

CABINET

THURSDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2020

PRESENT: Councillors David Cannon, Andrew Johnson (Chairman), David Coppinger, Samantha Rayner, Stuart Carroll (Vice-Chairman), David Hilton, Gerry Clark, Donna Stimson and Ross McWilliams

Also in attendance: Councillors C Da Costa, Price, Hill, Bhangra, Bateson and Barbara Richardson (RBWM Property Company)

Officers: Duncan Sharkey, Kevin McDaniel, Adele Taylor, Andrew Vince, Chris Joyce, Louise Freeth, Russel O'Keefe, Hilary Hall, Nikki Craig, Louisa Dean, Mark Beeley and David Cook.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 August 2020 were approved.

APPOINTMENTS

None

FORWARD PLAN

Cabinet considered the contents of the Forward Plan for the next four months and noted the changes made since last published, including:

- School places and projections report moving from October to November 2020.
- The following reports to be added to October 2020 Cabinet Parking Contract, Highways Contract, Communities Facilities Review, Windsor Neighbourhood Plan – Proceed to Referendum and the Housing Strategy and Housing Strategy.

CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS

A) FUTURE PUBLIC HEALTH ARRANGEMENTS FOR ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD, SLOUGH AND BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCILS

Cabinet considered the report regarding the rationale for altering the current arrangements for public health across Slough, RBWM and Bracknell-Forest.

Deputy Chairman of Cabinet, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health introduced the report and informed that the report sought new arrangements for the delivery of public health services and the statutory Director of Public Health (DPH) post. It

sought in principle the approval for the new collaborative arrangement and confirm indicative funding allocations subject to the 2021-22 Budget being approved.

Since 2013 the Berkshire Public Health System had operated on a hub and spoke model with Public Health teams within in each of the six unitary authorities supported by a Shared Strategic Director of Public Health and a Shared Team hosted by Bracknell Forest Council.

The overall aim of the Berkshire Public Health System is to deliver the core public health duty for local authorities which is to take steps to improve the health of residents and decrease health inequalities. During the current pandemic we have seen the importance of public health and associated strategic aims for delivery. There were also the associated work to deliver our public health strategy supported by the Health and Wellbeing Board. Public health had a wide remit and has been working collaboratively with a number of agencies. The strong relationship with the NHS has been important.

One of the challenges of the current arrangements is that the Director of Public Health has been supporting 6 local authorities and this reduces capacity due to responsibilities and demands. Recruitment to this type of roles has been challenging and the current post holder is leaving in the New Year. This provided a natural opportunity to change the role in Berkshire to make the system more efficient and attractive.

It was proposed is to dissolve the current arrangement between the six authorities and move to an arrangement between Slough Borough Council, RBWM and Bracknell Forest Council and the Frimley Integrated Care System. This would have a shared Director of Public Health role for East Berkshire to lead the public health system, working closely with the local authorities and partners across the integrated care partnership. There will also be a hub team providing health intelligence, health protection and commissioning support to support public health teams in each local authority. This would enable a lot more focus and insight locally.

The shared team commissioning function would sit within Bracknell Forest commissioning team with a view to individual authorities taking on the commissioning of particular services in the future.

The Deputy Leader of the Council, Resident and Leisure Services, HR, IT, Legal, Performance Management and Windsor thanked officers for their hard work during the current pandemic crisis and said the proposals would strengthen public health. She asked if west Berkshire authorities would combine and thus be two directors of public health within Berkshire. She also asked if proposed changed to public health would impact on what we do. In response Cabinet were informed that yes there would be two Berkshire positions and that public health had not changed but the Government had formed the National Institute for Public Protection that would look nationally at issues, remaining functions of public health were currently under consultation. Some functions may be devolved to local authorities.

The Lead Member for Finance and Ascot supported the proposal and said that he had been a governor of Heatherwood Hospital when the new trust was formed with Frimley Health. This report made sense and locally there were proposals for two new GP hubs. He asked if the new proposals would help the council provide support for residents within the borough. Cabinet were informed that through the creation of the integrated care system there had been a communality of local planning and commissioning. We had greater purchasing power and an opportunity to improve services to areas such as mental health.

Cllr C Da Costa said she welcomed any ways of reducing inequalities and that the poorest in society were the ones who needed the services the most but still had the poorest outcomes. She raised concerns about the different needs of the three authorities and if they would be served appropriately. She was informed that at the highest level the proposal would provide more capacity to service our area and that each local authority received its own grant to use locally or collectively. There would also be a local focus via the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Resolved unanimously: that Cabinet notes the report and:

- i) Approves the creation of the post of Director of Public Health for East Berkshire in collaboration with East Berkshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Bracknell Forest and Slough Borough Councils.**
- ii) Delegates authority to the Managing Director in consultation with the Lead Member for Adult and Children's Service, Health and Mental Health and the Director of Adult, Health and Commissioning, to finalise and approve the partnership arrangements with relevant organisations.**
- iii) Notes the inclusion of an additional £65,000 per annum to fund the new arrangements is to be added to the 2021-22 base budget and funded from the public health grant.**

B) FINANCE UPDATE: SEPTEMBER 2020

Cabinet considered the latest Financial Update report.

The Leader of the Council and Chairman of Cabinet, Business, Economic Development and Property informed that the tough budget set by the administration would, had it not been for Covid-19, been paying dividends and stabilising the budget. It was clear that we would have been in a better financial position with an underspend, it was a difficult, tough but necessary budget that due to the pandemic has changed.

The Lead Member for Finance and Ascot informed that the report set out the financial position of the Council at the end of month 4, July and read out the recommendations.

He said that when setting this year's budget, they were very robust in checking all budget lines and savings so it was no surprise that the underlying budget was holding up well and, pleasingly since June reserves had increased by £900K to £2.7M. But for COVID they were managing services within budget with a reported pre-covid favourable variance of £2.8M which would have increased reserves to nearly £9M. But due to the pandemic a major issue was the loss of revenue in Parking, Leisure and commercial property amounting to £8.2M.

The Government had published Guidance on the recovery of lost income. This excluded commercial property and is on the basis of 75% of 95% of the loss where the losses were associated with fees and charges but there was some dispensation around leisure.

Finance was working to establish exactly what they can claim. This was not straightforward as any actions the Council had taken to mitigate costs cannot be claimed. All funds received will be added to general reserves.

The Lead Member provided some revenue budget headlines:

- A positive was the green waste take up had increased.
- The Adult Social Care budget, with a multitude of moving parts, reported a favourable variance of £1.3M.
- Children's services report an unfavourable variance of £1.27M in part because savings in Transforming youth and early years services had been delayed by Covid and they also had an additional high cost placement.
- Given the Covid crisis Council Tax and Business rate collection, which accounts for £88M of our revenues, were holding up well. Council tax was 0.48% behind target and Business rates were 1.7% ahead of target.
- The increased burden of managing business rate grant awards impacted on the Revenue and Benefits team's ability to meet Housing benefit response time targets. But the average time to process new Housing Benefit claims and change events were

5.7 and 2.9 days respectively, well below target and as low as they have ever been. He thanked the team.

- Planning were seeing signs of increased activity which he hoped was a lead indicator for economic growth.
- Borrowing was largely unchanged.

With regards to Capital the Lead Member informed that:

- There was one fully funded addition to the capital programme to resolve a safeguarding issue Larchfield School.
- In appendix F on page 76 members were now able to easily track movements in the capital programme.
- On Page 81 a draft timetable for the 2021/22 budget build had been included.

He informed that the report was due to be considered by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Leader informed that the draft budget would go to Cabinet in December to allow consultation prior to Council in the new year.

The Deputy Leader of the Council, Resident and Leisure Services, HR, IT, Legal, Performance Management and Windsor thanked the revenue and benefits team as they had administered £39.3 million worth of new business rate relief and £28 million of grants to businesses that had been funded by Government.

The Head of Finance informed that we would be making three returns to Government for lost revenue the first claim was expected to be about £2 million this was for the loss incurred for the first third of the year. It was expected that the total claimed for the year would be about £3 to £4 million.

