

Cabinet
27 JANUARY 2022

Present: Councillors: Jonathan Chowen (Leader), Tony Hogben (Deputy Leader), Toni Bradnum, Liz Kitchen, Lynn Lambert, Christian Mitchell, Roger Noel, James Wright and Tricia Youtan

Also Present: Councillors: Tony Bevis, Martin Boffey, Karen Burgess, Louise Potter, David Skipp

EX/55 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 25 November were approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

EX/56 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

EX/57 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Lynn Lambert, Cabinet Member for Planning & Development, announced that two members of staff, who won regional Local Authority Building Control Building Excellence Awards last year, would be attending the ceremony in London for the national Excellence Awards on 28 January. Connor Hesling, an apprentice surveyor, had been short listed for the Newcomer of the Year Award and Sarah Collard for the Public Service Superstar Award.

Councillor Tony Hogben, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, announced that the Horsham Rec Ice Rink had been very successful, bringing economic and employment benefits as well as enhancing the Christmas experience in Horsham. The project had been funded by the political groups and by the Government's Additional Restrictions Grant.

EX/58 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No questions had been received.

EX/59 **THE 2022/23 BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY TO 2025/26**

Councillor Hogben introduced the annual Budget and revised MTFs following the Government's draft financial settlement. He set out the key points of the budget, including the budget requirement for 2022/23 of £12.188m, which was £1.1m lower than in 2021/22 due to the gradual recovery from Covid lockdowns.

The provisional settlement was on a similar funding basis to last year, although indications were that the Government's 2023/24 settlement would have quite a severe impact on the Council's financial position, for reasons set out in the report. However, due to the decision to remove New Homes Bonuses from operational budgets from 2016 to 2019, the Council was well prepared to address this.

The proposed Council Tax increase of 2.9% was a prudent level that balanced the needs of residents with future risks to the Council. The increase approximated to 9p a week for a Band D property and Horsham District continued to have one of the lowest rates in West Sussex and was within the lowest 25% nationally.

Councillor Hogben also drew attention to: the £10m capital programme; £1m committed towards the Council's green agenda, with measures to reduce carbon emissions and improve the environment within the district; and £200k supporting the economic recovery in the district.

With regards to the MTFs, the outlook remained extremely uncertain, with limited details on the Government's proposed changes to Business Rates and the Fair Funding Review, and no certainty regarding funding for food waste collections.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Martin Boffey, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Hogben reiterated that the Council Tax rise was modest given the economic pressures. Councillor Hogben and Councillor Chowen agreed to a meeting with Councillor Boffey and Councillor Louise Potter, Leader of the Minority Group, to discuss ideas regarding financial measures taken by the Council to help the most financially vulnerable.

Councillor Hogben commended the budget for 2022/23 as a prudent budget that was appropriate at a time of certainty.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

- i) That the level of Council Tax for 2022/23 increases from £157.52 by £4.57 (2.9%) to £162.09 at Band D.
- ii) That the net revenue budget set out in Appendix A for 2022/23 of £12.188m is approved.
- iii) That Special Expenses of £323,330 set out in Appendix C and a Band D charge of £26.83 are agreed in respect of the unparished area for 2022/23.
- iv) That the capital programme for 2022/23 set out in Appendix D be approved and that the indicative capital budgets in the programme for future years be noted.

- v) That the projected future budgets on the revenue account in 2023/24 to 2025/26 are noted and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy continues to be reviewed and refined to ensure that decisions are taken to set balanced budgets in these three years.
- vi) That the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement set out in Appendix E is approved.
- vii) That the Capital Strategy, Treasury Strategy, Investment Strategy and prudential indicators and limits for 2021/22 to 2024/25 set out in Appendix F are approved.
- viii) To note the statement on the robustness of the level of reserves in Appendix H.
- ix) That the increases to fees and charges set out in Appendix I and I(i) and I(ii) are approved.
- x) Delegate to the Director of Community Services in consultation with the relevant Cabinet lead temporary changes to fees and charges in the form of offers and incentives during the year, as well as the setting of charges for sports development activities as all offerings are being revised and will take account of variable costs such as facility hire and coaching rates.

REASON

To meet the Council's statutory requirement to approve the budget and the prudential indicators before the start of a new financial year.

