

CABINET

WEDNESDAY 25 OCTOBER 2023

PRESENT: Councillors Simon Werner (Chair), Lynne Jones (Vice-Chair), Richard Coe, Geoff Hill, Joshua Reynolds, Catherine Del Campo, Adam Bermange and Karen Davies

Present Virtually: Councillor Amy Tisi

Also in attendance: Councillor Ewan Larcombe

Also in attendance virtually: Councillors Maureen Hunt, Mandy Brar and Mark Wilson

Officers: Oran Norris-Browne, Stephen Evans, Lin Ferguson, Elizabeth Griffiths, Andrew Durrant, Elaine Browne, Kevin McDaniel and Lucy Kourpas

Officers in attendance virtually: Andrew Vallance, Tim Golabek and Becky Hatch

Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received, however it was noted that Councillor Tisi was attending virtually, so could not vote, however was still able to take part in the debates.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

Minutes

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 27 September 2023 were approved.

Appointments

The appointment of Margaret Smith to The Free Churches (representing Quakers) in Group A on the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE).

Forward Plan

Cabinet noted the Forward Plan for the next four months.

Cabinet Members then requested some additions to be made to the Forward Plan.

Councillor Davies said that she wished for an item to be added for roughly 12 months' time that would review the Council's air quality improvement plan, following the installation of additional air quality monitoring stations within the borough.

Councillor Hill asked for a report on fees and charges to be brought to November's Cabinet meeting and stated that the Maidenhead Parking Strategy would now come to January's Cabinet meeting, as it would be first going to an Overview & Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Jones asked for the monthly in-year budget reports to be added each month, to allow residents to see that it would come to Cabinet on a monthly basis.

The Chair drew attention to the e-petition that was currently live collecting signatures on the Council's website. He wished for a review of the decision be brought to the November meeting, in light of the petition being requested.

Leasing of Sport Pavilion in Braywick Park, Maidenhead

AGREED: That the order of the agenda was changed so that agenda items 11, 9 and 10 were heard first in that order.

Councillor Bermange, Cabinet Member for Planning, Legal & Asset Management, introduced the report by stating that the current building had been vacant since 2021 following the surrender of the former lease. Since then, the Council had been liable for all outgoing at the property, without receiving any income through rent. There were previous plans for the Maidenhead Heritage Centre to purchase the building, however this ultimately did not work out due to reasons such as a much bigger budget being required to allow the building to function in the long term.

Councillor Bermange said that in the wake of the Council's financial position, all decisions needed to be made in the best interests of both social factors and financial security. He then said that it was very important that the introduction of the support within this area for a new leisure activity, did not conflict with any other sports that were on offer within the same vicinity, such as what was provided at the Braywick Leisure Centre.

Manish Garg then addressed the Cabinet as a registered public speaker for 3 minutes on behalf of the Maidenhead Hindu Society.

The Chair thanked Manish Garg for his comments and commented on how badly the Maidenhead Hindu Society had been treated by the previous administration over the last few years. He wished to meet with them outside of the meeting to see how they could work together moving forward.

Councillor Reynolds, Cabinet Member for Communities and Leisure, said that the deal that was being presented to Cabinet was a very good one financially. He also praised recommendation iii) within the report which allowed the Executive Director of Place of their nominee to consult with user groups within the vicinity of the premises, to iron out any issues or concerns that they may still have. He said that he would be meeting with them also on 21 November 2023.

Councillor Hill, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Customer Service Centre and Employment, said that as Ward Councillor for the area, he was delighted that someone had agreed to take it upon themselves to make use of the property. He sympathised with the Maidenhead Hindu Society, however praised the Chair and Councillor Reynolds' commitment to working with them going forward. He also wished to commend the financial deal that had been struck.

Councillor Jones agreed with the comments made by Councillor Hill with regards to the financial deal that had been agreed and commented on the fact that no additional money was required to provide the building with maintenance, which was also a positive.

