

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 24 June 2020

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Committee members present:

Councillor Brown (Chair)	Councillor Turner (Deputy Leader)
Councillor Hayes (Deputy Leader)	Councillor Chapman
Councillor Clarkson	Councillor Hollingsworth
Councillor Rowley	Councillor Linda Smith
Councillor Tidball	Councillor Upton

Also present:

Councillor James Fry
Councillor Pat Kennedy

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Gordon Mitchell, Chief Executive
Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)
Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive
Tim Sadler, Transition Director / Chairman Direct Services Companies
Nadeem Murtuja, Interim Executive Director for Communities
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing Services / Director Housing Companies
Anita Bradley, Monitoring Officer
Mish Tullar, Corporate Policy, Partnership and Communications Manager
John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer

Apologies:

None.

11. Declarations of Interest

None.

12. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None.

13. Councillor Addresses on any item for decision on the Board's agenda

Councillor Pat Kennedy addressed Cabinet in relation to item 7 of the agenda (April Budget Monitoring Report). The report included reference to the Bullingdon Community Centre and the proposal to include it in the list of capital projects to be paused because of the financial pressure faced by the Council as a result of Covid-19. The report made clear the profound effect Covid-19 was having on the Council finances and the need for radical steps to mitigate its consequences. Recent events had demonstrated the devastating effects of social isolation, loneliness and wellbeing. Local neighbourhoods and communities had come together to support one another at this difficult time. Community centres provided a vital resource to all members of society by offering company, activities and a safe meeting space for the City's diverse communities. The City Council had long recognised the value of community centres and was working with Community Associations to open them as soon as possible after the current lockdown. Talks were underway in relation to the Bullingdon Community Centre, the reconstruction of which was due to have started in May but had been paused as part of the package of mitigation measures mentioned. She was pleased that the Council remained committed to this important project but recognised that it had had to be paused because of the current exceedingly challenging financial circumstances. She looked forward to the opening of the centre in due course.

The Chair thanked Cllr Kennedy for her contribution, confirming that her views about the important role of community centres were shared by the Cabinet. The pause of this and other important projects was regrettable but, as recognised by Cllr Kennedy, there had been little alternative in this financially challenging time for the Council.

14. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

15. Items raised by Board Members

None.

16. Scrutiny Committee Reports

Finance & Performance Panel

The Finance & Performance Panel of Scrutiny Committee had met on 16 June to consider item 7 of the agenda. Councillor James Fry, speaking as Chair of the Finance & Performance Panel, was pleased that the Cabinet had felt able to accept both of its recommendations in relation to the report on the April Budget Monitoring Report. He expressed concern that estimates of the extent of the deficit were perhaps too cautious. He noted that financial support from the Government to date represented just 6-7% of the anticipated deficit over the next 4 years.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance & Asset Management, responding to the recommendations of the Finance & Performance Panel, was pleased to accept both of its recommendations.

The first recommended lobbying in favour of capitalisation. This was something which made good sense in the current climate and was something which would be happening and which had, indeed, already been raised directly with government and elsewhere. The second recommended that the £60k proposed for cycling infrastructure shouldn't be included in the pause of capital projects. There was a one-off opportunity to influence people's decisions about whether or not to cycle. Furthermore, this would be combined with additional funding for such work from the County Council, giving a strong message about the shared commitment to an important area of development. He did however sound a note of caution given that this sum was in the Medium Term Financial Strategy for several years and no guarantees could be given about its future inclusion.

17. April Budget Monitoring Report

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to update members on the estimated financial impact of the Coronavirus together with agreement upon mitigating actions.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance & Asset Management introduced the report. The effects of Covid-19 on the Council's finances were profound. He drew attention to the anticipated deficits over the next 4 financial years. The Council had sought to protect frontline services by safeguarding income streams and it was precisely those income streams which were adversely affected by Covid-19. Income projections were therefore having to be revised in a wide range of areas.

It was necessary to take careful stock of the present position. The extent of support from central government was minimal as a proportion of the additional costs incurred to date and there was uncertainty about the extent of future support. It would be necessary, also, to take stock once the immediate crisis was over of the position of, for example, the property and leisure sectors. The Council was adopting a two pronged approach, first pausing non-essential expenditure which will generate in year savings to mitigate the deficit which will accrue. Secondly, the Medium Term Financial Strategy will be reshaped, with work on it starting much earlier in the financial year than hitherto. This will inevitably involve some difficult choices and would, as always, be the subject of public consultation. The focus however will remain on delivering against the Council's values, including among others, safeguarding frontline services; narrowing the gap between rich and poor; and avoiding compulsory redundancies. He concluded by paying tribute to the significant contribution of officers in the Finance Team at this challenging time.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Agree** the mitigating actions proposed against the financial impact of the coronavirus;
2. **Note** the additional spend commitments taken under Executive Emergency powers to commit further expenditure in 2020-21 in the order of £1.5 million as detailed in paragraph 11-12; and
3. **Agree** the strategy of a transfer from reserves by the Head of Financial Services to cover the estimated increased net expenditure in 2020-21 followed by a budget re-set for 2021-22 and beyond.

18. COVID19 update and work areas moving forward

Councillors Tidball and Turner, having previously, given their apologies, left during this item.

The Assistant Chief Executive had submitted a report to provide an update to Cabinet on the issues, challenges and opportunities arising from COVID and the work underway during a phase of transition from the emergency response, through to restart, recovery and renewal.

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council, introduced the report which set out the work of the Council over the next few months in respect of its response to Covid-19. The report was framed in terms of the language being widely used elsewhere of the three phases of restart, recover and renew. A significant unknown in relation to each phase was how long each might last in parallel with recognition that there was likely to be an overlap of them for different areas of activity. The tourist industry, for example, was likely to lag behind some others. She reminded Cabinet of some of the key principles set out in the report which will underpin the work including the importance of building on new ways of working; “building back better” with particular reference to environmental benefits; ensuring the protection of the most vulnerable in society who have been greatly affected by Covid-19; and equality, diversity and inclusion. Some of the key areas of work as set out in the report but not already touched upon included the economy; working with local business; and work on the public realm in the City Centre and local centres to ensure that people have the confidence to use local business and feel safe to go out into the community. Recent events had brought into sharp focus the importance of Health, Social Care and Wellbeing which will inform the work of building back better.

Caroline Green, Assistant Chief Executive, reminded Cabinet of the recommendations which had been made by Scrutiny in respect of the report and the responses given in the paper before Cabinet.

It was noted that the response to the recommendation in relation to the suggestion of setting up a mutual bank was informed by experience elsewhere and the significant amount of work which it would require notwithstanding clear support for the principle.

In relation to the recommendation that the Health Overview Scrutiny Committee should be asked to undertake a review of the equalities impact of Covid-19, the Health and Wellbeing Board had since noted that, while potentially valuable, it would be important not to duplicate work being done elsewhere.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the report and comment on the areas of work outlined and the proposed next steps outlined at paragraphs 59 and 60 of the report.

19. Annual Update Report on the Corporate Plan 2016-20

The Assistant Chief Executive had submitted a report to seek approval for the 2019-2020 Annual Update on the Corporate Plan 2016-20.

The Chair introduced the report which set out what the Council had achieved against the targets set out in the Corporate Plan 2016-20. Notwithstanding that these objectives had been set some 4 years previously some important milestones had been

reached, in relation to, among others: the economy; the Covered Market; and housing in relation to which 75 units at Barton Park had now been handed over to the Council.

The Chair said that Cabinet had agreed to Scrutiny Committee's recommendations on this report.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Annual Update on the Corporate Plan 2016-20, as set out in Appendix 1; and
2. **Delegate** authority to the Assistant Chief Executive to make minor textual/formatting changes to the Annual Update Report in advance of publication.

20. Appointments to Outside Bodies

The Head of Law and Governance had submitted a report to agree appointments to charities, trusts, community associations and other organisations for the 2020/21 Council Year.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** appointments to charities, trusts, community associations and other organisations as shown in Appendices 1A – 1D; and note the appointments to partnerships as detailed in Appendix 1E;
2. **Note** the guidance for appointees as detailed in Appendix 2;
3. **Agree** to remove Council of Ruskin College from the list of charities, trusts, community associations and other organisations as detailed in the report; and
4. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, and where appropriate with other group leaders, to make any changes to appointments to Outside Bodies as may be required during the course of the Council year 2020/21.

21. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 08 June 2020 as a true and accurate record.

22. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

- 15 July
- 12 August
- 09 September
- 14 October
- 11 November
- 09 December

All meetings start at 6pm unless otherwise stated..

The meeting started at 4.30 pm and ended at 5.18 pm

Chair Date: Wednesday 15 July 2020