

## CABINET

THURSDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Simon Dudley (Chairman), David Coppinger (Vice-Chairman), Phillip Bicknell, Natasha Airey, MJ Saunders, Samantha Rayner, Jack Rankin, David Evans, Stuart Carroll and Jesse Grey

Principle Members also in attendance: Christine Bateson, David Hilton and Ross McWilliams.

Officers: Alison Alexander, Rob Stubbs, Louisa Dean, Russell O'Keefe, Andy Jeffs, Kevin McDaniel and David Cook.

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

### MINUTES

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Part I minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2018 were approved.**

### APPOINTMENTS

None

### 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:

- Award for Enabling Works for Braywick Leisure Centre. Report will be considered by Cabinet in March 2018.
- Homelessness Strategy Update. Report will be considered by Cabinet in September 2018. The Principle Member for Housing and Communications informed that the report date had been changed to allow broader consultation with partner agencies so we can produce the best strategy for our vulnerable residents. It was noted that there had been an urgent question at Council.
- RBWM Property Business Plan - Report will be considered by Cabinet Regeneration Sub-Committee in April 2018.
- Authority to procure waste and allied services contract - new item for Cabinet in April. Report will be considered by Cabinet in April 2018.

### CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS

A) FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Lead Member for Finance presented the latest Financial Update report and informed Cabinet that as they entering the final stages of the financial year it was important to be clear what the final financial position would be.

The projected General Fund Reserves was £7,118,000 which was well in excess of the £5,780,000 recommended minimum level set at Council in February 2017. This excess of reserves was important to provide a buffer from any future uncertainties, however this was less than previously reported and it was for fellow Cabinet Members in Children's and Community Services to share their thoughts on the figures that had changed from previous months.

In response to a question regarding business rates the Lead Member for Finance reported that there had been a number of recent announcements that had lead a number of authorities to belief that the amount of business rates expected would not be the amount budgeted for. Although confident in our forecasting it was too early to say what the final figure into our net revenue receipts for this year would be, but it was expected to be positive and it was hoped that a more definitive figure would be reported in next month's update.

The Lead Member for Children's Services informed that the overspend in home to school transport had been expected and that this had been taken into account when setting next year's budget. There had also been an adverse variance in agency costs due to a number of factors, such as a team manager unfortunately being of long term sick leave and the level of social worker caseloads being reviewed which resulted in the number or agency worker being retained to maintain an acceptable case load.

There had also been good news from the Regional Schools Commissioner that Desborough College would become a standalone academy and that the Department for Education would be paying back £134,000 of debt that was currently held by the Dedicated Schools Grant; this was good news for all our schools.

The Lead Member for Culture and Communities informed that there was about £36,000,000 of benefits given to our residents and that we received most of that back from the Government but they retained a percentage for overpayments; which could be for a number of reasons such as a change in claimant's circumstances. We recouped as much of the overpayments as we can but there was a £200,000 amount not budgeted for. There were strategies in place to recoup this including an invest to safe strategy by employing someone to recoup the additional overpayments, this would supplement the existing team. The Government kept 40 pence in the pound for overpayments but if this was collected we recouped the 40 percent back as well as the overpayment.

The Lead Member also informed that there had been a number of pressures due to covering vacant positions and that the Registrar's service showed a pressure of £50,000 due to a 30% reduction in wedding bookings this year, they were on budget but had expected to have an excess that had not materialised. There was a national decline in wedding booking but we were looking at ways to buck this trend, we were competitively priced but there were a number of factors at play.

The Lead Member for Finance drew Cabinet's attention to the Capital items within the report that required specific resolution within the recommendations, they were the £200,000 capital budget for costs incurred during the closure of the Old Court Windsor for fire risk remedial works and a £475,000 capital budget for operational estate improvements.

The Lead Member for Culture and Communities informed that after an extensive review of the Old Court in Windsor the additional investment was required to keep the building operational. This was a huge investment in Windsor to retain a loved facility for our residents.

The Lead Member for Highways, Transport and Windsor agreed that the arts centre was very important but was surprised at the additional costs and asked if this would delay opening the

facility that was used by a number of organisations. Cabinet were informed that the centre was expected to open on schedule the following week.

With regards to the £475,000 capital budget for operational estate improvements the Lead Member of Finance informed that this was being requested following a recent review of the Council's estate that recommended that a number of priorities be brought forward to invest sooner rather than later. The Lead Member for Regeneration, Property and Deputy Finance informed that this was an acceleration of works and formed a part of a long term investment into our estate.

The Lead Member for Highways, Transport and Windsor highlighted the pressure on our buses where patronage had dropped and certain routes required financial support to keep operational, this had required an additional £153,000 extra support.

**Resolved unanimously: That Cabinet:**

- I. Notes the Council's projected outturn position for 2017-18 and mitigating actions to address service pressures.**
- II. Approves a £200k capital budget for costs incurred during the closure of the Old Court Windsor for fire risk remedial works (paragraph 4.31).**
- III. Approves a £475k capital budget for operational estate improvements (paragraph 4.34).**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on item 8 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.**

**Resolved unanimously: that the Part II minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2018 be approved.**

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 7.25 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....