



Committee and Date

Cabinet

16 January 2019

CABINET

**Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2018 in the Shrewsbury Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND
11.00 am - 12.00 pm**

Responsible Officer: Jane Palmer
Email: jane.palmer@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257712

Present

Councillor Peter Nutting (Leader)
Councillors Steve Charmley (Deputy Leader), Lezley Picton, David Minnery,
Robert Macey, Nicholas Bardsley, Lee Chapman and Steve Davenport

111 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Barrow.

112 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure declared an interest in the agenda item relating to the Shrewsbury Shopping Centres and stated that she would leave the room during consideration of this matter.

113 Minutes

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 28 November 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

114 Public Question Time

Public questions were submitted by Mr S Mulloy relating to Mardol House and by Mr P Carter relating to the designation of Longden as a Community Hub. Responses from the Portfolio Holders were read out and form part of the formal record of the meeting.

115 Member Questions

No questions were received from members of the Council.

116 Scrutiny Items - Welfare Reform Task and Finish Group Final Report

The Chair of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee, Councillor C Wild, presented the findings of the Welfare Reform Task and Finish Group that had been considered and supported by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in November 2018.

She drew attention particularly to the vital work undertaken by Landau, a supported employment and training charity originally set up the Council and suggested that Cabinet may wish to consider receiving a presentation from this organisation in future to fully appreciate its work.

A Member spoke strongly against the Government's Policy on welfare and stated that Universal Credit showed a flagrant disregard to the needs of the poor with poverty crippling some families. He drew attention to the £102M loss of income to Shropshire arising from the benefit rule changes. At the very least he urged the continuation of the Task and Finish Group to undertake further investigations into those affected and an assessment of the roll out of Universal Credit to Shropshire residents.

Another Member drew attention to the £1.1M net savings to the Council following changes to Council Tax support which resulted in many benefits recipients having to pay Council Tax for the first time. He also commented that Shropshire Council had underspent on its Discretionary Housing Payment [DHP] and monies had been returned to Central Government funds that should have been used to support local people.

The Chair of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee commented that excellent systems were now in place and the money would be efficiently allocated in future with as little as possible returned to Central Government.

The Chief Executive highlighted the new opportunities for improvement that would be afforded through the Council's digital platform whereby a single 'front door' would allow improved tracking and ultimately better support to those in need. He added that more work was needed in this area and a report would be presented to Cabinet in the New Year on these issues. The Leader agreed this way forward and added that getting people back into work and employment also formed part of the equation.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the recommendations from the Welfare Reform Task and Finish Group, as supported by the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee be approved, as follows:
 - That a single process and procedure for managing applications for discretionary hardship support be produced;
 - That work be undertaken with partners to develop a single strategy for supporting people receiving benefits;
 - That any Welfare Strategy be focussed on supporting people into work;

- That ways to better co-ordinate work to support individuals and families be explored with the Council's partners
- ii) That a report on the steps to be taken to implement i) above be made to a future meeting of Cabinet

117 Financial Strategy 2019/20 to 2023/24

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented a report from the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance [s151 Officer] on the Council's Financial Strategy 2019/20 to 2023/24 and provided an update on work completed over the Autumn, including a review of delivery against the plans set out in February and a range of proposals to enable a balanced budget to be set for 2019/20.

A Member commented on the brevity of the report and the dearth of information relating to some of the budget savings and drew particular attention to monies outstanding to the Council from the CCG. The Portfolio Holder for Adult Services, Health and Social Housing reported that the legacy debt had been paid and the figures within the report related to commissioning work; he anticipated that savings would be delivered,

Another Member voiced grave concerns regarding the financial situation of the authority resulting from Government policies. Reliance on the Government's Fairer Funding Strategy was, he believed, a massive gamble.

The Leader gave assurances that the Council would deliver a balanced budget in this and the next financial year. He acknowledged that there were uncertainties going forward but stated that the Council was planning on a worst-case scenario and had taken a conservative approach. The Portfolio Holder for Finance commented that beyond 2019/20 issues would be dealt with when they became certain; he acknowledged that other Councils had taken an alternative view.

RESOLVED:

That the savings proposals be approved which will deliver a balanced budget as outlined in Appendix 4 to the report, enabling the Leader of Council to take his proposed budget to consultation before reporting to Council on 28 February 2019.

118 Setting the Council Tax Taxbase and Council Tax Support for 2019/20

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented a report from the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance [Section 151 Officer] on the setting of the Council Tax taxbase and Council Tax Support Scheme 2019/20. The Leader commented on the excellent Council Tax collection rate of 98%.

RESOLVED:

That the following be agreed and recommended to Council for approval:

- i) In accordance with the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 to approve the revised discretionary power to levy a Council Tax premium in relation to dwellings which have been empty for more than two years i.e. increasing the premium to 100% in relation to dwellings which have been empty for more than two years and the resulting inclusion of an additional 503.34 Band D equivalents in the taxbase.
- ii) To approve the publication of a notice regarding the new discretionary Council Tax discount policy awarded in respect of vacant properties within 21 days of the determination.
- iii) To approve two amendments to the Council Tax Support Scheme to exempt claimants from the 20% minimum payment that are in receipt of Universal Credit that meet the qualifying criteria for the severe disability premium, and claimants in receipt of Universal Credit in receipt of limited capability for work related activity element in Universal Credit (that is the equivalent to the support element of employment and support allowance).
- iv) To approve the Council's localised Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme in 2019/20 (as amended). The scheme summary is attached at Appendix B.

On the assumption that the changes to the discount policy in relation to vacant dwellings detailed in Sections 2.1 and 7.3 of this report have been approved, Cabinet members are asked to agree and recommend to full Council:

- v) To approve, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Shropshire Council as its Council Tax taxbase for the year 2019/20, as detailed in Appendix A, totalling 111,240.10 Band D equivalents.
- vi) To note the exclusion of 9,211.79 Band D equivalents from the taxbase as a result of localised Council Tax Support.
- vii) To note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy of 0% in respect of second homes (other than those that retain a 50% discount through regulation as a result of job related protection) and note the inclusion of 729.45 Band D equivalents in the Council Tax taxbase as a result of this discount policy.
- viii) To note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy to not award a discount in respect of vacant dwellings undergoing major repair, i.e. former Class A exempt properties.
- ix) To note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy in respect of vacant dwellings, i.e. former Class C exempt properties, of 100% for one month i.e. effectively reinstating the exemption and the resulting exclusion of 294.56 band D equivalents from the taxbase.
- x) To note continuation of the "six week rule" in respect of vacant dwellings, i.e. former Class C exempt properties.

- xi) To note the Council Tax Support Scheme amendments detailed in Section 2.3 and 6 have no impact on the taxbase determination.
- xii) To approve a collection rate for the year 2019/20 of 98.0%.

119 **Treasury Management Update Quarter 2 2018/19**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented a report from the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance [s151 Officer] outlining the treasury management activities of the Council in the last Quarter.

Responding to a Member's question, the Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance stated that he would circulate further information on the investment return of 0.78% to which reference was made in paragraph 8.3 of the report.

RESOLVED:

That the position as detailed in the report be accepted.

120 **Addressing Unmet Housing Need - Outline Business Case to Establish a Wholly Owned Local Housing Company**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing Development presented a report from the Director of Place outlining the business case to establish a wholly owned Local Housing Company.

General cross Party support for this initiative was acknowledged together with the overarching accepted aim to provide the right house in the right place to meet the needs of local people.

RESOLVED:

That the following be recommended to Council:

- In principle that a Council Wholly Owned Local Housing Company be formed.
- The outline governance and constitutional arrangements for the Company detailed in the report are agreed.
- A full business case, business plan, financing and governance arrangements be developed by the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Housing Development; and be brought back for final approval.

