

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Friday, 13 January 2017

PRESENT: Mr A J King, MBE (Chairman), Mr N J D Chard (Vice-Chairman), Mr D L Brazier (Substitute for Mr J A Davies), Mrs M E Crabtree, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr M Heale, Mr C P D Hoare, Mr S C Manion, Mr L B Ridings, MBE, Mr D Smyth, Mr A Terry (Substitute for Mr R A Latchford, OBE), Mr N S Thandi and Mr J N Wedgbury

ALSO PRESENT: Miss S J Carey and Mr G Cooke

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Cockburn (Corporate Director Strategic & Corporate Services) and Mrs A Hunter (Principal Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

269. Apologies and Substitutes *(Item A2)*

- (1) Apologies for absence were received from Mr Davies, Mr Latchford and Mrs Stockell. Mr Brazier and Mr Terry attended as substitutes for Mr Davies and Mr Latchford respectively.
- (2) Apologies for absence were also received from Mr Carter (Leader of the Council) and Mr Simmonds (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement).

270. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda *(Item A3)*

There were no declarations of interest.

271. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2016 *(Item A4)*

- (1) Mrs Dean said the Homeless Centre had outgrown their existing accommodation and she had suggested that they contact the Property Team with a view to identifying possible accommodation. She thought that the Royal Mail site might be suitable.
- (2) In response to Mrs Dean's query at the previous meeting of the Cabinet Committee and recorded in Minute 258(5), Mr Cooke (Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services) said that the Equality and Human Rights Policy explicitly required that every effort be made to ensure equality impact assessments were conducted prior to decisions being made.

- (3) In response to a query about community rents listed for consideration in the work programme, Mr Cooke (Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services) said this matter would be included within the Asset Management Strategy.
- (4) Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2016 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

272. Draft 2017-18 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan

(Item B1)

- (1) Andy Wood (Corporate Director for Finance and Procurement) introduced the report which provided information about the key assumptions underpinning the budget proposals and savings relevant to the remit of the Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee. The report also included information from KCC's consultation on its proposed budget, the Chancellor's Autumn Budget Statement and the provisional local government finance settlement
- (2) Mr Wood said that grants to the authority from government had reduced by £46 million and the pressures on spending set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan amounted to £66 million. Of this £66 million, £51 million was unavoidable and included pressures arising from inflation, the introduction of the living wage and increased demand for services such as waste disposal, education and social care. The balance of £15 million was accounted for by a pay and performance improvement provision, funding the borrowing cost of the capital programme, and a "pot" to respond to market sustainability issues in the domiciliary and residential care sector to ensure the authority was able to meet the requirements of the Care Act.
- (3) Mr Wood also said that the income from Council Tax would increase by £34 million and this was based on a 2% increase in the size of the tax base, a 2% increase in Council Tax (up to the point at which a referendum would be triggered) and a 2% Social Care Levy. He said it was possible to increase the Social Care Levy to 3% in one year but it could not exceed a total of 6% over three years.
- (4) When pressures on spending, the loss of grants and increases in Council Tax were taken together, savings of £78 million were required to balance the budget. He said a risk assessment had been conducted on proposed savings and an update on the assessment would be reported to Council on 9 February 2017.
- (5) Mr Wood said that the authority had held £202 million in reserves at the beginning of 2016/17 and, if the proposed budget were agreed the authority, would have reserves of £180 million by the end of 2017/18. He considered that this was a prudent reserve but not excessive by any means.
- (6) Mr Shipton (Head of Financial Strategy) said: local government spending would remain "flat-cash" between 2015/16 to 2019/20 and that this flat-cash included council tax, additional social care funding and reductions in central government grants. Flat-cash meant there would be no additional funding for

rising costs or demand pressures and these would have to be funded by savings or spending reductions.

- (7) Mr Shipton said the dip in the government grant for 2017/18 had been partially offset by an announcement within the local government settlement which offered greater flexibility in setting the social care Council Tax precept, and a new one-off Social Care Support Grant in 2017/18. The Social Care Support Grant was funded out of New Homes Bonus (NHB) by bringing forward the proposed changes from 2018/19. However, in Kent this was at the expense of district councils (which collectively would receive £6.2m less NHB than announced in SR2015) and KCC would receive £4.6m more.
- (8) Mr Shipton concluded by saying that people tended to support increases in Council Tax when authorities took time to explain the reasons.
- (9) In response to questions, Mr Wood said that it was better to allocate the social care levy at 2% each year as it was being added to bigger tax base however Cabinet would take a view on the approach to be taken at its meeting on 23 January 2017. Mr Shipton said the increase in the number of households in the county accounted for about 50% of the increase in the Council Tax base with the balance made up by changes to discount schemes and Council Tax support schemes administered by district councils. Mr Shipton confirmed that the increase in demand for services arising from the increase in the number of households had been considered in developing the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- (10) Some apparent discrepancies in the figures in the report and the Medium Term Financial Plan were explained by the presentation of the budget in an A-Z format in the report.
- (11) In response to questions, Mr Wood undertook to provide a briefing note about the reserves being drawn down and to brief Members about the proposed re-structure of the Finance team.
- (12) Resolved that the draft budget and MTFP (including responses to consultation and Government announcements) be noted.

273. Technology Services Modernisation Programme

(Item B2)

Mr King deferred consideration of this item until Part II of the meeting.

274. Financial Monitoring 2016 - 17

(Item C1)

- (1) Jackie Hansen (Finance Business Partner) introduced the report which set out the October 2016-17 budget monitoring position which was presented to Cabinet on 12 December 2016. She referred, in particular, to the Strategic & Corporate Services figures in Table 1 of the report which contained both the forecast for the Directorate itself and the aspirational corporate savings target of -£1,038k for the Asset Utilisation Programme held against the Corporate Landlord budget within the Infrastructure Division.

- (2) Ms Hansen said the Directorate forecast (excluding the Asset Utilisation target) had moved by -£0.095m to an underspend of -£0.487m, and the position of the Asset Utilisation target remained unchanged at +£0.513m, giving an overall small pressure of +£0.026m. All the Divisions within the Strategic and Corporate Services Directorate had moved by less than £0.050m each.
- (3) Ms Hansen said the Strategic and Corporate Services capital budget was £20.502m and there was one variance of £0.120m since the last report as a result of using part of the grant within revenue as permitted under the grant conditions.
- (4) Mr Wood (Corporate Director of Finance and Procurement) referred to paragraph 3.2 of the report and said assuming funding was received from the Home Office to offset pressure on the asylum services, the overall position would reduce by a further £2.136m from £8.295m to £6.159m.
- (5) Resolved that the revenue and capital forecast variances from budget for 2016-17 that are in the remit of this Cabinet Committee, based on the October monitoring to Cabinet, be noted.

275. Work Programme
(Item C2)

Resolved that the work programme, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be endorsed subject to the deletion of Community Rents listed for consideration in March 2017 as this matter will be included in the Asset Management Plan.

276. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

277. Technology Services Modernisation Programme Contract Award
(Item D1)

- (1) Michael Lloyd (Head of Technology Commissioning and Strategy) gave a presentation which is available on-line as an appendix to these minutes. Mr Lloyd explained the context for putting a technology services contract in place to support the implementation of the ICT Strategy.
- (2) Ms Spore (Director of Infrastructure) and Mr Lloyd answered Members' questions about cloud technology, the streamlining of ICT services to Members and the opportunities for collaborative working with other public sector organisations across the county.
- (3) Resolved that the proposed decision to delegate to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate and

Democratic Services, the award of a technology services contract, including the necessary contractual negotiations and to enter into any subsequent necessary legal agreements be endorsed.