

CABINET

THURSDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2023

PRESENT: Councillors Andrew Johnson (Leader of the Council; Growth & Opportunity) (Chairman), Stuart Carroll (Deputy Chairman of Cabinet; Children's Services, Education, Health, Mental Health, & Transformation) (Vice-Chairman), David Cannon (Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime, and Public Protection), David Coppinger (Adult Social Care & Maidenhead), Samantha Rayner (Deputy Leader of the Council; Business, Corporate & Residents Services, Culture & Heritage, & Windsor), Phil Haseler (Planning, Parking, Highways & Transport), David Hilton (Asset Management & Commercialisation, Finance, & Ascot), Donna Stimson (Climate Action & Sustainability), Ross McWilliams (Digital Connectivity, Housing Opportunity, & Sport & Leisure) and Gurpreet Bhangra (Environmental Services, Parks and Countryside)

Also in attendance virtually: Councillors Bond, Brar, L Jones, Knowles, Larcombe, Price, Sharpe and Tisi

Officers: Adele Taylor, Kevin McDaniel, Andrew Durrant and Andrew Vallance

Officers in attendance virtually: Emma Duncan, Rebecca Hatch and Julian McGowan

Apologies for absence

There were none received.

Declarations of Interest

There were none noted.

Minutes

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2023 were approved.

Appointments

There were none to be considered.

Forward Plan

Cabinet noted the Forward Plan for the next four months and there were no amendments to be noted.

Budget 2023-24

Cabinet considered the report regarding the proposed 2023/24 budget.

Councillor Hilton, Cabinet Member for Asset Management & Commercialisation, Finance, & Ascot presented the proposed budget to Cabinet. There were eight appendices that set out the financial plans for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, its net budget requirement and associated Council Tax level for 2023/24.

Cabinet had considered the draft Revenue Budget and draft Capital programme on the 1 December 2022 and agreed to a public consultation to run until the end of January 2023. The

results of that consultation were included within the report. Councillor Hilton focused on new elements within the report and significant changes to the revenue budget, driven by the final grant settlement that was issued after the draft budget was published:

- He acknowledged that there had been a significant focus on parking charges when Fees and charges were reviewed by Corporate Overview & Scrutiny.
- The Capital budget and Capital strategy were unchanged. He noted the budget, increasingly funded by S106 and CIL, included a full Highways capital programme with £5.2M for Highways including roads resurfacing, patching and pothole repairs, footway repairs, drainage schemes and highway safety.
- There were investments in the borough's schools including £3.4M to increase provision for Special Education Needs.
- The Council was investing in new systems that would improve the management and quality of services. £500K would be invested in a replacement customer relationship management system, £1.1M in a children's social care system and £1M in a new Adult Social Care system which would enable the Council to implement Care Reforms from October.
- The total capital programme was nearly £40m and included slippages from 2022/23, schemes approved by Council in previous years, fully funded schemes and corporately funded essential schemes.
- The Treasury Management Strategy (appendix 4 of the agenda report) had been reviewed and endorsed by the Audit and Governance Committee in October 2022. He highlighted that the capital cash flow report showed that from 2025/26 there was a continuous decline in borrowing.
- The policy set out in appendix 5 of the agenda report covered all aspects of pay from the salary bands of chief officers, the number of employees by salary bands, the ratio of the lowest salary to the highest, expenses and benefits. Councillor Hilton noted that the Council must publish a pay policy statement by 31 March 2023, which had been approved by Council.
- He advised the meeting that the council operates a Local Pay Agreement and determines any pay award annually as part of its budget setting process which was set out in appendix 6. The paper responded to the local pay claim from UNISON and GMB Unions for 2023/24. The proposal for staff, who serve the borough's residents well, was a two-year settlement with a pay award of 4% in 2023 and 3% in 2024. He confirmed that a 4% increase would ensure that the lowest paid staff would be paid above the national living wage.
- Councillor Hilton thanked all residents and businesses who responded to the consultation and Councillors who attended scrutiny sessions for their input.
- He observed that despite roughly 90% of respondents not using Adults, Children's or Housing Services in the past year and 75% saying the proposals would have no impact on their families there was general agreement with the council prioritising care for the most vulnerable in the community.
- He advised that an additional £500K has been allocated to Adult Social Care in order to take out the saving in relation to charging for Meals on Wheels delivery, policies for accessing social care and in Optalis, staff retention.
- He advised an additional £670K has been allocated to Children's services to reduce the saving on Family Hubs by £400K but also to remove the saving in the Youth Offending Team and workforce retention Initiatives.
- He noted that residents had raised concerns over the cost of parking and in response, he confirmed that free Sunday parking would be retained in Maidenhead and an additional £124K had also been made available to expand 1-hour free parking for residents at Victoria Street in Windsor and Hines Meadow in Maidenhead.
- He acknowledged that there had been public concerns, which was shared by the Council, on the impact of air quality in the borough. This would be addressed by allocating an additional £94K for air quality monitoring.
- He addressed the concerns raised over the funding of the Climate Partnership stating they were unfounded. He confirmed that the amount of money being provided to the

