

BOROUGH OF REIGATE AND BANSTEAD

EXECUTIVE

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held virtually on 19 November 2020 at 7.30 pm.

Present: Councillors M. A. Brunt (Leader), T. Schofield (Deputy Leader), T. Archer, R. H. Ashford, R. Biggs, N. J. Bramhall, E. Humphreys, G. J. Knight and V. H. Lewanski.

Also present: Councillors Blacker, Harrison, Kulka, Michalowski and Sinden.

40. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 17 September 2020 be approved.

41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Horwood.

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

43. COMMERCIAL STRATEGY

The Portfolio Holder for Investment and Companies, Councillor Archer, introduced the report which sought approval for the Commercial Strategy: Part 1.

Councillor Archer explained that the Council could not continue to rely on Government funding streams in the future. The Medium Term Financial Plan projected a funding gap in excess of £5.5 million. Generating income commercially represented the only realistic way of closing the funding gap. Councillor Archer explained that the Commercial Strategy Part 1 detailed how the Council would do this. It set clear parameters for the Council's commercial activity and committed the Council to commercial activity which was ethical and consistent with statutory roles and responsibilities. The Part 1 Strategy confirmed surplus income would be put towards continued delivery of local services for local people.

Councillor Archer explained that approval of the Commercial Strategy Part 1 would provide confirmation that the Council was committed to its commercial programme. It would ensure confidence that there was an agreed and transparent approach which underpinned the Council's budget commitment. Councillor Archer confirmed that, subject to agreement of Part 1, work would be undertaken with members of the Commercial Ventures Executive Sub-Committee and Officers to develop Part 2 of the Commercial Strategy.

RESOLVED:

1. The Executive approves the Commercial Strategy: Part 1 as set out in Annex 1 of the report.

2. The Executive supports the ongoing development of Part 2 of the Commercial Strategy and notes that this will be brought to a future Executive meeting for approval.

44. APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES 2020/21

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Brunt, introduced the report which sought to appoint Council representatives to several outside bodies. Councillor Brunt thanked all members of the Council who volunteered to serve on outside bodies. These organisations, with whom the Council shares a mutual interest in supporting and delivering public services for residents, were critical to the welfare of the Borough.

Councillor Brunt explained that Group Leaders were provided with details of annual vacancies and were given the opportunity to make nominations earlier in the year. Nominations for uncontested vacancies were appointed under delegated authority in October. Contested vacancies were listed in the annex of the report for determination by the Executive. Some outside bodies allowed for the appointment of a deputy or substitute, and in those cases a member would be appointed to those roles.

In response to a query from a Visiting Member, it was confirmed that the appointments to Redhill Aerodrome Consultative Committee would be made under delegated authority by the Head of Legal and Governance.

RESOLVED:

1. To appoint the following Members as representatives to serve on outside bodies:
 - Councillor Kelly, Age Concern (Merstham, Redhill and Reigate)
 - Councillor Sinden (as Deputy/Substitute), Age Concern (Merstham, Redhill and Reigate)
 - Councillor Horwood, Borough of Reigate and Banstead Arts Council
 - Councillor Horwood, Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee (GATCOM) & GATCOM Steering Group
 - Councillor Absalom, Surrey Hills Board
 - Councillor McKenna (as Deputy/Substitute), Surrey Hills Board for the periods listed in Annexe 1 of the report.
2. To note the vacancies, set out in Annexe 1 of the report, for the Discretionary Relief Panel, Horley Town Management Group, YMCA East Surrey Children and Young People's Advisory Group, and YMCA East Surrey Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group.

45. SERVICE & FINANCIAL PLANNING 2021/2022

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance, Councillor Schofield, introduced a report setting out service and financial planning proposals for 2021/22.

