

CABINET

Monday, 23 December 2019

Present: Councillor P Hackett (Chair) Leader of the Council

Councillors E Grey Environment and Climate Change
C Jones Adult Care Health and Wellbeing
T Jones Regeneration and Growth
A Leech The Local Plan
T Usher Children Families and Education
S Whittingham Housing and Planning
J Williamson Finance and Resources

Apologies: Councillors J McManus and C Spriggs

70 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Cabinet were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary and/or any other relevant interest, in connection with any item(s) on the agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

No such declarations were made.

71 MINUTES

Resolved - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 25 November 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

72 EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

It was noted that no Key Decisions had been actioned by Cabinet Members, under delegated authority, during the period 15 November 2019 to 13 December 2019 (date of publication of Cabinet agenda).

Subsequent to the publication of the Cabinet agenda – the following Key Decision had been actioned:

Wirral Council to Commit to Keep it Local Campaign
Decision Maker: Cabinet Member - Finance & Resources
Date of decision: 20 December, 2019
Effective from: 7 January, 2020

COUNCIL BUDGET 2020/21 & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources introduced a report, as part of the Council's formal budget process, as set out in the constitution and in accordance with the legal requirements to set a balanced and sustainable budget for 2020/21.

The report also presented an update on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) covering the period from 2021/22 to 2024/25.

Councillor Janette Williamson introduced the report and stated how the challenge of setting a fair, sustainable and balanced budget gets more difficult every year, as austerity policies continued to bite.

Cabinet noted that, this year, the Council was facing an almost insurmountable financial challenge, with growing demand for services, that meant it had to find ways to reduce spending (or raising income) by £32 million in the forthcoming financial year, in addition to more than £200million in financial cuts it had been forced into delivering since 2010.

Cabinet was apprised that the Council was working hard to generate extra income in the future to aid the regeneration of Birkenhead town centre and other areas of the borough – which would in turn provide income from council-owned sites for years to come.

Members expressed support for this approach and re-enforced their commitment to broader community wealth building initiatives focused on keeping wealth in Wirral for the benefit of local residents and businesses.

A Member highlighted his deep concerns relating to the impact of financial cuts to Local Government funding that had seen various knock on effects within the Children's Services budget. He informed that it was Members' responsibility to continue to highlight concerns regarding the impact of the cuts on families, and the extreme pressures placed on Local Authorities as a result. He further informed that the number of children in care had doubled since 2010, and how prior to the austerity cuts to funding the Council had been better placed to deliver interventions before matters reached crisis point.

Cabinet reiterated their commitment to find innovative ways to use resources to improve the borough and the quality of life of its residents.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Pat Hackett, it was –

Resolved – That:

- (1) the financial proposals for 2020/21 that will be subject to consultation and further consideration by Cabinet in February 2020 be approved;**
- (2) the financial challenges facing the Council in setting a sustainable and balanced budget for the MTFP period from 2021/22 to 2024/25 be noted;**
- (3) the approach the Council is taking to close the funding gap in future years be noted; and;**
- (4) that an updated Budget Report and MTFP be presented to Cabinet in February 2020.**

74 TRANMERE ROVERS - REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources introduced a report which stated that Tranmere Rovers Football Club (the Club) had a long and successful history of working in partnership with the Council to deliver commissioned services on behalf of the Council and to deliver services that were not commissioned or paid for by the Council but supported the delivery of beneficial outcomes to Wirral residents.

The report informed that in September 2019 the Council entered into a Partnering Agreement with the club that highlighted the good historic relations and ambition to work together more transparently for the benefit of the residents of the Borough. The club was a key anchor institution within Wirral and provided many functions in support of the Council's 20 pledges. The club had approached the Council for a 50% grant of expenditure for Prenton Recreation Centre associated with physical improvements to the Recreation Centre, allowing the Club to enhance education, community sport and international business programmes.

The Council was able to agree the grant under its General Power of Competence and the grant would be funded from the Council's existing capital programme. Therefore, as the revenue impact of the Capital Programme had already been included in the 2019/20 budget approved by Full Council in March 2019, there were no adverse financial implications or implications for the council taxpayer as a result of awarding the grant.

Members expressed their support for the proposal, noting how the club's work provided help to those who were struggling, and assisted some of the borough's most vulnerable people through a variety of enhanced programmes within the local community.

On a motion by Councillor Pat Hackett, seconded by Councillor Janette Williamson, it was –

Resolved – That the request for financial assistance for a grant be approved in line with the grant conditions set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

75 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Resolved – That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test had been applied and favoured exclusion.

76 **TRANMERE ROVERS - REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

Resolved – That further to Minute 74 above, the content of the exempt appendix circulated with the agenda, be noted.