

# CABINET

Meeting held on Tuesday, 5th February, 2019 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 6.30 pm.

## **Voting Members**

Cllr D.E. Clifford, Leader of the Council  
Cllr K.H. Muschamp, Deputy Leader of the Council

Cllr Barbara Hurst, Planning and Economy Portfolio Holder  
Cllr G.B. Lyon, Corporate and Democratic Services Portfolio Holder  
Cllr M.L. Sheehan, Operational Services Portfolio Holder  
Cllr P.G. Taylor, Customer Experience and Improvement Portfolio Holder  
Cllr M.J. Tennant, Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder

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 **18th February, 2019**.

## **74. MINUTES –**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 8th January, 2019 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

## **75. REVENUE BUDGET, CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND COUNCIL TAX LEVEL –** (Cllr Gareth Lyon, Corporate and Democratic Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN1909, which made recommendations on the budget, Council Tax requirement and proposals for budget savings for 2019/20.

The Cabinet was reminded that, at its meeting on 16th October, 2018, the budget framework set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019-22 had been approved. The Strategy provided a risk-based General Fund balance of around £2 million, with a minimum expected level for total working balances of 5% of gross expenditure. The Cabinet was advised that the Report had been prepared on the basis that there would be no change to the provisional local government finance settlement figure. It was proposed that any changes which materially altered the figures contained in the budget summary, particularly in respect of the local government finance settlement figure or the business rates estimates, would be made by the Council's Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Corporate and Democratic Services Portfolio Holder, prior to consideration of the budget by the Council on 21st February, 2019.

The General Fund Revenue Budget would enable the Council, in broad terms, to maintain current service delivery, whilst identifying reductions in the level of net expenditure of £3.931 million to be delivered during 2019/20. The General Fund summary showed that the revenue balances were expected to be maintained at £2 million by the end of 2019/20. This was at the top end of the approved range of balances of £1 million - £2 million and was deemed to be acceptable given the levels of risks and uncertainty that had been identified. The General Fund Revenue Budget

assumed a 2.99% increase in a Band D charge for Council Tax, which fell within the permissible level of increase before triggering a local referendum. The Cabinet was advised that the Business Rate Retention Scheme continued to represent a volatile income stream and, for this reason, it was necessary to maintain sufficient reserves to meet any unforeseen shocks to the system.

The Capital Programme of £70.231 million in 2019/20 was set out in Appendix 4 of the Report. Implementation of the core Programme in 2019/20 would require the use of £58.958 million of the Council's resources, largely through borrowing, together with £11.272 million use of grants and contributions, including the Better Care Fund, and an element of developers' Section 106 contributions. The main areas where the Council would be facing increased levels of risk and uncertainty over the medium term were set out in Section 9 of the Report. Members were informed that the most significant risks were the move to a 75% business rates retention model and the potential for the redistribution of funding under the Fairer Funding Review, which would reallocate resources across local authorities based on an assessment of relative needs.

Under Section 25 of the Local Government Act, 2003, the Executive Head of Finance, being the Council's Chief Financial Officer, was required to report to the Council on the robustness of the estimates contained in the budget and the adequacy of the financial reserves maintained by the Council. The Council had to have regard to this report when making its decisions on the budget. The Chief Financial Officer was satisfied that the budget was robust and that it was supported by adequate reserves.

### **The Cabinet**

- (i) **RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL** that approval be given to:
  - (a) the General Fund Revenue Budget Summary, as set out in Appendix 1 of Report No. FIN1909;
  - (b) the detailed General Fund Revenue Budget, as set out in Appendix 2 of the Report;
  - (c) the additional items for inclusion in the budget, as set out in Appendix 3 of the Report;
  - (d) the Council Tax requirement of £6,409,171 for this Council;
  - (e) the Council Tax level for Rushmoor Borough Council's purposes of £204.42 for a Band D property in 2019/20;
  - (f) the Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix 4 of the Report;
  - (g) the Strategy for the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts, as set out in Appendix 5 of the Report;
  - (h) the Executive Head of Finance's Report under Section 25 of the Local Government Act, 2003, as set out in Section 10 of the Report;

- (i) the additional transfers to earmarked reserves in 2019/20 and the holding of reserves, as set out in the Report; and
- (ii) **RESOLVED** that authority be delegated to the Council's Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Corporate and Democratic Services Portfolio Holder, to make any necessary changes to the General Fund Summary arising from the final confirmation of the Local Government Finance Settlement and the Business Rates Retention Scheme estimates.

