



Rutland County Council

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RECORD OF DECISION AT A MEETING OF THE CABINET

Tuesday, 16th February, 2021 at 10.00 am

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Decisions published on 17th February 2021

Decisions will be implemented on 25th February 2021 unless the Call-in Procedure as outlined in Procedure Rule 206 is invoked.

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PRESENT: Mr O Hemsley Mr G Brown
Mrs L Stephenson Mr A Walters
Mr D Wilby

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mr M Andrews Interim Chief Executive
Mrs P Sharp Strategic Director for Places
Mrs D Godfrey Interim Director - Children's Services
Mr S Della Rocca Strategic Director for Resources
Mr J Morley Interim Director - Adult Services and Health
Mr P Horsfield Monitoring Officer
Ms E Sweeney Head of Service - Children's Social Care
Mrs E Powley Governance Manager

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received.

2 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND/OR HEAD OF THE PAID SERVICE

There were none.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

4 RECORD OF DECISIONS

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on the 12th January 2021 were agreed as a true record.

5 ITEMS RAISED BY SCRUTINY

There were none.

6 EMERGENCY POWERS - COVID 19

Councillor Hemsley, as the relevant Cabinet Member, elaborated on the report and noted the current situation of being in a national lockdown.

The Interim Chief Executive explained that the report was written prior to Rutland's uplift in the number of cases of Covid-19, which was due to an outbreak of cases at Stocken prison. The number of cases reported had dropped which indicated that the prison had swiftly got the infection under control. Vaccinations of over 70 and the clinically extremely vulnerable had been successful and the next tranche of vaccinations would soon be underway.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the present position in Rutland in respect of COVID 19 be noted
- b) That the continued applicability of the Civil Emergency Delegation be noted.

7 PUBLIC BUS SERVICE CONTRACT AWARD

Councillor Stephenson, as the relevant Cabinet Member, elaborated on the report and explained that previously the Local Transport Plan and the Transport Strategy had been approved and a holistic approach to public transport across the County was needed. It was explained that the criteria had been carefully considered to ensure that providers successful in the process would be capable of meeting the requirements and could deliver appropriate quality services in Rutland.

Whilst a 2 year and 5-year contract had been considered it was explained that the Council would get better value for money if they entered into a 5-year contract; the Cabinet Member responsible explained that she would have discussion with officers with regards to requesting contributions from other surrounding Councils where the bus services ran through their areas with no financial benefit to RCC. It was further stated that there was a duty of care to residents to provide a bus service especially due to the rurality of the County.

RESOLVED:

That the procurement model and criteria for the award of public bus service contracts 12 & 47 be approved

That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director for Places, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with portfolio for Culture & Leisure, Highways & Transportation and Road Safety, to award the contract resulting from this procurement.

8 INTEGRATED TRANSPORT CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Councillor Stephenson, as the relevant Cabinet Member, elaborated on the report and noted that the report followed on from a paper taken to Cabinet on 12th January 2021 which set out revisions to the Highway and Transport Concern Process (HTCP),

along with clarifications surrounding timeframes and distinctions between the HTCP, the Highways Transport Working Group and the Integrated Transport Capital Programme. It was reported that the HTCP provided a mechanism for Rutland communities to highlight any concerns they may have regarding traffic management, walking and cycling infrastructure, parking provision or public transport infrastructure.

It was reported that when preparing the Integrated Transport Capital Programme, community concern schemes identified as 'essential' or 'necessary' will be prioritised over those identified as 'beneficial' or 'amenity'. Community concern schemes identified as 'beneficial' or 'amenity' would be unlikely to receive funding through the Integrated Transport Block, but would be kept on a list for consideration should grant funding or developer contributions become available in the future

It was noted that in order to simplify matters and ensure funding was spent where it would be most beneficial, Highway and Transport schemes would be funded from one pot of money. Previously, funding allocations had been split across a number of areas but it was considered that the simplification of funding would enable more efficient use of the budget available.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Stephenson reported that the in-house fleet of vehicles were to be replaced; 4 having been kept for emergencies.