Resolved unanimously: that Cabinet notes the report and:

- i) Notes the Council's projected revenue & capital position for 2020/21.**
- ii) Notes the budget movements;**
- iii) Approves the capital variances and slippage.**
- iv) Approves a capital budget addition of £110,000 for Safeguarding works at Larchfield Primary School**

C) RBWM RECOVERY STRATEGY

Cabinet considered the report that set out the approach to recovery at a Borough level to support our residents and businesses to empower communities to thrive, create great places and build lasting partnerships with our businesses during Covid-19 recovery.

The Leader of the Council and Chairman of Cabinet, Business, Economic Development and Property informed that it was strange introducing the recovery strategy when it seemed we were entering into phase two of the pandemic. He thanked officers and the cross party working group for the work on the important strategy. The strategy was aimed to mirror that of the national strategy and the Berkshire wide strategy.

He highlighted the four key pillars of the strategy:

- Health and wellbeing
- Direct hardship
- Structural economic impacts
- Building resilience and seizing the positives

There were three core objectives of his administration; public health obligations, delivery of a balanced budget and to support economic recovery and growth.

The Lead Member for Finance and Ascot said that this was a cross Berkshire strategy and asked who would be responsible for monitoring its success at Thames Valley level. Cabinet were informed that this strategy was our local strategy and the Berkshire level data hub would be monitored locally. There was also a weekly Berkshire recovery meeting.

The Lead Member for Transport and Infrastructure said that this fell into existing resources and that at times of adversity people came together and worked collaboratively to do everything possible for recovery.

The Lead Member for Climate Change, Sustainability, Parks and Countryside said that there had been a lot of new investment in the borough and that the recovery had started.

Cllr Price said it was an excellent paper that gave inspiration and hope. She asked if there was an equalities impact assessment and if it should have been brought to Cabinet, it was confirmed that there was and that individual projects would have one as they were developed. She also asked if this linked to the Transformation Strategy as they did not mention this. It was confirmed that they were linked.

Cllr Price also mentioned that the report did not mention the impact of Heathrow and she also raised the concept to the '20 minute village' in keeping things local. Cabinet were informed that there were action in place such as the Cycling Action Plan and encouraging the local economy. With regards to Heathrow this fitted with the broader economic recovery plans and we were working closely with Heathrow.

Resolved unanimously: that Cabinet notes the report and:

- iv) Approves the Royal Borough Support and Recovery Strategy to move into delivery phase.**

D) LIBRARY STOCK PURCHASE CONTRACT

Cabinet considered the report that dealt with the retendering of the Central Buying Consortium contract.

The Deputy Leader of the Council, Resident and Leisure Services, HR, IT, Legal, Performance Management and Windsor informed that the report asked for an extension of the contract at a cost of £70k per year to the council because it was offset by S106 funding and a grant from Ascot Durning. There was about 733, 000 book loans last year.

Resolved unanimously: that That Cabinet:

- v) Notes the report and retender for the supply of library stock by the Central Buying Consortium under the OJEU compliant process.**
- vi) Approves the Council continuing to remain an Associate Member of the Central Buying Consortium and utilising the new framework contract for the supply of library stock until 31 March 2022 with the option to extend for two years.**
- vii) Delegates authority to the Executive Director of Resources & the Corporate Leadership Team in consultation with the Leader, the Lead Member for Finance and the Deputy Leader of the Council, Resident and Leisure Services, HR, IT, Legal, Performance Management and Windsor; Armed Forces Champion to award the tender and exercise the optional extension of the new contract for up to two more years, until 31 March 2024, if the Central Buying Consortium decides to pursue the extension.**

- viii) To confirm the procurement process began prior to Lockdown with an effective contract start date of 01 April 2020. However, use was not made of this until the Library service re-opened in July. At that time, approval was sought from the Director of Resources, until such time as a paper could be brought before Cabinet.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public were excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion took place on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 3 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

(Cllr Carroll left the meeting)

The meeting, which began at 6.15 pm, finished at 7.40 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....