

# CABINET

Meeting held on Tuesday, 11th February, 2025 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

## **Voting Members**

Cllr Gareth Williams, Leader of the Council

Cllr Keith Dibble, Housing & Planning Portfolio Holder

Cllr Christine Guinness, Pride in Place / Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder

Cllr Julie Hall, Economy, Skills & Regeneration Portfolio Holder

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllrs Jules Crossley, Sophie Porter and Becky Williams.

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 **24th February, 2025**.

### 58. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –**

Having regard to the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors, no declarations of interest were made.

### 59. **MINUTES –**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 14th January, 2024 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

### 60. **GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2025-26 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025-26 TO 2028-29 –**

(Cllr Gareth Williams, Leader of the Council)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN2505, which set out the draft General Fund Budget for 2025/26 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) up to 2028/29.

The Cabinet was reminded that the Medium Term Financial Strategy set out the key work streams for the Council to focus on over the medium term. These aimed, collectively, to address the projected significant shortfall in the General Fund budget. Members were informed that a wide range of information was presented in the report and accompanying appendices. It was confirmed that the Council was in a position to present a balanced budget for 2025/26 with the use of reserves. It was reported that there was a £16.152 million deficit of the MTFS terms and that a Financial Recovery Plan was in place to address the challenge achieving this. The budget would continue to require the implementation of cost reductions, efficiency savings and capital receipts to reduce capital costs whilst drawing down reserves. The Cabinet discussed the additional funding requests in respect of Citizens Advice and Rushmoor Voluntary Services that had been presented through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was decided that the funding for these organisations would be

discussed and reviewed through the planned service review process later in the year.

The Capital Programme for the period 2024/25 to 2027/28 was set out at Appendix 6 of the report. It was explained that the purpose of the Capital Programme was to provide the framework for the Council's capital expenditure and financing plans to ensure that they were affordable, prudent and sustainable over the longer term. The main areas where the Council would be facing increased levels of risk and uncertainty over the medium term were set out in Section 4 of the report. In discussing the details of the report, Members expressed their gratitude for the hard work of the finance team.

## **The Cabinet**

- (i) **RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL** that approval be given to:
  - (a) the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the strategy to resolve the Medium Term Financial Strategy deficit, as set out in Report No. FIN2505;
  - (b) the General Fund Revenue Budget Estimates Summary 2025/26, as set out in Appendix 1 of the Report;
  - (c) the Council Tax requirement of £8,008,377 for this Council;
  - (d) the Council Tax level for Rushmoor Borough Council's purposes of £239.70 for a Band D property in 2025/26;
  - (e) the Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix 6 of the Report;
  - (f) the Strategy for the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts, as set out in paragraph 3.29 of the Report;
  - (g) the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funding allocations, as set out in Appendix 7 of the Report; and
- (ii) **RESOLVED** that:
  - (a) the requested earmarked reserves and delegations, as set out in paragraph 3.12 onwards of Report No. FIN2505; and
  - (b) the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder, be authorised to make final decisions on specific UKSPF project allocations.

## **61. COUNCIL PLAN, PERFORMANCE AND RISK REGISTER QUARTERLY UPDATE OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2024 –** (Cllr Jules Crossley, Policy, Performance and Sustainability Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet received Report No. ACE2503, which set out the performance monitoring information for the Council Plan and key service measures for the third

quarter of 2024/25. Members were informed that key projects and activities from the Council Plan and key service indicators and measures used by the Council to monitor how the Council runs were included in the Report. Members were informed that the monitoring document had been updated and refreshed prior to quarter two, to give a better picture of performance across the Council. The Cabinet heard that the Council's Corporate Risk Register tried to identify factors that could impact on the future delivery of the Council's key priorities. A summary of those risks that had become issues, new risks and those risks that had seen a significant change in the risk gap was provided in the report for discussion.

In discussing the Report, Members were satisfied that the amended format of the document had helped Portfolio Holders to better track performance within their areas of responsibility.

**The Cabinet NOTED** the progress made towards delivering the Council Plan and Council services and the changes highlighted in the Council's Corporate Risk Register, as set out in Report No. ACE2503.

**62. ANNUAL PEOPLE REPORT AND OTHER HUMAN RESOURCE MATTERS –**  
(Cllr Becky Williams, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. PEO2502, which set out a number of updates in relation to the Council's workforce.

Members were informed that the report contained updates on the implementation of elements of the Council's People Strategy, which had been adopted in 2021, and provided key data on the Council's workforce for 2024. The report also provided the latest Pay Policy Statement and Gender Pay Gap and Ethnicity Pay Gap calculations, which would be considered by the Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee and then the Council.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED** that

- (i) the Annual People Report, as set out in Report No. PEO2502, be noted; and
- (ii) the Pay Policy Statement, Gender Pay Gap and Ethnicity Pay Gap report to the Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee, as set out in Appendix B of the Report, be noted.

**63. TREE RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY AND TREE MAINTENANCE POLICY –**  
(Cllr Christine Guinness, Pride in Place / Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. OS2502, which set out a new Tree Risk Management Policy and a new Tree Management Policy for the Council.

Members were informed that the new policies would form the overall management approach in relation to Council owned trees. The policies also set out how trees would be surveyed and how work would be prioritised in relation to the safety of persons and property.

In discussing this, Members expressed their support for the introduction of this policy as vital in helping to maintain the green and leafy character of the Borough.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED** that the adoption of the Tree Risk Management Policy and the Tree Management Policy, as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of Report No. OS2502, be approved.

64. **RUSHMOOR LOCAL PLAN - LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME FEBRUARY 2025 –**  
(Cllr Keith Dibble, Housing and Planning Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. PG2507, which set out a Local Development Scheme in relation to the Council's Local Plan.

Members were informed that the Government had requested an up-to-date timetable for the preparation of a Local Plan. It was reported that this would take the form of an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) which would provide an indicative timetable for the preparation of a new Local Plan for the Borough. In considering this, Members discussed matters around the expected level of housing provision and the importance of discussing these matters with our neighbouring authorities.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED** that the publication and submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government of an updated Local Development Scheme for the new Local Plan, as set out in Report No. PG2507, be approved.

65. **FARNBOROUGH LEISURE CENTRE - NEXT STEPS –**  
(Cllr Sophie Porter, Healthy Communities and Active Lives Portfolio Holder / Christine Guinness, Pride in Place / Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. REG2501, which set out the next steps in relation to the provision of a new leisure centre for Farnborough.

The Cabinet was reminded that, in January 2023, the Council had been awarded £20 million of Levelling Up Funding to support the delivery of a Leisure and Cultural Hub in Farnborough. Since that time, a review of the project had shown that estimated costs had increased significantly and it had become clear that a project of that type was no longer affordable for the Council. The project team had engaged with a team of specialist consultants provided by the Government to look at how the project could be adjusted to achieve the most important outcomes for local people whilst being affordable for the Council. The Report set out a revised proposal that would deliver a leisure centre in Farnborough that was both within the time parameters of the Levelling Up funding and affordable for the Council, given its wider financial pressures.

The Cabinet was supportive of the proposed approach and felt that this would deliver an important facility for the Borough.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED** that

- (i) the revised approach to providing a leisure centre in Farnborough town centre, as set out in Report No. REG2501, be approved;

- (ii) the proposed facilities mix for the leisure centre, as set out in the Report, be approved;
- (iii) the development procurement approach, to enable the delivery of the project within the Levelling Up Fund timelines, be approved;
- (iv) the commissioning of design work to the end of RIBA Stage 3, planning submission and associated costs of up to £1.35 million be funded by the Levelling Up Fund;
- (v) the use of Levelling Up Fund Capacity Funding Grant (£40,000), towards legal and other project related costs that cannot be drawn down from the Levelling Up Fund, be approved;
- (vi) the overall operator procurement and appointment approach, as set out in the Report, be approved, along with the commencement of the process;
- (vii) the Executive Head of Operations, in consultation with the Healthy Communities & Active Lives Portfolio Holder, be authorised to amend the procurement documentation as required throughout the process, subject to consultation with the Executive Head of Finance on any financial implications;
- (viii) the further extension to the existing agreement with Places Leisure to operate the Aldershot Pools and Lido on the same terms until 31st March, 2027 be approved;
- (ix) it be noted that a detailed viable business case, based on the outcomes of RIBA 3 and the initial stages of the operator procurement, including an appropriate funding strategy supported by robust independent due diligence, would be produced before a decision to move to RIBA Stage 4 of the project was considered by the Cabinet;
- (x) it be noted that, if proceeding beyond RIBA Stage 4, the Council would be accepting the financial risks associated with the funding strategy, including the outcomes of the operator procurement and the risks fully identified, evaluated and scenario tested in the business case; and
- (xi) it be noted that, to progress beyond RIBA Stage 4, the Council would firstly need to resolve its current Medium Term Financial Strategy deficit and, to a high degree of certainty, achieve financial sustainability.

**66. SERCO CONTRACT EXTENSION –**

(Cllr Christine Guinness, Pride in Place / Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. OS2503, which set out options in relation to the ending of the primary period of the Council's contract with Serco.

The Cabinet was reminded that the current contract in respect of waste collections, street cleaning and grounds maintenance had commenced on 31st July, 2017 and was due to expire on 30th July, 2027. It was reported, however, that the contract

allowed for an extension period of up to a further ten years. In light of the contractor's consistent performance and the risks associated with alternative options, it was proposed that the Council should enter into negotiations with Serco regarding a possible extension. Members considered that this would be the best option for the Council and expressed satisfaction with the current performance of the contractor.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED** that

- (i) the proposed approach for the Council to enter into formal contract extension negotiations with Serco, as set out in Report No. OS2503, be approved; and
- (ii) the establishment of a working group to oversee the extension process be approved.

The Meeting closed at 7.57 pm.

CLLR GARETH WILLIAMS, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

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