

MINUTES

CABINET

14 DECEMBER 2022

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

Officers:

C Hamilton	Chief Executive
A Wilkie	Strategic Director People and Transformation
C Silva Donayre	Strategic Director – Corporate and Commercial
M Brookes	Assistant Director – Legal and Democratic Services
N Howcutt	Chief Finance Officer
A Robinson	Assistant Director Planning
L Fowell	Corporate & Democratic Support Lead Officer (minutes)

Also Attendance: Cllr Tindall

The meeting began at 6.00 pm

CA/103/21 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2022 were agreed by Members present and signed by the Chair.

CA/104/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

CA/105/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

CA/106/21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation

CA/107/21 **REFERRALS TO CABINET**

There were no referrals to Cabinet

CA/108/21 **CABINET FORWARD PLAN**

The forward plan was noted

CA/109/21 **KINGS LANGLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Decision

That Cabinet recommends to Full Council to formally adopt the Kings Langley Neighbourhood Plan as part of the Local Plan following a 'YES' vote at Referendum 17th November 2022

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 Neighbourhood Plan referendum produced a positive vote in favour of adopting the plan and therefore the only option available to the Council is to formally make the Kings Langley Neighbourhood Plan.

S151 Officer:

There are no direct financial implications of this decision.

Advice

Cllr Anderson introduced the report; he paid tribute to Parish Cllr John Morris who had led the project with a number of volunteers over a number of years. and was happy to take questions.

There were no questions.

Recommendation agreed

CA/110/21 **TREASURY MANAGEMENT**

Decision

That Cabinet recommends to Council acceptance of the report on Treasury Management performance for 2022/23.

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Statutory Officer Comments:

Monitoring Officer:

This report is part of the Council's financial governance and provides the required oversight to ensure that Members are fully informed of the Council's treasury management activities.

S151 Officer:

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

Advice

Cllr Elliot introduced the report and was happy to take questions.

NHowcutt added that they had allowed the additional treasury management income in the 23/24 baseline budget to reduce some of the pressures that had been impacted due to inflation; they were reacting to that increased performance.

Cllr Barratt asked in relation to the list of investments what the Debt Management Office was. NHowcutt explained that was the Government and that the DMO was their last point of call as they got the lowest return, during covid times they were charging them to leave money with them.

Recommendations agreed

CA/111/21 TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

Decision

That Members note the report and agree the:

- Digital Strategy
- People Strategy
- Communications Strategy

As annexed to this report.

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Statutory Officer Comments:

Monitoring Officer:

There are no direct legal considerations arising from the three strategies presented for approval.

Deputy S151 Officer:

The delivery of these core Council strategies will require financial support that has been projected and accounted for as part of the Council's approved MTFs, the specific annual budgets will be detailed and approved as part of the annual budget setting process.

Advice

Cllr Elliot introduced the report and thanked Aidan and his team for such a comprehensive report. He was happy to take questions.

Cllr Griffiths said that she was pleased to see this reports as it has been around for some time, she feels it was now getting to the "doing" bit as opposed to the research stage. She feels this would have a major impact, in a good way to residents and business.

Cllr Banks asked for a comment around future proofing, she understood the background work and how they were modernising and bringing in to the present, she was keen to know that they had built in some capacity to move with the future changes that were on the horizon or would they have to redo this from scratch.

AWilkie responded that as they had been developing this, particularly on the digital side they had been conscious that the changes were only getting faster. What they do not want to do is have the monolithic strategy that in five years would be completely out of date and not relative. They want to be constantly challenging themselves about what could be coming down the line. The new Head of digital was very much in the headspace of looking at what they could do to practically avoid that. The strategy talks about ensuring that they were not signing up to or wedding themselves to different technologies for a considerable amount of time. Tying themselves into long-term contracts would not be the way to go, nor tying themselves to a particular system or provider. The strategy talks about technical design authority which means that every technical decision that is made as an organisation is done so strategically by aboard who understands not only where the market is leading but also where technology is leading whilst understanding the breadth of their infrastructure. Different departments with the best will in the world would make decision around their own technology however when you look across the organisation it doesn't make sense as different systems don't tie in with each other and we misuse the technology and miss opportunities. With this

strategy, it allows them to be agile with the mind-set to look into two or more years' time when the world has moved on and they can revisit this.

Recommendations agreed

CA/112/21 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

Decision

1. That the content of the report is noted.
2. That Cabinet seek further assurance if, and where, required.

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Statutory Officer Comments:

Monitoring Officer:

The Risk Register provides an appropriate framework for the Council to monitor and review the strategic risks which could affect the Council and its operations.

S151 Officer:

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

Advice

Cllr Elliott introduced the Q2 report and was happy to take questions.

AWilkie added that in terms of the social media risk, it was clearly a risk but when they looked at the it didn't equate to the severity of the risk of a cyber-attack they would keep an eye on it and they had the policies in place.

There were no questions.

