

MINUTES

CABINET

20 JUNE 2023

Present:

Members:

Councillors: Tindall (Leader)
Bromham
Dhyani
England (Deputy
Leader)
Symington
Weston
Wilkie

Officers:

D Welsh	Chief Housing Officer
C Hamilton	Chief Executive
J Doe	Strategic Director Place
C Silva Donayre	Strategic Director Corporate & Commercial
M Brookes	Assistant Director Legal and Democratic
Nigel Howcutt	Chief Finance Officer (S151)
D Barratt	Assistant Director Strategic Housing
D Southam	Assistant Director Place, Communities & Enterprise
L Fowell	Corporate and Democratic Support Officer

Also Attendance:

Cllrs Williams, Douris, Birnie and Banks

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

CA/47/21 MINUTES

The Chair commented on the item regarding the Forward Plan and Cllr Anderson requesting that the Herts Prosperity Fund and release of SIL funds go to the June Cabinet. The Chair advised that this item was not on the agenda. C Hamilton explained that this followed a series of meetings regarding the release of core SIL funds and ahead of the election a number of bids were considered for funding. The intention was to bring proposals back when there was further information and further information has only provided for one of the projects bid for, which officers are currently liaising on and will bring to the next meeting. C Hamilton advised that officer will liaise with the Chair and Cllr Wilkie regarding remaining funding and proposals after summer.

Cllr England queried if the further proposals would go into the forward plan. C Hamilton confirmed that these proposals would be reviewed at the July meeting and would be noted on the forward plan.

The minutes of the previous meeting were formally approved as an accurate record.

CA/48/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

CA/49/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

CA/50/21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation

CA/51/21 REFERRALS TO CABINET

There were no referrals to Cabinet.

CA/52/21 CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The Chair noted that the release of core CIL funds for Long Marston Village Hall would be brought to the October meeting.

Cllr Birnie noted no mention of the new Local Plan and asked if there would be no Section 18 this year. The Chair advised that the Local Plan is for discussion at the next meeting. C Hamilton confirmed that the Local Plan will come back and that the timeline is currently being discussed with the administration.

The forward plan was noted.

CA/53/21 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN REPORT

Decision

1 To note the provisional financial outturn position for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account. The General Fund year-end financial performance is showing a surplus of £0.065m and the HRA is showing a deficit of £2.289m year-end position.

2 To recommend to Council the following reserve movements:

In respect of 2022/23 financial year:

- Drawdown from the Dacorum Development reserve for £0.050m for CIL admin costs to cover the shortfall in income collected for 2022/23 following the planning moratorium.
- Transfer from the Funding Equalisation Reserve of £2.849m relating to timing differences on Collection Fund income (Council Tax and Business Rates) attributable to the Council.
- Drawdown from the vehicle replacement reserve for £0.350m for financing of the Vehicle Replacement programme
- Income collected to fund future mitigation work of £0.153m to be moved to a SANG Reserve.
- £0.065m surplus in respect of the General Fund Budget for 2022/23 be moved to the Dacorum Development Reserve.

3 To recommend to Council to approve the following slippage on the capital programme:

- £3.073m to 2023/24 in respect of General Fund capital schemes
- £5.741m to 2023/24 in respect of Housing Revenue Account capital schemes.

4 To recommend to Council to approve the following supplementary Capital budgets for 2022/23:

- £0.670m Hemel Garden Communities projects, funded by government grant funding received in 2022/23.

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

Deputy S151 Officer:

This is a deputy s151 Officer report.

Advice

Cllr Symington noted the provisional financial outcome for the general fund and housing revenue account. The recommendations on reserve movements and slippage to the capital programme were also noted. Cllr Symington also noted the supplementary capital budget for the Hemel Garden Communities project for approval and the Treasury Management Strategy for adoption.

N Howcutt advised that the report has been through the scrutiny process and advised that they are on budget for 2022-23 in the General Fund. Due to pressures in the HRA as a result of the cost of living crisis, the proposal is to draw down from reserves. N Howcutt explained that the capital slippage is predominantly linked to the planning moratorium in 2022-23, which delayed some works into 2023-24.

Cllr Birnie noted that there was also slippage on non-capital of £2.5m. N Howcutt confirmed that there is no slippage in revenue. Cllr Birnie clarified that he was referring to the non-capital items in the HRA. N Howcutt confirmed that revenue has to remain within budget and that capital is the only area that has seen slippage.

Recommendation agreed

CA/54/21 STRATEGIC ASSET REVIEW

Decision

1. That Cabinet supports the proposals for the Strategic Asset Review programme and associated funding requirements.

2. Cabinet approves the allocation of £116k from the Dacorum Development reserve to finance the current shortfall in the General Fund financing for this project.

3. Cabinet approves the reallocation of £96k of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) contribution to capital budget, to support the HRA elements of this project.

