

CABINET

THURSDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Simon Dudley (Chairman), David Coppinger (Vice-Chairman), Phillip Bicknell, MJ Saunders, Samantha Rayner, David Evans and Stuart Carroll.

Principal Members also in attendance: Christine Bateson and David Hilton

Officers: Alison Alexander, Rob Stubbs, Louisa Dean, Mary Kilner, Russell O'Keefe, Karen Shepherd, David Cook and Andy Jeffs

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N. Airey, Grey, Rankin and McWilliams.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2017 be approved.

APPOINTMENTS

Councillor Clark was appointed as an RBWM representative on the Optalis Holdings Board, to replace Councillor Story.

FORWARD PLAN

Cabinet considered the contents of the Forward Plan for the next four months and noted the changes that had been made to the plan since the last meeting. In addition it was noted that:

- The item 'York Road Site Proposal' would be presented to Cabinet Regeneration Sub Committee on 25 January 2017
- The item 'Broadway Car Park' would be presented to Cabinet Regeneration Sub Committee on 25 January 2017
- The item 'Local Housing Crisis' was deferred to Cabinet on 30 March 2017
- The item 'Oaks Leisure Centre' was deferred to Cabinet Regeneration Sub Committee on 20 February 2017

CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS

LOCAL HOUSING CRISIS

Members noted that the item had been withdrawn from the agenda and deferred to March 2017.

COUNCIL TAX BASE 2018-19

Members considered approval of the council tax base for 2018/19. The Lead Member explained that the approval was a critical piece of the jigsaw in planning for council tax for the coming year. The increase in local housing in the borough was estimated at equivalent to 718 Band D properties. The actual number of homes was 908.29. It was noted that this figure was ahead of the Objectively Assessed Need calculation.

The Lead Member for Maidenhead Regeneration and Maidenhead highlighted the excellent collection rate of 99.5%, which was in the top three in the country. The Executive Director explained that the rate was a result of both demographics in the borough, high levels of payment by direct debit, and experienced staff. On behalf of Cabinet, the Chairman placed on record his thanks to the collection team.

The Chairman commented that Councillor Jones had raised a question at the council meeting earlier in the week in relation to the number of councils with a council tax support rate of 10% or less. Research showed that a number of councils had a rate of 8.5%, which was the rate that had been proposed by central government when responsibility had been transferred to local authorities. The highest level was currently 35%.

The Chairman commented that the borough was proud to have a low contribution rate but if it were reduced to 8.5%, this would cost £50,000. The Lead Member supported the proposal. The Lead Member for Culture and Communities agreed as the proposal would support the most vulnerable. Members agreed that the proposal should be put to Full Council, following a short consultation.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Cabinet notes the report and:

i) Approves the council tax base for the whole of the Borough area, for the year 2018-19 at 67,617.93 as detailed in this report and appendices.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2016/17

Members reviewed the Royal Borough's treasury management arrangements during 2016/17 as required by the council's constitution.

The Lead Member explained that the report set out how the council managed cash balances flowing in and out of the council. Funds under management at the end of 2016/17 had totalled in the region of £2.5m. The excellent work of the investment team had secured an average return of 0.62% against a benchmark of 0.59%. Appendix A detailed the approval limits and Fitch ratings. The council had adopted a prudent approach, as some councils had, such as those that had invested in Iceland.

The Principal Member for Ascot Regeneration agreed that the team had in the past done an incredibly good job handling amounts up to £60m. If the current figures increased in future he had no doubt they would do so again.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

i. That Cabinet notes the report.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Members considered the latest financial update.

The Lead Member explained that the headline was continuing confidence that the current year financial performance forecast levels of reserves at year end totalling just under £7.8m, which was approximately £2m above the budget floor. A number of significant variances continued to persist throughout the year, in particular the ongoing material increase in the volume of vulnerable young people needing care arrangements. Children's Services therefore projected an overspend by year end of £1.5m. However there were also a variety of underspends to offset the pressures and bring the balance back to nil.

The Principal Member for Ascot Regeneration highlighted the capital slippage related to a pavilion at Victory Playing Fields. It had been agreed not to pursue a pavilion with facilities that would not be used and have a stripped down version, which then allowed £150,000 to go to Ascot United to bid for further funding for an all-weather playing pitch. He was pleased that the parish council had taken a strategic decision rather than a parochial one.

The Lead Member confirmed that the budget preparation pack had been considered by all Overview and Scrutiny Panels and Cabinet over the last six weeks. No issues of substance had been raised by Members, including the Opposition, that required changes to any particular aspects. However, as the budget had been brought three months earlier than normal, some adjustments may be necessary before the final version was considered. It was anticipated that the final budget would be available for a final round of scrutiny in late January / early February, before Full Council at the end of February 2018.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Cabinet:

- i) Notes the Council's projected outturn position for 2017-18 and mitigating actions to address service pressures.**

The Chairman, on behalf of all councillors, placed on record his thanks to all staff for their work during the year. Some staff would work throughout the Christmas period to provide services to residents and support the vulnerable.

The meeting, which began at 7.30 pm, finished at 7.54 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....