- Climate Partnership would remain as previously agreed as climate change continued to be a high priority for residents and the Council. He reflected that the Climate Partnership had been promoted in order to bring many organisations together and collectively achieve much more than the Council alone.
- Councillor Hilton noted a variety of consultation responses that highlighted concerns about the environment, the importance of green spaces in the borough, and the impact of development. There were a smaller number of concerns about the state of roads, the state of shared public spaces, and the need for additional police or community wardens. In response he confirmed that additional investment would be made to ensure the Royal Borough remained a well-maintained community, an additional £100K funding was proposed for fly tipping, an additional £200K would be made available for street cleansing and to better manage the Borough, £200K for the provision of four Environmental Enforcement Officers.
 - He reported that the Council planned to manage concerns over community safety by funding four additional neighbourhood police officers who would be dedicated to the Borough. He stated that this was supported by residents spoken to on the doorstep.
 - Councillor Hilton emphasised that the three main towns of Maidenhead, Windsor & Ascot were critical to the Council's economic growth. He stated that it was essential that a high-quality experience was offered to both residents and visitors and therefore £150K was being invested for a 'face-lift' for those town centres. It was planned to remove street clutter, renew old planters with sustainable planting, clear 'Grot Spots' and improve signage and wayfinding around the towns.
 - He reflected that previous budgets had been constrained by the difficult financial situation caused by Covid but through sound financial management this year it was pleasing to deliver a truly resident's budget.
 - He reported that in the interests of financial prudence £1M would be put into the general reserve.
 - He acknowledged that as many of the Council's services were demand led and the Council was operating within a rapidly changing world which could cause volatility in Council finances. He considered that through the financial competence shown by officers and Cabinet members this had enabled the current administration to manage that volatility.
 - He concluded by thanking all the officers involved but particularly the Director of Resources, Head of Finance and the finance team for their incredible contribution.

Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council seconded the proposals but reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Cannon commented that this was a resident led budget and within his area residents had raised concerns regarding crime and antisocial behaviour. This had been responded to by additional environmental enforcement officers. He supported the proposal for four additional police officers being funded who would remain within the borough tasked jointly by the Council and Thames Valley Police to address residents' concerns. The additional officers would be seen on borough streets from April dealing with matters raised by residents. He advised that to assist the identification of those tasking priorities a Crime and Antisocial Behaviour Summit was being arranged for residents and businesses to work with Thames Valley Police and officers from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. He reflected that the additional £94K for air monitoring demonstrated the Council listening to concerns of residents and the data collected would help the Council make informed decisions. He concluded that his portfolio had been supported and this was a budget that they could all support.

Councillor Johnson commented that he welcomed the funding of frontline police officers as it was a clear response to the needs and feedback received from residents. He noted that RBWM was one of a number of local authorities who had decided to invest in additional police resourcing.

Councillor Rayner commented that she was proud that final budget was delivering such a budget for residents, endorsed the work and direction the administration had taken in supporting Northern Farm and North Court which provided outstanding culture and arts for residents. She hoped to be able to continue that investment for all ages. In addition to comments already made she reflected that having four additional police officers would support the policing for Windsor which as a tourist destination of Windsor town with a thriving night time economy would give people reassurance and help the local economies grow rather than be an additional policing burden. She welcomed the free parking in the Victoria Street car park from 1 April and hoped this would encourage more people to come to Windsor. She was pleased that more money was being spent on street cleaning and flowers which made such a difference to how people saw and experienced the borough's towns. She emphasised that Windsor had been broadcast around the world and was amazing staging for the country. She was proud that the proposals included 7% pay increase over two years for the council's staff who she considered were hard working, passionate people delivering amazing services and changing the organisation through its services, transformation and digital. She reiterated that the collection of air quality monitoring data would support future decision making. She concluded by thanking Councillor Hilton as this was his last budget and the finance officers.