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Statutory Officer Comments:

Monitoring Officer:

There are no issues to highlight at this stage and the legal team will ensure that relevant advice and guidance is provided as the project progresses to the delivery options appraisal stage under workstream 3.

S151 Officer:

The Dacorum Development reserve was set up to support future development opportunities. This project's core aim is to assess the most appropriate investment opportunities and methods of achieving the greatest outcomes, so use of this reserve is appropriate.

The HRA budget has a revenue contribution to capital in place to provide funds for future investment. This project will outline the most appropriate and efficient investment opportunities relating to the HRA assets and hence the use of this one-off financing is appropriate.

Advice

Cllr Symington noted the proposed review that will look to make the best use of council assets and generate long-term income streams to support the delivery of services for residents across Dacorum.

C Silva Donayre noted the need to ensure that they are making the best use of council assets to support the ambitions in place for Dacorum. The series of assessments will support aims for housing, regeneration and place improvements, and opportunities will be sought to generate long-term income streams to support wider service delivery and achieve strategic objectives.

D Barratt provided an overview of the proposal, advising that the work will be split into three work streams with the first being a high-level review of all assets across the portfolio. The second stream will focus on a more detailed assessment of individual asset segments, including housing estates, garages, supported housing sites and neighbourhood centres. This work will highlight opportunities to pipeline new opportunities and projects. The third work stream will look at how best to deliver any emerging projects.

Cllr Birnie commented that he was surprised that they are proposing to spend £516k given the pressure on the general fund, which is being partially funded by drawing down from the reserves. Cllr Birnie suggested that it was not the time to spend £516k on these activities

given the other areas this money could be spent on. Cllr Birnie asked whether it was the right time to spend this money.

N Howcutt advised that, for the general fund, there are contributions to reserves both in 2022-23 and 2023-24 and the general fund is not being supported by reserves. Regarding the overall asset base, N Howcutt advised there is almost £2m of assets on the balance sheet and a strategic asset review has not been carried out for a period of time, stating that it would be remiss of the organisation to not review the assets to maximise the use of these for residents and local communities across the borough. N Howcutt advised that they would be taking a coordinated approach and that this is helping to drive down the cost as much as possible, adding that much of this work will take 2-3 years when it is hoped that the economy will have improved and the Council can benefit from this.

C Silva Donayre commented that they need to look at maximising the assets to drive both income and efficiencies to support the wider ambitions for the borough around housing regeneration in the future.

The Chair asked how often asset reviews should be held. N Howcutt advised that they would look to carry out an asset review every 3-4 years and the last review took place in 2019 with some programmes identified at this point no longer able to proceed due to the pandemic.

D Barratt noted the responsibility to carry out long-term financial asset planning through the housing revenue and business planning that comes to Cabinet on an annual basis and that there is an expectation to carry out regular reviews of assets to check these remain fit for purpose.

Cllr Birnie referred to the amount of pressure on officers and that a large part of this work relies on consultants. The Chair suggested that it would be preferable to focus on this work now.

Cabinet supported the proposals for the programme of works and funding required for the first phase

Recommendation agreed

CA/55/21 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

CA/56/21 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

Decision

1. To note the award of £1,763,392 of funding under UKSPF to the Council and its approach for allocation of the funding.
2. To delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place to determine the final funding awards to grant recipients and to enter into necessary associated agreements in respect of UKSPF funding awards.

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Statutory Officer Comments:

Monitoring Officer:

All funding provided to external partners must be supported with an appropriate funding agreement and monitored by the Council to ensure that the Council can accurately report spending to DLUHC

S151 Officer:

The UKSPF grant was awarded on the basis of key specific grant criteria and the service needs to ensure these criteria are maintained through the award of funding. There is a requirement for the service in conjunction with finance to scrutinise and approve the use of these funds on an annual basis prior to Chief Executive and S151 sign off.

Advice

The Chair noted that any discussion regarding items in the appendix would need to go into Part 2.

Cllr Wilkie noted the award of £1,763,392 funding under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund ("UK SPF") and its approach for the allocation of this funding. Cllr Wilkie asked Cabinet to note the award and delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place to determine the final funding award to grant recipients and to enter into necessary associated agreements in respect of the UK SPF funding awards.

J Doe referred members to the themes of the UK SPF, as set out in section 2.4, and noted that more information regarding the proposals is included in the appendix under Part 2.

Cllr Banks noted the amount of work that went in when the funding was first made available to local authorities and how quickly the Council responded to engage with the charitable and voluntary sectors. Cllr Banks described it as an extraordinary opportunity to bring the voluntary sector together to seek their views.

Cabinet accepted the report. Cllr Tindall moved the meeting into Part 2, Please see part 2 Minutes.

Recommendation agreed

CA/57/21 APPOINTMENT OF CONTRACTOR PARADISE DEPOT

Please see Part 2 Minutes

The Meeting ended at 8.20 pm