121 **Designation of Norton in Hales, Adderley and Morton Say Parishes as a Neighbourhood Plan Area**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing Development presented a report from the Director of Place seeking approval for the application by Adderley Parish Council for the three Parish Council areas of Adderley, Moreton Say and Norton in Hales to be considered as a single Neighbourhood Area for the purposes of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the proposed Neighbourhood Area identified on the map in Appendix 2, covering the three Parish Council areas of Adderley, Moreton Say and Norton in Hales (minus the area already covered by the Market Drayton Neighbourhood Area), be agreed as an appropriate basis for the development of a Neighbourhood Plan and notifies Adderley Parish Council accordingly.
- ii) That if the proposed Neighbourhood Area is approved, the three Parish Councils will be able to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for that area, which will be subject to public consultation, examination and local referendum as set out in Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 as amended. Assuming any subsequent local referendum if successful, Shropshire Council's full Council will then be asked to adopt the final version of the Neighbourhood Plan.

122 **European Social Fund - Community Grants**

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Commercial Support presented a report from the Director of Place summarising the content of the tender response to administer the European Social Fund Community Grants scheme for the areas of Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin. He added that £1.7M funding would be deliverable across Shropshire and Telford and would be administered by Shropshire Council. This was acknowledged by all to be good news for the area.

RESOLVED:

- i) That Shropshire Council becomes the accountable body for the Community Grants Scheme, pending the [Education and Skills Funding Agency] ESFA decision, covering the European Social Funds [ESF] Transitional area of Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin.
- ii) That the development and signing of a Partnership Agreement between Shropshire Council and Telford and Wrekin Council to ensure successful delivery of the programme, be approved

123 **Shrewsbury Shopping Centres Next Phase**

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure and the Chair of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee left the meeting during consideration of this item.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Commercial Support presented a report from the Director of Place setting out the next phase of work required to drive forward the ambition set out in the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan [SBTP] and the purchase of the three shopping centres in the town centre through a cohesive and coordinated delivery approach. He added that the parties of the tripartite agreement comprised Shropshire Council, Shrewsbury Town Council and the BID.

A Member drew attention to the need to reinforce the message that the Big Town Plan relating to the whole of the area in and around Shrewsbury. Another commented that the BTP was the product of a sound partnership together with stakeholder involvement and wide consultation that had been most beneficial and had had a positive impact.

Noting comments by some Members, the Leader stated that Workshops for all Members would be held in the New Year to discuss the options available to deliver the ambition within the SBTP. The Chair of the Place Overview Committee commented on the benefits of scrutiny involvement in this major project to serve as a critical friend and to be involved in the place shaping process going forward that could ultimately be rolled out to market towns in the county.

The Director of Place stressed the importance of place shaping and the transition to a new economy but added that strong commercial development would have to remain confidential at this stage.

In bringing the debate to a close, the Leader accepted that scrutiny would be involved in the process, would have the opportunity to look at the issues and provide feedback. He further re-iterated all Member involvement in the planned workshops in the New Year when more detailed work would get underway.

RESOLVED:

- i) That an initial budget of £500,000 be approved to secure the appropriate resources and expertise to prepare a Strategic Development Framework and Masterplan to support the delivery of the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan (to include the redevelopment of Riverside) and the appointment of two dedicated posts to support this implementation.
- ii) That the reallocation of the New Homes Bonus (NHB) capital funding previously agreed to provide part funding for the project be approved.
- iii) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Economic Growth, to procure, appoint and commence with the work required to create a Strategic Development Framework and Masterplan.

124 Exclusion of the Public and Press

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 consideration of the following item.

125 Shrewsbury Business Park

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Commercial Support presented a confidential report from the Director of Place relating to the Shrewsbury Business Park.

RESOLVED:

That the two confidential recommendations as detailed in the report be approved.

Signed (Leader)

Date: