

Minutes of the Cabinet

Monday, 6th July, 2020 at 6.00 pm
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present:

Cabinet Members

Councillor P Harley (Leader – Chair)
Councillor D Vickers (Deputy Leader – Vice-Chair)
Councillors N Barlow, R Buttery, S Clark, I Kettle, A Lees, S Phipps, K Shakespeare and L Taylor

Opposition Group Members Nominated to attend the Cabinet

Councillors K Ahmed, S Ali, C Barnett, C Bayton, K Casey, J Foster, P Lowe, J Martin, S Ridney and Q Zada

Officers

K O’Keefe – Chief Executive, M Williams – Acting Deputy Chief Executive (Director of Public Realm), I Newman – Director of Finance and Legal, M Bowsher – Director of Adult Social Care, B Kaur – Interim Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, M Farooq – Monitoring Officer, P Mountford – Head of Planning and Regeneration, J Cunningham – Project Lead - Midland Metro, S Manson – Health and Wellbeing Policy Officer, S Griffiths – Democratic Services Manager and M Johal – Senior Democratic Services Officer

1 Declaration of Interest

Councillor Q Zada declared a non-pecuniary interest with regard to any reference to the National Health Service (NHS) in view of his employment with the Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust.

2 Minutes

In response to a query, the Leader provided an update on finances associated with the Very Light Rail Project and undertook to provide a detailed written response to the Member concerned.



Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12th February, 2020, be approved as a correct record and signed.

3 Capital Programme Monitoring

A joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Legal was submitted on progress with the implementation of the Capital Programme, including the 2019/20 outturn position together with proposed amendments to the Capital Programme.

Several concerns were raised by Members of the Opposition Group regarding consistent overspend on projects, particularly the Leisure Centre, and it was commented that receipt of accurate quotes and better planning was vital for budgeting purposes.

In response to specific queries it was clarified that debt charges to be funded from further Green Care savings would not impact on the quality of services and savings would be made by alternative means. The increased costs associated with certain projects was due to quotes being obtained some time ago. With regard to the Leisure Centre the feasibility study had also been undertaken a while ago and further additional costs had been incurred owing to the need for equipment to be imported from abroad which was further financially impacted by volatile currency rates. However, it was pointed out that every effort was made to negotiate and reduce costs wherever possible and the Council's good track record was highlighted in this regard. In referring to paragraph 6 of the report, although it was stated a number of projects were under review, it was confirmed that all projects would continue to be delivered, however, it was acknowledged that detailed information should be provided. The delays and phases of work to Lister Road, to include proposals for the new office block, were explained and it was noted that there was no completion date or timescales as yet, however, further details would be shared when available.

Following further discussion it was requested that detailed questions be submitted by email to enable written responses to be provided appropriately.

It was agreed that written responses would be provided on details regarding negotiations with health partners on a joint health leisure facility, the value of the budget related to the uncommitted Diplomas, Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disabilities capital grant together with details of spend and reasons on the underspend given the problems associated with SEN. With regard to the Brierley Hill Action Zone an update would be provided to include details of

timescales and consultation. Further detailed information would also be provided in relation to the three projects relating to Family Centre improvements, particularly on the refurbishment of the unused catering kitchen at Stourbridge Family Centre to office or practitioner space at a cost of £80,000. Details on the level of consultation and proposals on 24-hour opening were also requested.

Resolved

That the Council be recommended:-

- (1) That the outturn position for 2019/20, as set out in paragraph 5, and Appendix A to the report submitted, be noted.
- (2) That progress with the 2020/21 Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix B to the report submitted, be noted.
- (3) That, with regard to the Emergency Active Travel Fund, the capital element of the final allocation be included in the Capital Programme and that the Director of Public Realm, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Street Services, be authorised to determine the detailed measures to be implemented, and incur the relevant revenue and capital expenditure, as set out in paragraph 7 of the report.
- (4) That the budget for the Crystal Leisure Centre Heat Pump project be increased by £200,000, as set out in paragraph 8 of the report.
- (5) That the Brierley Hill Heritage Action Zone project be approved and the capital elements be included in the Capital Programme with a maximum Council contribution of £0.4m proportionate to private sector match funding, as set out in paragraph 9 of the report.
- (6) That the urgent amendments to the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraphs 11 to 15 of the report, be noted.

4 Revenue Outturn 2019/20 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

A joint report of the Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Legal was submitted on the provisional revenue outturn position for 2019/20 and providing an update to 2020/21 forecasts.



Responses were provided to questions from the Opposition Group and it was noted that Ministers had been written to with a view to permitting retention of the remainder of monies relating to business grants. It was noted that the loans requested by Dudley Zoo and the Black Country Living Museum had not been included in the Budget. Specific details on shortfalls would be made more clearer once the element from national funding for Dudley was established together with the position on any other additional funding that may be accessible or forthcoming.

In referring to paragraph 17 of the report relating to home to school transport, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People undertook to arrange a briefing with the Member concerned about the concerns expressed around the challenges in children's services and placements.

Following a query, a brief update was provided on the position relating to INTU and associated implications for the Merry Hill Shopping Centre.

Discussion ensued on expenditure arising from the Covid-19 Pandemic and associated loan to the Zoo. It was explained that the loan to the Zoo was not related to the Pandemic and had been negotiated prior to Covid-19. The Director of Finance and Legal undertook to provide a written response to the Member concerned explaining the debt and details of the loan to Dudley Zoo.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) outturns for 2019/20, be noted.
- (2) That the effect of the General Fund outturn on General Balances at 31st March, 2020, be noted.
- (3) That the position on General Fund earmarked reserves at 31st March, 2020, be noted.
- (4) That the forecast impact of Covid-19 and other impacts on the forecast for 2020/21 and risks to the Medium Term Financial Strategy, be noted.

5 **Annual Review of Equality 2019**

A report of the Interim Director of Public Health and Wellbeing was submitted on the annual review of equality for 2019.

The Interim Director of Public Health and Wellbeing undertook to provide a response to the Member concerned to provide details on data relating to the Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) specifically on the percentage of disciplinary cases and seniority of staff within the Council in this particular group.



Following the ensuing discussion it was recognised that cross party work was imperative and future reports should be reviewed to include meaningful data to influence change. The Bereavement Team were commended on their work with different communities and their input during Covid-19.

Resolved

That the annual review of equality for 2019 be approved.

6 Climate Change Emergency

A report of the Acting Deputy Chief Executive was submitted on Dudley MBC declaring a Climate Emergency for the borough of Dudley.

Arising from the presentation of the report, Opposition Group Members made comments and expressed concerns, in particular, that there was no target date set for achieving zero carbon emissions. A suggestion was also made that the cross-party Climate Changing Working Group should comprise of representatives from interest groups and members of the public for community input.

Resolved

That subject to the approval of the Council:-

- (1) That the declaration of a Climate Emergency, in line with other Local Authorities in the wider region, be approved.
- (2) That a cross party Climate Change Working Group, to lead on the development and implementation of a Carbon Reduction Plan for Dudley, be established, with a Membership to be agreed following consultation with the Group Leaders.
- (3) That the Climate Change Working Group be requested to consider what activities are in scope, and what are out of scope, to inform the decision on setting a realistic carbon reduction target.
- (4) That a further detailed report be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

7 **Memorandum of Understanding with Avenbury (Dudley) Ltd**

A report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise was submitted proposing that the Council enters into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Avenbury (Dudley) Ltd which sets out the principles of a partnership framework to facilitate the comprehensive redevelopment of the Portersfield site in Dudley Town Centre. The MOU agreement had been circulated separately to members of the Cabinet and Opposition Spokespersons prior to the meeting.

Arising from the presentation of the report, and in responding to queries from the Opposition Members, the Leader confirmed that a report containing further details would be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Cabinet in due course.

Resolved

That the Council enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Avenbury (Dudley) Ltd.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

