of the Year in 2019. He will be greatly missed.

Councillor Philip Circus thanked Councillor Paul Clarke, who was stepping down as Leader of the Council, for his dedication to the role and his commitment to the Council.

Councillor Chris Brown, Cabinet Member for the Local Economy, summarised the achievements and efforts of the Economic Development Team and gave details of ongoing and forthcoming projects, many of which were funded by approximately £2m of Government recovery grants (the ARG and Welcome Back Fund). Projects included: the Horsham Pop-Up Shop in West Street, which was proving a success and was featured on the BBC One Show; the ice rink at the Rec Room; Major Mind Games escape room project; 23 successful applications for shopfront grants; 13 approved Leap grants for small start-up businesses; and training and bespoke consultancy opportunities for the district's businesses. Councillor Brown advised that Horsham had been ranked seventh in the top 10 towns for new businesses.

EX/47 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No questions had been received.

EX/48 **UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL POSITION AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

Councillor Richard Landeryou, Cabinet Member for Finance & Assets, introduced the report on the Council's financial position and MTFs, and outlined how assumptions had changed since the update in September.

Councillor Landeryou anticipated a modest surplus in the 2022/23 budget, but there was little information from Government to help with later projections and future strategy. Once further details were available on garden waste and food waste collections, business rates and income recovery positions, revisions to the MTFs could be made. There was also uncertainty over the full cost of measures to tackle climate change, which had not yet been included in the financial planning.

Councillor Landeryou advised that the garden waste collection charges had to be agreed before the budget was set in February because of the timing of annual billing. The recommendations to Council included four new revenue budgets to enable the Council to accept grant funding on specific services. With regard to the final recommendation, it was noted that the Council had withdrawn from the West Sussex Business Rates pool last year because of uncertainty over the impact on Covid-19 on business rates.

The Director of Community Services confirmed that the extent to which the Government would fund the collection of food waste was still unknown. There was also no clarity as to whether the Government was going to remove the ability to charge for garden waste collections. With regards to the possible Government stipulation against comingling of recycled items, the Director anticipated that Horsham District's good record on the quality and quantity of recycling would allow us to continue with comingled collections.

RESOLVED

- i) That the changes in the Council's financial position in 2021/22 and the medium-term be noted.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

- ii) That the charges from 1 April 2022 for the garden waste subscription service are increased from £42 for the first bin to £44 and for any subsequent bin increased from £33 to £35.
- iii) To approve the creation of a £2,500 revenue budget for a short breaks funding grant from West Sussex County Council and matching expenditure in the 2021/22 leisure services budgets.
- iv) To approve the creation of a £99,271 revenue budget for Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) grant funding from West Sussex

County Council and matching expenditure in the 2021/22 environmental health service budgets.

- v) To approve the creation of a £139,000 revenue budget for Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) grant funding from West Sussex County Council and matching expenditure in the 2021/22 housing services budgets.
- vi) To approve the creation of a £78,946 revenue budget for Winter 2021 COVID-19 rent arrears financial support grant funding from Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities and matching expenditure in the 2021/22 housing services budgets.
- vii) Subject to the safety net being put in place, recommend to Council that it approves the Council joining the West Sussex Business Rates pool in 2022/23.

REASON

- ii) The Council needs to acknowledge the effects of the local situation occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic and the continued impact this is having on its financial position both in the short and medium-term. This has moved the council from what has been a long-term healthy financial position to one with predicted deficits. However, given the level of uncertainty in the projections, the economy and proposed Government action the report does not recommend direct action to reduce expenditure at this stage.
- ii) The costs of running the garden waste service increase by inflation, and this price increase is passing this cost onto users of the service.
- iii) The short breaks grant will be spent on a Family Fun Day at Chanctonbury Leisure Centre for disabled children and young people before the end of March 2022. This will form an additional part of the Reaching Higher project.
- iv) The COMF grant will be spent preventing health inequalities and on COVID-19 risk management.
- v) The housing COMF grant will be spent on a range of interventions and housing solutions to support those affected by homelessness and risk of homelessness associated with COVID-19.
- vi) The Winter 2021 COVID-19 rent arrears financial support grant will support low-income private renters with COVID-19 related arrears to avoid eviction or find a new home.
- vii) Joining the West Sussex business Rates pool should benefit the County and therefore the district by retaining locally generated

business rates, using it to further support the economic regeneration of the wider West Sussex area.

