

CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 SEPTEMBER 2015

AT 4.30 PM

IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WILLITON

Present:

Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew..... Leader

Councillor M J Chilcott
Councillor C Morgan
Councillor K Turner

Councillor M O A Dewdney
Councillor S J Pugsley
Councillor D J Westcott

Members in Attendance:

Councillor G S Dowding
Councillor A P Hadley
Councillor R P Lillis
Councillor R Woods

Councillor S Y Goss
Councillor B Heywood
Councillor P H Murphy

Officers in Attendance:

Chief Executive (P James)
Assistant Chief Executive (B Lang)
Assistant Director Energy Infrastructure (A Goodchild)
Assistant Director Resources (P Fitzgerald)
Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager (P Harding)
Planning Manager (B Kitching) – Item 7
Media and Communications Officer (D Rundle)
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

CAB37 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor K Mills.

CAB38 Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 August 2015

(Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 5 August 2015 - circulated with the Agenda.)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 5 August 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

CAB39 Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a County, Parish or Town Council:

Name	Minute No.	Member of	Action Taken
Councillor C Morgan	All	Stogursey	Spoke and voted
Councillor A Trollope-Bellew	All	Crowcombe	Spoke and voted
Councillor K Turner	All	Brompton Ralph	Spoke and voted
Councillor D Westcott	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted
Councillor S Goss	All	Stogursey	Spoke
Councillor P Murphy	All	Watchet	Spoke

CAB40 Public Participation

No members of the public spoke at the meeting on any items on the agenda.

CAB41 Forward Plan

(Copy of the Forward Plan for the month of October 2015 – circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of this item was to approve the Forward Plan.

It was noted that the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy which was to be presented to October Cabinet related to Business Rates, and that the Review of Earmarked Reserves was included in the Forward Plan for December.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan for the month of October 2015 be approved.

CAB42 Cabinet Action Plan

(Copy of the Action Plan – circulated with the Agenda.)

RESOLVED (1) that CAB33 – Corporate Debt Policy be deleted as actioned.

RESOLVED (2) that CAB35 – Revenue and Capital Outturn 2014/15 be deleted as actioned.

CAB43 Corporate Performance Report – Quarter 1

(Report No. WSC 128/15 – circulated with the Agenda.)

The report provided Members with key performance management data up to the end of quarter 1 2015/16, to assist in monitoring the Council's performance. Publishing this information also supports the aim of greater public accountability

The report was presented by the Leader who provided an explanation as to the reasons why the performance of two measures, namely 'Disabled

Facilities Grants' and '% Minor Planning Applications processed within 8 weeks', were indicated as red and targets not achieved.

The Leader proposed the recommendation of the report, which was duly seconded by Councillor M Dewdney.

It was acknowledged the Council would endeavour to improve the Disabled Facilities Grant target in the next quarter as it was felt that there was a greater need for this type of grant in the district; and the other 60 measures were amber or green which indicated that the Council was in a positive position.

In response to questions, the Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager advised that the measures reported on represented the main areas of Council business, but if Members felt there was a service area that was not covered adequately in terms of performance they should advise him so he could discuss the matter with the relevant Portfolio Holder. He went on to explain why no figures had been reported on measures KPIs 46, 47, 48 and 49 (relating to homelessness) in this quarter, and agreed to circulate the figures when available prior to the next quarterly report.

The Assistant Director Resources explained that staff turnover and the year-end/start of year demand on the service were the reasons for the amber status of the quarterly performance for KPI 5 'Average processing times of new Housing Benefit claims'.

RESOLVED that the performance in Quarter 1 be noted.

CAB44 Financial Monitoring Report – Quarter 1 2015/16

(Report No. WSC 129/15, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with details of the Council's initial forecast financial outturn position for the 2015/16 financial year for both revenue and capital budgets, together with information relating to predicted end of year reserve balances.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the item and outlined the main details contained within the report. She advised that the main variances to the budget for quarter 1 related to business rates retention funding, and reported that in-year savings had yet to be identified within the Council's departments and work to review budgets in order to identify savings would be undertaken. A major concern was the fact that the current general reserves balance was very close to the recommended minimum balance of £500,000 which meant there was no money in the reserves to deal with any requests for additional funding for unexpected emergency works which may arise during the year. It was also noted that a review of all earmarked reserves would be carried out to ensure they were still relevant and whether any could be released into the general fund reserves.

She concluded by drawing Members' attention to the comments made by the Section 151 Officer, stating the Council needed to prepare itself as it faced further difficult financial challenges ahead.

She proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor S Pugsley.

A lengthy discussion ensued and various questions and concerns were raised as regards to identifying where further savings could be found and the significant number of outstanding business rates appeals.

The Assistant Director Resources provided further clarification on the in-year spending plan review to be undertaken as part of the budget setting process to help identify savings in the current financial year and informed that this would progress by the end of September 2015, with reports being presented to Members in October/November. He advised that no definitive guidance had been received from the Valuation Office as to the outcome of the outstanding business rates appeals.

The point was made that there was also a need to consider all options relating to how the Council could increase its income.

RESOLVED (1) that the current financial standing of the Council together with the estimated position at the end of the financial year be noted.

RESOLVED (2) that it be recommended to Full Council to approve the transfer of £200,000 to the Business Rates Smoothing Reserve.

CAB45 HPC Planning Obligations Board – Allocations of CIM Funding

(Report No. WSC 130/15, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to present the recommendations of the Hinkley Point C Planning Obligations Board for the allocation of monies from the Community Impact Mitigation (CIM) Fund secured through the Section 106 legal agreement for the site preparation works at Hinkley Point.

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the item and outlined the three applications contained within the report. She went on to propose the recommendation which was duly seconded by Councillor M Dewdney.

On consideration of this item, it was envisaged that more projects would come forward once the Hinkley project was up and running as this was when further impacts would be felt in the communities across West Somerset. At the present time it was difficult to demonstrate and prospective applicants may perhaps benefit by waiting to apply/re-apply until such time as the impact was fully recognised to be able to demonstrate how it would be mitigated. Attention was drawn to the considerable amount of monies still remaining in the CIM Fund.

Officers were thanked for the huge amount of support provided to the applicants during this process.

RESOLVED that it be recommended to full Council to endorse the recommendations of the Hinkley C Planning Obligations Board, as follows:

- (1) To release £200,000 from the CIM Fund ring-fenced for projects in Sedgemoor (and in particular Bridgwater) to Sydenham and Bower Family Health and Wellbeing Group for the enhancement of Coronation Park in Bridgwater and that the significant amount of additional funding that will be levered into the area through the Coronation Park enhancement project is noted.
- (2) To release £18,295 from the CIM Fund ring-fenced for projects in Sedgemoor (and in particular Bridgwater) to Bridgwater Education Trust as a contribution to the expansion of their student/employee mentoring project.
- (3) That the second application for £15,000 of funding from Church House, Crowcombe is refused as the application did not demonstrate how the project would provide community benefits that address impacts of the Hinkley Point C development, or how it would effectively meet the CIM fund criteria.

The meeting closed at 5.55 pm