

3(b)

Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held at Riverside, 4 Canning Road,
Lowestoft on **Wednesday, 6 December 2017 at 6.30pm**

Cabinet Members present:

Councillors M Bee (Chairman), S Ardley, G Catchpole, M Ladd, B Provan, C Punt, C Rivett, D Ritchie and M Rudd.

Deputy Cabinet Members present:

Councillors J Ceresa and C Topping.

Also in attendance:

Councillors S Allen, L Coulam, A Green, J Murray and S Woods.

Officers present:

S Baker (Chief Executive), M Fitzsimmons (Valuer, Property Services), A Haye (Housing Needs Manager), J Hunt (Head of Housing), N Khan (Strategic Director), A Jarvis (Strategic Director), H Javadi (Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer), L Rogers (Finance Manager, Financial Planning), S Taylor (Finance Manager, Financial Compliance) and N Wotton (Democratic Services Manager).

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were also received from Deputy Cabinet Members, Councillors P Ashdown, N Brooks and A Cackett.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor M Ladd declared a Local Non Pecuniary Interest in Item 9 on the Agenda – Alfred Corry Museum, Ferry Road, Southwold – as he had previously given the charity some funding from his Suffolk County Council Locality Budget.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Minutes of the Extraordinary Cabinet Meeting held on 11 October 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
- (b) That the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 1 November 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the inclusion of the word 'Deputy' in relation to Items 6 and 14 within the Minutes. This would then read 'The *Deputy* Cabinet Member for Resources.....'

4 ISSUES ARISING FROM THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE OR THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

(a) The Overview & Scrutiny Committee

There were no matters to report.

(b) The Audit & Governance Committee

There were no matters to report.

5 FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2018/19

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report, which sought approval of the Discretionary Fees and Charges for implementation from 1 January 2018 and asked Cabinet to note the level of Fees and Charges set by Statute, also for implementation from 1 January 2018.

Members noted that the income from fees and charges was an integral part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which generated essential funding for the Council to help minimise Council Tax increases and/or service reductions. It was also vital to ensure that the charges reflected any changes in costs or demands, that had either already occurred, or were expected to occur over the next year. In addition, the financial constraints currently faced by the Council made it essential to ensure its income from fees and charges was consistent with the East Suffolk Business Plan and relevant central Government legislation.

Members were advised that when setting fees and charges, the Council must apply the principles of sound financial management and need to consider a range of 'Best Value' principles, including cost and quality standards, value for money, as well as affordability and accessibility of their services.

A Member commented that they preferred the way that the information had been presented in previous years, as it had included the percentage increase, which was helpful. Members were advised that these comments would be noted and taken on board for next year.

RESOLVED

1. That the Discretionary Fees and Charges set out in Appendix A be approved for implementation from 1st January 2018, or alternative date if specified.
2. Note the level of the fees and charges set by statute and the timing of any increase in these as set out in Appendix B.

6 DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND EFFICIENCY PLAN

The Cabinet Member for Resources introduced the report and welcomed the Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer to the meeting, who would give a presentation to the Cabinet regarding the financial situation of the Council.

The Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer advised that the Council had a legal duty to have a balanced budget by February each year, in order to set the Council Tax precept for the District. It was noted that there had been a shortfall of £400,000 in the budget and this would be closed in time for the February deadline. Setting the budget was an extremely difficult and complex process and this was made worse due to the uncertainty caused by factors such as Brexit.

The Revenue Support Grant (RSG), which had been a significant source of local authority funding for many years, was in the process of being phased out and would be reducing sharply over time, from £3million in 2015 to £300,000 in 2020. Although Councils would be able to retain 50% of Business Rates generated in their Districts, this would not necessarily replace the amount of RSG they would have received. Also the amount of business rates income generated was reliant upon levels of growth and the re-evaluation of rates. The Council had previously generated significant funding via the New Homes Bonus (NHB), however the funding cycle had recently been reduced from 6 years to 4 years and the amount of funding received would be reducing by approximately 33%. Council Tax was therefore a reliable and low risk source of funding, which the Council was able to rely on, in the longer term.

When setting the budget, a number of assumptions had been made with regards to the rate of inflation, the level of Council Tax increase and the Bank of England Base Rate. Although a balanced budget could be set for this year, there were significant uncertainties for future years and the budget gap was likely to increase to £2million in 2020/21, which would be exacerbated by various regime changes to funding streams.

The Council was focussing upon increasing its sustainability and resilience for future years. As such, the General Fund Reserves were currently £4million, with Earmarked Reserves for Projects being £9million. The Capital Programme was currently over £82million. It was noted that for every £1million borrowed, the interest rates for servicing that loan were approximately £70,000 per year. Reassurance was provided that no predictions had been made in terms of possible savings generated by the creation of a new Council for East Suffolk. Further work on setting a budget for the new Council would take place in due course.

The Cabinet thanked the Chief Finance Officer & Section 151 Officer for her informative presentation and the Cabinet wished to record their thanks and congratulations to the Finance Team, for all of their hard work and ongoing support for the Council.

Further clarification was requested regarding the 'Use of Contingency for contribution to SCC for Green Waste saving' within the operational requirements shown on Page 97 of the report, which was shown as £300,000 for 2017/18 and increasing to £400,000 in future years. It was reported that the current rate of recycling credits had to be shared with Suffolk County Council in year three of the scheme and, in order to be prudent, contingency funding had been used to cover the payment, as an accounting mechanism. However, it was noted that the scheme was working better than expected and contingency funding was not anticipated to be required to make the payments to Suffolk County Council.

Members noted that contingency funding had also been earmarked for ‘reduced income from Sentinel Leisure Management’ and it was reported that the funding was set aside, as the assumptions contained within the budget had not been tested. This would make sure that the budget was deliverable and reduced potential future risks.

With regard to the Capital Programme, reassurance was provided that a mixture of funding had been arranged to cover the works and all schemes had been thoroughly tested to ensure that they were affordable and sustainable for the Council. The cost of borrowing for the Council was closely monitored to ensure that the Council achieved the best value for money and long term security.

Clarification was provided that there was an error in paragraph 4.3 on page 81 of the report. The Council would not move into a negative position regarding Revenue Support Grant in 2019/2020. However it was likely that the Council may be in a negative position regarding RSG in 2020/2021.

RESOLVED

1. That the draft Efficiency Plan attached as Appendix A be approved;
2. That the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved;
3. That Members and Officers develop proposals to set a balanced budget for 2018/19 and beyond.

7 HOMELESS REDUCTION ACT 2017 – PREPARATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented a report which set out the requirements of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and its likely impact on the demands on the Housing Needs Service, along with the recommendation to increase the staffing levels of the service and to develop new service initiatives to meet these requirements.

Members noted that the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 would come into force in April 2018 and would introduce a statutory duty for all Councils to prevent homelessness in their Districts. Most households at risk of homelessness within 56 days would be covered under the new legislation, regardless of whether they were in priority need or intentionally homeless, which was a significant change. It was anticipated that the casework for all local authorities would increase by 26 – 51%. As such, additional staffing would be required to deal with the increase in casework.

A Member queried whether the Council would be responsible for homing people from outside of the area who wanted to live in Waveney. It was reported that it would depend on the stage of the homelessness process the individuals were at, however they would need to have a local connection with Waveney and there was also a two year residency requirement for all people receiving this support.

It was noted that homelessness could be created by a number of factors including rent arrears, family crisis and relationship breakdowns. Early intervention was preferable, in order to prevent homelessness and the Council had a duty to intervene.

A Member queried the table of income and expenditure on page 106 of the report. Clarification was provided that there was an error in the table, as the figures for the Rent Guarantee Scheme had slipped down two lines within the table. Members were assured that the income and expenditure in relation to this new Act would be closely monitored.

With regard to finding suitable properties for people who were about to become homeless, Members were advised that people were assessed according to strict criteria and the options chosen to support them would depend upon their individual circumstances and needs.

Reassurance was provided that the Housing Register was fair and those people at risk of homelessness may not necessarily be housed sooner than those people with identified housing needs. The focus would be to try and prevent those people from being made homeless and to manage expectations. Those people living in overcrowded accommodation were still a priority for the Council. The emphasis was on collaborative working wherever possible. Members noted that there were some people who were at risk of repeat homelessness, due to alcohol dependency and domestic violence and it was noted that the Council would work with specialist agencies to try and break the cycle and support those people.

In respect of Armed Forces Veterans, it was noted that the Council had signed up to the Armed Services Covenant, whereby if a veteran was homeless and had links to the area, they would automatically go to the top of the list to get help regarding their housing.

In respect of additional partnership working, it was noted that the Housing Team were in the process of undertaking a pilot scheme, whereby a Social Landlord would need to notify the Council, if they were considering evicting a tenant or when a notice to evict was served. This would allow the Council to take action at an earlier stage and hopefully prevent the eviction from taking place.

RESOLVED

1. That the additional expenditure to the Council's General Fund of up to £246,857 until March 2020 for staffing and other direct costs, including the Rent Guarantee Scheme, as a result of the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 be approved.
2. That up to £50,000 of the Council's Homelessness Reserve be used to part fund this expenditure, with the remainder to be met from the New Burden funding of £196,857, be approved.

8 DISPOSAL OF LAND AT KENSINGTON GARDENS – OBJECTIONS RECEIVED

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report, which outlined the objections received to the proposed disposal of open space land adjacent to Kensington Gardens, in conjunction with the development of a pre-school facility at the adjoining primary school.

It was noted that the Cabinet, at its Extraordinary meeting on 11 October 2017, had approved the disposal of the open space. The proposed disposal of land would bring a

capital receipt estimated to be in the range of £10,000 - £20,000. The disposal would also help to manage resources by reducing maintenance and similar commitments, although savings were likely to be minimal.

Members were advised that one objection had been received, which stated that the proposed sale would mean that the land was lost as a parking area for those involved with the sailing of model boats on the boating lake in Kensington Gardens. It was noted that due to the nature of the equipment involved and general age of the participants, parking any distance from the lake was problematic.

Members felt that on balance, the benefit of the use of the land in question as an informal / unauthorised parking area used by participants in model boating, was outweighed by the benefit of the proposed disposal and alternative use of the land. It was also noted that there was free parking along the road alongside Kensington Gardens.

RESOLVED

That the objection received to the proposed disposal of land be noted and rejected as a reason to prevent the proposed disposal of the land.

9 ALFRED CORRY MUSEUM, FERRY ROAD, SOUTHWOLD

A Member of the public took the opportunity to explain that they would like to film this part of the meeting, as one of the Trustees from the Alfred Corry Museum was not able to attend the meeting. With the agreement of all those present, this item of business was filmed.

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report which provided details on the proposed surrender of the lease for the Alfred Corry Museum and the re-grant of a lease. The site under consideration was the lifeboat museum at Southwold Harbour and planning permission had recently been granted for a single storey extension at the west end of the existing building, which was approximately 6m x 4m in size. An additional piece of land was required for the extension and access to the site. Therefore the current lease needed to be surrendered and a new lease needed to be granted, with the inclusion of the additional land. Members were advised that a new lease, in excess of 21 years, would assist the Museum to apply for additional grant funding and would help improve the long term sustainability of the Museum.

The Cabinet Member for Tourism & Economic Development stated that they were very pleased to support the recommendations contained within the report. The Museum was an extremely important tourist destination in Southwold and was even more popular than the Pier.

A Member raised concerns that the Museum would only pay a nominal rent of £10 per year for the new lease and queried whether this was in the best interests of the Council. They also raised concerns that the extension would remove vital car parking spaces in the area, although it was conceded that the nearby car park was rarely completely full. It was noted that further information would be provided in respect of the rent and review periods, outside of the meeting.

Another Member commented that they were very pleased with the developments as proposed, yet queried why there had been considerable secrecy about the discussions and a significant delay in any information being provided. The Strategic Director confirmed that he would investigate these concerns outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED

1. That the museum be allowed to surrender its current lease in favour of a new lease to include the western extension site.
2. That Delegated Authority be granted to the Head of Operations Strategic Management, acting in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources, and Head of Legal and Democratic Services, to finalise all aspects of the proposed lease on terms that best protect the Council's interests.

10 APPOINTMENT TO THE NORFOLK HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD (EXECUTIVE FUNCTION)

The Leader of the Council presented the report, which sought to make a Cabinet Member appointment to the Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board, for the remainder of the 2017/18 municipal year.

Members noted that health services in Waveney were currently provided by the Great Yarmouth and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group, which was the overall responsibility of the Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board. Health issues relating to Waveney were therefore being discussed by the Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board and it was felt that it would be appropriate for there to be a Waveney representative in attendance at these meetings, to ensure that local views were heard and taken into account.

The Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board have therefore invited Councillor M Rudd to attend their future meetings, in her capacity as Cabinet Member for Community Health and Safety, and as a Member of the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board. It was reported that this appointment would be on an informal basis initially, until the appointment could be formally ratified at the Board's Annual General Meeting in May 2018.

RESOLVED

That Councillor M Rudd, Cabinet Member for Community Health & Safety, be appointed to the Norfolk Health & Wellbeing Board, for the remainder of the 2017/18 municipal year.

11 EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

RESOLVED

That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the

grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

12 JUBILEE BEACH HUTS REDEVELOPMENT

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented a report which considered the redevelopment of the Jubilee Beach Huts in Lowestoft.

RESOLVED

1. That the production of a prototype beach chalet, to assist with the design and investigation process, be approved.
2. On the longer term development, that a budget, of the sum as discussed at the meeting, to fund the requisite site and utility surveys, structural investigations, planning reports, flood risk assessments, flood risk engineering and other fees and reports necessary to submit a planning application and produce a final performance specification/ cost which can assist to deliver a final Cabinet report in early 2018, be approved.
3. Simultaneous with the above, to proceed and submit an application for grant funding, from the programme as discussed at the meeting, and to accept the external funding if the project bid is successful and can meet the timing of the project.
4. That all works are to be preceded by a local communications and engagement process.

15 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Exempt Minutes of the Extraordinary Cabinet Meeting held on 11 October 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
- (b) That the Exempt Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 1 November 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the inclusion of the word 'Deputy' in relation to Item 14 within the Minutes. This would then read 'The *Deputy* Cabinet Member for Resources.....'.

The meeting concluded at 8.17 pm.

Chairman