Councillor Schofield explained that the revenue budget proposals for 2021/22 were based on a full and robust assessment of what the Council does and how it does it by the Executive and the Management Team. The proposals allowed for the

continued provision of high-quality services. Councillor Schofield noted that the net £812,000 revenue budget growth proposals were offset by savings of just over £2 million and a small call on earmarked reserves. There was a requirement to draw just over £0.5 million from the General Fund Reserve to balance the budget. Councillor Schofield explained that the savings against the Markets Service shown in annex 3 were incorrect and should be £10,000.

Councillor Schofield explained that several matters were still to be concluded. The final budget position was dependent on the outcome of the Spending Review and the Provisional Local Government Settlement. Overall, the budget position was sound, and the Council was well positioned to take advantage of commercial opportunities. However, the most significant financial risk was the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and uncertainty about income receipts returning to pre-pandemic levels.

The five-year medium-term budget forecasts had been updated. The Medium Term Financial Plan and supporting strategies provided a solid framework for future financial planning.

In terms of Revenue Reserves, Councillor Schofield explained that they remained sufficient to support the budget proposals and mitigate Covid-19 risks. Approval was sought for the Revenues Policy in annex 6.2 of the report.

Councillor Schofield went on to outline the proposal to increase the Reigate and Banstead element of Council Tax by 1.99%, equivalent to 9 pence per week for a Band D charge.

In terms of the Capital Programme, Councillor Schofield explained that the proposals meant that 2021/22 would be a year of consolidation with modest increases and some reductions due to reprofiling of existing allocations. This would reflect updated spending plans.

The Executive were asked to confirm the continued disregard of war disablement and war widow's pensions when assessing housing benefit claims.

The Executive were asked to recommend to Council the adoption of a new council tax policy to apply a 300% council premium for properties that have been empty for more than 10 years with effect from 1 April 2021.

In response to a question from a Visiting Member about Car Parking Charges, Councillor Schofield explained that it was projected that there was currently forecast to be a loss next year as a consequence of ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. He also confirmed that service fees and charges were still under review.

It was noted that the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had invited all non-Executive Members to the Budget Scrutiny Panel on 3 December 2020.

The Leader of the Council highlighted the work undertaken by officers to review vacant posts and, where deemed to be no longer necessary, these had been deleted from the budget. The Leader thanked the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance and the Interim Head of Finance and other officers for their work in drafting the 2021/22 proposals.

RESOLVED:

1. That the national and local policy context (Annex 1 to the report) be noted.
2. That the service proposals set out in the report which seek to respond to this context and deliver our corporate priorities, be endorsed.
3. That the draft business plans for 2021/22 to 2023/24 be approved, and that Heads of Service be authorised to finalise the plans for their service areas, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders.
4. That the following be approved for consultation under the Council's budget and policy framework:
 - a. Medium Term Financial Plan Summary (Annex 2 to the report)
 - b. Revenue Budget Savings and Additional Income proposals totalling (£2.094) million (Annex 3 to the report)
 - c. Revenue Budget Growth proposals totalling £0.812 million (Annex 3 to the report)
 - d. Forecast ongoing income budget pressures in 2021/22 as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic totalling £1.610 million (Annex 2 to the report)
 - e. Capital Programme Growth and Reprofiting proposals resulting in a net reduction in the five-year Capital Programme of (£0.286) million (Annex 4 to the report)
 - f. Revenue Reserve Balances at 1 April 2020 of £35.391 million (Annex 6.1 to the report)
5. That the Fees & Charges Policy (Annex 5 to the report) be approved.
6. That the Reserves Policy (Annex 6.2 to the report) be approved.
7. That the Medium Term Financial Plan forecast for 2022/23 onwards (Annex 2 to the report) and proposed actions to address the forecast revenue budget gap be noted.
8. That the modified housing benefit schemes, whereby prescribed war disablement pensions and war widow's pensions are disregarded, be continued.
9. **That the Executive RECOMMENDS to the Council the adoption of a new council tax policy to apply a 300% council premium for properties that have been empty for more than 10 years with effect from 1 April 2021.**

46. TREASURY MANAGEMENT HALF YEAR REPORT 2020/2021

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance, Councillor Schofield, explained that the purpose for the Treasury Management Half Year Report was to provide an update on the performance of the Council's treasury management activities. It also provided an update from the Council's advisors and an updated outturn report.

Councillor Schofield reported that the Council complied with legislative and regulatory requirements, bar one exception which related to the Government's payment of emergency funding as part of the national Covid-19 pandemic response. At short notice, it had not been possible to spread those funds across a range of banks and financial institutions as was required. This had been resolved.

Councillor Schofield explained that the Council's treasury management activity had been on track and had complied with limits that Members had previously approved. The report would be submitted for consideration to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to Council for noting in December.

RESOLVED:

To note the Treasury Management Performance for the year to date and note the updated prudential indicators, and to RECOMMEND to Council to note.

47. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2021/22

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance, Councillor Schofield, introduced a report which proposed the Council Tax Base for the Council to adopt by the end of January 2021. The report also proposed Tax Bases for Salfords and Sidlow Parish Council and Horley Town Council.

Councillor Schofield explained that, despite strong growth expected in the area, the proposed Tax Base increase was modest due to expected increases in Council Tax support claimants as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In response to a query from a Visiting Member, Councillor Schofield confirmed that there had been an increase in the number of Council Tax support claimants. A further increase was expected as a result of the second lockdown.

The Interim Head of Finance explained that the income from every household in receipt of Council Tax support was approximately 90% of a full paying household.

Due to the uncertainties that existed, an additional recommendation was proposed that would delegate authority to the Chief Financial Officer in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance to make further adjustments to the final tax base where necessary to reflect any changes in the underlying assumptions and report the outcome to Executive in January.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Executive approve a Council Tax Base for 2021/22 for the purpose of setting the Collection Fund budget of 61,354.3 Band D equivalents, this being a net increase in the Tax Base on 2020/21 of 0.37% after allowing for growth of 1.56% and an increase in local concessionary tax support as a result of COVID 19, and to RECOMMEND the Council Tax Base for 2021/22 be recommended to Council for approval.**
2. That Executive delegate authority to the Chief Financial Officer in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance to make further adjustments to the final tax base where necessary to reflect any

changes in the underlying assumptions and report the outcome to Executive in January.

48. DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO ENFORCE LEGAL PROVISIONS RELATING TO CORONAVIRUS, MADE UNDER THE PUBLIC HEALTH (CONTROL OF DISEASE) ACT 1984, INCLUDING ALL ASSOCIATED AND SUBSEQUENT REGULATIONS

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Brunt, introduced a report to note the Strong Leader Decision in relation to delegated authority to enforce legal provisions relating to Covid-19 which had been made under the Public Health (Control of Disease Act) 1984.

Councillor Brunt explained that a number of regulations had been made in response to the pandemic which placed restrictions and requirements on businesses and individuals and restrictions on gatherings and access to public spaces. Local authorities had been designated enforcers of specified elements of these regulations, including serving formal notices on businesses for breaches of the regulations and bringing prosecutions for the most serious offences.

Councillor Brunt explained that the Council must delegate these powers to appropriate officers. In order to ensure that officers of the Environmental Health team had the correct delegated authority to enforce the Regulations available to them immediately, and in keeping with the Council's Officer Scheme of Delegation, the powers had been delegated to the Head of Service with responsibility for Environmental Health, who had then delegated them to other officers as appropriate.

RESOLVED:

To note the Decision made by the Leader of the Council on 12 November 2020 to authorise the Head of Service with responsibility for Environmental Health to exercise the Council's powers, duties and functions with regard to all current and future legal provisions relating to Coronavirus that the Council is designated to enforce.

49. STATEMENTS

There were none.

50. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There was none.

51. EXEMPT BUSINESS

There was none.

The Meeting closed at 8.13 pm