

Cabinet

19 October 2021 – At a meeting of the Cabinet held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ.

Present: Cllr Marshall (Chairman)

Cllr Crow, Cllr J Dennis, Cllr Hunt, Cllr N Jupp, Cllr Lanzer, Cllr Russell, Cllr Urquhart, Cllr Waight, Cllr Lord and Cllr Montyn

Apologies were received from Cllr A Jupp

Also in attendance: Cllr Lord and Cllr Montyn

Part I

19. Declarations of Interest

19.1 No declarations of interest were made.

20. Minutes

20.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

21. Medium Term Financial Strategy and Council Plan 2022/23

21.1 Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Finance and Support Services. The report was introduced by Cllr Jeremy Hunt, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property who advised that the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) outlined the broad budget principles which were supported by the priorities of the council plan. Katharine Eberhart, Director of Finance and Support Services further outlined the key assumptions underpinning the review of the MTFS, service pressures and movement in the budget gap, which stood at £2.5m. Whilst this was a favourable position, there remained much uncertainty into the future, particularly surrounding Adults Social Care, price inflation, Council Tax and Business Rates and the deferred Fairer Funding review. An increase in capital borrowing was likely in order to meet new demand.

21.2 Cllr Pieter Montyn, Chairman of the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee noted the uncertain position, national challenges and their likely impact on the core budget, such as the pandemic effects, rising energy costs, Adults Social Care guidance, pay increases and National Insurance. Cllr Montyn felt clarity on local government funding was key in order to close the budget gap now and for planning future years.

21.3 Cllr Kirsty Lord, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group acknowledged the difficult financial situation and that whilst the gap was small, uncertainty was an issue. Cllr Lord expressed concern

about the proposed changes to day centre services and hoped the pandemic wasn't being used as a justification for this and other changes. Cllr Lord felt any proposals and their scrutiny should be managed in a public and transparent way.

- 21.4 A written statement from Cllr Caroline Baxter, Leader of the Labour Group was read out. Cllr Baxter recognised the good position for the forthcoming budget but felt rebuilding communities and improving the health of residents was very important and asked Cabinet to bear in mind the increased costs faced by residents when considering savings.
- 21.5 Cllr Paul Marshall, Leader of the Council said the MTFS was encouraging, affirmed the priorities of the Council Plan and demonstrated resilience. The Leader recognised the challenges and unpredictable landscape but that the assumptions built into the MTFS gave a good starting base to tackle the external pressures.
- 21.6 The following points were made by Cabinet Members in discussion:
- Cllr Bob Lanzer, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing felt the report presented a good and viable MTFS which supported the Council Plan and makes best use of resources.
 - Cllr Steve Waight, Cabinet Member for Support Services and Economic Development noted the £683m worth of Capital Programme investment in areas such as schools, highways and new ways of working which would benefit residents both directly and indirectly.
 - Cllr Jacquie Russell, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People highlighted the revenue growth pressures in the Children and Young People portfolio which were largely attributed to demand growth. She outlined the work ongoing with the launch of the Family Safeguarding Model which should see a reduction of the number of children and young people with child protection plans and phase 2 of the fostering programme. The predicted savings were on track.
 - Cllr Deborah Urquhart, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change and Deputy Leader outlined the significant funding set aside to commence work on Climate Change and energy projects over the next four years and that plans needed to be in place to ensure the Council Plan could be delivered inside the budget. Cllr Urquhart confirmed that any decisions about savings were scrutinised in a transparent and public way.
- 21.7 Cllr Hunt thanked the Director of Finance and Support Services and her team and summarised the many challenges ahead. The Leader concluded the MTFS was an optimistic first presentation ahead of setting the budget for 2022/23 and beyond and outlined the consultation and engagement timeline over the Autumn and Winter.
- 21.8 Resolved – that Cabinet:

1. Note the latest update to the Medium Term Financial Strategy
2. Agree the existing priority outcomes and underpinning theme of Our Council Plan remain unchanged as the basis for planning 2022/23 and beyond.

22. Date of Next Meeting

22.1 The next meeting of the Cabinet will be held on 16 November 2021.

The meeting ended at 11.34 am

Chairman