Councillor Bhangra agreed with comments made by his Cabinet colleagues and referred to the proposals as being a residents' budget. He added that within his own portfolio he'd been pleased to see the continuation of weekly food waste and recycling collections and biweekly waste collection. He reported that the Council was setting up a reuse shop in Recycling and Refuse Centre to help cut down waste and was pleased to see the visual environment was being improved with street cleaning. He concluded by thanking the finance officers and Councillor Hilton for putting the budget together, listening to residents and proposing a fully costed balanced budget.

Councillor Coppinger commented that he was always surprised by the amount of money spent on Adult Services, 38.2% of total income, yet acknowledged it was an unknown area by the majority of residents who only became aware of it when affected by its services. He stated that the Council continued to provide amazing services with its partner Optalis across the whole borough and he was proud to be responsible for his portfolio.

Councillor Haseler comments focused on the budget headlines within his portfolio. He noted that funding was being made available for car parking improvements to make the experience more pleasurable including free Sunday parking to continue in Maidenhead and extending residents' car parking discount scheme. He noted that there were investments in highways for a comprehensive resurfacing programme of roads and pavements with replacement of streetlights, street signs and street furniture. He stated that there would be funding for road safety schemes with continued investment in local cycling, walking and infrastructure schemes. He reiterated the addition of four environmental enforcement officers to deliver a zero-tolerance approach towards those crimes. He highlighted funding for proactive tree work to ensure that the borough's trees were maintained and safe for residents. He reiterated the visual improvements in the three town centres. He was really pleased that officers working within his portfolio had pushed for this funding and thanked finance officers for delivering a balanced budget.

Councillor Johnson commented that it was fantastic to be able to finally invest funding in Councillor Haseler's portfolio including planning capacity, highways, parking and broader sustainable transport.

Councillor McWilliams reflected that the administration had repeatedly delivered balanced budgets and surpluses each year, building up the Council's reserves whilst investing in services and keeping council tax low. He noted that near neighbours had seen an increase of 10 and 15% to council tax costs. He reiterated the plans to reduce borrowing and debt levels whilst delivering key services which were important to residents as previously listed. He had been proud of the work officers had done and of the difficult decisions the administration had made to ensure the financial stability of the council whilst maintaining services.

The Chair advised that there were two members of the public who had registered to address Cabinet and he welcomed them to speak.

Andrew Hill addressed the meeting focusing on the top priorities arising from the residents' budget consultation which were parking, climate partnership funding and the environment. He commented that these top priorities were receiving less revenue funding than those lower down in the priorities identified. He suggested that if opposite parties were able to they would switch the budget allocations around. He stated that the budget indicated that the Police and Crime Commissioner had failed to deliver safe streets under his Crime Plan and queried why additional Community Wardens were not being invested in as promised in previous elections. He queried the continued expenditure for the River Thames scheme set out on page 147 of the agenda report. He sought clarification of the medium-term risk set out on page 59 of the agenda relating to Council's partners and contractors. He asked how much had been set aside to manage repairs and maintain the Nicholsons Car park. In relation to the additional air quality monitors he asked why Maidenhead was not having one installed. He highlighted the use of the phrase 'review of savings' stating that this was uncosted. He asked if the Council had budgeted for the skillset the Council needed such as contract managers. As the budget had changed since it was discussed at scrutiny he queried whether opposition members would be given the opportunity to ask questions.

The Chair thanked Andrew Hill for his political speech and questions but was concerned to hear his comments on the proposals for fully warranted officers to deal with crimes. He stated that the budget contained service led savings, the Council had responded and reflected on numerous conversations with residents, businesses and partners. He reflected that the Chief Executives appointment and salary was a cross party basis. He concluded that the Council would have had more money to spend on those priority areas if it had not needed to respond to unnecessary legal challenges.