EX/49 **SERVICE PROVISION OF THE REVENUES AND BENEFITS FROM APRIL 2023**

Councillor Landeryou reminded Members that the Council's Revenues & Benefits service had been delegated to LGSS, a group of Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire local authorities, in May 2017. Members noted how this arrangement had changed over the years and that the Council's service was currently solely provided by Milton Keynes. Milton Keynes had offered to continue this service after the current contract expires at the end of March 2023.

The Cabinet Member considered that this offer provided the best price and quality of service and avoided the costs of moving to another supplier or bringing the service in-house. He therefore proposed a new partnership arrangement between Horsham and Milton Keynes councils.

RESOLVED

- i) To agree to secure the provision of the revenues and benefits service through a local authority partnership with Milton Keynes Council.
- ii) To delegate to the Director of Corporate Services the negotiations to secure the agreement and all legal documentation with Milton Keynes in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance & Assets and the Monitoring Officer.

REASON

The arrangements with Milton Keynes' and its predecessor LGSS Partnership provided the Council with a cost effective, good quality service.

EX/50 **TENDER OF THE COUNCIL'S CONTRACT FOR ARBORICULTURE SERVICES**

Councillor Roger Noel, Cabinet Member for Leisure & Culture, presented the report on the procurement of a new arboricultural contract, which would be in place by the time the current one expires in March 2022. The contract would include tree inspections, which were currently undertaken by in-house Council staff. This would ensure there was capacity to manage ash dieback and enable the Council's specialist arboriculture officer to manage the contract and ensure good quality standards are maintained. The contract period will align with the recently agreed grounds maintenance contract, should it be of value to combine the two contracts in the future.

Councillor Noel confirmed that the highest scoring bidder was selected for the quality of service provided rather than cost alone. The new contract would

include a commitment to sustainable practices and Councillor Noel was confident they would take good care of the district's tree stock and fulfil everything they had tendered for.

RESOLVED

- (i) To approve the award of the Arboriculture Contract to the highest scoring bidder, on the terms recommended, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report (exempt).
- ii) To delegate authority to the Director of Community Services in consultation with the Head of Legal & Democratic Services to finalise terms and conditions and to enter into the contract with the highest scoring bidder.

REASON

For the Council to continue to carry out statutory arboriculture services across the parks and countryside portfolio.

EX/51 **COMMUNITY ADVICE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

Councillor Claire Vickers, Cabinet Member for Community & Wellbeing, stated that the report informed the decision-making process concerning whether the Council entered into a partnership contract with WSCC and Sussex district and borough councils to collectively procure and fund community advice services in the future.

The current service was supplied by Citizens Advice under a partnership contract. They offered essential services to the community and had demonstrated year on year the positive impact that advice services provide. The Director of Community Services advised that regular performance updates from Citizens Advice were monitored by the Head of Housing & Community Services and that officers had a high opinion of the service they provided.

RESOLVED

- i) To approve the procurement of a partnership contract/inter-agency agreement with West Sussex County Council and the other West Sussex District and Borough Councils for Community Advice Services for the provision of an independent and comprehensive information and advice service for up to seven years from 1 April 2022.
- ii) To delegate to the Cabinet Member for Community & Wellbeing the authority to enter into the partnership contract/inter-agency agreement subject to contract approval by the Monitoring Officer.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

- iii) To approve a budget contribution of £93,000 for up to 7 years, uplifted annually in line with the consumer price index calculated on the anniversary of the agreement, subject to satisfactory service reviews in line with Horsham District Council's corporate priorities and the availability of Horsham District Council funding.

REASON

To enable community advice services to continue to be delivered for residents of the Horsham District, therefore protecting the quality of life of those who live in, work in and visit our district.

EX/52 **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Councillor Tony Bevis, Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, reported that the Committee had expressed concern and frustration that the recommendation from Overview & Scrutiny adopted by Council in February 2021 regarding a review of Parking Standards had not been progressed.

Councillor Lynn Lambert, Cabinet Member for Planning & Development, stated that when the Council resolution had been made Members were advised that the review would be undertaken once the new Local Plan was in place. Members had been kept informed when changes to the Local Plan timetable were required (due to changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and more recently because of the water neutrality issue). The Committee had been given a status update in mid-October and Councillor Lambert confirmed that Parking Standards and Design work was now programmed into Strategic Planning's work stream for the New Year.

EX/53 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan was noted. It was confirmed that the report on Highwood Community Centre was scheduled to be considered by Cabinet in January.

EX/54 **TO CONSIDER MATTERS OF SPECIAL URGENCY**

There were no matters of special urgency to be considered.

Councillor Hogben closed the meeting by echoing Councillor Circus' thanks to Paul Clarke. He extended these thanks to the rest of the Cabinet and thanked them all for their service and commitment.

The meeting closed at 6.12 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm