

CABINET

Meeting held on Tuesday, 26th January, 2021 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor Jason Zadrozny in the Chair;

Councillors Kier Barsby, Samantha Deakin,
Tom Hollis, Rachel Madden, David Martin,
Matthew Relf, Helen-Ann Smith,
Daniel Williamson and John Wilmott.

Officers Present: Craig Bonar, Lynn Cain, Carol Cooper-Smith,
Ruth Dennis, Joanne Froggatt, Katherine Green,
Theresa Hodgkinson, Peter Hudson, Mike Joy,
Paul Parkinson and Shane Wright.

In Attendance: Councillors Jim Blagden and David Hennigan.

CA.49 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

CA.50 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 1 December 2020 be received and approved as a correct record.

(Prior to consideration of the next item and in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4 (Order of Business), the Chairman advised that he would be moving the agenda order and considering agenda items 10 and 11 (Environmental Charter and Public Funerals) as the next items of business. Cabinet Members concurred with this course of action.)

CA.51 Environmental Charter

Cabinet received a summary of activities that the Council currently undertakes in keeping the District clean and safe and were asked to consider proposals to take further steps to ensure continuous improvement including the development of an Environmental Charter.

The Leader of the Council also took the opportunity to announce that the Council would imminently be entering into an agreement with a private contractor to provide additional support for environmental crime enforcement regarding littering and dog fouling offences. The pilot scheme would initially be running for 12 months.

Members considered the alternative option of declining to approve the development of an Environmental Charter and propose an alternative format for incorporating the enhancements as set out in the report.

RESOLVED that

- a) the significant progress made in keeping Ashfield clean and safe, be received and noted;
- b) the proposed enhancements to operational services, community engagement and environmental enforcement be endorsed and welcomed;
- c) approval be given for the development of an Environmental Charter to incorporate the enhancements set out in this report and to grant delegated authority to the Director of Place and Communities, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Streets, Parks and Town Centres, for finalisation of the Charter as required;
- d) approval be also given to the Director of Place and Communities to ensure the effective communication of the Council's current performance and the proposed Environmental Charter to Ashfield residents;
- e) the proposal to present regular performance updates to Cabinet as part of the Council's wider performance framework, be endorsed.

Reason:

To ensure Members are kept updated as to progress and proposals for enhancements to operational services, community engagement and environmental enforcement including the development of an Environmental Charter.

CA.52 Public Funerals

Due to the Council having a responsibility for Public Health Funerals under the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984, Section 46, Cabinet were requested to consider new arrangements for this service being transferred to Ashfield District Council (ADC) for its own residents, having historically been delivered by Mansfield District Council on behalf of the Council.

Members had considered the alternative option of outsourcing the service by approaching Nottingham City Council who have a dedicated Public Health Funeral Manager and also work on behalf of Gedling Borough Council. However, due to the current high numbers of Public Health funerals that Nottingham City Council managed plus the Gedling referrals, they did not have capacity or resources to take on the function for Ashfield District Council.

RESOLVED that

- a) the proposed policy relating to Public Health Funerals under the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984, Section 46, as appended to the report be approved;
- b) Council be recommended to approve (as part of the 2021/22 Annual Budget Report to Council in March 2021) the revised budget to

accommodate the statutory responsibility of £9,100 (giving a total budget of £15,000), with the revised budget being kept under review with any required variation being brought back to Cabinet for approval.

Reasons:

The policy sets out the Council's commitment to carry out Public Health Funerals and allow the Council to fulfil its statutory obligations with regards arranging the burial process of anyone who passes away on the District without anybody willing or able to make the appropriate arrangements.

The Council has a legal duty in regard to Public Health Funerals and the recommendations provide the Council with the best opportunity to ensure that anyone who passes away in the District is buried with respect and dignity.

CA.53 COVID-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel - Verbal Update

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Panel gave an update to Cabinet regarding the work undertaken at the latest meeting of the Panel.

Leader of the Council

The Leader took the opportunity to speak to the Cabinet in relation to the third national lockdown and its impact on Ashfield and the wider area. The data for positive Covid-19 tests was still showing a rise, particularly in the city of Nottingham and for Ashfield, 7,321 positive tests had been registered since the start of the third lockdown which remained the highest for all Nottinghamshire areas.

In relation to the vaccination programme, all letters had now been sent out to the over 80s and cohort 2 was commencing for people between the ages of 75 to 80. Ashfield Independent Members were currently undertaking a series of health and wellbeing calls to residents and had been assisting many to enable them to attend their first vaccine appointments.

Cabinet were advised that due to fierce lobbying by local Hucknall Members, the Clinical Commissioning Group were now addressing the lack of a vaccination centre in Hucknall with options being considered next week as to possible locations for the centre.

Finally, the Council's Revenues and Benefits Team were acknowledged and commended for their continuous delivery of grants to businesses in a fast and efficient manner.

Covid-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel Meeting – 10 December 2020

The Vice Chairman gave an overview of the discussions from the last meeting including the question and answer session with Police Inspector Mark Dickson. Police operational priorities had changed frequently over the course of the pandemic dealing with increases in incidences of domestic violence and anti-social behaviour (ASB) as well as the education and enforcement of social distancing guidelines as required.

However due to concentrated areas of ASB including Papplewick Green at Hucknall and areas in Sutton, Kirkby, Jacksdale and Underwood, Inspector Dickson had initiated additional Police patrols to address the problems being experienced. Inspector Dickson was now also meeting with Ward Members over the 4 Ashfield areas to consider issues as and when they arose.

The Panel had also spoken about and acknowledged the effective working of the Integrated Partnership Hub at the Council offices and thanked Inspector Dickson for his contribution and commitment towards this effective working partnership.

Panel Members has also had the opportunity to meet the Council's Business Support Officer and acknowledge the excellent work he and his team of Covid Information Officers were undertaking to meet and support local traders and businesses through the pandemic.

Covid-19 Response and Recovery Scrutiny Panel Chairman

The Chairman reminded Members of the County Council's contact number (0300 500 8080) for all Covid enquiries.

The Chairman and Vice Chairman had endeavoured to keep all Members in the picture regarding the latest Covid information and statistics and had circulated regular update emails accordingly. Katherine Green and her Communications Team had also circulated an excellent Covid question and answer briefing paper to Members to keep them abreast of the ever changing and often confusing, situation.

Browsing the Gov.uk website had revealed a method of collating information in the form of 'super output areas' and interesting and useful data could be gleaned from these area statistics. Asymptomatic Covid-19 testing in Mansfield was due to be launched at 2 sites imminently and it was hoped that a similar programme could be launched in Sutton in the near future.

To conclude, the Chairman gave special thanks to the Communications Team, Scrutiny and Democratic Services and the Housing and Homelessness Team for continuing to provide an efficient and effective service despite the ongoing difficulties arising from the pandemic and ongoing lockdowns.

CA.54 Corporate Plan Performance - April to September 2020 Update

Cabinet were requested to consider the Quarter 2, April to September 2020, update for the corporate performance scorecard, progress against the Corporate Plan priorities and service provision during the ongoing pandemic.

As the report was for information only, Members did not have any alternative options to consider.

RESOLVED that

- a) having reviewed the levels of performance achieved against the Corporate Plan and Corporate Scorecard, as at Quarter 2 2020/21, progress be received and noted;

- b) the significant levels of continued service provision to date, despite the impacts of the pandemic, be acknowledged accordingly.

Reasons:

The Council's ambitions for the period 2019 – 2023 are clearly identified in a set of revised and updated Corporate Priorities as presented in the Council's Corporate Plan. These were developed by Cabinet last year and have since been reviewed and updated, with particular consideration of the impact of the pandemic and intended recovery activity.

Priorities for the future and the key projects and initiatives intended to be delivered, are then translated and cascaded through the Performance and Strategic Planning Framework, into specific Service Plans to facilitate focussed delivery. The report keeps Members up to date with performance progress.

CA.55 Social Housing White Paper

Cabinet received a summary of the key implications for Ashfield District Council arising from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Social Housing White Paper.

As the report was for information only, Members did not have any alternative options to consider.

RESOLVED

that the key implications for Ashfield District Council arising from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Social Housing White Paper, as outlined in the report, be received and duly noted.

Reason:

To update Members on changes to the Regulatory regime for Council Housing and in addition, their role within it.

CA.56 Proposed Fees and Charges 2021/22

Each year the Council reviews its Fees and Charges as part of setting its Annual Budget and Cabinet were requested to consider and approve the proposed Fees & Charges booklet for 2021/22, as appended to the report.

Members considered the alternative options for varying the fees and charges, as presented to them in the report, where applicable.

RESOLVED

- a) that the proposed Fees & Charges booklet for 2021/22, as appended to the report, be approved;
- b) it be noted that all applicable increases will take effect as soon as practically possible after 1 April 2021.

Reason:

Additional income generated will meet the inflationary costs of service provision and will contribute towards the Council's saving targets and continue to support the financing of a range of services to Ashfield residents and businesses. In addition, an annual review of Fees and Charges is part of sound financial management practice and a requirement of the Council's Financial Regulations.

CA.57 Housing Rent Setting 2021/22

Prior to consideration of this item, the Leader declared a general Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interest in respect of all Members present at the meeting who were currently tenants of Council owned properties.

Cabinet were requested to consider and approve the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) rent level and other HRA accommodation related charges for Council tenants for the financial year 2021/22.

Members considered and subsequently declined the range of alternative options for rent levels and accommodation related charges, as outlined in the report.

RESOLVED

that the following HRA rent level and other HRA accommodation related charges be set for 2021/22 as follows:

- a) an average rent increase of September Consumer Price Index (CPI) (0.5%) + 1% for all Council house rents for 2021/22;
- b) a garage average rent increase of CPI (0.5%) + 1% for 2021/22;
- c) a weekly amenity charge of £1.37 (an increase of £0.02p) for all Council house properties for 2021/22;
- d) a decrease to the communal heating charges of 5% for 2021/22;
- e) an increase for water charges at Brook Street Court of 0.9% for 2021/22;
- f) an increase for service charges for the properties at Hawkers Place of Retail Price Index (RPI) at December 2020 for 2021/22.

Reasons:

1. To set a 1.5% rent increase in line with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government policy statement on rents for social housing 2019.
2. To set an increase of 1.5% on garage rents to continue covering the increasing costs of maintenance and rental collection for the Council garage sites, consistent with the approach in previous years.

3. To increase the amenity charge in line with CPI + 1% to continue covering the costs of providing the services which do not fall within the provision of the rent charge.
4. To set a decrease to the communal heating service charges. This is to pass on the decrease in prices obtained under a newly procured contract from the utility company to the Council for providing the communal heating in the applicable housing court schemes.
5. To set an increase to the service charge for water at Brook Street Court to cover the increase in prices from the utility company to the Council for providing water at Brook Street Court.
6. To set an increase of RPI for the service fee for the properties at Hawkers Place estate, Hucknall, in line with the legal agreement between the Council and the Housing Development Company.

CA.58 Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Forecast 2021/22 - 2024/25

Cabinet Members were updated on the forecast financial position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the next five years.

As the report was for information purposes only, there were no alternative options for Members to consider.

RESOLVED

that the impact of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) five year financial forecast and the inherent financial risks within, as presented, be received and noted.

Reason:

To provide Cabinet Members with an up to date medium term financial forecast for the HRA.

CA.59 Ashfield Health and Wellbeing Partnership Strategy 2021-25

Cabinet Members were updated on the new Ashfield Health and Wellbeing Partnership and requested to approve the development of the Health and Happiness Strategy 2021-2025.

Members considered the alternative option of declining to endorse the strategy but this was not recommended as the existing strategy was now out of date and a new strategy was needed to ensure the work of the Partnership remained focused in areas of greatest need.

RESOLVED that

- a) the significant progress made against the Health and Happiness theme in the Council's Corporate Plan, be received and noted;
- b) the development of the Health and Happiness Strategy 2021- 2025 and the framework for the strategy, as set out in this report, be approved;

- c) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Place and Communities to sign off the final strategy following its completion.

Reason:

The strategy will support the delivery of outcomes within the Corporate Plan's Health and Happiness theme and aligns to the work of many strategic organisations including Mid Notts. Integrated Care Partnership and Nottinghamshire Public Health. The strategy also considers the impact of Covid-19 and focuses delivery on those affected by the pandemic as one of the priority groups.

CA.60 Future High Streets Funding

Cabinet Members were updated on the successful outcome of the Future High Streets bid for Sutton in Ashfield and requested to recommend acceptance of the funding and approve the delivery of the projects as presented in the report.

Members considered the alternative option of not accepting the funding but this was not recommended as the funding provided an opportunity to deliver projects to help revitalise Sutton town centre.

RESOLVED that

- a) the update on the successful outcome of the Future High Streets bid for Sutton in Ashfield, be received and noted;
- b) Council be recommended to accept the Future High Streets funding of £6.27m;
- c) approval be given to the delivery of the projects, in principle, subject to the reworking of the business case to reflect the level of funding awarded.

Reason:

To celebrate the Future High Streets funding bid success, to recommend to Council approval of the funding and to approve delivery of the projects as presented.

The meeting closed at 12.30 pm

Chairman.