76. **COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2019/20 –**  
(Cllr Gareth Lyon, Corporate and Democratic Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. ED1902, which set out the outcome of the recent public consultation exercise and the considerations and recommendations of the Council's Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group in respect of potential changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme. The Chairman welcomed Cllr Mrs. D.B. Bedford, who was the Chairman of the Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group, and was attending to report on the Group's recommendations.

Members were informed that a public consultation exercise had run from 12th December, 2018 to 16th January, 2019 on potential changes to the Scheme. A total of 392 responses had been received and a detailed consultation report was set out in Appendix 1 to the Report.

The Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group had met on 21st January, 2019 to consider the consultation responses. The majority of the Group had supported recommending to increase the minimum amount of Council Tax that working age people would pay from 12% (88% discount) to 15% (85% discount) for 2019/20. To mitigate any unforeseen hardship that the increase might cause, the Group further recommended that the Hardship Fund should be increased by £2,000 per annum from the 2019/20 financial year onwards.

In considering the proposals, the Cabinet made reference to a representation that had been received from two Members. This had suggested that the Cabinet should consider retaining the minimum contribution at 12% in 2019/20. Additionally, it was suggested that the Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group should be asked to review and, if appropriate, recommend reforms to the eligibility criteria for Council Tax support, to ensure that this would provide help to those who most needed it. In discussion, broad support was expressed for this approach.

**The Cabinet**

- (i) **RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL** that the current 12% minimum contribution (88% discount) for those of working age be retained for 2019/20; and
- (ii) **RESOLVED** that the Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group be requested to review and, if appropriate, recommend reforms to the eligibility criteria for the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme.

77. **ANNUAL CAPITAL STRATEGY 2019/20 –**  
(Cllr Gareth Lyon, Corporate and Democratic Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN1906, which set out the Council's Annual Capital Strategy 2019/20, which included the Prudential Indicators for Capital Finance in 2019/20. Members were informed that this was the first time that a Capital Strategy had been produced, following the revision of codes of practice and guidance, as set out in paragraph 1.3 of the Report.

The purpose of the Capital Strategy was to give an overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity would contribute to the provision of local public services, along with an overview of how associated risk would be managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. The proposed Capital Strategy was set out in Appendix A of the Report.

**The Cabinet RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL** that approval be given to the Capital Strategy 2019/20 and Prudential Indicators, as set out in Report No. FIN1906.

78. **ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ANNUAL NON-TREASURY INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2019/20 –**  
(Cllr Gareth Lyon, Corporate and Democratic Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN1905, which set out an update to the Treasury Management Strategy, a new Non-Treasury Investment Strategy (Investment Strategy) for 2019/20 and the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision Statement. Members were reminded that the purpose of the treasury management operation was to ensure that the Council's cash flow was adequately planned, so that sufficient cash was available when needed but also that any surplus funds were invested in counterparties or instruments, in line with the Council's low risk approach. The second main function of the treasury management service was the funding of the Council's capital plans.

**The Cabinet RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL** that approval be given to:

- (i) the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Borrowing Strategy, as set out in Appendix A of Report No. FIN1905;
- (ii) the Annual Non-Treasury Investment Strategy, as set out in Appendix B of the Report; and
- (iii) the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, as set out in Appendix C of the Report.

79. **BUSINESS RATES - RETAIL DISCOUNT POLICY –**  
(Cllr Gareth Lyon, Corporate and Democratic Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN1908, which set out a proposed new Business Rates Retail Discount Policy, which would enable the Council to award a retail discount from business rates, with effect from 1st April, 2019.

Members were informed that this retail discount had been introduced by the Government in response to the significant challenges faced by retailers in town centres in light of changing consumer behaviour. The new discount scheme would apply to retail properties with a rateable value of less than £51,000. Eligible businesses would receive a discount of one third of the annual business rates bill for the financial years 2019/20 and 2020/21.

The Cabinet expressed support for this initiative, which, it was considered, would provide a boost for smaller businesses locally.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED** that

- (i) the adoption of the local Retail Discount Policy, as set out in Annex 1 of Report No. FIN1908, be approved; and
- (ii) the Executive Head of Finance, in consultation with the Corporate and Democratic Services Portfolio Holder, be authorised to award the discount and resolve disputes in relation to eligibility.

80. **COUNCIL TAX EMPTY PROPERTY PREMIUM CHARGE 2019/20 AND AMENDMENT TO COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS –**  
(Cllr Gareth Lyon, Corporate and Democratic Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN1907, which set out a proposal to increase the Council's Council Tax empty property premium charge in line with new legislation and sought an amendment to the level of discount applied in respect of properties that were empty and unfurnished and undergoing major repair work or structural alteration.

