

Cabinet

28 January 2020 – At a meeting of the Cabinet held at 2.15 pm at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr Marshall (Chairman)

Mr Crow, Mr Elkins, Mr Hunt, Mrs Jupp, Mr Jupp, Mr Lanzer, Mrs Russell and Mrs Urquhart

Apologies were received from Mr Barling

Also in attendance: Mr Barrett-Miles, Mrs Dennis, Mr Jones and Mr Turner

Part I

33. Declarations of Interest

33.1 In accordance with the code of conduct, there were no declarations of interest made.

34. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

34.1 RESOLVED – that the minutes of meeting held on 14 January 2020 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

35. Approval of the County Council's Revenue Budget 2020/21, Capital Strategy 2020/21 to 2024/25 and Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2020/21 (CAB12_19/20)

35.1 The Cabinet considered a report by Director of Finance and Support Services (copy appended to signed minutes).

35.2 Jeremy Hunt, Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report for endorsement by Cabinet, for recommendation to County Council on 14 February 2020. Mr Hunt highlighted the following:

- Despite the financial challenges a balanced budget was being presented for 2020/21.
- The budget included funding growth of £32m and £2.6m into Children's Services and Fire and Rescue Service respectively.
- £18m of savings had been identified, and the early involvement of members in the budget process will happen again next year.
- The total proposed Council tax increase for 2020/21 was 3.99% (1.99% core element and 2% Adult Social Care).

35.3 Katharine Eberhart, Director of Finance & Support Services highlighted the Section 25 statement on the robustness and adequacy of reserves. There would be £144m in reserves by the end of this financial year and it was expected that reserve levels would be similar by the end of 2020/21. Resilience indicators had been considered and it had been concluded that there was sufficient financial resilience to deal with the risks highlighted in the report.

35.4 Joy Dennis, Chairman of Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee, provided a summary of the recommendations and comments made by the Committee in relation to the budget. The Committee welcomed the early member engagement in the budget setting process.

35.5 Michael Jones, Leader of the Labour Group commented that his group did not support some of the savings proposals and questioned whether performance issues such as drug and alcohol and serious road accidents were being addressed in the budget.

35.6 Cabinet Members welcomed the balanced budget being presented.

35.7 Cabinet Members made the following comments in relation to the budget:

- Welcoming the financial prudence of the County Council to enable an increase in core spending for vital services.
- Supporting the strength of the Capital Programme that included investment in growth programmes and major highways projects which both harnessed external funding.
- Recognising the need to understand the increase in serious road accidents and the importance of working with the Safer Sussex Partnership to address this.
- Welcoming the additional funding for Children's Services including £12m for improvement and £12m for placements. The aim was to target investment into early help to maximise outcomes.
- Recognising the need for a long-term funding settlement from Government to provide certainty and enable long term financial planning. The Cabinet would continue to work with the Local Government Association and MPs to lobby government for this and would welcome cross party support.

35.8 Andrew Barratt-Miles, Chairman of the Environment and Communities Select Committee commented that the Committee welcomed the early review of savings and hoped this would continue.

35.9 Bryan Turner, Chairman of Health and Adults Social Care Scrutiny Committee confirmed that the Committee welcomed the £10m growth in the Adults Portfolio and recognised the complexity of being able to predict demand and growth levels.

35.10 The Leader recognised the current financial challenges, but that the County Council had robust financial planning capabilities. The budget being proposed allowed for service improvements to help enable the council to show the progress it is making on its improvement journey.

35.11 RESOLVED – that Cabinet endorses the County Council Budget for 2020/21, as set out in Appendix A and Annex 1, the Capital Strategy set out in Annex 2(a) and the Treasury Management Strategy set out in Annex 2(b), for approval by County Council on 14 February 2020.

36. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

36.1 The Cabinet considered a report by Director of Law and Assurance (copy appended to the signed minutes).

36.2 Cabinet Members confirmed that the Adults Services Improvement – Next Steps decision would now be considered at Cabinet in March. Work was ongoing for the West Sussex Children First Strategic Approach and therefore this decision would be taken later in the year. Cabinet would receive an update on the Practice Improvement Plan on the 18 March.

36.3 RESOLVED – Cabinet notes the progress against the Forward Plan and the decisions identified for future Cabinet meetings, taking into account the amendments outlined in paragraph 36.2 above.

37. Date of Next Meeting

37.1 It was confirmed that the next meeting of Cabinet was scheduled for 18 February 2020.

The meeting ended at 3.31 pm

Chairman