

EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in a virtual environment on Monday 14th December 2020.

Present:

Councillors D Goodfellow (Chairman), G Allen, E W R Barker, R A Faulkner and B G Peters.

Officers Present:

The Chief Executive, the Heads of Service (Sal Khan and Mark Rizk), the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Accountant (Min no 131/20 only), the Corporate and Commercial Manager (min nos 132-133/20 inclusive), the Communities and Open Spaces Manager (min no 134/20 only), the Housing Options Manager (min no 135/20 only), the Shared Services Centre Manager (Revenues, Benefits & Customer Contacts) (min no 136/20 only), the Enterprise Manager (min nos 138-139/20 inclusive) and the Principal Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present:

Cabinet Support Members Councillors Mrs B Ashcroft and S McGarry.

PART II

127/20 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest at the commencement of the meeting.

128/20 **MINUTES**

Resolved:

That the public minutes of the meeting held on 16th November 2020 be approved as a correct record.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor D Goodfellow		
Councillor G Allen		
Councillor E W R Barker		
Councillor R A Faulkner		
Councillor B G Peters		

129/20 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business submitted to the meeting pursuant to Rule 12.

130/20 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan for the period 1st December 2020 to 31st March 2021 was submitted for information.

NOTED.

131/20 **QUARTER 2 REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT 2020/21**

The report of the Head of Service (Sal Khan) on the forecast outturn position in relation to the Council's revenue budget, capital programme or expenditure, treasury and risk management activities was considered.

The following appendices had been circulated with the report:

- 1) Appendix A: Forecast variances against budget – Quarter 2 2020/21;
- 2) Appendix B: Investments at 30th September 2020;
- 3) Appendix C: Corporate and Strategic Risks – Quarter 2 2020/21.

Cabinet noted that there were forecast net pressures against the original budget of £2.5m for the full financial year against a net budget of £11.024m. However the vast majority of the pressures had arisen due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and related lockdown. The Government had provided a number of funding packages to local authorities to support them with Covid-19 related financial pressures, once this actual and estimated additional funding of £2.6m was taken into consideration, there was a small forecast net surplus to £0.1m.

Cabinet placed on record their thanks to members of the finance team for their hard work.

The reasons for making the decision below were set out in the report.

Resolved:

- 1) That the financial position at quarter two of 2020/21 in relation to revenue and capital budgets together with the degree of financial uncertainty that existed due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, be noted;
- 2) That the latest position in respect of the Council's investments and borrowing be noted;
- 3) That the corporate and strategic risks, together with actions being taken to manage these, be noted.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor D Goodfellow		
Councillor G Allen		
Councillor E W R Barker		
Councillor R A Faulkner		
Councillor B G Peters		

132/20

CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT 2020/21 – QUARTER 2

The report of the Head of Service (Sal Khan) on the progress at the end of the second quarter of the 2020/21 financial year towards achieving the priorities set out in the East Staffordshire Borough Council Corporate Plan was considered.

The following appendices had been circulated with the report:

- 1) Appendix 1: Comprehensive data on all Corporate Indicators;
- 2) Appendix 2: Data for Quarter 2 2020/21 from the benchmarking exercise coordinated by East Staffordshire Borough Council.

Cabinet noted that out of the 109 indicators for the three corporate priorities, 78 were green status; 4 were amber status; 3 were red status; 14 were not yet due to be reported; 8 had been previously agreed to be deferred and 2 had been previously agreed to be deleted and that of the 85 “live” targets: 91.76% were green status; 4.71% were amber status and 3.53% were red status.

The reasons for making the decision below were set out in the report.

Resolved:

- 1) That performance at the end of the first quarter of the 2020/21 financial year towards achieving the Council’s Corporate Priorities be considered;
- 2) That targets CR09, VFM38 & VFM39 be deferred to 2021/22.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor D Goodfellow		
Councillor G Allen		
Councillor E W R Barker		
Councillor R A Faulkner		
Councillor B G Peters		

133/20

COVID-19 EMERGENCY PLANNING UPDATE (DECEMBER 2020)

The report of the Head of Service (Sal Khan) on the latest situation and associated response in East Staffordshire by the Council and its partners to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic was considered.

Cabinet noted that the report included a backwards looking review of recent response activities considering all relevant aspects of the response including considerations regarding: People & Processes; Service Changes & Communications; Community & Partners and Finances and that throughout the response to the COVID-19 situation, critical services had continued.

The reasons for making the decision below were set out in the report.

Resolved:

That the update detailed within the report be noted.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor D Goodfellow		
Councillor G Allen		
Councillor E W R Barker		
Councillor R A Faulkner		
Councillor B G Peters		

134/20

PARKS DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2020-2030

The report of the Head of Service (Mark Rizk) on the strategic plan for the development and enhancement of parks across East Staffordshire for the next ten years was considered.

