

MINUTES

CABINET

18 OCTOBER 2022

Present:

Members:

Councillors: Williams (Leader)
Griffiths (Deputy
Leader)
Elliot
Anderson
Banks
Barrett

Officers:	C Hamilton	Chief Executive
	C Silva Donayre	Strategic Director Corporate & Commercial
	J Doe	Strategic Director Place
	M Brookes	Assistant Director Legal & Democratic
	N Howcutt	Chief Finance Officer
	L Fowell	Corporate & Democratic Support Lead Officer (minutes)

Also Attendance: Councillor Tindall

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

CA/79/21 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th September 2022 were agreed.

CA/80/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies.

CA/81/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

CA/82/21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public in attendance.

CA/83/21 REFERRALS TO CABINET

There were no referrals to Cabinet

CA/84/21 CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Cllr Williams proposed that the meeting of the 13th December be moved until 14th December and mentioned this would be taken to Full Council in November

The forward plan was noted

CA/85/21 MFTS REFRESH

Decision

It is recommended that Cabinet recommend to Council the approval of the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2022/23 –2026/27, including recommendations;

1. To note the financial projections within the 5-year Medium Term Financial Strategy and to approve the Strategy,
2. A General Fund savings target of £1,799k be approved for the 2023/24 budget-setting process;
3. A four-year General Fund savings target of £3.6m be approved for the duration of this Medium Term Financial Strategy;
4. The Chief Finance Officer will work with the Council's Senior Leadership Team and Portfolio Holders to deliver options that will achieve the saving targets identified within the strategy;
5. The Financial Planning Framework is approved to support the budget-setting process for 2023/24;
6. The Chief Finance Officer be requested to revise the Medium Term Financial Strategy and re-present to Cabinet and Council for approval if material changes to forecasts are required following future Government announcements.

Corporate Priorities

A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Building strong and vibrant communities
Ensuring economic growth and prosperity Providing good quality affordable homes,
in particular for those most in need Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service
delivery Climate and ecological emergency

Statutory Officer Comments:

Monitoring Officer:

The MTFS is an essential strategy to ensure that the Council has appropriate governance and oversight of its financial position and this report provides that overview and financial planning for the medium term.

S151 Officer:

This is a S151 Officer report.

Advice

Cllr Elliot said that this was a bit of a moving feast, as the macro and micro financial situation is changing on a daily basis. The council does need to have in place a medium term financial strategy that runs for a period of 5 years. They have headwinds coming their way with inflation, increase in supplier costs, and increase in salaries and issues with funding from central government. It was good that they had been a prudent council and had been able to absorb the shocks that had come through. With their commercial strategy that was coming forward, they could future proof any other issues that may come down the line. He thanked Nigel and the team for preparing this document he said it was clear, concise and easy to understand.

Nigel H said that they had a sustainable medium term financial strategy, it outlined that they had 3.6 million to achieve over the next five years of which they had a gap to fill of 0.8million. They have many strategies to implement and deliver; it outlines the work that had been put in over the last six to nine months to develop that strategy. He said it was a sustainable footing as long as they could deliver on the strategies that they had outlines and driving forward now.

Cllr Tindall referred to par 5.6 where is mentions “any authority that does not increase council tax by the maximum permissible amount”. He said that this was something that they had before and is most likely going to happen. Looking at the costs of living crisis going through the winter, how geared up are we to exercise the maximum advice for benefits, council tax rebates and payment for those that are going to struggle, or those struggling already and will struggle further with this increase.

Nigel Howcutt responded that in term of the proposed increase at the moment of £5 which was approximately 3.3% was significantly below current inflation levels, from that perspective it was an inflation busting increase, this was positive for those that have very few pounds in the pocket. In terms of the benefits support he said that they have a very good council tax support scheme in which they aim to help those that were financially vulnerable, however they do ask that everybody contribute a small amount towards that so they had always achieved a good level in terms of support for residents. They do have a high council tax collection rate, the highest in Hertfordshire that was because they have a fair scheme that puts resident’s front and centre. There may be proposals that comes out in the next few months around council tax regulations, around what they can and cannot do and how that changes. As a council and cabinet, they would assess any changes that the government may bring in. The fact that it was below inflation rates and about half of what average pay rates were going up by he feels that this would be one of the only bills that people receive that was not increasing astronomically.

Cllr Williams clarified that it was actually 2.3% increase and the 1% comes from growth, fairly modest against the 10% inflation rate.

Cllr Griffiths said that she took issue with Nigel saying the work that had gone on for 9 months, although it had gone on for 9 months it was fair to say that it had gone on a lot longer than the prudence they had over the years had ensured that like some councils they have not fallen over.

Nigel responded in terms of prudence or good fiscal planning they had been very astute in recent years meaning they were able to react to things like Covid in a positive way to continue to focus on their main strategies in terms of supporting frontline services. They were only able to do that because of fiscal plans they had in advance. It went beyond the time that he had been there; fiscal planning had been very strong, they have a good framework, monitoring, controls, checks and balances, supported by internal audit reports that support that as well. They also have very clean value for money external audits in the last few years as well.

Recommendation agreed

CA/86/21 ANNUAL TREASURY REPORT

Decision

1. That Cabinet recommends to Council acceptance of the report on Treasury Management performance in 2021/22 and the Prudential Indicators for 2021/22.

Corporate Priorities

A clean, safe and enjoyable environment; Building strong and vibrant communities; Ensuring economic growth and prosperity; Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need

Statutory Officer Comments:

Monitoring Officer:

No comments to add to the report

S151 Officer:

This is a Deputy S151 Officer report. Comments are contained within the body of the report.

Advice

Cllr Elliott advised that this is the usual annual review and he would like to draw attention to the fact that interest rates have increased and borrowing has gone up but we are in a fairly robust situation with regard to Treasury Management. We are

looking at other ways are to increase our returns on cash but this will be done in a very prudent way.

Recommendations agreed

CA/87/21 ELECTRIC VEHICLE STRATEGY

Decision

1. To review and approve the Electric Vehicle Strategy Cabinet www.dacorum.gov.uk
2. To delegate responsibility to the Strategic Director for People and Transformation to make any final changes prior to publication.

Corporate Priorities

- Building strong and vibrant communities
- Ensuring economic growth and prosperity
- Climate and ecological emergency

Statutory Officer Comments:

Monitoring Officer:

The strategy itself does not raise any legal issues but various contractual and land issues will arise as the strategy is delivered and continued liaison with the legal team will be required.

Deputy S151 Officer:

The strategy itself does not require financial approval. The development of an action plan, and delivery of the action plan, may require financial support or the commitment of Dacorum land and assets at which point continued liaison with the finance team will be required.

Advice

Cllr Williams said that this is a strategy for the charging structure across the Borough which is increasingly coming under scrutiny as the use of electric vehicles continues to grow. Aside from the Strategy we are working hard to achieve contracts to bring electric vehicle charging into our car parks.

The paper on Electric Vehicle Strategy was presented. Sustainable transport is a key element to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and we are very aware of the growing demand from the public regarding our approach and plans for improving availability of EV charging as well as access to electric vehicles. If approved this will be published on our website and Mel will be working through the

detailed implementation plan linked to the wider Climate and Ecological Emergency Programme delivery tracker that is being developed.

Cllr Griffiths said that she thought it was an important document to have as it lets everyone know what our position is and will hopefully get the engagement of the public and businesses. Presumably this will be a fairly fluid document that as the world changes at a substantial rate it will be updated with the changes. Cllr Griffiths thanked everyone involved in its production.

Regular reviews and scrutiny of the document will be expected as we move forward through the planning and policy. The approach to existing petrol stations being changed to charging stations is a key element also and DBC will support to businesses where possible. A discussion took place regarding street charging and the problems of providing charging points to locations in narrow streets, flats etc. and how these issues can be overcome by entering into dialogue with the various petrol stations. The charging hierarchy and approach is explained further on page 11 of the strategy. Various case studies are taking place across the country regarding cable-less charging and information is being shared.

Recommendations agreed

CA/88/21 QUARTERLY STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

Decision

That the content of the Strategic Risk Report is noted

Corporate Priorities

A clean, safe and enjoyable environment; Building strong and vibrant communities; Ensuring economic growth and prosperity; Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need; Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery; Climate and ecological emergency

Statutory Officer Comments:

Monitoring Officer:

No comments to add to the report.

S151 Officer:

This is a S151 Officer report.

Advice

Cllr Elliott presented the Quarterly Strategic Risk Register and pointed out that the funding and income are not sufficient to deliver corporate objectives however, most of it can be covered on the MTFs and actions being taken to mitigate the risk.

Another other key risk was about the issues coming from Brexit negotiations but that has all been concluded and should now be removed from the Risk Register.

Nigel Howcutt said that in terms of evolution there was a list of recommended changes to the Strategic Risk Register that senior colleagues are going through and this will be coming to Members during the next four to five weeks to review and assess. This has been brought about by Brexit still being on the Risk Register and the uncertain economic and political situation.

Recommendations agreed

The Meeting ended at 8.10 pm