AGREED: That Cabinet noted the report and:

- i) Approved the leasing of the former Sportsable Pavillion, Braywick Park to Padel Berkshire**
- ii) Delegated authority to the Executive Director of Place Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Legal and Asset Management, to conclude the negotiation of a new agreement for lease and lease to Padel Berkshire**

- iii) **Approved the Executive Director of Place or their nominee to consult with the Braywick Park Users Group for their views on the re-use of the building and external areas for a new sporting facility**
- iv) **Approved the use of the Public Open Space Application and Consultation process and delegates the decision to the nominated officer.**

Achieving for Children (AfC) Annual Reports 2022/23

Councillor Tisi, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Windsor, introduced the report by providing some background information as to what Achieving for Children (AfC) was, which would provide members of the public with some clarity on the differentiation between AfC and RBWM. She made it clear that this was a jointly owned service along with Richmond and Kingston and acknowledged that in the past, it had been said that the borough perhaps did not have a tight enough grip on AfC, however this would change with the introduction of a new AfC Ownership Board and regular director meetings.

Councillor Tisi said that AfC were working extremely hard and had made progress on a number of key services. The Department for Education (DfE) had recently removed the borough's written statement of action for example, as the progress that had been made by AfC was noticeable, along with other key strengths that were showcased by AfC. The holiday offer for children who were entitled to free school meals was going from strength to strength too, with 832 children being provided with activities and meals in 2022.

Lastly, Councillor Tisi briefly outlined what both the equalities, diversity and inclusion report included along with the financial accounts of AfC, which showed the cost of services to the borough to be a growing concern. She then thanked the People Overview & Scrutiny for their comments on the report as it came before them prior to it appearing before the Cabinet.

Lucy Kourpas, Chief Operating & Finance Officer for AfC, echoed Councillor Tisi's comments and the good work that the borough had done in the last few years. She also said that as a joint owner of AfC, independent auditors had been appointed and confirmed that they had determined that the accounts showed a true and fair reflection.

Councillor Coe, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services, said that the high number of children on free school meals who had participated in the summer activities showcased the amount of child poverty that sadly existed within the UK.

Councillor Bermange asked what the main goals were for the current financial year. Lucy Kourpas replied by saying that work would continue to support families through the cost-of-living crisis all year round. They were also doing a lot of work in the early help services and SEND services, to provide children with access to all of the services that they may need.

Lin Ferguson, Executive Director of Children's Services and Education, echoed Lucy's comments and added a further two points. The first was pupils who were not ready for school after Covid, there were a number of projects that were in place to assist these children. The second was that since covid, some children were also struggling with confidence in attending school.

AGREED: That Cabinet noted and agreed to the below reports:

- i) **The Achieving for Children Impact Report**
- ii) **The Achieving for Children Equalities Report**
- iii) **The Achieving for Children Annual Report and Accounts**

Achieving for Children (AfC) Contract

Councillor Tisi introduced the report, by stating that officers had considered 3 different options in terms of AfC moving forward. Option 1 was to extend the contract with AfC, option 2 was to bring the service back in house and option 3 was to go out to tender for another provider. The option that had been recommended to Cabinet was option 1, to extend the contract for 5 years from 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2029. She then outlined the reasons as to why this was the recommendation being put forward by herself and officers.

Councillor Jones expressed her gratitude that all options were considered before making a decision and praised the finances that were involved.

AGREED: That Cabinet noted the report and approved the extension of the contract with Achieving for Children (AfC) Community Interest Company (CIC) for five years from 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2029.

Quarterly Assurance Report

Councillor Tisi left the meeting.

The Chair then used his discretion and invited Councillor Larcombe forward to speak. He reminded Cabinet that he was the Council's appointee at the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee and that in January 2024 he would have to raise his hand along with other representatives in the Thames Catchment area to spend in the region of £100m for a year. He wished to make the Cabinet aware of this in case they were not aware. He referred back to the motion that had been passed at Council earlier in October 2023, on the commitment to managing the borough's finances. He was wary of the Council's current debt standing at £203m, but overall asked if the £10m commitment that was made by the Council was still on the table.

The Chair thanked him for his comments and said that it was his understanding that the £10m being discussed was a commitment made by the Council and that it did not appear in the budget. He then thanked Councillor Larcombe for all he did on flooding and offered to meet him with Councillor Jones in the future to discuss finance when it came to flooding.

The Chair, Councillor Werner, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Community Partnerships, Public Protection and Maidenhead, then introduced the Quarterly Assurance Report. He began by saying that this was a new approach to performance management at the Council. The Cabinet would scrutinise performance on a quarterly basis, along with the budget on a monthly basis. The aim of this was for improved governance at the Council and implored the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Panel to scrutinise these reports too, moving forward.