RESOLVED:

1. That the current programme of work and timeframe for updating the programme be noted
2. That the request to allocate £900,000 towards the 2021/22 Integrated Transport Capital Programme be approved.
3. That the decision making proposals and requested delegated powers be approved

9 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT AWARD

Councillor Stephenson, as the relevant Cabinet Member, elaborated on the report and explained that it was an annual exercise and asked support for procurement to ensure that the Council has the necessary contract in place for the provision of transport for the new school year. The contract had to be considered annually due to the fluctuation in the number of students needing transport, including special needs transport plans. It was a statutory obligation for the council to provide home to school transport.

Councillor Wilby thanked officers and Councillor Stephenson for their hard work.

In response to a question asked, Councillor Stephenson explained that the termination of the contract was one calendar month which was standard and necessary in order to respond to changes in the requirement of student transport.

RESOLVED:

That the procurement model (section 4 and appendix C) and criteria for the award of home to school transport (section 5 and appendix D) contracts for academic year 21/22 be approved.

That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director for Places in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture & Leisure, Highways & Transportation and Road Safety to award the contracts resulting from this procurement.

10 QUARTER 3 - FINANCE REPORT

Councillor G Brown, as the relevant Cabinet Member, elaborated on the report and noted that as reported at Quarter 2, forecasting likely expenditure during the pandemic was proving challenging. He explained that new duties and requirements emerged on a weekly basis and issues could change very quickly. It was noted that in overall terms, the Council was coming in under budget compared to the budget position and this put Rutland County Council in a strong position compared to many other local authorities who were reporting significant over spends. It was noted that the underspend position was positive but it was possible that the underspend would increase further by the year end depending on the work Council would need to undertake as part of the response to the pandemic.

Councillor Wilby thanked the finance team for their continued hard work.

The Chief Finance Officer commented that the government was encouraging Councils to give business and individuals breathing space to sort out their positions with regards to bad debt and it was reported that in the next financial year, it was likely the Council would see an increase in bad debt provisions.

Councillors Stephenson and Hemsley thanked the finance team and noted that Rutland County Council continued to be a low cost council.

RESOLVED:

That the projected revenue outturn for 20/21 and the uncertainty that remains be noted;

That the financial impact of COVID-19 on the Council's finances and the risks that remain.

11 UPDATE ON CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Councillor Wilby, as the relevant Cabinet Member, elaborated on the report and explained that the Ofsted Improvement Board had met on a monthly basis and that there had been ongoing training and a positive shift in direction.

The Interim Director of Children's Services reported the progress made since the beginning of March 2020, when the Ofsted inspection had occurred. She further explained that a key challenge to being 'consistently good' was the need for staff stability which was a key area that had been identified. It was noted that in order to address this, the service was forward planning and a team of 'Frontline' students had been employed who would qualify in September. It was hoped this would lead to more workforce stability and consistency for families in Rutland and employment opportunities for undergraduates, reducing the reliance on agency staff.

Councillor Walters declared an interest as an independent member of a private fostering panel. He therefore stated that he would not take part in the debate and would abstain from voting on the report.

Members discussed the report and agreed that bringing in undergraduates was effective and positive. It was agreed that this was an encouraging sign and would lead to a reduction in staff churn.

RESOLVED:

That the update on the Children's Services Improvement Plan be noted.

12 CLEANING SERVICES CONTRACT FOR COUNCIL PROPERTIES

Councillor Hemsley, as the relevant Cabinet Member, elaborated on the report and noted that the cleaning of all Council properties was provided by S4 Facilities Ltd and the existing contract was due to expire on 31 March 2021. It was noted that Rutland County Council wished to extend the existing contract from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, whilst a new cleaning contract was procured. The estimated cost was exclusive of exceptional events such as deep cleaning following a Covid-19 outbreak. The new contract would be structured to be flexible and enable the Council to amend cleaning requirements to reflect property use, occupation and environmental events as they occur. This flexibility would be particularly important as the Council makes decisions on future use, ownership and occupation of properties over the lifetime of the new contract.

In response to a question asked, the Strategic Director for Places explained that there was a systematic cleaning process in place and there had been an increase in the number of cleanliness and compliance checks undertaken.

RESOLVED:

That the extension of the existing cleaning contract of Council properties to 31 March 2022 at an estimated cost up to £157,180, including consumables and laundry but excluding exceptional events such as deep cleaning following a Covid-19 event be approved.

That the Strategic Director Places be authorised in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Rutland One Public Estate & Growth, Tourism & Economic Development, Communications, Resources (other than Finance) and Property and the Director for Resources to determine a procurement route, award criteria and if a suitable supplier or suppliers are identified, move forward and award a contract.

13 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES RE-PROCUREMENT PROJECT

Councillor Stephenson, as the relevant Cabinet Member elaborated on the report and explained that as per the Council's agreed project management framework, the project was analysed against the risk matrix and it was deemed a High risk project. It therefore required a governance structure of a project team, reporting into a project board, with Cabinet as the primary decision making body.

It was reported that external contractors had been used to assist the Council in ensuring that the Council get value for money and the best service. There was a

number of key milestones that had been signed off and a high level of governance in the delivery of the project.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Strategic Director-Places be authorised to form a Project Board and associated structures in order to undertake a re-procurement of the Environmental Services functions as detailed herein
2. That the related documentation comprising Project Initiation Document, Project Governance and Project Board Terms of Reference as attached at Appendix A of the report be approved
3. That the progress on associated pre-procurement activities as detailed herein be noted
4. That the contents of the of the Risk & Issues Log and associated Project Timetable as attached at Appendix B1 and B2 of the report be noted
5. That the budget available to support the projects, paragraph 6.1 of the report be noted.

14 FINAL BUDGET 2021/21

Councillor G Brown, as the relevant Cabinet Member, elaborated on his report. He thanked the Chief Finance Officer and his team for their hard work in delivering grants, drafting the budget and delivering the Quarter 3 – finance monitoring report during difficult circumstances.

Members were asked to note the updates following the draft budget approved by Cabinet on the 12th January 2021 listed below.

1. Use of Reserves – various changes to business rates (para 2.2.5) mean that the projected deficit for 21/22 is now £2.4m. In the draft budget, Council was advised to take action to reduce that deficit by at least £500k. This has been increased to £1m given that indications from Government is that there will be no increase in the overall settlement.
2. Council tax rise – Cabinet has confirmed that following consultation, they will proceed with a 3% council tax proposal (2% general and 1% for adult social care).
3. Business Rates - the Council has completed its NNDR1 return and business rates estimates to Government. Business rate estimates indicate an increase of £201k due to the growth in the property tax base from new business (e.g. McDonalds) and existing businesses now being brought into the rating system by the Valuation Office Agency.
4. Spending plans - no changes have been made to detailed Directorate budgets.
2.2.7 Pay settlement - The pay settlement negotiations are still ongoing with an agreement unlikely to be reached by 1 April.
5. Early Years - The Early Years funding rates have been confirmed with £5.36

- for 2 year old provision and £4.25 for 3 and 4 year olds.
6. The Government is introducing a compensation scheme for Council tax and business rate losses. The Council's view is that likely compensation will be less than £70k and at this stage no amount has been built into the MTFP.
 7. MTFP - minor adjustments totalling £16k to align the tax base to that proposed in the Council Tax report.
 8. Council tax base - Section 4 of the report set out potential "losses" of different council tax increases relative to the maximum possible increase of 5%. The draft report indicated losses were for a five year period (this has been clarified as the loss covers the current year plus five years). The 126 volatility of the tax base, in the economic circumstances, means that the loss figures are now expressed as being within a range i.e. between £1.5m - £2m. The annual loss figure for 21/22 has not changed.
 9. Consultation responses – these are included in Section 9 of the report.

Councillor G Brown explained that Scrutiny Committees had discussed the report and that noted that there had been 197 responses from members of the public during the budget consultation period. He further explained that the preferred option was for a 2.99% increase in council tax in order to reduce additional financial pressures on the residents, contrary to the advice of the Chief Finance Officer to increase council tax by 4.99%

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that it:

- Approves the Revenue Budget of £42.6m for 2020/21 detailed in Section 3
- Notes that the Revenue Budget includes a £2.4m use of Reserves assuming a 3% Council tax rise (in the event that the Council approves a different level of Council tax, the use of Reserves will vary accordingly)
- Approves the capital programme as detailed in Section 6
- Approves the creation of a new Earmarked Reserve for Ash Dieback (£500k) as per para 3.5.9
- Approves the minimum reserve level be increased from £2m to £3m to reflect the changing risk profile
- Notes the Medium Term financial outlook and commits to taking action in 21/22 to address the deficit position
- Notes that additional revenue or capital expenditure may be incurred in 2021/22 funded through 2020/21 budget under spends to be carried forward via earmarked reserves. The use of reserves for budget carry forwards is not currently shown in the budget but will have no impact on the General Fund
- Approves a deficit of c£186k on the Collection Fund as at 31 March 2021 (Section 4.2) of which £160k is the Rutland share
- Notes the responses to consultation (section 3)
- Notes the updates since the draft budget was approved (section 2.2)
- Delegates authority to the s151 Officer to make any necessary changes to the budget arising from the Council tax decision and/or any additional funding received

15 SCHOOL CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Councillor Wilby, as the relevant Cabinet Member, elaborated on the report and explained that there was significant pressure at secondary level and previously, Cabinet approved the undertaking of a two-stage feasibility study for school expansion across all the secondary provision in Rutland in February 2020

It was noted that the Stage Two Feasibility Study had been completed, which had identified Catmose College as the favoured site because of its current conditions of the existing modern new-build school which would consolidate the investment that had already been made in recent extensions on the site, with fewer potential planning constraints than at the other two secondary school sites. It was reported that the site was centrally located within the County which was reflected in most admissions for this school being from Rutland families and would therefore more readily address Rutland's pupil place sufficiency need.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Wilby explained that the Council appreciated the standards of all of the schools and colleges in Rutland, and not just that of Catmose College. He explained that since the fire at Uppingham Community College, they had reconfigured themselves well and that there was a commitment that all schools would be looked after. Catmose College was considered to be the flagship building which had a lot to offer its student.

The Leader confirmed that the Council would continue to seek and support funding opportunities for all schools in Rutland

RESOLVED:

1. That the initiation of the Schools' Capital Programme Project and the related documentation comprising Project Initiation Document (PID), Programme and Project Board Terms of Reference as attached at Appendices C, D and E of the report be approved.
2. That the contents of the of the Risk & Issues Log and associated Programme Timetable as attached at Appendix B of the report be noted
3. That the budget available to support the projects, paragraph 7.1 in the report be noted
4. That Council be requested to approve of the Schools' Capital Programme and related documentation up to a maximum value of £5.5m
5. That the Interim Director for Children's Services be authorised to commence the Schools' Capital Programme and associated structures to enable the local authority to meet its statutory obligation to provide sufficient secondary schools places within Rutland, subject to reporting to Cabinet on the costing prior to placement of the order to commence construction.
6. Cabinet delegated authority to the Interim Director for Children's Services and Portfolio Holder for Lifelong Learning, Early Years, SEND, Inclusion,

Safeguarding Children & Young People to enter into the funding agreement.

16 ANY ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgency.

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The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 11.46am.

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