

Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday, 21st February, 2019.

Present: Cllr Robert Cook (Chair), Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy, Cllr Steve Nelson, Cllr Michael Smith and Cllr Norma Wilburn.

Officers: Neil Schneider (CE), Julie Danks, Margaret Waggott (DCE), Beccy Brown, Jonathan Nertney (HR&L), Garry Cummings (F&BS), Martin Gray (CHS), Reuben Kench (CL&E), Richard McGuckin (ED&D), Jamie McCann (CS), Ann Workman (AH).

Also in attendance: Cllr Carol Clark.

Apologies: None.

CAB Welcome and Evacuation Procedure 136/18

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and the evacuation procedure was noted.

CAB Declarations of Interest 137/18

Each of the Cabinet Members present declared a non-prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 5 - Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy and had a dispensation regarding any disclosable pecuniary interests they might have as Council Tax payers.

Councillor Nigel Cooke declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 5 - Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy as he was a member of Tees Music Alliance.

CAB Council Plan 2019-2022 138/18

Consideration was given to a report on the Council Plan for 2019-22.

The Council Plan set out the vision and key objectives of the Council. It aimed to provide clarity and focus for Councillors, managers, staff, members of the public and partners about the Council's ambitions.

The Council Plan was a rolling 3 year plan that summarised the Council's key objectives. It was reviewed and approved annually by Cabinet and Full Council and Cabinet received six monthly update reports on progress against the key objectives.

The Council Plan described the Council's four policy principles that support decision making:-

- Protect the vulnerable
- Create economic prosperity
- Tackle inequality
- Help people to be healthier

The key objectives in the Council Plan 2019-22 had been rolled forward from the previous version. It was recommended that members review the Council

Plan and the key objectives after the local elections in May 2019 in preparation for a revised Council Plan being approved in early 2020.

Discussion sessions had been arranged for 15 and 19 February 2019 for elected members to discuss the Council Plan and the Medium Term Financial Plan.

A copy of the Council Plan was attached to the report.

The Council continued to face huge challenges with the continuous and sustained reductions to local authority and other public sector budgets. This was very clearly a position and context that the vast majority of people delivering public services believed was not viable going forward.

The Council had adapted to funding reductions of £52million over the last six years and the Council was still confronted with having to find further savings. At the same time demand for services particularly adult social care and children's services continued to rise.

The Council was in as strong a position as it could be. The Council had a strong track record of sound financial management and the Council had been dealing with these problems successfully for many years. Finding additional savings by 2020/21 wouldn't be easy. Further difficult decisions would have to be made.

The scale of the challenge the Council was facing during the period of the Council Plan made it inevitable that there would be further job losses and cuts to services and the harsh reality was these cuts would become increasingly more notable. In making the tough decisions that inevitably face the Council it would continue to use our policy principles to support its decision making:

In spite of all of this the Council remained fiercely proud of what had been achieved over the last year across all of the themes within the Council Plan.

Many of the residents and visitors to the Borough positively commented on how welcoming and inviting the place was, how pleased they were with the changes made to the town centres, housing regeneration schemes and the 'invest to save' street lighting improvements. The year-round programme of events, the majority of which were free, remained hugely popular and successful both in terms of people experiencing them and the additional income they brought in to the Borough.

The Council would continue to do the very best that it could for the children and young people in its care, often in difficult circumstances, and remained resolute on the commitment to this as corporate parents. The Council was challenging and supporting of schools to carry on making improvements and were actively encouraging local businesses to create more apprenticeship opportunities as well as developing them in the Council.

The Council was heartened by the most recent independent Borough-wide residents' survey which indicated that the people of the Borough were satisfied with and trust the Council, believe that it acted on resident's concerns and that it provided value for money.

With the strong political and executive leadership, committed and resourceful employees, solid partnerships and robust financial and corporate governance the Council firmly believed it was better placed than many to rise and respond to both the challenges and the opportunities.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Council Plan be endorsed.
2. The proposal for members to review the Council Plan and the key objectives after the local elections in May 2019 in preparation for a revised Council Plan being approved in early 2020 be endorsed.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

- 3. The Council Plan be approved.**

**CAB
139/18 Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy**

Consideration was given to a report on the Medium Term Financial Plan Update and Strategy.

This was the final report in setting the Council's 2019/20 Budget and Council Tax. The report also outlined the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) position to 2023.

The MTFP report for 2019/20 to 2022/23 was attached and contained the following detail:

- Background and Context
- National Changes
- Financial Position at 31 December 2018
- 2019/20 Council Tax levels
- Medium Term Financial Plan 2019-23
- Capital Programme
- Business Rate Relief Scheme
- Pay Policy and Members Allowances
- Precept Levels
- Capital Strategy
- Treasury Management Strategy
- Investment Strategy

Attached to the report as appendices were the following:

- Capital Programme December 2018
- Capital Programme 2012-2020
- Pay Policy Statement
- Council Tax Statutory Requirements
- Capital Strategy
- Treasury Management Strategy
- Investment Strategy

The report outlined the Council Tax proposals and budget for 2019/20 and the indicative MTFP for the next three years.

The report updated the position from that reported to Cabinet and Council in February and March 2018 and in particular reflected the implications arising from the Autumn Budget 2018 and the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2019/20.

The Provisional and Final Financial Settlements had provided funding allocations for 2019/20 only, this being the final year of the four year settlement agreed with MHCLG. They confirmed further funding reductions which would make the difficult financial position faced by the Council even more challenging. The report also provided an update on future changes to Local Government Finance. These included the move to retention of a greater proportion of business rates by Local Authorities and the introduction of changes to the funding formulae. These were potentially major changes which were likely to have an impact on future council funding. This meant that the position for 2020/21 onwards, outlined in the report, needed to be treated with some caution.

The Council had a strong track record of prudent financial management and delivering savings early. This had enabled the use of reserves to support a planned and managed approach to addressing the financial challenges and this would continue.

RECOMMENDED to Council:-

COUNCIL DECISIONS

1. That in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003, Members note that the Section 151 Officer confirms that the following recommendations:

- a. represent a robust budget which has been prepared in line with best practice;**
- b. provide adequate working balances;**
- c. that the controlled reserves and provisions are adequate for their purpose.**

General Fund Budget

2. A 2019/20 Council Tax requirement for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council of £89,143,441 be approved.

3. A 2019/20 Council Tax requirement for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council inclusive of Parish Precepts (£870,287) of £90,013,728 be approved.

4. The 2019/20 budget and indicative 2019/23 MTFP as outlined in paragraphs 37-39 be approved.

5. Prudential Borrowing of £2.5m to fund the additional costs associated with the Globe Theatre, which has previously been agreed in

principle by Cabinet, be approved.

Business Rate Relief System

6. The changes introduced in the Spring and Autumn Budgets of 2017 and 2018 be noted.

Taxation

SBC

7. The Council Tax for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council prior to Parish, Fire and Police Precepts be increased by 2.9% i.e. to £1,588.65 at Band D (£1,059.10 at Band A) be approved.

Fire, Police & Parish

8. The Police precept of £14,058,476 which equates to a Council Tax of £250.54 at Band D (£167.03 at Band A) be noted.

9. The Fire precept of £4,340,878 which equates to a Council Tax of £77.36 at Band D (£51.57 at Band A) be noted.

10. The Parish precepts as set out in paragraph 63 of the budget report be noted.

Capital

11. The Capital Programme attached at Appendix A & B be approved.

Organisational and HR

12. The Pay Policy Statement attached at Appendix C to the report be approved.

Members Allowances

13. Members allowances be frozen for 2019/20. This will mean that these allowances have been frozen since 2013/14.

Council Tax - Statutory Requirements

14. The statutory requirements for Council Tax as shown in Appendix D be approved.

15. The current Local Council Tax Support Scheme be retained for the financial year 2019/20 (see paragraph 66 of the report)

Capital Strategy

16. The Capital Strategy as set out at Appendix E to the report be approved.

Treasury Management/Prudential Code

17. The Treasury Management Strategy as set out in Appendix F to the report be approved.

Investment Strategy

18. The Investment Strategy as set out at Appendix G to the report be approved.

CABINET DECISIONS

RESOLVED that:-

19. The Officer Appointments to outside bodies and governing bodies at Appendix C(2) be approved and noted.