



Committee and Date

Cabinet

30 July 2021

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2021

In the Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Responsible Officer: Amanda Holyoak

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Present

Councillor Lezley Picton (Chairman)

Councillors Steve Charmley (Deputy Leader), Gwilym Butler, Dean Carroll, Rob Gittins, Kirstie Hurst-Knight, Cecilia Motley and Ed Potter

1 Apologies for Absence

The Leader provided the following update since the last meeting of Cabinet:

- Although there had been an increase in the number of Covid cases in June 2021 Shropshire levels continued to remain below the national average
- The easing of lockdown would provide a boost to local people and also to the economy of the county
- The huge commitment and fantastic achievement of the vaccination programme
- The £4.3M expansion to the Bishop's Castle business park, including £3.1M of Council investment bringing jobs to the local area
- Hosting in mid June 2021 of the online Tech Severn conference on how technology can help tackle the climate change crisis, featuring an opening address by Andrew Griffith MP and attracting a global audience
- Armed Forces week and signing the Armed Forces Covenant
- Next week, marking, together with the Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire, the social care and frontline NHS workers' day and the birthday of the NHS and thanking all those who have helped so greatly during the Pandemic

Apologies were noted from Councillor Nellins who would be joining the meeting remotely.

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None were declared.

3 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2021 be confirmed a correct record. (In reply to a Group Leader who raised an issue regarding an action point being missed from the minutes, the Leader said she would look into this outside of the meeting)

4 Public Question Time

The Legal Services Manager stated that he would be reading out the questions submitted and the questions and answers provided would be available from the webpage for the meeting:

<http://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=130&MId=4228&Ver=4>

Questions were submitted from the following members of the public:

Claire Kirby – regarding project costs relating to the North West Relief Road.

Adam Shipp – regarding project costs relating to the North West Relief Road and its financial viability

Jackie Jones – regarding funding of the North West Relief Road

Ann Boskett – regarding public access to a swimming facility whilst a new swimming pool is built in Whitchurch

5 Member Question Time

Member Questions were received as follows:

Duncan Kerr – requesting an injection of resources for the cultural life of Oswestry in order to level up provision to match other major settlements in Shropshire and for the Council's Cultural Strategy to reflect this fact.

The full question and answer provided are attached to the web page for the meeting.

<http://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=130&MId=4228&Ver=4>

6 Scrutiny Items

The Chair of the Place Overview Committee presented a report of a working group of the Committee detailing its review of Shropshire Council's highways winter service policy and outlining its recommendations to support its proposed review of the highways winter service policy.

It was noted that the Place Overview Committee would be revisiting this matter.

RESOLVED:

To note the report of the Place Overview Committee Working Group on Shropshire Council's Winter Services Policy.

7 Financial Outturn 2020/2021

The Portfolio Holder for Resources presented the report providing a financial commentary on the 2020/21 Financial Year; a year dominated by the Coronavirus global pandemic. He paid tribute to staff managing the Council's business during such a testing period and was confident that structures and staff were in place to deal with the issues ahead. Lobbying Central Government for fairer funding to the county remained a high priority.

The following issues were raised:

- Carry forward of unachieved savings and underperformance of the capital programme
- Underspending in many areas, including the housing revenue account, Broadband, highways
- Lack of clarity regarding the Shrewsbury shopping centres
- Unsustainable use of reserves
- Fairer funding and the need to lobby Central Government

The Executive Director of Resources commented that the Pandemic had had huge impacts on the Council, despite this, the Council had delivered £12M of savings and of the £7M not delivered some £4M had related directly to the Covid pandemic. Referring to the £7M, he stated that almost £6M of this would be carried forward to the next year so was delayed rather than undeliverable.

Responding to concerns relating to the Shrewsbury shopping centres, the Director of Resources confirmed that profit had been delivered from these schemes and overarching figures only could be provided. The Portfolio Holder added that the acquisition of the shopping centres had provided value for money as the investment of the monies used to purchase them would have resulted in a lower level of income.

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Assets commended excellent management during exceptional circumstances and drew particular attention to the £5.2M underspend in Adult Services despite Covid and the pandemic and added that the additional costs in public health could be attributed to the Pandemic as savings had not been able to be made.

Referring to the housing revenue account underspend he stated that stewardship of this lay with the Council's arm's length management company, Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing Association and illustrated the nature of developing projects that would inevitably result in greater expenditure in some years than others.

The Leader reiterated that detail to questions raised could have been provided if advance warning of the specific areas of concern had been highlighted ahead of the meeting and added that the Finance Task and Finish Group would be looking in detail at the budgets. Furthermore, a document detailing the overall financial position of the Council would be available in the near future.

RESOLVED: to

- A. Note that the outturn for the revenue budget for 2020/21 is a controllable underspend of £0.655m (0.11% of the original gross budget of £575.462m).
- B. Note that the level of the General Fund balance after adjusting for the outturn underspend and insurance position stands at £14.091m, which is an increased balance when compared with March 2020, but is still significantly below the recommended level.
- C. Note that the Council has been sufficiently provided with revenue funding relating to Covid-19 in 2020/21, and that therefore no additional costs have had to be funded by the Council's base budget.
- D. Note that the outturn for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2020/21 is an underspend of (£3.634m) and the level of the Housing Revenue Account reserve stands at £11.341m (£10.140m in 2019/20).
- E. Note the increase in the level of Earmarked Reserves and Provisions (excluding delegated school balances) of £22.019 in 2020/21 and the reasons for this.
- F. Note that the level of school balances stand at £5.995m (£1.891m in 2019/20).
- G. Approve net budget variations of £4.812m to the 2020/21 capital programme, detailed in Appendix 9 / Table 18 and the re-profiled 2020/21 capital budget of £68.566m.
- H. Approve the re-profiled capital budgets of £157.430m for 2021/22, including slippage of £2.828m from 2020/21, £115.644m for 2022/23 and £15.070m for 2023/24 as detailed in Appendix 9 / Table 19.
- I. Accept the outturn expenditure set out in Appendix 9 of £65.738m, representing 96% of the revised capital budget for 2020/21.
- J. Approve retaining a balance of capital receipts set aside of £20.036m as at 31st March 2021 to generate a one-off Minimum Revenue Provision saving of £0.708m in 2021/22.
- K. Approve the write off of the capital loan to SCC No.1 company up to the value of £0.450m with no General Fund impact

8 Cultural Strategy

The Portfolio Holder for Communities, Place, Tourism and Transport presented the report on the Council's new Cultural Strategy entitled, "Vibrant Shropshire; Independent by Nature" setting out the ambition and strategic priorities for the cultural sector for the next 10 years. She added that the sector had been badly hit during the pandemic but the Strategy allowed the future to be faced with confidence. She drew attention to the golden threads within the Strategy namely, improved health and wellbeing, building up cultural and heritage offerings in the county, building up the local economy, tourism and the natural environment.

She commended the Strategy and stressed its importance in facilitating the Council's access to future funding opportunities. Responding to a Member's comment on timelines for its implementation, she stated that this would be complex but she would be happy to discuss and report back on this matter.

RESOLVED:

To approve "Vibrant Shropshire: Cultural Strategy 2021-31" (Appendix A) and the appendices associated with the strategy (appendices 1-5) and agree to these being published on the Shropshire Council website in July 2021.

9 Whitchurch Swimming Centre Options Report

The Portfolio Holder for Communities, Place, Tourism and Transport presented the update report on the condition of the Whitchurch Swimming Centre and options for consideration regarding the future provision of this important community facility.

In promoting support for Option 6 within the report, she stressed that a new build offered the most secure and viable option and, although resulting in significant capital outlay, it would support the long-term viability of the facility.

Responding to Members' comments she made the following points:

- The new building would offer great opportunities for young people
- The recent work on the existing library had been part of an ongoing maintenance programme and had been completed before it was understood that the existing swimming pool could not reopen
- Putting the library and swimming pool into one building would enhance the offer and may encourage users to take up other activities
- Consultation was a statutory responsibility and positive responses would be helpful to the project
- Much work had already taken place on the project

RESOLVED: to

- I. Approve that option 6 is the emerging preferred option and should be taken forward to the next stage of feasibility and due diligence.

- II. Delegate to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Place, Tourism and Transport, the ability to progress the feasibility and due diligence on the emerging new build option, including:
 - Project requirements prepared.
 - Accommodation Schedule.
 - Further review of the business case.
 - Undertake site appraisals to develop opportunities and constraints diagrams to identify opportunities and initial key project risks.
 - Strategic appraisal of planning considerations.
 - Prepare project brief including outcomes.
 - Commissioning relevant surveys.
 - Development of block plans.
 - Quantity Surveyor costings.
 - Programming.
 - Prepare initial block massing 3D views and sections to explain relationship with the existing building and scale of proposal/s.
 - Prepare precedent image and concept images for the proposal.
 - Developing Project Strategies
 - Pre-application Planning Advice.

- Implementation of a public/stakeholder engagement/consultation exercise.
- III. Approve that the additional feasibility work includes a needs assessment for a new library facility in Whitchurch and, also explores the potential for and, cost/benefits of co-locating the library in any new leisure facility development on the site. Noting that if co-locating the library emerges as part of the preferred option a specific public consultation on this will be required.

IV. Agree that the findings of the additional feasibility work be reported back to a future cabinet meeting.

10 Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) Adoption

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Regeneration and Planning presented the report proposing the adoption of a revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) following a public consultation.

He added that the SCI was a statutory document and an important statement of how the Council, as local planning authority, informed, consulted and engaged with the community on planning policy and development management. Members noted that it had been last reviewed in 2014 and had now been reviewed and revised following a 12-week consultation period.

Responding to Members' comments, the Portfolio Holder recognised the difficulties in reaching out to local communities and urged Members to encourage local people to sign up to the Council's planning portal in order to receive notifications of local applications. Site notices would be actively displayed and notification was also provided via Parish and Town Council agenda and notices.

Referring to the Government White Paper on wider changes to the planning system, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that representations had been and would continue to be made.

RESOLVED:

That the updated Statement of Community Involvement is approved by Cabinet and adopted by Shropshire Council.

11 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED:

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

12 Shropshire Community Leisure Trust - Proposed Leisure Management Contract Extension

The Portfolio Holder for Communities, Place, Tourism and Transport presented the confidential report relating to Shropshire Community Leisure Trust, proposed management contract extension.

RESOLVED:

That the two recommendations in the report be agreed.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: