

CABINET MEETING

Meeting: 7 December 2021

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Elise Wilson (Leader of the Council and Devolution) (Chair) in the chair; Councillor Tom McGee (Deputy Leader and Resources, Commissioning & Governance) (Vice-Chair); Councillors Sheila Bailey (Sustainable Stockport), Colin Foster (Children, Family Services & Education), David Meller (Economy & Regeneration), David Sedgwick (Citizen Focus & Engagement) and Jude Wells (Adult Care & Health).

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 2 November 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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.

No declarations of interest were made.

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 matters within its powers and duties, subject to the exclusions set out in the Code of Practice.

Two public questions were submitted as follows:-

- Relating to whether a decision on the Stockroom proposal would be delayed until the Council Meeting had the opportunity to have their say.

The Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Devolution (Councillor Elise Wilson) responded that the decision with regard to the Future High Street Fund proposals was a matter to be determined by the Cabinet and as such was not scheduled for consideration by the Council Meeting.

- Relating to temporary road closures introduced as part of the Heatons Active Neighbourhood Trial and whether these would be removed until a review had been completed by the North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) and in recognition of concerns expressed by members of the public.

The Cabinet Member for Economy & Regeneration (Councillor David Meller) responded that the Council was conscious of public safety and had consulted the emergency services prior to the implementation of the measures included in the Heatons Active Neighbourhood Trial. Following recent concerns, further meetings had been held with NWAS during which it had been confirmed that the service had been informed of the changes to the road layouts in accordance with established procedures, however these changes had not been updated in NWAS' internal satellite navigation systems. It was stated that the trial had brought to light issues with regard to NWAS operations, and that the Council was continuing to collect data on the trial without the modal filters being in place.

5. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST

The Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Devolution (Councillor Elise Wilson) invited the Cabinet to consider whether to exclude the public and press from the meeting during consideration of agenda item 15 as it contained information that was 'not for publication' within its appendices.

RESOLVED – That in order to prevent the disclosure of information which was not for publication relating to the financial or business affairs of the any particular person (including the authority), the disclosure of which would not be in the public interest, would not be fair and would be in breach of Data Protection principles, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item in the eventuality it was necessary to discuss the information contained within the 'not for publication' appendices:-

<u>Item</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Reason</u>
14	Final Business Case - Review of the Town Centre Operational Office Portfolio and New Ways of Working	Category 3 'Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority)' as set out in the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)

Key Decisions

6. FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND - STOCKROOM (E&R76/ RCG43)

The Cabinet Members for Economy & Regeneration (Councillor David Meller); Resources, Commissioning & Governance (Councillor Tom McGee); and Citizen Focus & Engagement (Councillor David Sedgwick) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on progress with Stockport's Future High Street Fund project, Stockroom and seeking support and approval on the proposals; and further provided an update on the recent consultation undertaken and seeking approval to relocate the town centre library offer from Central Library into Stockroom.

The Cabinet Member for Citizen Focus & Engagement (Councillor David Sedgwick) reported that the proposal not only aimed to provide a library service that was fit for the 21st century but which would also enhance peoples' lives. It was stated that Stockroom would be significantly larger than Central Library and as a result would be able to display more books. It was noted that there was significant opposition from some members of the public with particular regard to the Central Library facility. However, it was stated that there was an absolute commitment that the building would remain accessible to the public.

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The Deputy Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning & Governance (Councillor Tom McGee) stated that that representations received through the petition and consultation whilst significant in number could not be said to represent the views of all the residents of Stockport. It was further stated that the Council had demonstrated a commitment to libraries unlike other parts of the country that had seen the closure of library facilities. It was noted that Central Library would remain a challenge in terms of the accessibility of the building to all sectors of the population, with particular regard to those with mobility difficulties. Councillor McGee further stated that it was important to recognise that while Central Library was an asset that served the whole of the borough, it also served as a local library to those less affluent communities both within and directly adjacent to the town centre that deserved access to high quality, modern library facilities.

The Cabinet Member for Economy & Regeneration (Councillor David Meller) reported that the Stockroom proposal represented a significant investment in the future of the library service in Stockport which would repurpose 70,000 sq foot of underutilised space in the heart of the town centre which would allow for the display of significantly more books than could be provided at the Central Library facility. The enhanced facility would provide for enhance computer facilities and provide a place for children to do their homework. It was further stated that the relocation of the adult education service into Central Library would allow for the provision of an enhanced service to tackle the issue of poor literacy and improve access to the economy and jobs.

The following comments were then made/ issues raised:-

- It would not be possible to spend the £14.5m from the Future High Street Fund on the Central Library facility.
- There was insufficient funding available for the Council to be able to develop and enhance services itself at the Central Library site.
- Stockroom would provide an opportunity to display more books and provide more services than would be possible at Central Library.
- The provision of changing places facilities was welcomed.
- The new Stockroom development would go some way to tackling issues of inequality in the borough.
- The Central Library building would continue to have a secure future as part of these proposals.

