

MINUTES

CABINET

24 NOVEMBER 2020

Councillors: Williams (Leader)
Griffiths (Deputy
Leader)
Elliot
G Sutton
Anderson
Banks

Officers:	Claire Hamilton	Chief Executive
	Mark Brookes	Assistant Director - Corporate and Contracted Services
	James Deane	Corporate Director - Finance and Operations
	James Doe	Assistant Director - Planning, Development and Regeneration
	Mark Gaynor	Corporate Director - Housing & Regeneration
	Nigel Howcutt	Assistant Director - Finance and Resources
	Stephen Mendham	Strategic Planning and Regeneration Officer
	Katie Mogan	Corporate and Democratic Support Lead Officer

Also in Attendance:

Councillor John Birnie
Councillor Terry Douris
Councillor Adrian England

The meeting began at 6.30 pm

CA/95/20 MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2020 were agreed by Members present and signed by the Chair.

CA/96/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

CA/97/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

CA/98/20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation

CA/99/20 REFERRALS TO CABINET

There were no referrals to Cabinet

CA/100/20 CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan was noted

CA/101/20 BUDGET MONITORING Q2

Decision

That the budget monitoring position for each of the above accounts be considered and:

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

1. **The approval of the revised capital programme to move £2.409m slippage identified at Quarter 2 into financial year 2021/22 as detailed in Appendix C.**

2. **The approval of supplementary revenue budgets as follows:**
 - **Supplementary budget of £300k in the Local Development Framework (LDF) budget to fund the costs of producing the Local Plan, to be funded from the LDF reserve.**

 - **Supplementary budget of £30k in the Waste Development employees budget to fund a Recycling Officer post, to be funded from the Management of Change reserve.**

3. **The approval of supplementary capital budgets as follows:**
 - **Additional capital budget of £180k in the Commercial Assets and Property Development budget to fund the costs of completion of the new Bunkers Farm cemetery, to be funded from a contribution from West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee.**

 - **Additional capital budget of £210k in the Leisure service to fund a Multi-Use Games Area at The Hemel Hempstead School.**

- **Additional capital budget of £70k to fund audio-visual improvement works at The Forum.**

4. Approve a budget virement following receipt of £200k New Burdens funding related to Revenues and Benefits. Increase the budget in Revenues and Benefits employees costs by £75k and decrease the income budget by £125k, with an offsetting increase in the budget for Corporate Grants of £200k.

Deputy Section 151 Officer

This is a Deputy S.151 Officer report.

Monitoring Officer

No comments to add to the report.

Advice

Councillor Elliot introduced the report to members which provided the usual details of the projected outturn for 2020/21 and recommends the approval of certain movements in the revised capital budget, moving £2.4 million into the next financial year. This includes £300k to fund the Local Development Plan, £30k for a waste development employee post, £180k for the Commercial Assets and Property Development budget, an additional capital budget of £210k for the leisure service to fund a multiuse games area at The Hemel Hempstead School and £70k to fund audio visual improvements at The Forum. The financial forecast outlined in the report was accurate at the end of September and the biggest driver was the impact of covid-19. Since the report was written, the Covid related forecasts have been further updated to reflect the position as at the end of October and are included in the Covid impact report which is next on the agenda.

Councillor Birnie referred to page 26, paragraph 5.2 and commented on the aging vehicle fleet and the replacement programme. He asked if this pressure would extend into next year as he had had conversations with the Group Manager who said that once the vehicle chassis had been delivered, it takes another 24 weeks for the vehicle to be completed.

Councillor Williams said the delivery will be of completed vehicles not just the chassis.

Councillor Birnie said he was informed they weren't delivered until December which would mean the actual completed vehicles wouldn't be delivered until June.

Councillor Williams responded that there might have been a misunderstanding as the completed vehicles are being delivered from December.

N Howcutt said the maintenance budget is there and used for certain vehicles, what is being projected here, is over and above the maintenance budget that currently exists. We are not expecting to incur additional maintenance costs above what is in the budget. The vehicles are delivered complete and he would check with the Group Manager about the delivery programme but was not aware of any ongoing maintenance costs into next year.

J Deane added that the reason why there are additional pressures at the moment is that the ageing fleet is being propped up. Once the new fleet arrives, the maintenance bill will decrease.

Councillor Birnie referred to the £50k pressure in appeals in paragraph 5.3. He asked if this was a one off cost because he thought Dacorum's performance on appeals had improved.

J Doe said the pressure was put under the appeals reserve heading but it wasn't a planning appeal. It was a successful judicial review against a small supermarket in Markyate that DBC lost in court. The appeals performance is good and this was a one off.

Councillor Birnie referred to the £65k pressure at the Maylands Business Centre and asked if this was covid related.

N Howcutt says this relates to the loss on rental income. We have been unable to turn around the vacant premises as quickly as we would have liked due to covid.

Councillor Birnie queried the pressure on £12k relating to cess pits and commented that he would have thought with more people at home, we would make more money from emptying.

J Deane said he would have to look into the detail and come back to Councillor Birnie outside the meeting.

Councillor Anderson added that he would have thought emptying more cess pits would drive up the costs.

Recommendations agreed.

CA/102/20 COVID-19 UPDATE

Decision

1. That the following be noted:

- (a) The projected financial impact of Covid-19 for 2020/21 as set out in section 1.

(b) The service updates provided in section 2.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND

2. The approval of £76,000 (over two years) additional funding for Citizens Advice Dacorum.

Monitoring Officer comments

The Monitoring Officer continues to monitor the key issues raised by legislative changes and relevant government guidance and ensure that effective policies and procedures are in place to assist services to continue to deliver during the pandemic and subsequent recovery phase.

S151 Officer comments

The Financial Implications section of the report have been written by the S151 officer and will continue to be monitored as actual costs become clearer. Members will be regularly updated on the financial implications of Covid-19 as they develop.

Advice

Councillor Williams introduced the report to members and highlighted the recommended to make additional funding available to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) for two years to recognise the increase in workload for them, especially in providing financial assistance.

C Hamilton added to the report to tell members that the Incident Management Team (IMT) continues to meet twice a week and the membership has been expanded to include a Communications representative to ensure that the information is cascaded appropriately after the meetings. Efforts are ongoing to identify staff to work in the local Track and Trace centre and work continues with Hertfordshire County Council to identify premises for a vaccination centre in the borough. The Environmental Health team continue to do a great job and are visiting premises to ensure they are following guidance. There continues to be a concern from county that people are reluctant to self-isolate when they have been told to and there is an increase in cases amongst the over 60s. The council continue to liaise with Everyone Active on their finances and a report will be going to Finance & Resources OSC this week. The Homeless Team are under continued pressure and the Tenancy Sustainment Team are dealing with an increase in domestic abuse cases. This is all closely monitored through IMT and members will continue to be kept up to date.

M Gaynor commented on the pressures on CAB. They are seeing an increase in case load due to increased redundancies, furlough and people moving onto Universal Credit and the delays in getting payments. Although it keeps getting

delayed, there is also the threat of private landlords being able to evict tenants. There has been a 300% increase in cases at CAB.

J Deane highlighted some of the financial implications. The overall pressure has reduced from £2.5 to £2.2 million and a lot of the pressure is forecast on the income side. There is an additional pressure this month from the Alternative Financial Model (AFM) funding from Hertfordshire County Council which is an incentive to increase recycling and divert waste from landfill. The department are collecting significantly more waste due to more people staying at home which increases the waste going to landfill so the payments are reduced. The budget allowed for an income of £300k but this has been reduced to £50k. The pressure on car parking income was reduced due to the lockdown but it is showing signs of recovery.

Councillor Tindall referred to the AFM payment and asked if this would be likely to continue or was another consequence of covid.

J Deane said the AFM is an incentive for councils to divert waste from landfill but the current situation is causing more waste to be collected and this is pushing up the county's costs.

Councillor Tindall said that the county council gave a briefing about the potential of continuing to allow staff to work from home to reduce office costs. He asked if there was a prediction for what would happen across the borough if other companies followed this trend.

J Deane said the increase in working from home would reduce AFM income and the general AFM income stream will be reduced on an annual basis. It is too early to understand any longer term plans.

Councillor Williams said that pre-covid, the AFM is something that the county sought to reduce. It is not compulsory for county to share the benefits of enhanced recycling with districts. It would be safe to assume that this income stream will not recover.

Councillor Anderson added that Herts has been considering reducing this funding for a while and this has been raised through the Herts Waste Panel and the Leader and made the point that it would no longer be in our interests to recycle.

Councillor Griffiths asked if the increase in waste is because people have been at home sorting through their houses and it is household waste or are people not separating their rubbish from recycling.

Councillor Anderson responded that there has been an increase of a third in both residual and recycling waste so people are producing increase volumes of both kinds of rubbish. When the AFM formula was produced, no one could predict the current pandemic so it is unfortunate that it is now working against us.

Councillor Williams added that an increase in residential waste is offset by a decrease in commercial waste but this is a chargeable collection.

C Hamilton added that the council were looking at the impact of covid on local retailers and their services in an economic recovery strategy which will be brought to members in due course.

J Deane said that in some cases, local shops are doing well as people stay local. There is big uncertainty in relation to a recession and how this impacts on the success of shopping centres and significant job losses.

Councillor Williams said local businesses have been able to claim one off grants and have had a year's business rates holiday which could be masking any financial issues.

Recommendations agreed.

CA/103/20 CAMELOT RUGBY CLUB LEASE

Decision

1. That subject to consideration of comments received pursuant to recommendation 2 below the principle of granting of a 75 year lease of Chaulden Lane Playing Field to Hemel Hempstead (Camelot) Rugby Union Football Club in accordance with the heads of terms at Appendix 1 be approved.
2. Delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources and the Leader of the Council to consider any representations received from the public notice published, pursuant to Section 123 Local Government Act 1972 and decide whether to proceed with the leasehold disposal and finalise the terms of disposal.

Monitoring Officer comments

Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 applies as the land is subject to an 'open land' designation and requires a local authority to advertise its intention to dispose of the land in question in a locally-circulating newspaper for a period of at least two consecutive weeks. The local authority has an obligation to give consideration to any objections that may be received and to demonstrate that it has considered these. A positive Cabinet decision would mean that this exercise would have to be undertaken and delegations are proposed to ensure that the appropriate Portfolio Holders give consideration to the responses received before proceeding.

Deputy S.151 Officer comments

The comments of the Deputy S.151 Officer are included in the body of the report.

Advice

Councillor Elliot introduced the report and the recommendations are to delegate authority to the Leader and the Portfolio Holder over the approval of the 75 year lease at Chaulden Lane Playing Field to Camelot Rugby Club. The lease will be available to the club once they have secured funding and planning permission. This will support the club's ambitions and will help them attract external funding to develop and improve the community rugby club with enhanced facilities.

Councillor Birnie asked if the Boxmoor Trust had been consulted and were in agreement.

Councillor Elliot confirmed they were.

Councillor Griffiths said this issue had been going on for some time and the club wanted a stable background instead of having many short term leases. This is a great asset to the borough.

Recommendations agreed.

CA/104/20 BROWNFIELD LAND REGISTER

Decision

That the sites listed in Parts 1 of the Brownfield Land Register (BLR) as drafted in Appendix 1 be approved and delegate authority to the Assistant Director (Planning, Development and Regeneration) to finalise the site specific information before publication and note that no sites are recommended for inclusion in Part 2.

Monitoring Officer comments

This report considers the Council's statutory requirement to review its Brownfield Land Register at least once every year. It is noted that no sites are recommended for approval in Part 2 of the register and therefore approval of Part 1 remains an Executive decision to be made by the Council's Cabinet.

Deputy S.151 Officer comments

This report meets with the statutory requirement to review the Brownfield Land Register to highlight the use of brownfield sites in the borough.

Advice

Councillor G Sutton introduced the report to members and said this report was the annual review of the Brownfield Land Register. The list of sites are reducing every year due to an increase in development but four sites have been added: Symbio

House, the Plough roundabout car wash site, 66-72 Wood Lane End and the residual land left over after the development of West Herts College.

Councillor Birnie asked if offices being converted into housing formed part of the land register.

J Doe said the aim of the register was to capture sites where there was prospect of it coming forward for housing. The council has served an Article 4 direction on some office sites in the Borough's main employment areas including Maylands Business Park and part of Hemel Hempstead town centre and this is something that will be kept under review.

S Mendham added that the sites on the register meet its criteria and this position could change over time.

Councillor Williams said his understanding was that brownfield sites were those that would be available for reuse not reconfiguring. He noted that some housing in the town centre were part of a building and not stand alone.

J Doe said the purpose of the register is to try and identify more sites for housing whether that is building it or converting an existing building.

Councillor Williams said there is very little office space left in the town centre and Dacorum hasn't been a prime site for office space in the last 10-15 years.

Councillor Griffiths noted it was difficult to read the register but asked when sites come off the register and pointed out a few sites that had already been developed.

S Mendham said it was the timing of the reporting cycle and these sites would be removed in the next reporting cycle. There is talk of a new national brownfield land register and this may affect how things are added or removed.

J Doe reassured members that office sites converted into housing does contribute towards the housing numbers in respect of the Local Plan.

Recommendations agreed.

The Meeting ended at 7.10 pm