EX/60 **2022 - 23 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME**

Councillor Hogben advised that Horsham's current CTR scheme provided financial support for those on low incomes to help them afford their Council Tax payments. The scheme was means tested and helped the more vulnerable in society. It was proposed that the scheme remained unchanged for 2022/23.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

To agree to no changes in the Council Tax Reduction scheme for 2022/23.

REASON

Council Tax Reduction schemes are annual schemes and therefore require an annual review and approval, even when no changes to the scheme are being proposed. Review work on the scheme showed the scheme remains affordable for Horsham District Council and provides a good level of support to our less well-off residents.

EX/61 **2022 - 23 DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF SCHEME**

Horsham District Council provided discretionary rate relief to charities and not-for-profit organisations under s47 of Local Government Finance Act 1988. Councillor Hogben proposed that the current scheme, which was reviewed each year, be amended by extending the charitable relief to up to 100% for eligible organisations. This would bring transparency and clarity to the award process and enable relief recipients to receive additional financial support.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

To approve the Discretionary Rate Relief scheme for 2022/23 as detailed in the appendix to the Cabinet report

REASON

- i) Discretionary rate relief is an annual scheme and therefore require an annual review and approval.
- ii) The increase in the level of rate relief to 100% will provide additional support for charitable and not for profit organisations.

EX/62 **SERVICE PROVISION OF THE INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES**

Councillor Hogben explained the background to this item, as set out in the report. The current partnership with Orbis Partnership, a local authority partnership, would expire on 1 April. A review of the service found the current arrangement to be of good quality but more expensive than alternative options. Following discussions with Orbis a lower price had been agreed for a new five year agreement.

RESOLVED

- i) To agree to secure the provision of the internal audit service through a local authority partnership with East Sussex County Council for 5 years from 1 April 2022.
- ii) To delegate to the Director of Corporate Services the negotiations to finalise the legal documentation with East Sussex County Council in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Monitoring Officer.

REASON

- iii) The new agreement retains the current good quality service with price £20,000 lower for each year and no risk or costs of change.

EX/63 **PROCUREMENT OF HORSHAM PARK SKATE PARK**

Councillor Roger Noel, Cabinet Member for Leisure & Culture, stated that the original skate park had been very popular before falling into disrepair, and he was delighted that it was being replaced, in the same location with free access for all.

It would be constructed from hardwearing carbon-reducing concrete and designed to be suitable for skateboards, roller skates, scooters, BMX bikes and wheelchairs. The Friends of Horsham Park were in support of the proposal. Once completed, the refined design would be submitted for planning permission. Councillor Noel concluded that this facility would support young people's physical and mental health and the design would enhance the location.

A number of Cabinet Members spoke in support of the proposal.

Councillor Noel confirmed that the design would deter antisocial behaviour and there would be CCTV surveillance and floodlighting into the evening. The building process was expected to take eight weeks with a view to being operational by late Summer 2022.

RESOLVED

- i) To approve the award of the Horsham Park Skate Park contract to the highest scoring bidder, on the terms recommended, as detailed in Appendix 1 (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

In accordance with Horsham District Council's Procurement Code.

EX/64 **PROCUREMENT FOR THE SUPPLY AND FIT OF TYRES CONTRACT AND
PROCUREMENT FOR TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT CONTRACT**

Councillor Toni Bradnum, Cabinet Member for Recycling & Waste, stated that HDC had acted as lead authority, in collaboration with four other councils, in the procurement process for the supply and fitting of tyres. By working with other councils, larger orders meant the cost of the contract was reduced. The tyres were remoulded; these were slightly more expensive but had a longer lifespan and helped to meet sustainability targets.

The Traffic Management contract was a statutory requirement required so that litter-clearing operatives can carry out their duties safely. The new three year

contract followed a tender process carried out with Crawley Borough Council and would commence on 1 April.

RESOLVED

- i) To approve the award of the contract for Fit and Supply of Tyres to the highest scoring bidder, on the terms recommended, as detailed in Appendix 1 (exempt);
- ii) To delegate authority to the Director of Community Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Recycling & Waste to approve the award the Traffic Management Contract following the conclusion of the tender process; and
- iii) 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 contract with the highest scoring bidder for the Tyres contract and Traffic Management contract.