The following appendices had been circulated with the report:

- 1) Appendix A: Parks Development Plan;
- 2) Appendix B: EHIA Parks Development Plans

Cabinet noted that the strategic aim of this plan was to utilise open spaces to encourage people to exercise, offer places to relax (mentally and physically) and be mentally stimulating and accessible and that these developments would also seek to have a positive impact on the environment through sympathetic planting and/or grounds maintenance regimes. The environment and climate change was a major theme throughout the plan, with objectives around reduced mowing, wildflower planting and tree planting. As the aims set out in the plan could not be achieved with the resources available to ESBC alone, an emphasis had been placed on continued joint working with internal departments and the forging of partnerships with Parish Councils and other community organisations.

Cabinet noted that the Plan included the following series of operational actions: Clean, tidy and free of vandalism; Play equipment (new and old); Volunteers and volunteering; Trees; Places of interest with sustainability at their centre; Joint working (Internally and externally) and Finance and Funding.

The reasons for making the decision below were set out in the report.

Resolved:

That the Parks Development Plan be approved.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor D Goodfellow		
Councillor G Allen		
Councillor E W R Barker		
Councillor R A Faulkner		
Councillor B G Peters		

135/20

REFRESHED HOUSING STRATEGY 2021-2025

The report of the Head of Service (Sal Khan) on the refreshed Housing Strategy for the period 2021 to 2025 was considered.

The following appendices had been circulated with the report:

- 1) Appendix 1: DRAFT Housing Strategy 2021-2025;
- 2) Appendix 2: EHIA

Cabinet noted that the proposed Housing Strategy set the following 4 priorities:

- 1) Housing supply is promoted in line with the Local Plan, and including the utilisation of S106 commuted sums;
- 2) Capitalise on existing housing resources: facilitation of a high quality private rented sector and bringing empty homes back into use;
- 3) Maximise housing options for households on a low income: Access to Social / Affordable Housing, support for housing costs and improving access to home ownership;
- 4) Secure suitable housing for people with vulnerabilities: Adaptations and Disabled Facilities Grants, access to older persons accommodation and supported housing.

The reasons for making the decision below were set out in the report.

Resolved:

That the Housing Strategy 2021-2025 at Appendix 1 of the report be adopted

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor D Goodfellow		
Councillor G Allen		
Councillor E W R Barker		
Councillor R A Faulkner		
Councillor B G Peters		

136/20

COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR BOROUGH AND PARISH COUNCILS 2021-22

The report of the Head of Service (Sal Khan) on the amount of the Council Tax Base for East Staffordshire Borough Council and the individual parishes within the borough for the financial year 2021-22, including the allocation of Local Council tax Support Grant to Parish Councils, was considered.

The following appendices had been circulated with the report:

- 1) Appendix 1: The Billing Authority Tax Base 2021-22;
- 2) Appendix 2: The Council Tax Bases for the individual parishes within the Borough;
- 3) Appendix 3: Further calculations showing how appendix 2 has been arrived at;
- 4) Appendix 4: Allocation of Council Tax Support Grant to Parish Councils.

Cabinet noted that using the calculations indicated within the report, the tax base for the year 2021-22 would be 37,875.0, a reduction of 1.3% on the previous year, taking into account the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, including the increased cost of the local council tax support scheme, increased discounts and exemptions as well as a lower collection rate of 97.5%. The budgeted collection rate in 2019/20 and 2020/21 was 98%, however it was envisaged that collection rates would continue to be impacted during both the current pandemic and also during the recovery period.

The reasons for making the decision below were set out in the report.

Resolved:

- 1) That the amount calculated by East Staffordshire Borough Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2021-22 be 37,875.0.
- 2) That the allocation of the council tax support grant to local preceptors of £59,336 be approved and that this be apportioned in line with appendix 4 of the report.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor D Goodfellow		
Councillor G Allen		
Councillor E W R Barker		
Councillor R A Faulkner		
Councillor B G Peters		

137/20

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT SCHEME REVIEW

The report of the Head of Service (Mark Rizk) on the annual review of the Disabled Facilities Grant Service and proposed amendments to the Disabled Facilities Grants and Assistance Policy was considered.

The following appendices had been circulated with the report:

- 1) Appendix 1: Disabled Facilities Grants and Adaptations Policy
- 2) Appendix 2: Internal Audit Report

Cabinet noted that the performance of the Disabled Facilities Grant Service has been continually monitored and corrective action taken for any challenges that had arisen and that it was clear that the improvements and changes implemented, as reported in the original review in 2019, were being reflected in reduced Disabled Facilities Grant timescales.

The reasons for making the decision below were set out in the report.

Resolved:

- 1) That the amendments to the Disabled Facilities Grants and Adaptations Policy for the removal of the land charge for discretionary assistance to RSL properties, subject to Head of Service approval, be approved;
- 2) That the report and the use of discretionary funding using the Disabled Facilities Grant be noted.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor D Goodfellow		
Councillor G Allen		
Councillor E W R Barker		
Councillor R A Faulkner		
Councillor B G Peters		

138/20

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.