



RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Tuesday, 17th November, 2015 at 4.30 pm
at the Council Offices, Farnborough

Councillor P.J. Moyle
Councillor K.H. Muschamp, Deputy Leader and Business, Safety and
Regulation Portfolio Holder

Councillor Hughes, Health and Housing Portfolio
Councillor Sue Carter
Councillor P.G. Taylor, Corporate Services Portfolio Holder
Councillor R.L.G. Dibbs
Councillor A. Jackman

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of .

The Cabinet considered the following matters at the above-mentioned meeting. All executive decisions of the Cabinet shall become effective, subject to the call-in procedure, from **1st December, 2015**.

59. **MINUTES –**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 20th October, 2015 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

60. **FINANCIAL MATTERS –**
(Leader of the Council)

(1) **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015/16 – 2018/19 –**

The Cabinet considered the Head of Financial Services' Report No. FIN1518, which set out a review of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and sought endorsement of an updated Strategy. It was appropriate to carry out the review at this time as the Council was about to move into its next budget setting cycle.

The Cabinet was advised that the review of the Strategy had been carried out in light of the expected continuation of the challenging financial circumstances that the Council had experienced for a number of years. Members were informed that the existing Strategy had served the Council well in supporting financial planning over the medium term. It had been integral to the Corporate Plan and had supported the 8-Point Plan for the achievement of sustainability.

The Report set out the keys risks and considerations for future budget setting under the following headings:

- Central Government funding
- Council Tax
- Austerity
- Interest rates
- Level of reserves
- Devolution
- Other key risks
- Sustainability

The Cabinet was informed that, to ensure that a revised Strategy would be relevant to current decision making, it was necessary to consider this in the context of the Medium Term Financial Forecast. The Revenue Forecast indicated the anticipated funding gap for each of the years in the medium term. Based on a set of assumptions about cost pressures and funding levels, and set these against cost reductions and income generation proposed in the 8-Point Plan. Some sensitivity analysis was provided against key assumptions, depicting their effect on the funding gap and on reserves. The Capital Forecast included the draft annual capital programme alongside estimates of spending on invest to save schemes to support the 8-Point Plan and strategic capital plans, such as spending on regeneration. The Council would need to consider moving to borrowing as its internal capital resources were utilised.

Following the review, some changes were suggested to the financial strategy to address current priorities and risks, such as the provision for increasing the levels of reserves held, in line with recommendations made by the Council's auditors and changes to the use of revenue contributions to capital outlay. Members were assured that the Strategy would put the Council in a good position from which to face the significant financial challenges anticipated over the medium term.

During discussion, Members expressed their satisfaction with the Council's financial position and approach set out in the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that:

- (i) the principal issues identified in the Head of Financial Services' Report No. FIN1518 and in the summary of risks in Appendix B of the Report be noted; and
- (ii) the Council be recommended to approve the Financial Strategy, as set out in Appendix A of the Report.

(2) Revenue Budget Monitoring and Forecasting 2015/16 – Position at October, 2015 –

The Cabinet considered the Head of Financial Services' Report No. FIN1520, which set out the anticipated financial position for 2015/16, based on the monitoring exercise carried out during October 2015. The Report explained that, in the second quarter monitoring exercise, service managers had identified a net overspend of approximately £28,000 against their non-salary budgets. This figure was likely to be more than offset by a number of favourable variances that had been identified, including additional savings in relation to staff turnover and additional interest receipts. Members were reminded that, in light of the variances involved in the Business Rates Retention Scheme, the sum of £1.8 million had been transferred to the Stability and Resilience Reserve, to replenish the amount utilised in the previous year.

The Report identified a number of financial risks facing the Council which included not achieving the required savings target, projects not delivering efficiency savings and the deterioration of income streams due to the economic climate. While some of the savings required for 2015/16 had been identified, Members were informed that the net cost of the Council's services would need to be reduced to achieve financial sustainability and, therefore, further work would be carried out under the 8-Point Plan in this respect.

Members considered the Report and were content with the present position and proposed actions.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the Head of Financial Services' Report No. FIN1520 be noted.

(3) Capital Programme Monitoring 2015/16 – Position at October, 2015 –

The Cabinet received the Head of Financial Services' Report No. FIN1521, which provided the latest forecast regarding the Council's Capital Programme for 2015/16. The Report advised that the Programme, including slippages and variations, totalled just over £13.5 million. The recent monitoring exercise had identified a number of areas of slippage, including infrastructure works between Wellesley and Aldershot town centre as part of the Activation Aldershot initiative, the replacement of car park pay and display machines and the refurbishment of the playgrounds at Manor Park and the Municipal Gardens. It was noted that the main underspend in the Programme was due to the in-house management of Aldershot town centre improvements. A capital bid would be put together for the 2016/17

Programme to progress phase six of the scheme, relating to works around Aldershot Station.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the Head of Financial Services' Report No FIN1521, be noted.

61. **CORPORATE STRATEGY AND CORPORATE PLAN 2015/16 - QUARTER 2 MONITORING –**
(Leader of the Council)

The Cabinet received the Directors' Management Board's Report No. DMB1505, which gave an update on performance management monitoring information against the Corporate Plan for the second quarter of the 2015/16 financial year.

The Chief Executive gave Members an update on strategic and performance management data on many areas, including indices of multiple deprivation, crime, economic data and homelessness. The Report also set out key initiatives and service measures under the themes of:

- People and communities
- Prosperity
- Place
- Leadership
- Good value services

It was noted that 89.6% of the indicators were on target, 10.4% were in question as to whether they would achieve the action or indicator and there were none unable to achieve elements of the target. The Chief Executive gave a summary of key projects that were ongoing and responded to Members' questions. In particular, Members discussed issues around educational attainment.

The Cabinet NOTED the Directors' Management Board Report No. DMB1505 and the performance made against the Corporate Plan in the second quarter of the 2015/16 municipal year.

62. **FARNBOROUGH AIRPORT COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL FUND –**
(Environment and Service Delivery)

The Cabinet considered the Head of Community and Environmental Services' Report No. COMM1519, which sought approval to award a grant from the Farnborough Airport Community Environmental Fund, which had been set up to assist local projects.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Service Delivery had considered the application by the 1st Crookham Scouts for an award of £2,450 towards the cost of

the building and equipping of a dedicated archery range at its headquarters in Fleet and had recommended that this should be approved.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that a grant of £2,450 be awarded from the Farnborough Airport Community Environmental Fund to the 1st Crookham Scouts.

63. **LOCAL AUTHORITY DATA TRANSPARENCY CODE AND ESTATES WORK –**
(Corporate Services)

The Cabinet considered the Solicitor to the Council's Report No. LEG1520, which set out the Council's progress in meeting its requirements under the transparency code on land ownership records. It also sought resources to continue both this and other estates work.

Members were reminded that the Transparency Code made it mandatory for the Council to publish, on its website, all of its land and property assets in the Borough. The Cabinet had, in 2014, agreed for a legal executive to be employed for a temporary fixed period of one year in order to progress this work and, with 129 of a total of 844 cases having been processed so far, it was now requested that this post should be extended by another year in order to continue with this work. It was difficult to estimate at this time how long it might take to complete this task, as some cases were relatively straightforward and quick to process, whilst others were larger and more complex. To carry out this work, additional support had been required from within the estates team and this had been provided by employing a graduate surveyor, through an agency, for the previous three months. This post holder had also supported other important estates work which had freed up resources within the estates team to carry out other important work, such as progressing the acquisition of a new depot and SANG sites. It was now proposed that this graduate surveyor should be employed directly by the Council for a fixed period of one year, during which time the longer term needs of the team would be determined through the asset management work being carried out with Eastleigh Borough Council. The financial implications of these proposals were set out in the Report.

The Cabinet was supportive of the approach being proposed.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) a legal executive be employed for a further period of twelve months, from 1st January, 2016, at a cost of £43,000 plus the cost of increased National Insurance or pay awards;
- (ii) the sum of £2,000, to meet land registry fees in respect of the first registration applications, be approved;
- (iii) a graduate surveyor be employed for a period of twelve months at a cost of £29,642.25; and
- (iv) the above costs be met from the Service Improvement Fund.

64. **PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STAFFING - TARGETED PROPERTY SURVEY –**

(Corporate Services)

The Cabinet considered the Head of Environmental Health and Housing's Report No. EHH1512, which set out a proposal to appoint a full time officer, for a period of twelve months, to carry out a targeted survey of specific areas of private rented accommodation in the Borough.

Members heard that the purpose of the survey was to ascertain the extent of poor housing conditions, to identify houses in multiple occupation and to identify cases of overcrowding. It was reported that the Private Sector Housing Team had experienced an increase in the number of requests for assistance from residents concerned about overcrowding, safety and disrepair. Government guidance had recommended, amongst many measures, that local authorities should carry out door-to-door surveys of private rented accommodation, as part of a pro-active approach for dealing with such problems. With work levels within the existing team already high, it was felt that this could only be carried out by employing an additional resource. It was, therefore, proposed that a suitably qualified person should be recruited for a fixed term of twelve months in order to carry out this survey and any ensuing enforcement work.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the recruitment of a full time qualified person, on the terms set out in the Head of Environmental Health and Housing's Report No. EHH1512, be approved.

65. **PLANNING POLICY AND CONSERVATION TEAM RESOURCES –**
(Corporate Services)

The Cabinet considered the Head of Planning's Report No. PLN1553, which set out a proposal to alter the staffing structure within the Planning Policy Section of the Planning Policy and Conservation Team.

Members heard how the team was extremely busy at present, especially in respect of the ongoing production of a revised Rushmoor Local Plan. There had been some recent changes to staffing within the team, including the loss of some capacity in the Planning Policy and Conservation Manager post, following the resignation of one half of the job share arrangement. These changes had left the team unable to keep up with its core and priority work. A review had been carried out to establish what staffing structure would best deliver the team's priorities and a number of proposed changes were set out in the Report. This involved the deletion of some posts and the creation of others, along with other proposed changes. It was felt that this review was necessary and would enable the team to cover work requirements into the future. It was noted that the proposal did result in additional costs over the first two years but, after this, would be cost neutral.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the proposed changes to staffing within the Planning Policy and Conservation Team, as set out in the Head of Planning's Report No. PLN1553, be approved.

66. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC –**

RESOLVED: That, taking into account the public interest test, the public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the under mentioned items to avoid the disclosure of exempt information within the paragraph of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 indicated against the items:

Minute Nos.	Schedule 12A Para. Nos.	Categories
67 and 68	3	Information relating to financial or business affairs

THE FOLLOWING ITEM WAS CONSIDERED IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC

67. **CONTRACTS TEAM - STAFFING STRUCTURE –**
(Corporate Services)

The Cabinet considered the Head of Community and Environmental Services' Exempt Report No. COMM1521, which set out a proposal to continue with an additional resource and to make other staffing changes within the Contracts Team. This was required to ensure there would be sufficient resources to support the work of the team, including the procurement of the refuse, street cleansing and grounds maintenance contracts and the securing of a new depot.

Members were reminded that, in 2014, the Cabinet had agreed to some temporary changes to staffing within the Contracts Team, to facilitate the increase in work due to preparations for the renewal of the contracts. It had been agreed at that time that the new arrangements would be trialled for one year and then reviewed. It was confirmed that these arrangements had worked well and now, in light of a request from a team member for flexible retirement, it was proposed that the structure should be changed again to provide the appropriate level of resources. It was further proposed that, having covered some contracts work using secondments for each of the previous three years, that this additional resource should be made permanent, to provide some certainty for employees. The Cabinet was informed that the staffing structure would be reviewed again once the new contract was in place and bedded in.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) a supplementary estimate for £23,000 in respect of changes to staffing within the Contracts Team, as set out in the Head of Community and Environmental Services' Exempt Report No. COMM1521, be approved; and
- (ii) the structure of the Contracts Team be reviewed again towards the end of 2017.

68. **SALE OF SMALL AREAS OF AMENITY LAND –**
(Corporate Services)

The Cabinet considered the Solicitor to the Council's Exempt Report No. LEG1519, which sought approval for the principle of selling small areas of amenity land which

had been retained by the Council at the time of the voluntary transfer of its housing stock over twenty years ago.

It was explained that the Estates Team within Legal Services had regularly received requests to dispose of small pieces of Council owned amenity land situated in large housing estates within the Borough. To date, around 30 requests had been received and around half of these were considered suitable for transfer to private ownership in planning terms, though planning permission would still need to be formally sought for change of use. It was now proposed to consider the transfer of these suitable plots and, at the same time, set up a procedure so that future requests could be dealt with in an efficient and timely manner. A proposed process was set out in the Report and this also set out the risks of any such scheme. Members were assured that, in the case of an owner wanting to build on the newly acquired land, the Council would need to give consent for this and would, at this time, receive the appropriate overage for any increase in value over garden land.

The Cabinet expressed support for the principle of selling small areas of amenity land in these circumstances.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the Solicitor to the Council be authorised to agree the sale of any area of amenity land and take all necessary steps to complete the transaction, subject to planning permission having been granted for the change of use of the land to gardening land or for building extensions, upon the following basis:
 - payment of the planning application fee;
 - payment of £500 surveyor's costs;
 - payment of £500 legal costs;
 - the purchase price for garden land to be £6 per square foot based on comparable evidence within Rushmoor Borough Council;
 - the purchase price for built extension land to be approximately £30 per square foot, depending on location, or such other figure that the Estate Team advises represents best value; and
- (ii) the above costs and items be reviewed in subsequent years, indexing linking them to cover increasing costs.

The Meeting closed at 5.45 pm.

D.E. CLIFFORD
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