The Chair then wished to make a minor change to recommendation ii) which did read 'identify any areas that Cabinet may wish to recommend for scrutiny to the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Panel', so that it would instead read 'ask the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Panel to consider the Quarterly Performance Report and identify areas where improvements could be made'.

Councillor Jones welcomed the report and said that it was certainly a welcome and major step forward in openness and transparency. She asked for it to go further still in future by having the report identify what things needed to be addressed, with a better understanding of complaints and the effects that it would have.

Councillor Reynolds said that it was certainly the right thing to do and that it also allowed non-Cabinet Members to have a better look into performance within the Council and not just the Cabinet.

Councillor Coe said that openness and transparency was also a great way to drive improvement within services provided by the borough.

AGREED: That the Cabinet noted the report and:

- i) **Reviewed the Quarterly Assurance Report setting out progress against the performance indicators and risk register.**
- ii) **Asked the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Panel to consider the Quarterly Performance Report and identify areas where improvements could be made.**

2023/24 Month 5 Revenue Monitoring Report

Councillor Jones, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, introduced the report and provided fellow Cabinet Members with an outline of the Council's in-year budget position, which was an overspend at month 5 of £7.312m, which reduced to an overspend of £3.589, when including unallocated contingency budgets and changes to funding budgets. She then said that Councillors from all parties had been invited to 3 separate briefings on the Council's financial position, with the opportunity to ask questions, further showcasing openness and transparency.

Councillor Jones said that cost of servicing debt, remained a key concern. However, a difference was starting to be seen, with the introduction of things such as a Spending Review Panel. Currently, over £2m worth of savings that were included in the 23/24 budget, appeared to be unachievable. She then outlined some of the projects that were ongoing to identify cost saving exercises, such as a communication campaign centred around parking.

Councillor Jones stressed that it was of vital importance to keep borrowing levels low. As an example, if £20m was borrowed and paid for over 20 years at current rates, this would see an additional revenue cost of £1.5m per year. To conclude, Councillor Jones outlined the virements that were shown in Appendix B, which the Cabinet were being asked to agree too.

Councillor Hill said that parking revenue was £532,000 up compared to at the same point in the previous year. The communications campaign to increase parking numbers in both Windsor and Maidenhead also appeared to be working, with numbers being up in car parks such as Vicus Way. There had also been a very big up take in the resident discount scheme in recent times too.

Councillor Coe commended the effort being made by Councillor Jones and officers.

Councillor Bermange thanked Councillor Jones for bringing forward the report and her commitment to bringing a report to Cabinet on a monthly basis.

AGREED: That Cabinet noted the report and:

- i) **Noted the forecast revenue outturn for the year at M5 was an overspend on services of £7.312m which reduces to an overspend of £3.589m when including unallocated contingency budgets and changes to funding budgets (para 4).**
- ii) **Noted that the Council's approach to in-year budget monitoring and management was being strengthened – as part of a wider approach to improving corporate governance at RBWM - as set out in paragraph 5.1.**
- iii) **Noted the forecast capital outturn was expenditure of £47.769m against a budget of £87.199m (para 10); and**
- iv) **Agreed the virements in Appendix B.**

A308/Holyport Road junction improvements

Councillor Hill introduced the report by stating that the roundabout in question was in great need of an upgrade. He said that it was a hazard to drivers, especially as the A308 was so straight, coming onto the roundabout. Within the public consultation that had been carried out, members of the public had strongly expressed that they did not want traffic lights placed at the location and that a compact roundabout was the sought-after way forward. The cost would be £1.3m, which would be coming from the Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (£1m) and from the Community infrastructure Levy (£300,000).

Councillor Reynolds said that it was very important to see the results of the consultation and said that the report was a perfect example of the Council listening to its residents by addressing an important issue that had been requested by residents and following the feedback from the public on traffic lights, via the consultation.

AGREED: That Cabinet noted the report and approved the installation of a compact roundabout at the junction of A308 Windsor Road with Holyport Road and delegated authority to the Service Lead for Transport to finalise the detailed design.

York Road Phase I, Maidenhead

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

The Chair said that the Cabinet were committed to getting the best value from all of its assets and said that the report would come back to November’s Cabinet meeting with additional options being presented such as potentially keeping the units, or instead renting them out.

Councillor Bermange agreed with the comments made by the Chair and said that as the Cabinet Member, he was happy with this route forward.

The meeting, which began at 7.02 pm, finished at 8.00 pm

CHAIR.....

DATE.....