Paul Hinton addressed the meeting on behalf of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Climate Emergency Coalition. He raised concerns about the proposed savings of £180K achieved by using the carbon offsetting and biodiversity net gain fund or S106 payments rather than the revenue budget and included 'PLA17S' which is £100K saving against the support of the Climate Partnership. The S106 payments are meant to remedy damage made by developments in addition to not instead of projects delivered by the Climate partnership or the Council. He stated that the savings equated to a reduced commitment of £180k to environment and climate change, to the Council's own Environment and Climate Strategy and to its Corporate Plan. The Coalition had asked at scrutiny meetings what had been done to provide additional resources to avoid the need for the savings and did not consider they had received satisfactory answers. The Coalition had been encouraged to see £3.5M in additional funding being reported and had written to Councillor Johnson to ask if the savings could be reversed but had not received a response. He concluded by asking the Cabinet to reject the proposed budget in favour of one where savings were not achieved by using S106 funding but instead by the additional funding received. He stated that this only required 5% of the additional funding and the environment and climate change were supposedly one of the Council's top three priorities.

The Chair thanked Paul Hinton for his speech and for articulating the concerns of the people he was representing. He confirmed that his email had been read and discussed. He acknowledged that Cabinet was having to make some difficult decisions, reflecting fact was created by this council, to the detriment of other, given the other priorities we are comfortable will enable partnership some opportunities and leverage private sector funding and enable us to achieve that

Due to technical issues the meeting was adjourned at 19:44

The meeting recommenced at 19:46

Councillor Johnson, reiterated his initial response to Paul Hinton and thanked him again for his contribution.

Councillor Stimson commented that it was a difficult budget. She thanked Cabinet colleagues for the reduction in her portfolio scope to reflect the magnitude of Climate Action & Sustainability. She noted that the development of the energy efficiency statement had resulted in significant funding. She considered that the Council was working closely with partners to deliver above and beyond existing standards. She reflected that she was being pragmatic about the requirements within the budget to deliver what residents' want and met fundamental statutory responsibilities such as adult social care, schools funding and children's social care. She responded to the comments made by concluding that the Council was doing an extraordinary amount including delivering against the single use action plan, holding suppliers to account and had increased the number of officers working in this area.

Councillor Carroll thanked Councillor Hilton stating that it was an excellent budget in difficult international circumstances and the consequences from the pandemic. He reiterated the principles behind the budget which was putting residents first. He commented that public consultation was not just responses through the formal consultation but all councillors listening to residents, replying to social media and discussions held on the doorstep. He acknowledged those discussions were not captured in the statistics data but stated they were just as valid when looking at themes. He stated that it was important to remind themselves of the challenges that people were going through. He reflected that the balanced budget demonstrated that the administration's financial strategy had been one of sound money and sometimes making tough choices and that this had delivered competency and rigorous focus. He asked the meeting to consider adult social care, improved look at health, preventative activities and transparency. He commented that this was a credit to officers and Councillor Hilton. He stated it was not fair to say that the local police force was failing adding that he worked closely with Matthew Barber, met with range of officers and responded to issues. He commented that within his ward residents wanted officers who had the legal warranted ability to respond to issues. He reported that he had asked the Police and Crime Commissioner what the police were doing to restore national trust and said they were facing the recurrent issues of organised crime, domestic abuse and felt he deserved support for the approach rather than criticism. He stated that lobbying and advocacy had been undertaken to receive additional funding and it would be used to ensure that the Early Hub was restored, Youth Offending Service was restored and have business support staff. He concluded that if £1 was spent in one area then it could not be spent elsewhere and considered the Council was collectively doing the right thing for residents.

Councillor Johnson thanked Councillor Hilton for all his hard work and support over the last three and a half years while he had acted as Leader of the Council. He reflected that they had made progress and made a significant difference to the financial future of the Council. He reiterated the repeated delivery of underspends and setting of balanced budgets with reserves being nearly doubled during his time as Leader and nearly in the position of having optimum levels of reserves. He noted it was the third year in a row when hard working staff would be given a much-needed pay rise. He stated that they had consulted, engaged and listened to residents. He noted that four budget scrutiny meetings had been held over 16 hours of in depth scrutiny with lead officers and elected members being held to account. He commented that the Council was retaining car parks rather than developing flats, were investing in the climate partnership, focused on attracting and retaining business partnerships as acknowledged the growth potential of the borough was significant. He acknowledged that within the residents' survey only 52% of respondents thought the Council offered value for money and he wanted to drive this forward. He considered that the budget made huge commitments to protecting the most vulnerable and the new approach to tackling crime through investment in additional neighbourhood police officers. He noted the investment in the highways infrastructure and road safety, cracking down on environmental crimes and tackling congestion. He recognised the future housing opportunities and deployment of resources to tackle rogue landlords and deliver local housing for local people. Extending the residents parking discount scheme was highlighted now it was financially possible to do so. He was

aiming for the Council to be a vanguard authority for public engagement. He commented on the commitment to tackling climate change and investing heavily for extreme weather events such as flooding. He concluded by stating this was an investment budget of opportunity and ready to take the Council forward for the next 4 years. He thanked everyone that had contributed to the consultation and members of Overview and Scrutiny for their time and considerations at those meetings.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

Appendix 1 – Revenue Budget

That Cabinet considered and recommends that Council approves:

- i) The 2023/24 Net Budget of £108.075m, consisting of:
 - a. The proposed new growth in service budgets of £10.558m as set out in Annex C to Appendix 1;
 - b. The proposed new opportunities and savings of £10.923m as set out in Annex D to Appendix 1;
 - c. The associated contribution from Earmarked Reserves of £0.165m, and the level of contingency as £2.380m as set out in paragraph 5.23
- ii) Council Tax:
 - a. A Council Tax Requirement of £87.222m.
 - b. A Band D charge of £1,223.11 for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead in 2023/24, reflecting an overall increase of 4.99%, based on:
 - i. A 2.99% increase in base Council Tax taking the charge to £1,060.73 for 2023/24;
 - ii. An additional 2% to reflect an increase in the Adult Social Care Precept which is proposed as £162.38;
 - c. The Special Expenses Precept increases by £1.03 (2.98%) to £35.60 for 2023/24 for the unparished areas of Windsor and Maidenhead in accordance with Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as set out in Annex E to Appendix 1;
- iii) Schools Budget:
 - a. The allocation of the £152.201m Dedicated Schools Grant as set out in Annex F to Appendix 1, and delegated authority be given to the Executive Director of People and the S151 officer in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Finance and for Children’s Services, Education, Health, Mental Health and Transformation to amend the total schools’ budget to reflect the actual Dedicated Schools Grant levels once received;
- iv) Delegated authority to the Grants Panel to award community grants (capital and Kidwells Trust) for the 2023/24 annual round and publish the decisions following the Grants Panel.

Appendix 2 – Fees and Charges

That Cabinet considers and recommends that Council approves:

- i) The Fees and Charges for 2023/24 as set out in Annex A to Appendix 2.
- ii) Delegated authority is extended to the Executive Director for People, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Maidenhead, to set the Direct Payments Standard Rate.

Appendix 3 – Capital

That Cabinet considers and recommends that Council approves:

- i) The Capital Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26 as set out in Annex A to Appendix 3 of this

report. A draft was considered by Audit and Governance Committee on 20th October 2022.

- ii) The consolidated Capital Programme for 2022/23 – 2025/26 in Annex B1-3 to Appendix 3 of this report, including previously approved schemes and proposed new schemes as set out in Annexes B4 & B5 to Appendix 3 of this report.
- iii) Capital programme slippage to date from 2022/23 to 2023/24 as detailed in Annex B6 to Appendix 3.

Appendix 4 – Treasury Management

That Cabinet considers and recommends that Council approves:

- i) The Council’s Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 4 of this report, including
 - a. The proposed Lending Counterparty Criteria;
 - b. the continuation of the current Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2023/24. A draft was considered by Audit and Governance Committee on 20th October 2022.
- ii) The Council’s Treasury Management Policies as set out in Annex B to Appendix 4 of the agenda report;
- iii) The Council’s Prudential Indicators as set out in Annex C to Appendix 4 of the agenda report

Appendix 5 – Pay Policy Statement

That Cabinet considers and recommends that Council approves:

- i) The Council’s updated Pay Policy Statement Strategy for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 5 of this report.

Appendix 6 – Proposed Pay Award

That Cabinet considers and recommends that Council approves:

- i) Pay awards of 4% from 1 April 2023, and 3% from 1 April 2024, for all staff paid on RBWM local pay scales.
- ii) An increase in Members’ Allowances of 4% from 1 April 2023, and 3% from 1 April 2024, in line with the employee pay award, as required by Section 17 of the Members’ Allowances Scheme.

Appendix 7 – Feedback from Public Consultation/Overview and Scrutiny Panels

That Cabinet considers and has due regard to the contents of Appendix 7 and recommends that Council also gives it due regard.

Appendix 8 – Equalities Impact Assessments

That Cabinet considers and has due regard to the contents of Appendix 8 and recommends that Council also gives it due regard.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 8.12 pm

CHAIR.....

DATE.....