

CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 JULY 2017

AT 2.30 PM

IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WILLITON

Present:

Councillor A Trollope-Bellew Leader

Councillor M Chilcott
Councillor A Hadley
Councillor K Turner

Councillor M Dewdney
Councillor S Pugsley
Councillor D J Westcott

Members in Attendance:

Councillor I Aldridge
Councillor P Murphy

Councillor B Heywood
Councillor P Pilkington

Officers in Attendance:

Assistant Director - Place and Energy Infrastructure (A Goodchild)
Corporate Strategy and Performance Officer (R Doyle)
Finance Manager (J Nacey)
Community and Housing Lead (HPC) – Energy Infrastructure (L Redston)
Housing & Community Project Lead (A Summers)
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)

Also in Attendance:

Andy Ridgewell, Somerset Community Foundation

CAB11 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor C Morgan.

CAB12 Minutes

(Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 17 May 2017 - circulated with the Agenda.)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 17 May 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

CAB13 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
Cllr M Chilcott	All	SCC	Spoke and voted
Cllr A Trollope-Bellew	All	Crowcombe	Spoke and voted
Cllr K Turner	All	Brompton Ralph	Spoke and voted
Cllr D Westcott	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted
Cllr I Aldridge	All	Williton	Spoke
Cllr P Murphy	All	Watchet	Spoke
Cllr P Pilkington	All	Timberscombe	Spoke

CAB14 Public Participation

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

CAB15 Forward Plan

(Copy of the Forward Plan for the month of September 2017 – circulated with the Agenda.)

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

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan for the month of September 2017 be approved.

CAB16 Future Management of Voluntary and Community Sector Grant Funds

(Report No. WSC 71/17 – circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to provide a proposal for the future management of the grant funds allocated to the Voluntary and Community Sector (CVS) in West Somerset.

The Lead Member for Community and Customer presented the report, giving reasons for the need to establish a cross-party Grants Panel for the fair distribution of local community funds generated from the Somerset West Lottery and the Big Energy Switch. Reference was made to the fact that all the monies raised in West Somerset would only be allocated to projects in West Somerset. Andy Ridgewell from the Somerset Community Foundation went on to provide further information on how the grant procedure would work.

The Lead Member proposed the recommendations of the report which were duly seconded by Councillor M Chilcott.

Members were fully supportive of the creation of a cross-party Grants Panel, and the following main points were made:

- The initiative was extremely positive for the area and it was hoped that over a period of time the funding generated would grow.

- Many good causes would benefit and Councillors were encouraged to promote the lottery so that as much money as possible could be raised to help the local community.
- Members were confident that the mechanism put forward by the Somerset Community Foundation to run the Grants Panel would be successful.
- In response to a query relating to whether Members could sit on the Grants Panel if they also took part in the lottery, the Housing and Community Project Lead drew attention to the Declarations of Interest section in the Terms of Reference which stated the Panel would have to adhere to the guidance set out in the Council's Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED (1) that the formation of a cross party Grants Panel as outlined in Appendix A to the report to discuss applications and make recommendations to the Lead Member for Community and Customer be approved.

RESOLVED (2) that the Grants Panel will consider applications for Somerset West Lottery Local Community Fund and Big Energy Switch Fund.

RESOLVED (3) that the Somerset West Lottery Local Community Fund and the Big Energy Switch Fund be managed by Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) for 2017/18.

RESOLVED (4) that the design of the final application form, guidance notes and report be agreed between officers and the SCF and signed off by the Lead Member for Community and Customer.

Note: With the agreement of the Chairman this item was brought forward on the Agenda.

CAB17 Quarter 4 2016/17 Performance Report

(Report No. WSC 59/17 – circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with key performance management data up to the end of quarter 4 2016/17, to assist in monitoring the Council's performance.

The Leader of Council presented the report and drew attention to the main areas of concern. Full explanations of the failing indicators were provided and it was noted that KPI TH2 would no longer be monitored due to the Council having little control or influence over the outcome of the results.

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

Following concerns raised at a recent Scrutiny Committee meeting regarding KPI 5 and 6 and the fact that, with the introduction of Universal Credit, Housing Benefit/Council Tax Rebate claims were taking at least 38 days to process due to having to wait to receive information from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), the Chairman of Scrutiny thanked the Revenues and Benefits Manager for providing the Members' Briefing Note (detailed at Appendix B to the report). Claimants having to wait a considerable time to receive their entitlement was deemed totally unacceptable and the Scrutiny Chairman requested that Cabinet engage with and lobby DWP and government in this regard. It was felt that more pressure should be put on the DWP to ensure claims are processed quicker.

The Corporate Strategy and Performance Officer provided further clarification and stated that the delays were mainly due to the DWP's significant backlog. He confirmed that the Council's liaison officer had regular meetings with the DWP to try to address and improve the situation. Members' concerns would be reported back to the Revenues and Benefits Manager to ascertain whether more could be done to improve matters.

Various questions were asked as to the possibility of the Scrutiny Committee providing further influence and calling in the DWP to answer questions; and whether some of the delays could be due to difficulties experienced by claimants in completing and returning the paperwork. The Corporate Strategy and Performance Officer explained the procedure in more detail and advised that further clarification would be sought from the Revenues and Benefits Manager in relation to staff capacity and whether the process could be speeded up any further.

The Leader agreed to write to the Secretary of State to make him aware of the situation, with a copy of the letter to be sent to the Bridgwater and West Somerset MP requesting his assistance.

RESOLVED that the Council's performance be noted.

CAB18 **Revenue and Capital Outturn 2016/17**

(Report No. WSC 69/17 – circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with details of the Council's financial outturn position for both revenue and capital budgets, together with information regarding end of year reserve balances

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the item and highlighted the key points from report. She proposed the recommendations of the report which were duly seconded by Councillor D Westcott.

During the debate the following main points were made:

- The Member Services underspend was emphasised and it was evident that the majority of Members did not claim their full entitlement.

- It was advised that the Council had to account for the Disabled Facilities Grant and all expenditure would be committed. The Grant was held in an earmarked reserve and classed as a capital spend. Further clarification would be provided following the meeting.
- The Sustainability Fund earmarked reserve was welcomed.
- A written explanation on car park expenditure within the budget setting process was requested.
- It was noted that the report did not accurately reflect the debate which took place at the recent Scrutiny Committee and a request was made by the Scrutiny Chairman that more information as to what was discussed be included in the report in order to further assist Cabinet in their debate. The Finance Manager apologised and agreed to incorporate the views of Scrutiny in the report being presented to the full Council meeting in August.
- Cabinet valued the input from the Scrutiny Committee and welcomed detailed comments to be incorporated in the report.
- The Finance Manager advised that there were valid reasons for keeping the Revenue and Capital Outturn report and the Medium Term Financial Plan report separate but appreciated there was an overlap of information between the two. Comprehensive and necessary information was provided in each of the reports in order for Council to make an informed decision
- A request was made that consideration be given for future reports to be presented over two meetings.

RESOLVED (1) that the Council's reported General Fund Revenue Budget underspend of £270,890 for the financial year 2016/17, which takes into account proposed earmarked reserve transfers including budget carry forwards, be noted.

RESOLVED (2) that it be recommended to Council to allocate £170,000 from the 2016/17 underspend as follows:

- a) £100,000 to the Business Rates Smoothing Reserve to mitigate budget risk for reductions in business rates funding;
- b) £70,000 to the Sustainability Fund earmarked reserve to help fund opportunities such as "invest to save" plans to support the financial sustainability of the Council.

RESOLVED (3) that it be recommended to Council to approve the net Earmarked Reserve transfers as set out in **Table 4** and **Appendix B** of the report, including recommended Budget Carry Forward of 2016/17 underspends for specific service costs in 2017/18 totalling £247,189.

RESOLVED (4) that it be recommended to Council to approve the proposed Capital Programme Budget Carry Forwards totalling £1,788,064 for general schemes to be funded using capital receipts, capital grant and S106 contributions (as set out in **Appendix D** of this report).

RESOLVED (5) that it be recommended to Council to approve the proposed Capital Programme Budget Carry Forwards totalling £2,123,121 for Hinkley S106-funded schemes (as set out in **Appendix D** of this report).

RESOLVED (6) that the residual net overspend of £250 in relation to the Capital Programme for general schemes in 2016/17 be noted.

Note: With the agreement of the Leader, Report Nos. WSC 69/17 and WSC 70/17 were taken and debated together.

CAB19 **Initial Medium Term Financial Plan 2018/19**

(Report No. WSC 70/17 – circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to present Councillors with the proposed Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2018/19 onwards, including an updated set of estimates and assumptions contained with the initial draft of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

The Lead Member for Resources and Central Support presented the item and highlighted the key points from report. The Lead Member proposed the recommendations which were duly seconded by Councillor D Westcott.

RESOLVED (1) that the revised estimates, and in particular the ongoing risks and uncertainty, within the Medium Term Financial Plan be noted and that the proposed financial strategy that seeks to deliver a balanced budget prior to the formation of a new council be supported.

RESOLVED (2) that it be recommended to Council to approve a Revised Budget for 2017/18 with the following changes:

- a) Revise the Collection Fund Business Rates Surplus/Deficit budget from a deficit of £223,546 to a surplus of £480,635 – a net increase in funding of £704,181.
- b) A transfer to the Business Rates Smoothing Reserve of £704,181 to mitigate budget risk from business rates funding volatility.
- c) Revise the 2017/18 Business Rates Retention estimates by an additional £30,700 in respect of S31 Grant, with a related transfer to General Reserves.

RESOLVED (3) that it be recommended to Council to agree in principle to a further transfer to the Business Rates Smoothing Reserve in 2018/19 to mitigate the increased budget risk in respect of business rates funding volatility as reflected in the updated MTFP estimates.

Note: With the agreement of the Leader, Report Nos. WSC 69/17 and WSC 70/17 were taken and debated together.

CAB20 HPC Planning Obligations Board – Allocations of CIM Funding

(Report No. WSC 68/17 – 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 report and provided detailed information on the three applications submitted for CIM Funding. She went on to propose the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor A Hadley.

Discussion centred around the Enterprising Minehead project which would enhance the visitor experience and transform the Sea Front. In addition, the Salvation Army (Bridgwater) was commended on its Youth Space project.

Members then asked a series of questions relating to alternative travel routes to Minehead and the need to improve directional road signage to encourage visitors to take different routes into the area.

RESOLVED that the following recommendations of the Hinkley Point C Planning Obligations Board be endorsed:

- a) To approve the release of £19,745 from the 1st Annual Payment to the Salvation Army (Bridgwater) for the Youth Space project, with the condition that the requirement to monitor outcomes for young people are included in the terms and conditions of the grant.
- b) To recommend to West Somerset Full Council that the application from Lower Lakes CIC for the Bridgwater Oasis project is not approved as it did not sufficiently meet the funding criteria.
- c) To recommend to West Somerset Full Council that £501,688 is released from the CIM fund ring-fenced for West Somerset to West Somerset Council for the Enterprising Minehead project.

The meeting closed at 4.45 pm.