

CABINET MEETING

Meeting: 17 January 2018

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Alex Ganotis (Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Policy, Finance & Devolution) (Chair) in the chair; Councillor Wendy Wild (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care) (Vice-Chair); Councillors Sheila Bailey (Communities & Housing), Kate Butler (Economy & Regeneration), Dean Fitzpatrick (Education), Colin Foster (Children & Family Services), Tom McGee (Health) and David Sedgwick (Reform & Governance).

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 19 December 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendments:-

- (1) Under Minute 6 (i) 'MFTP Financial Landscapes and Forecasts 2018/19 (update following 2017 Autumn Budget)' replace the second paragraph with the following:-

'The Leader of the Council reported on the announcement made earlier in the day on the provisional 2018/19 local government financial settlement. This announcement included the ability to raise Council Tax by a further 1% before triggering a local referendum and allowing a doubling of the Police precept up to £12. The National Employers for local government services has also proposed a pay offer of 2%, but we understand that this would need to be funded through Council Tax increases. Given the lateness of the settlement publication, the Cabinet had not yet considered the implications of these announcements.'

- (2) Under Minute 15 'Closure of the Section 48 AGMA Grants Scheme' replace the word 'few' with the word 'no' in the first sentence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interests they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

The following interests was declared:-

Personal & Prejudicial Interest

Councillor

Interest

Wendy Wild

Agenda item 5 'Council Tax and Business Rates Discounts Annual Review' as a Trustee of Chelwood Foodbank who were potentially eligible for discounts. Councillor Wild left the meeting during consideration of the item and took no part in the discussion or vote (see Minute 5 below).

3. URGENT DECISIONS

No urgent decisions were reported.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Members of the public were invited to submit questions to the Cabinet on any matter its powers and duties, subject to the exclusions set out in the Code of Practice.

Five questions were submitted:-

- (1) Was it not the case that despite what has been claimed by the Council there was no Department for Transport (DfT) funding application window in December 2017, and therefore was the decision of the Cabinet to proceed to the next phase of development for the A6-M60 Bypass and seek funding from the DfT based on false information?

The Cabinet Member for Economy & Regeneration responded that the position remained as stated in previous reports and in response to previous public questions. The Cabinet made a decision at its last meeting to request additional funding from the DfT to undertake further work. The Cabinet Member reiterated that this request was not to build the bypass but to seek funding for further investigation, as had been made clear numerous times. She further stated that the Council had been in contact with the DfT and written to the Secretary of State and that once a reply had been received the Council would publish details of the next steps. The Cabinet Member emphasised that these steps would only be taken in the event of funding being received.

In response to a supplementary question querying whether there were any application process to the DfT, the Cabinet Member disputed the accuracy of the assertion made by the questioner and stated that the DfT process was opaque. She reiterated that the DfT process had been followed by the Council and followed up with a letter to the Secretary of State.

- (2) The decision of the Cabinet relating to the possible A6-M60 bypass was causing concern to people living on the route and those who appreciated greenspaces, and the collapse of Carillion demonstrated what happened when projects were based on biased information. Would the Council therefore not renounce proposals to build the bypass?

In response, the Cabinet Member for Economy & Regeneration acknowledged the anxiety amongst the public, but suggested that this should not be added to by inaccurate information. The Cabinet Member made clear that the Cabinet had never stated that it would build the road, but that it wanted more information to understand the potential benefits and impact to determine whether it was justified.

The Cabinet Member stressed that the lengthy debate at the Council Meeting in November 2017 had demonstrated that most councillors, whether they thought the bypass was a good idea or not, agreed that the process should move to the next stage. Having the information on which to make an informed decision either way would hopefully settle the matter.

- (3) Would there be a public consultation on the SEMMMS Refresh and the A6-M60 Bypass in February 2018, and what would the arrangements be, and if it had been delayed what was the new plan?

The Cabinet Member for Economy & Regeneration reiterated her previous responses to questions and stated that once a response was received from the Secretary of State in relation to the funding of further investigations and consultation this would be pursued and the plans published. She could not confirm the timescales for a response being received.

- (4) Could an explanation be given for the wrong route for the proposed bypass being included in the appendices to the A6-M60 outline business case and at the engagement events, showing a route via Marple rather than Offerton, and was this route therefore modelled and references removed from the business case document?

The Cabinet Member for Economy & Regeneration stated that explanatory text above the map referred to made clear that these were screen lines used to analyse the impact of traffic, not the route itself.

- (5) Given the unsafe levels of bed occupancy at hospitals including at Stepping Hill during the current Winter Crisis, was this not an indication of risks in the intent of Stockport Together to reduce the number of hospital beds?

In response the Cabinet Member for Health acknowledged that Stepping Hill Hospital was impacted by the national winter crisis affecting the NHS, and that the increases in attendances at Stepping Hill were in the context of already high levels of attendance and admissions at the hospital, particularly for older people. Partners had put in place a number of measures to improve the flow through the hospital and to ensure attendance and admissions were appropriate.

The Cabinet Member challenged the assertion that the current occupancy was unsafe, as the hospital operated at around 85% occupancy to ensure it had sufficient capacity for the flow of patients. There had also been increased specialist bed capacity added as part of the Healthier Together. Programme. Furthermore the hospital and partners were working hard to reduce the length of stay of patients.

The Cabinet Member further stated that there was a regular fluctuation in bed capacity within the hospital where extra wards were opened temporarily to respond to seasonal fluctuations in demand, then closed at other times. He cited the example of the current flu related demands that required isolation capacity for patients. He also pointed to the high levels of flu vaccination in Stockport, particularly amongst vulnerable residents that had meant Stepping Hill Hospital was dealing with less patients with flu than other hospitals.

The Cabinet Member stated that he did not believe Stockport Together would impact negatively on safety at the hospital, and that the proposals for delivering care through neighbourhood teams was a separate matter. He further stated that the hospital's management were closely monitoring the situation to make sure it was safe for patients.

Key Decisions

5. COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES DISCOUNTS ANNUAL REVIEW (R&G15)

The Cabinet Member for Reform & Governance submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) inviting the Cabinet to consider the proposed scheme of local discounts and exemptions against liability for Business Rates and Council Tax, including the localised Council Tax Support Scheme.

The Cabinet Member highlighted changes made to the scheme to remove Council Tax liability for Care Leavers up to 21 or 24 if in education; extending relief for those starting on Universal Credit, and 'topping up' the discretionary support fund.

The Leader of the Council welcomed changes to the Scheme to respond to national and local pressures and issues. He emphasised that the Cabinet was always striving for fairness, but that the increasing pressure on Council finances were making this more challenging.

RESOLVED – That the Council Meeting be recommended to note the Council Tax and Business Rates Discount Annual Review and approve the changes to the Business Rates and Council Tax Support and Discounts and Exemptions schemes.

General Items

6. BUSINESS PROGRAMME - 2018/19 AND 2019/20

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for (Policy, Finance & Devolution) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) inviting the Cabinet to consider the programme of committee meetings for the 2018/19 and 2019/20.

RESOLVED – That the Council Meeting be recommended to approve the Business Programme for 2018/19 and 2019/20.

7. GMCA DECISIONS - 15 DECEMBER 2017

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Policy, Finance & Devolution submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out decisions taken by the Greater Manchester Combined (GMCA) on 15 December 2017.

The Leader of the Council reported that Councillor Kieran Quinn, Leader of Tameside Council, had passed away on 25 December 2017. He paid tribute to the work of Councillor Quinn in his role as Leader and his work through AGMA and GMCA, as well as chairing the Greater Manchester Pension Fund. On behalf of the Cabinet the Leader expressed their sympathy to Councillor Quinn's family for their loss.

The Leader of the Council also highlighted the GMCA's decision in respect of the Social Impact Bond to support entrenched rough sleepers, and the discussion at the GMCA on the emerging Greater Manchester Cycling Strategy.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. NOMINATIONS FOR THE MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR 2018/19

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Policy, Finance & Devolution invited the Cabinet to consider nominations for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the 2018/19 Civic Year.

RESOLVED – That the Council Meeting be recommended to approve the nomination of Councillor Walter Brett for the position of Mayor and Councillor Wendy Meikle for the position of Deputy Mayor for the 2018/19 Civic Year.

9. TO CONSIDER RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were none to consider.

The meeting closed at 6.33 pm