REASON

- i) Under the current Public Contracts Regulations (2015) the Council is legally required to competitively tender if the value of the goods or services exceeds the current threshold of £189,330. Horsham District Council currently spends £45,000 per annum on tyres and associated services, and averages c. £80,000 per annum for traffic management services. Both contracts therefore exceed this threshold over the contract term.
- ii) The Council has not competitively procured either of these contracts previously but do have long standing agreements in place with suppliers. Both contracts are therefore to be brought into compliance, and to formalise the relevant contract management arrangements.

EX/65 **MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATEMENT**

Councillor Liz Kitchen, Cabinet Member for Community Matters, stated that to adopt this Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking statement would reflect how seriously the Council takes this issue and its commitment to tackling modern day slavery in the community and in its supply chain. The principles set out in the statement were included in the Council's procurement process.

The publication of such a statement by local authorities was considered best practice and was likely to become a statutory requirement in the future.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

- i) Approve the publication of the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Transparency Statement as attached at Appendix A to the Cabinet report.
- ii) Delegate authority to the Leader of the Council in consultation with the Director of Corporate Resources and the Head of Legal & Democratic Services to approve minor amendments and subsequent annual statements for publication.

REASON

- i) The adoption and publication of a Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking statement is considered best practice and is likely to become a statutory requirement within the next 12 months.
- ii) The approval of the statement shows the commitment of Horsham District Council to tackle modern day slavery in the community and its supply chains, it also supports the principles set out in the Sustainable Procurement Charter which is used within our procurement processes.

EX/66 **COMMUNITY LINK DIGITAL INVESTMENT**

Councillor Trisha Youtan, Cabinet Member for Housing & Public Protection, outlined the services provided by the Council's Community Link scheme, which supported 1,700 residents across the district at a very competitive rate. The service was tailored to individual needs and included personal alarms, smoke alarms, GPS trackers and bed sensors.

Changes to the service were required because BT were moving from analogue to digital technology by 2025. To continue the service all telephones and Community Link emergency call button and base units will have to be replaced. Councillor Youtan gave details of the required price increases, as set out in the report. The 2022/23 budget included a £360k investment over a two-year period to pay for the new technology. There would be a modest price increase for customers from July 2022 and the service would continue to be better value than comparable services. It was noted that there had been no price increase for 10 years.

Members praised the service and the Head of Environmental Health & Licensing confirmed that each user had a personal portfolio, which enabled those in financial need to be identified so that support could be offered if required. He also advised that the service was actively promoted, including through the NHS and Saxon Weald and had the capacity to take on further customers.

RESOLVED

- i) To approve the direction of the Community Link Service to move its technology to digital to continue operating in the field.
- ii) To waive paragraphs 15.1 b and 16.2 of the Procurement Code to allow a change to the existing contract with ChipTech.
- iii) To award a contract extension to the contract with the ChipTech for the provision of the Community Link technology equipment provided by ChipTech.
- iv) To note the changes to the Community Link Service and charges are included in the Budget for approval by Council on 9 February.

REASON

- v) The national switch to digital technology by the telecommunications industry as required by Government policy necessitates investment in the digital transformation of the Community Link Alarm Service in order to continue to provide this service.

EX/67 **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Councillor Tony Bevis, Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny advised that the Committee had expressed concern at the process that had been followed during the recent reshuffle of Committee memberships caused by the changes to the Cabinet. The Monitoring Office assured the meeting that nothing untoward had occurred and a report would go to Council with details of the changes and the provisions that allow them.

Councillor Bevis stated that the Committee were concerned at the lack of progress following recommendations from the Off-street Parking Task & Finish Group. The Cabinet Member of Planning & Development referred to the information provided at the Cabinet meeting on 25 November and reiterated that the Parking Standards and Design work was programmed into Strategic Planning's work stream for the current year (Minute No. EX/52 refers). The Overview & Scrutiny Committee would be kept informed of progress over the coming months.

EX/68 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan was noted.

EX/69 **TO CONSIDER MATTERS OF SPECIAL URGENCY**

There were no matters of special urgency to be considered.

The meeting closed at 6.45 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN