

**Committee and Date**

Cabinet

7 September 2020

CABINET**Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2020 at 1pm
Virtual Meeting**

Responsible Officer: Julie Fildes

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Present

Councillor Peter Nutting (Leader)

Councillors Steve Charmley (Deputy Leader), Gwilym Butler, Dean Carroll, Lee Chapman, Steve Davenport, Robert Macey, David Minnery, Lezley Picton and Ed Potter

102 Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

103 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None were declared.

104 Minutes**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th June 2020 be approved as a correct record to be signed by the Leader.

105 Public Question Time

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services read out questions submitted by the following members of the public:

Rob Wilson – regarding the Emergency Active Travel Fund

Diane Peacock - regarding Covid 19

The full questions and responses provided by Portfolio Holders are attached to the signed minutes.

106 Member Question Time

The following Members were invited to ask their questions by the Leader. The full questions and responses provided are attached to the signed minutes.

Councillor Julian Dean asked questions regarding Shropshire Council's Annual Workforce Diversity Monitoring Report and Annual Service User Diversity Report. By way of a supplementary question he asked if it would be possible to give further consideration to how the Council heard from communities with protected characteristics. The Leader said he would ask officers to consider this going forward.

Councillor Roger Evans asked questions regarding the recent closure of a main road in his electoral division, the adherence of the closure with the times advertised and the lack of adequate notice for residents and businesses to plan alternative arrangements.

Councillor David Vasmer asked a question about the sale of the former training and development centre on Racecourse Crescent. In response to a follow up question the Portfolio Holder said every option was still open at this stage.

Councillor David Vasmer also asked if there would be a review of the need of the NWRR in the light of the impact on the roads of the Council working in new ways post Covid. In response to a follow up question about expected guidance from the Department of Transport, the Portfolio Holder said the Council was in constant discussions with the Department of Transport and up to the minute guidance taken.

Councillor Andy Boddington asked a question also from Councillors Viv Parry and Tracey Huffer about urgent road closures under experimental traffic regulation orders and what assessments took place in advance of these in relation to impact on people with disabilities, mobility issues and retail and service trades. In response to a supplementary question about bus routes into Ludlow during closures, the Portfolio Holder invited Councillor Boddington to contact him outside of the meeting.

107 Scrutiny Items

There were no scrutiny items.

108 Financial Outturn 2019/20

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Support presented the report of the Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance providing details of the revenue and capital outturn position for 2019/20. There had been an overspend of £1.692m which represented a variance of 0.3% of the gross budget. The Leader said he felt this was a reasonable amount considering the extremely challenging year.

In response to a question from the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group regarding the implications of not meeting planned savings and whether there was a likelihood of future recruitment and spending freezes, the Portfolio Holder stated that there were a number of reasons savings had not been met in 2019 – 2020, some of which had been due to floods and the pandemic but some others had been due to be delivered via income generation. There was confidence that the planned savings would be achieved and alternative means of delivering services were being considered.

The Leader said he was confident that one-off funding would be received from government in relation to the pandemic and that the local government funding review would address some of the underlying issues with revenue budgets. Any vacancy was always carefully considered and recruitment did not proceed unless absolutely necessary.

RESOLVED:

- i) that that the outturn for the revenue budget for 2019/20 is a controllable overspend of £1.692m be noted. This represents 0.3% of the original gross budget of £568.489m.
- ii) that had £0.460m of the Council's General Fund not been applied in response to the Storm Dennis emergency event, and had £0.387m Coronavirus funding not been applied to revenue at year end, the controllable outturn position would have been an overspend of £2.539m be noted.
- iii) that the level of the General Fund balance after adjusting for the outturn overspend and insurance position stands at £13.510m, which is significantly below the recommended level be noted.
- iv) that the outturn for the Housing Revenue Account for 2019/20 is an underspend of £4.106m and the level of the Housing Revenue Account reserve stands at £10.140m (2018/19 £9.813m) be noted.
- v) the increase in the level of Earmarked Reserves and Provisions (excluding delegated school balances) of £1.931 in 2019/20 and the reasons for this be noted.
- vi) that the level of school balances stand at £1.891m (2018/19 £4.178m) be noted.
- vii) That the net budget variations of £9.710m to the 2019/20 capital programme, detailed in Appendix 5 / Table 11 and the re-profiled 2019/20 capital budget of £70.982m be approved.
- viii) That the re-profiled capital budgets of £127.309m for 2020/21, including slippage of £11.773m from 2019/20, £89.835m for 2021/22 and £103.110m for 2022/23 as detailed in Appendix 5 / Table 15 be approved.
- ix) that the outturn expenditure set out in Appendix 5 of £59.209m, representing 83% of the revised capital budget for 2019/20 be approved.
- x) That retaining a balance of capital receipts set aside of £19.619m as at 31st March 2020 to generate a one-off Minimum Revenue Provision saving of £0.693m in 2020/21.2m be approved.

109 Treasury Management Update Quarter 4 2019/20

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Support presented the report of the Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance outlining the Treasury Management

activities of the last quarter. Both he and the Leader congratulated the internal treasury team for yet again achieving a return which outperformed the benchmark - achieving 1.03% on the Council's cash balances. This outperformed the benchmark by 0.59%, and amounted to an additional income of £232,080

RESOLVED: that the position as set out in the report be approved.

110 **Financial Strategy 2021-22**

The Leader presented the report of the Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance on the Financial Strategy. He said the current situation was fast moving, announcements from government were ongoing and the position would be reviewed in the Autumn when things were clearer.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Support said he was confident covid costs would be met by the government, that the required savings would be made and a balanced position would be achieved for the next two financial years.

The Leader reported that all Council activity was under review and consideration was being given to more services being delivered remotely and to providing more of a council presence in market towns.

RESOLVED:

- i) that the revised financial projections for the Council leading to a forecast funding gap of £18.5m in the 2020/21 Financial Year, and the options identified to resolve this be noted.
- ii) That the revised financial projections for the 2021/22 Financial Year leading to a forecast funding gap of £33.3m in that year be noted.
- iii) that with additional government intervention to support the shortfall in Covid-19 costs in 2020/21, confirmation of one-off grants for 2021/22, delivery of existing savings targets in both financial years and utilisation of the Financial Strategy Reserve, a balanced budget over the two financial years can still be achieved, be noted.

111 **Shropshire Council Equality Objectives Action Plan 2020 to 2024**

The Leader presented the report on Shropshire Council Equality Objectives, pointing out its timely nature as current affairs around the world had served as an unwelcome reminder of the racial injustice and inequality in society today. These events had highlighted the need for the Council to be aware in its daily operations in particular around discrimination. He reported that he had personally reflected on the need to drive out discrimination and ensure equality and had reviewed the content of the Council's equality training and fully endorsed the work of officers and communities in a commitment to develop understanding of these issues.

The Action Plan set out a range of actions to ensure that the Council was not complacent or complicit in particular forms of discrimination. It also set out actions to address the disproportionate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic which had exposed health inequalities in the population, making work around equality, diversity and inclusion of even greater importance.

The Council had always been committed to equality and valuing diversity in its workforce and local communities. The goal was to ensure this commitment was embedded in day to day practices with all customers, colleagues and partners, alongside open dialogue and ongoing engagement with all communities in Shropshire.

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All at the Council had a role to play to bring about positive change by promoting equality and would lead by example and not tolerate discrimination, harassment or victimisation of any kind and he commended the action plan to Members.

RESOLVED:

- i. That the publication of Shropshire Council's Equality Objectives Action Plan for 2020 to 2024, in order to meet legal requirements for compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty placed upon the Council through the Equality Act 2010 be approved. (Appendix A)
- ii) That the progress made in this policy arena over the last four years, and the necessary and optimum linkages to be made between this document and associated corporate and partnership documentation, as part of good practice approaches towards meeting the needs of the diverse communities served by the Council and partners be noted. (Appendix B)
- iii) That to receive a progress report on equality developments at local and national level at a timely future date, at which point further recommendations may be tabled, specifically with regard to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic upon groupings and communities in Shropshire be approved.

112 Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED:

That in accordance with the provision of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and Paragraph 10.4(3) of the Council's Access to Information Rule, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items be approved.

113 Options for Temporary Accommodation

This item was WITHDRAWN

114 Proposed Highways and Environment Term Maintenance Contract Year 1 Settlement and Contract Amendment

RESOLVED:

That the two recommendations detailed in the report be approved.

Signed

(Chairman)

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Date:

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