

CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 12 MARCH 2020

Present:

Councillor Martin E Thacker MBE JP (Chair)
Councillor Alex Dale (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Charlotte Cupit

Councillor Alan Powell

Also Present:

A Maher	Senior Governance Officer
J Dethick	Head of Finance and Resources
K Hanson	Director of Environment and Enforcement
L Hickin	Director of Corporate Resources
S Sternberg	Joint Head Of Service - Corporate Governance & Monitoring Officer
G Lucas	Interim Director of Economic Development & Growth

603 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors J Kenyon, B Lewis and P Parkin.

604 Declarations of Interest

Members were requested to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or other interests, not already on their register of interests, in any item on the agenda and withdraw from the meeting at the appropriate time.

No declarations of interest were received at this meeting.

605 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 13 February 2020 and the Special meeting held on 5 March 2020 be approved as correct records and signed by the Leader of the Council.

606 Clay Cross Town Board - Progress Report

Cabinet considered a report of Councillor M E Thacker MBE JP, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Overall Strategic Leadership, on the progress which had been made in establishing the Clay Cross Town Board.

The report explained the Board's initial work to agree a transformative 'vision' for Clay Cross, how it had identified its initial priorities and for Town Fund resources from the Government and the bidding process that it would now have to undertake. Cabinet also heard about how education institutions, the business community and the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) could participate and

contribute to the work of the Board and to help it to achieve its goals.

Cabinet discussed the report. Members welcomed the progress which had been made to-date. They were keen to ensure that the right technical assistance be procured, to ensure that the Board's bid for funding was successful and agreed to the proposed approach to achieve this.

Cabinet emphasised just how important it was that local people and businesses in Clay Cross be kept informed about the work of the Town Fund Board. Members asked that an appropriate communications strategy be put in place to ensure this.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That Cabinet noted the progress in developing the Town Deal Board and proposals for the bid for funding.
- (2) That Cabinet approved the tendering of the support to the Council and Town Board for the development of the Town Investment Plan, in line with the Town Deal prospectus timescales, as specified in the report.
- (3) That the Director of Economic Development and Growth, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, be delegated authority to finalise the tender documentation and any associated issues.
- (4) The Cabinet noted the funding for the tender would be through the capacity funding provided to Lead Town Deal Authorities.
- (5) That a Communications Strategy be developed to ensure that Clay Cross residents are updated on Town Deal Board developments.

REASON FOR DECISION – To enable the Council to make progress on preparing the bid for Town Deal funding, to assist in the regeneration of Clay Cross in line with the Clay Cross town Fund Board's vision.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED – The option of not bidding for the proposed additional funding was considered but rejected as not in the interests of Clay Cross.

607 Risk Management Strategy 2020

Cabinet considered a report of Councillor P Parkin, Portfolio Holder for Finance, on a new Risk Management Strategy for the Council. A copy of the proposed strategy was appended to the report.

Members were informed that a comprehensive review of the Council's Risk Management Framework had now taken place and that following on from this a new Risk Management Strategy had been drafted. The new strategy, it was explained, recognised that key elements of the Council's service would be delivered through partnership working and that these partnership risks also had to be addressed and mitigated.

Cabinet discussed the proposed Strategy. Members welcomed the approach and supported the role of the new Risk Management Group to provide a comprehensive oversight of risk throughout the organisation.

Cabinet made it clear that it wished to be kept informed of what specific actions were taken to achieve the goals and objectives of the strategy. To this end, Cabinet asked to receive an update report on the Risk Management Strategy later in the year.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That Cabinet approved the Council’s new approach to ‘Risk Management’ and the adoption of the new ‘Risk Management Strategy’
- (2) That an interim report on the implementation of the Risk Management Strategy be received by Cabinet before 31 October 2020.

REASON FOR DECISION – To enable the Council to maintain, develop and actively monitor, the operation of a formal systematic approach to Risk Management.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED – The Council is required to have in place a robust risk management framework. Not providing this framework was rejected.

608 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) Policy

Cabinet considered a report of Councillor P Parkin, Portfolio Holder for Finance, which sought approval for a refreshed Discretionary Housing Policy (DHP) for the Council. Members were reminded that the policy had been in place for a number of years. The refreshed version, it was explained, had been revised to ensure that it reflected recent legislative changes.

Cabinet discussed the Policy. There was strong support for the role which Discretionary Housing Payments could play in helping those requiring short term support. In this context, Members noted how applicants had to be entitled to housing benefit/universal credit and how they also had to be able to demonstrate that they would be otherwise unable to meet their housing costs.

RESOLVED – That Cabinet approved and adopted the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) Policy 2020 as appended to the report.

REASON FOR DECISION – To refresh the Council’s DHP Policy and ensure that all relevant legislative and operational changes had been taken into account and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED – No other options were considered. The Council required a DHP Policy in order to operate the scheme.

609 Urgent Items

There was no urgent business to be considered in the public session at this meeting of Cabinet.

610 Exclusion of Public

RESOLVED – That the public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the following items of business to avoid the disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006). [The category of exempt information is stated after each Minute].

611 Coronavirus - Contingency Planning

Cabinet received an update on the contingency planning arrangements that were now in place at a regional and national level to help combat the outbreak of the Coronavirus (Covid19).

612 Management of Corporate Debt - Write-off of outstanding amounts

Cabinet considered a report of Councillor P Parkin, Portfolio Holder for Finance, on the Management of the Council's Corporate Debt. The report sought Cabinet's approval for the write off of outstanding debts.

Cabinet discussed the report. Members asked for and received an assurance that everything possible had been done to recover the debts before determining that they could not be recovered and had to be written off.

RESOLVED – That the outstanding Corporate Debts, as specified in the report, be written off.

REASON FOR DECISION – To avoid additional expenditure on unrecoverable debts.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED – All available options to recover this debt were explored. The write-off was the final option in the debt management process.

(Paragraphs 3 & 5)

613 Appointment of a Facilities Manager Contractor

Cabinet considered a report which proposed the appointment of a Facilities Contractor for the Council for the provision of Planned Preventative Maintenance, Compliance and Comprehensive Repairs. Members discussed the report and indicated that they supported the proposed appointment.

RESOLVED – That Cabinet approved the appointment of Facilities Manager Contractor on the terms specified in the report.

REASON FOR DECISION – To ensure the appointment of a Facilities Manager Contractor on the most cost effective terms.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED – The option of continuing with the existing approach was considered but rejected, for the reasons specified in the report.

(Paragraph 3)

614 Urgent Items

With the agreement of the Chair, Cabinet received an update on the Budget Statement made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Members heard about the likely impact of the statement on local government finance and the possible impact on the Council.