Members were informed that recent legislation now allowed the Council to charge a higher premium in respect of long-term empty properties. It was proposed that the charge would escalate to a higher level the longer a property remained empty. The Government had explained that these provisions had been introduced to help to reduce the number of long-term empty properties by providing an incentive to owners to bring properties back into use. The Report also set out a proposed Council Tax Empty Homes Policy, which provided information about which discounts or exemptions empty properties might qualify for and the circumstances under which the premium charge might be waived. Finally, the Report set out the reasons for recommending reverting to 50% Council Tax discount for a twelve month period in cases where empty properties were undergoing major repairs or structural alteration.

The Cabinet expressed support for the proposed increase to the premium charge and felt that this would reduce the number of empty homes in the Borough.

**The Cabinet**

- (i) **RESOLVED** that
  - (a) the Council Tax Empty Homes Policy, as set out in Report No. FIN1907, be approved;

- (b) the Executive Head of Finance, in consultation with the Corporate and Democratic Services Portfolio Holder, be authorised to waive the premium charge in certain circumstances and resolve disputes, as set out in the Report; and

(ii) **RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL** that

- (a) an increase to the amount of Council Tax Empty Homes Premium charged for long-term empty properties from 1st April, 2019 to 100%, from 1st April, 2020 to 200% and from 1st April, 2021 to 300%, as set out in Report No. FIN1907, be approved; and
- (b) the application of a Council Tax discount of 50% for twelve months in respect of empty homes undergoing major repairs or structural alterations, as set out in Report No. FIN1907, be approved.

81. **FARNBOROUGH AIRPORT COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL FUND –**  
(Cllr Maurice Sheehan, Operational Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. DSP1902, which sought approval to award grants from the Farnborough Airport Community Environmental Fund to assist local projects.

The Operational Services Portfolio Holder had considered three applications and had recommended that all three awards should be made.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED** that grants be awarded from the Farnborough Airport Community Environmental Fund to the following organisations:

Cove Football Club	£1,500
Grange Community Junior School PTA	£2,505
Southwood Infant School	£7,000

82. **ADOPTION OF THE RUSHMOOR LOCAL PLAN –**  
(Cllr Barbara Hurst, Planning and Economy Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. EPSH1901, which set out the Rushmoor Local Plan and associated Policies Map, which would, subject to the Cabinet's endorsement, be submitted to the Council for adoption.

The Cabinet was informed that this was the culmination of five years' work, predominantly by the Council's Planning Policy Team, and the Chairman congratulated all those involved in the production of the Plan.

Members considered that, once adopted, the Local Plan would be integral to the delivery of the Council's regeneration priorities and the provision of housing in the Borough.

**The Cabinet RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL** that

- (i) in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, the new Local Plan, and accompanying changes to the Policies Map, as amended by the main modifications identified in the Inspector's Report dated 14th January, 2019, be approved;
- (ii) the replacement of the Rushmoor Local Plan Review (2000) saved policies and Core Strategy (2011) policies, as listed in Chapter 16 of the new Local Plan, by the new Local Plan policies upon its adoption, be approved; and
- (iii) the Head of Economy, Planning and Strategic Housing, in consultation with the Planning and Economy Portfolio Holder, be authorised to agree any further minor changes to the new Local Plan and the Policies Map, prior to publication.

83. **SOUTHWOOD SANG –**  
(Cllr Martin Tennant, Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. ED1901, which provided a progress report on the conversion of the former Southwood Golf Course to a major new parkland and to deliver Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).

Members were reminded that the decision to close the Southwood Golf Course, to provide SANG to mitigate the potential recreational impact of net new residential development on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, had been made in December 2017. The Golf Course had closed in October 2018, when the operators, Mack Trading, had entered voluntary liquidation. Since that time, Rushmoor officers had been working with Natural England to bring forward plans to convert the site to parkland and identify complementary additional uses for the site. The next stage was to submit planning applications, where needed, to allow the project to progress.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED** that

- (i) the submission of planning applications, as necessary to enable the conversion of the site to an operational SANG, be approved; and
- (ii) the progress on the conversion of the former Southwood Golf Course, as set out in Report No. ED1901, be noted.

84. **PLANNING DELIVERY FUND –**  
(Cllr Barbara Hurst, Planning and Economy Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. EPSH1906, which set out a proposal to spend grant funding awarded by the Government, from the Planning Delivery Fund.

Members were informed that the funding would be used to progress joint working between Rushmoor, Hart and Surrey Heath Councils on issues relating to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. The project had started on 1st October, 2018 and would run until 31st September, 2020. The project's aim was to investigate and seek to implement alternative and complementary avoidance and mitigation measures to mitigate new housing development within the Hart, Rushmoor

and Surrey Heath Housing Market Area. A previous report to the Cabinet had set out plans to use the funding to appoint a project officer on a fixed two-year contract to progress this work. The purpose of this Report, following the appointment of the project officer, was to enable the drawdown of the grant from reserves for expenditure on advice and consultancy to support the project. Members were informed that, given the limited timescale, it was important that the project proceeded without delay.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED** that

- (i) the drawdown of the remaining grant of £130,000 over a two-year period, to spend on appropriate consultancy support and/or expert advice to support the legal, technical and ecological aspects of the work, as set out in Report No. EPSH1906, be approved; and
- (ii) the Head of Economy, Planning and Strategic Housing be authorised to approve future expenditure and report through the budget monitoring process, ensuring that expenditure should not exceed the amount of the Planning Delivery Fund grant, with any expenditure being offset by the drawdown from the earmarked reserve where the Planning Delivery Fund grant monies were being held, to the General Fund.

**85. ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION FOR CHURCH CIRCLE –**  
(Cllr Barbara Hurst, Planning and Economy Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. EPSH1908, which sought approval to make an Article 4 Direction to withdraw permitted development rights related to the replacement of windows, the alteration or removal of chimneys, removal of front boundary walls and the laying out of hard surfacing on the front garden areas of identified properties in Church Circle, Farnborough, which formed part of the South Farnborough Conservation Area. The proposed Direction would enable the Council to protect the architectural and historic character of that part of the Conversation Area by requiring property owners to make a planning application to carry out those works. Members were informed that, as things stood, permitted development rights removed the requirement to obtain such consent.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that it might be possible to make similar Directions elsewhere in the Borough, but that there would have to be robust and justifiable planning grounds, including the assessed level of threat.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED** that

- (i) the making of an Article 4 Direction, under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 1995 (as amended), as set out in Report No. EPSH1908, be approved; and
- (ii) the Corporate Manager – Legal Services, in consultation with the Head of Economy, Planning and Strategic Housing, be authorised to take all necessary steps in making, serving and publicising an Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights, as set out in paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 of the Report.



86. **CIVIL PENALTIES POLICY –**  
(Cllr Maurice Sheehan, Operational Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. OS1903, which set out a proposed new Civil Penalties Policy, which had been produced following the introduction of new powers, under the Housing and Planning Act 2017, that would enable local authorities to deal with non-compliant landlords.

Members were informed that the new legislation had amended the Housing Act 2004 and included powers for a local authority to issue civil penalties for housing offences, as an alternative to taking prosecution proceedings. The proposed Policy was set out the Annex to the Report.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED** that

- (i) the adoption of the Civil Penalties Policy, as set out in Report No. OS1903, be approved; and
- (ii) the Head of Operational Services, in consultation with the Operational Services Portfolio Holder, be authorised to approve any minor changes to the Policy that may be required following the introduction of new regulations or secondary legislation.

87. **UPDATED LICENSING POLICY FOR HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION –**  
(Cllr Maurice Sheehan, Operational Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. OS1902, which set out an updated licensing policy for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), following the reform of licensing through secondary legislation which had amended the Housing Act 2004.

Members were informed that the new legislation had extended the requirement to licence HMOs to cover all properties occupied by five or more people, living as more than one household, irrespective of the number of storeys of the building. Previously, licensing had only been required if the HMO building had comprised three or more storeys. The proposed licensing policy was set out in the Annex to the Report.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that, where enforcement had led to residents being displaced into short-term accommodation, it was the landlord's responsibility to cover the cost of this. During discussion, the Cabinet expressed concern in relation to cases where developers converted family accommodation into HMOs and requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be asked to investigate whether powers were available to regulate this.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED** that

- (i) the adoption of the updated Licensing Policy for Houses in Multiple Occupation, as set out in Report No. OS1902, be approved; and
- (ii) the Head of Operational Services, in consultation with the Operational Services Portfolio Holder, be authorised to approve any minor changes to the

Policy that may be required following the introduction of new regulations or secondary legislation.

**88. 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:

<b>Minute Nos.</b>	<b>Schedule 12A Para. No.</b>	<b>Category</b>
89 and 90	3	Information relating to financial or business affairs

**THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WERE CONSIDERED  
IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC**

**89. PROPERTY INVESTMENT PURCHASE –**  
(Cllr Martin Tennant, Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Exempt Report No. RP1903, which set out a proposal to acquire the freehold investment in a property, as part of the asset investment programme in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Piers Leigh and Ellie Kirkby from Avison Young, who had been appointed to advise the Council in relation to this potential acquisition.

The Report set out the details of the potential investment, including the current lettings, the projected rates of return, the associated risks and the rationale for the purchase. Members were informed that the site contained a number of buildings, with a variety of uses and tenants and benefitted from excellent road links. It was explained that part of the site was, currently, undeveloped and would provide an opportunity for the Council to consider development in the future. Options for the undeveloped site included the provision of further office accommodation. Alternatively, consideration could be given to the development of a hotel on the site, although this would require significant planning policy issues to be addressed.

In considering this matter, the Cabinet discussed many issues, including the projected rates of return, the nature of the current tenants, the level of management fees, the appointment of managing agents, the ownership of a piece of art located on the site and public transport links. The Cabinet was supportive of the purchase and, taking all factors into account, considered it to be an excellent investment for the Council.

**The Cabinet**

- (i) **RESOLVED** that
  - (a) the purchase of the property, as set out in Exempt Report No. RP1903, be approved;

(b) the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Council’s statutory officers and the Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder, be authorised to conclude negotiations, subject to due diligence, for the freehold at a price up to the figure set out in the Report; and

(ii) **RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL** that approval be given to a variation of the Capital Programme, as set out in the Exempt Report, to reflect the purchase, including the relevant fees.

90. **APPLICATION FOR SECTION 49 REMISSION OF NON-DOMESTIC RATES –**  
(Cllr Gareth Lyon, Corporate and Democratic Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Exempt Report No. FIN1904, which set out an application for the remission of non-domestic rates on the grounds of hardship.

Members assessed the application from UK Fitness Limited, trading as The Unit Gym, Nos. 209 – 211 Lynchford Road, Farnborough, taking into account the evidence of financial hardship supplied and whether it was in the interests of local taxpayers to subsidise the business. The Cabinet took into account the nature and circumstances of the business and the availability of alternative facilities in the area. The Corporate and Democratic Services Portfolio Holder had met with the proprietor at the premises to discuss the application in detail.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED** that 35% hardship relief be granted to UK Fitness Limited, trading as The Unit Gym for the period from 1st May, 2018 to 31st March, 2019.

91. **ADDITIONAL ITEM - 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 item to avoid the disclosure of exempt information within the paragraph of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 indicated against the item:

<b>Minute No.</b>	<b>Schedule 12A Para. No.</b>	<b>Category</b>
92	3	Information relating to financial or business affairs

92. **ADDITIONAL ITEM - ALDERSHOT REGENERATION - SITE ASSEMBLY UPDATE –**  
(Paul Shackley, Chief Executive)

The Cabinet considered Exempt Report No. CEX1901, which set out the latest position in relation to the acquisition of a particular property as part of the assembly of sites in Aldershot town centre to enable a comprehensive redevelopment scheme to be brought forward. The item had been included on the agenda as a matter of urgency given that a further independent evaluation of site value had been received as part of the diligence process for purchasing this integral property to the overall regeneration of the Union Street site. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny

Committee had been advised of the reasons for the urgency and the need for the matter to be considered at this meeting and he had supported this approach.

Members were reminded that, at the Cabinet meeting on 8th January, 2019, an upper limit of £2.6 million had been approved to allow the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder, to negotiate and acquire, by agreement, the freehold of the property. At that time, it was confirmed that the asking price was likely to be within the range set out in a recent valuation of the property. Members were informed that, following due diligence, the valuation of the property had been revised. This material change was the reason for this matter to be brought back to the Cabinet. The Exempt Report set out the latest position in relation to the condition of the property and the details of the financial assessments that had been carried out, including an estimated cost of acquiring the property through the compulsory purchase process.

In discussing this matter, the Cabinet maintained its view that this was a key site in the regeneration of Aldershot town centre. It was confirmed that, should the Cabinet choose to acquire the property by the compulsory purchase process, this would take longer to complete, estimated to be at least two years. It was further confirmed that the significant funding secured from Homes England was conditional upon the ability to drawdown and spend the allocation by early in 2021. It was considered that the project was unlikely to be completed in this timescale if the compulsory purchase route was taken. The Cabinet felt that the delay involved with compulsory purchase, compared to a negotiated settlement, along with the consequential risk of the loss of significant external funding, would not be acceptable in terms of progressing the regeneration of Aldershot town centre.

**The Cabinet RESOLVED** that the acquisition of the property, by agreement, at the purchase price set out in paragraph 4.2 of Exempt Report No. CEX1901, be approved.

The Meeting closed at 8.30 pm.

CLLR D.E. CLIFFORD, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

-----