Recommendations agreed

CA/113/21 COUNCIL TAX BASE REPORT

Decision

1. Cabinet approved the Collection Fund surplus estimate of £429,119.98 as at 31 March 2023. The Dacorum Borough Council share of this surplus is £50,451.32.

2. Cabinet approved the payment profile for the surplus identified at 1) above and contained at section 2.8 to this report (Table 3).

3. Cabinet approved the calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2023/24 incorporating an estimated collection rate of 99.4%.

4. Cabinet agreed that, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by the Council as its tax base for the year 2023/24 shall be 59,922.3 and its constituent elements shall be:

Table 1 Taxbase 2023/24

Part of Area - Parished and Non Parished	100% Tax base	99.4% Tax base
Hemel Hempstead	32,266.6	32,073.0
Aldbury	482.8	479.9
Berkhamsted	8,678.5	8,626.4
Bovingdon	2,150.4	2,137.5
Chipperfield	899.8	894.4
Flamstead	667.8	663.8
Flaunden	180.1	179.0
Great Gaddesden	464.6	461.8
Kings Langley	2,377.1	2,362.8
Little Gaddesden	642.5	638.6
Markyate	1,361.3	1,353.2
Nash Mills	1,249.2	1,241.7
Nettleden with Potten End	809.7	804.9
Northchurch	1,383.6	1,375.3
Tring Rural	698.9	694.7
Tring Town	5,286.3	5,254.6
Wigginton	684.8	680.7
Total	60,284.0	59,922.3

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Statutory Officer Comments:

Monitoring Officer:

No comments to add to the report

S151 Officer:

This is a Deputy Section 151 officer report.

Advice

Cllr Elliot introduced the report and was happy to take questions.

NHowcutt said that these technical reports could be quite difficult to get your head around. He said that the report showed a £500k surplus which appears to be a big variance however they collected £113 million last year so this comes out at 0.3% in terms of what they expect to collect. The impact in Dacorum is only around £50k and they smoothed that out with the funding equalization reserve so it does not affect the overall budget. In terms of the council tax base set for 23/24, they were seeing a 1% increase, which they have modelled in the budget, so from that perspective it is in line with what they have in the budget and the medium term financial strategy. In previous years they had always achieved their collection rate on the council tax, up to period 7 or 8 they were in a good place, where they go on with the costs of living crisis there was a potential risk to that collection rate. Council tax is often lower down the list of priorities for people to pay when their income is stretched so they may see an impact on that.

Cllr Tindall asked if they had noticed many people moving from a 10 month to 12-month payment of their council tax due to the cost of living crisis.

NHowcutt said that it was difficult to give a straight answer too as around four to five years ago the council moved to a having the option for a 12 month payment plan or 10 month for residents. Many of the residents moved to the 12 month at that point. Then came covid and they saw a bigger increase. Now they were seeing similar increase levels as before covid. They expected to see more move to the 12 months as they come to the respites of February and March, people might be feeling the bite of the costs of living and may move towards to 12 months. Therefore, whilst they had not seen a greater movement in the last few months, with the economy set to affect all of the service areas and comes streams we expect it to bite now and onwards and with utility bills set to increase again, they expect potential pressures ahead.

Cllr Tindall said that it was a shame as that advanced payment was a little extra bit of income collecting interest throughout the year.

NHowcutt said that it helped with their collection rate as when you have that movement, you get to period 10 and were thinking was the collection rate lower because people were finding it hard to pay or was it because they had moved to 12 months. It also meant that a lot of the time Feb and March were a good time to collect bad debt as the normal payment wasn't coming through so it does add additional complexity to it.

Cllr Tindall asked if it took anymore officer hours to have two different payment options and would it be better to have everyone on the 12 month.

NHowcutt said that it was fractions of fractions because it was just a matter of setting up the direct debit itself; they do the same reconciliation so it was only the setting up that takes time. If they saw a massive swing towards the 12-month option then they may come back to members to look to change the policy, however he felt that some people do really like the 10 month, as it is easier as they like the holiday.

Cllr Tindall did say that he does like the 2 months off.

Cllr Anderson said that he was one of the first to change to the 12 month as he feels that it is easier.

Cllr Williams agreed it was nice to not have a bill to pay in Feb and March.

Cllr Barratt said that he was not aware that they offered a 12-month option and asked if this was something that residents were aware of.

NHowcutt said that this was something that they offer when people are having difficulty paying, it is an option on the website, and residents can fill in a form to move to the 12 months option. He admitted that they could advertise this more widely and he would go away and see what they could do towards adverts.

Cllr Barratt feels that especially during the current climate that it should be something they should advertise to help people with their cash flow.

NHowcutt said that they do offer it to people who were struggling and during covid, officers led the switch so that is why they saw growth during that period.

Cllr Griffiths mentioned that this was included in the costs of living page on the website.

Recommendations agreed

The Meeting ended at 6.22 pm