RESOLVED - (1) That the update on progress with Stockport's Future High Street Fund project, Stockroom be noted and approval be given to the proposals.

(2) That the recent consultation undertaken be noted and approval be given to the relocation the town centre library offer from Central Library Building into Stockroom.

(3) That authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) and Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate and Support Services) in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Citizen Focus & Engagement; the Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning & Governance; and the Cabinet Member for Economy & Regeneration:-

- (a) to appoint a contractor to deliver the refurbishment works and execute any necessary letter of intent or other agreement, pending resolution of the final contract, to maintain progress in connection with the redevelopment of Stockroom;
- (b) to take all necessary steps to implement the strategy set out in this report; and
- (c) to approve the final Operational Business Plan for Stockroom.

(4) That authority be delegated to the Strategic Head of Service (Legal & Democratic Governance) to do all things necessary or incidental to the implementation of resolution (3).

(5) That the update provided on the potential future uses of the existing Central Library Building be noted and approval be given the proposed course of action set out in Section 10 of the report to progress these.

7. SCHOOL SUFFICIENCY INVESTMENT PLAN (RCG42/ CFS&E6)

The Cabinet Members for Children, Family Services & Education (Councillor Colin Foster) and Resources, Commissioning & Governance (Councillor Tom McGee) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing a proposed School Sufficiency Investment Plan that aimed to set out its strategy and capital pipeline for the next five years, secure an education estate that provided a safe, accessible, secure and stimulating learning environment, which was sustainable and provided value for money, was fit for current and future needs and reduced environmental impact.

RESOLVED – That approval be given to the terms outlined in the strategy and the associated investment plan outlined in the Asset Management Plan.

8. BUSINESS RATES AND COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS ANNUAL REVIEW (RCG37)

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning & Governance (Councillor Tom McGee) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) summarising the impact of Business Rates and Council Tax discounts and exemptions over the last year and recommending their continuation for 2022/23.

RESOLVED – That with regard to the Business Rates and Council Tax Discounts Annual Review:-

- The CASC Top-up scheme be continued for the year 2022/23, enabling CASCs to achieve 100% relief from Non-Domestic Rates, provided they meet the qualifying criteria at Appendix 2.
- Charity Relief remains limited to the 80% Mandatory Relief for the year 2022/23.
- Rural Rate Relief continues to be limited to 50% Mandatory Relief for the year 2022/23 and should any village shops be established in the future then additional discretionary relief should be awarded up to 100%.
- The 50% discount and qualifying criteria for Not-for-Profit organisations be maintained for the year 2022/23.

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- The local scheme for large businesses which are new to the Borough or those undergoing significant expansion in the Borough be continued for 2022/23.
- The continuation of a case-by-case approach for Business Rates discounts where exceptional circumstances exist be continued for 2022/23. It is unlikely that Exceptional Circumstances Relief would be awarded to an organisation which was in receipt of support from the Council, either grant funded or commissioned.
- The Council continues to no longer offer a Council Tax discount in respect of unoccupied and unfurnished properties for 2022/23.
- The maximum Council Tax premium charge levels in respect of unoccupied and unfurnished properties be implemented in accordance with those shown at para 4.3.3 for 2022/23.
- Any Council Tax liability for care leavers up to the age of 25 be reduced to zero for 2022/23.
- Stockport's Council Tax Support scheme be maintained for 2022/23 as detailed at Appendix 5.
- The Council Tax discretionary fund be refreshed to £25k for 2022/23, supporting customers facing financial difficulty, with no alternative means.
- The Revenues & Benefits Discretionary Support Policy at Appendix 6 be endorsed for 2022/23.

9. STOCKPORT BILLING AREA - 2022/23 COUNCIL TAX TAXBASE AND NON-DOMESTIC RATES FORECAST (RCG35)

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning & Governance (Councillor Tom McGee) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the forecast Collection Fund outturn position for 2020/21, the setting of the Council Tax Taxbase for 2022/23, and a forecast for Business Rates income for 2022/23.

RESOLVED - (1) That the Cabinet:-

- Declare a provisional forecast outturn Collection Fund deficit of £16.598m in 2021/22 relating to a Council Tax deficit of £0.618m and Business Rates deficit of £15.980m subject to the delegations below;
- Declare a provisional forecast outturn Collection Fund deficit to be reimbursed to the Council's General Fund in 2022/23 of £16.345m relating to a Council Tax deficit of £0.525m and Business Rates deficit of £15.820m subject to the delegations below;
- Note that the declared position will be offset by Section 31 grants received from Government of £17.688m;
- Note the 2022/23 Council Tax Taxbase for budget setting purposes of 96,883.1 Band D equivalent dwellings. The Council's final 2022/23 Council Tax Taxbase will be presented for approval to the Council meeting on 13 January 2022;
- Note the forecast 100% Pilot benefit from the 2021/22 Pilot of £3.896m based on the Business Rates forecast outturn position presented in the report (subject to change as noted);
- Provisionally approve the 2022/23 forecast for Business Rates income of £78.190m subject to the completion of the NNDR1 (Business Rates budget) to be submitted to Government by 31 January 2022;

- Note the 2022/23 Business Rates budget forecast subject to the completion of the NNDR1 (Business Rates budget) to be submitted to Government by 31 January 2022; and
- Note the available one off resources identified to support the 2022/23 budget, MTFP and Investment decisions.

(2) That the Cabinet delegates the following decisions to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Commissioning:

- The decision to change the in-year provisional forecast outturn Collection Fund position in 2021/22 prior to declaring the position by 31 January 2022;
- The decision to continue in the Greater Manchester Business Rates pooling arrangement; and
- The decision to vary the Business Rates forecast presented in Table 8 and Table 9 linked to the submission of the NNDR1 (Business Rates budget) to Government.

General Items

10. GREATER MANCHESTER (GM) VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE (VCSE) ACCORD STOCKPORT POSITION

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning & Governance (Councillor Tom McGee) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an overview of the recently agreed the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Accord which was agreed at the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA).

RESOLVED - (1) That the updates on progress against the Accord commitments outlined in section 3 of the report be noted.

(2) That the GM Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Accord be endorsed and the adoption of the accord locally be agreed.

(3) That the Stockport approach to the implementation of the eight commitments set out in the VCSE Accord be supported.

11. GMCA DECISIONS

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Devolution (Councillor Elise Wilson) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out decisions taken by the GMCA at its meeting on 29 October 2021.

RESOLVED – That the decisions be noted.

Performance and Budget Monitoring

12. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES - MID-YEAR REPORT 2021/22

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning & Governance (Councillor Tom McGee) submitted a report (copies of which had been

circulated) providing a summary of progress in delivering the Council's priority outcomes and budget in the first half of the financial year, with a particular focus on the second quarter of 2021/22 (July – Sept).

RESOLVED – That:-

- the key achievements against Shared Priorities (Exec Summary) and analysis of corporate performance for 2021/22 (section 2) be noted.
- the Cash Limit and Non-Cash Limit forecast positions for 2021/22 as set out in section 3.3 and 3.6 be noted.
- the update to the Council's positive investments as set out in section 3.4 be noted.
- the update on the Council's Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) investments plan set out in section 3.5 be noted.
- the Dedicated Schools Grant, Housing Revenue Account and Collection Fund forecast positions as set out in sections 3.7, 3.8, and 3.9 be noted.
- the appropriations to/from reserves and balances as set out in section 3.10 and note the resulting reserves and balances position as at 30 September 2021 be noted.
- the position for the 2021/22 Capital Programme as set out in section 4.1 be noted.
- the adjustments and re-phasing of capital schemes during the quarter as set out in section 4.3 be noted.
- the proposals for resourcing and additional resources required for the Capital Programme as set out in section 4.2 be approved.
- the resourcing of the capital programme as set out in section 4.3 be approved.
- the 2021/22 prudential indicators as set out in section 4.4 be approved, and
- the identified key areas for further investigation and responsibility for taking forward corrective action to address any existing or outturn issues or risks be noted.

13. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY MID-YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2021/22 (RCG40)

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning & Governance (Councillor Tom McGee) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing the Cabinet with a mid-year review of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2021/22 approved by Council on 25 February 2021 and has been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services.

RESOLVED - That the Council Meeting be recommended to:-

- Note the report and the treasury activity in the first half of the financial year;
- Note the revised interest rate forecasts for Bank Rate and PWLB rates over the short and medium-term, which will drive the Council's long-term borrowing strategies going forward.

14. TO CONSIDER RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no recommendations to consider.

Item containing information 'Not for Publication'

15. FINAL BUSINESS CASE - REVIEW OF THE TOWN CENTRE OPERATIONAL OFFICE PORTFOLIO AND NEW WAYS OF WORKING (RCG41)

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning & Governance (Councillor Tom McGee) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) presenting the final business case which has examined in detail the Council's operational town centre estate and the current and future business needs following the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and as the Council moves towards a new hybrid working model.

(NOTE: This item included a 'not for publication' appendix that had been circulated to members of the Cabinet only).

RESOLVED - (1) That the update on progress with The Town Centre Asset Review and approve the proposals be noted.

(2) That inclusion in the Capital programme and funding via prudential borrowing in line with the business case as set out be approved.

(3) That authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) and Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate and Support Services) in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning & Governance to enter into a construction contract and bring forth any necessary planning applications related to the refurbishment of Stopford House.

(4) That authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) and Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate and Support Services) in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning & Governance and Head of Service (Legal & Democratic Governance) to take the necessary steps to implement the strategy set out in this report.

(5) That authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) and Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate and Support Services) in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning & Governance to implement the strategy for new ways of working (the hybrid model) as set out in this report.

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm