

CABINET

6 JULY 2020

Present: Councillors Forward (Chair), Fitzgerald (Vice-Chair), Barnett, Batsford, Chowney, Evans, O'Callaghan and Rogers

259. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

260. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor	Minute	Declaration
Rogers	264	Personal – Trustee of the Fellowship of St Nicholas
Forward	264	Personal – Trustee of Education Futures Trust
Forward	266	Prejudicial

261. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED – the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 9th June be approved as a true record.

The Leader of the Council announced that Councillor Davies is appointed to the Audit Committee and that Councillor Roberts, who is already a member of the Standards Committee, is appointed Vice-Chair of that Committee.

RESOLVED - the chair called over the items on the agenda, under rule 13.3 of the council's constitution, the recommendations set out in minute number 262 were agreed without being called for discussion.

262. PLANNING ENFORCEMENT POLICY UPDATED

The Assistant Director, Housing and Built Environment, submitted a report to seek approval for revisions to the Planning Enforcement Policy.

Proposed changes to the policy include

- The policy prioritises by complaint type, each priority with a time frame within which the site is visited. The existing 3-point priority framework has been replaced by a 5-point scheme This includes A new priority to carry out emergency site visits within 2 days. and replaces the existing 3 day target. This ensures that the service will be more proactive in emergency cases. The new priority 1 will apply in respect of dangerous structures, felling of TPO trees and demolition of heritage assets.

CABINET

6 JULY 2020

- Timescales for Priorities 2- 5 have been adjusted accordingly and allow between 5 days (priority 2) to a max of 20 days (priority 5).
- The policy introduces a new section to explain when enforcement action will not be appropriate and what information is needed when a complaint is submitted. The policy also now provides a link to the on-line 'report a breach' form.
- The policy is generally edited to make it more accessible for its readers.

Under rule 13.3 the recommendations of the report were agreed without being called for discussion

RESOLVED:

To approve the Revised Planning Enforcement Policy.

Reasons for the decision:

The existing Planning Enforcement Policy was approved by CMG in 2017 and sets out how the service will respond to complaints regarding alleged breaches of planning control. The policy has recently been updated and amended following a review and restructure within Planning Services.

263. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS ARISING FROM COVID-19

The Chief Finance Officer presented a report to provide details of the financial impacts of Covid-19 on the Council.

The report identifies that there will be significant and continuing impacts for 2020/21 and beyond, and also highlights the need for additional government funding.

The cost implications of Covid-19 are large and varied. The estimates are changing weekly as the impacts become better understood and the rules change.

In February 2020, before the implications of the pandemic were fully understood, the council identified that a balanced budget could only be achieved in 2020/21 using £1.182m of reserves. The forecast deficit for 2021/22 being £798,000 at that time.

The monthly return to government in May 2020 on the impact of Covid-19 identified additional costs/ loss of income amounting to some £4.9m. The estimated costs/ loss of income ranges from a best-case scenario of some £3.65m to a worst-case scenario of some £10.1m. The range is very wide as it is hard to estimate given the unknown timescales and the impact of the lockdown, and the depth/ length of any recession.

The government have provided grant funding of £985,000 to date.

The Chief Finance Officer informed the Cabinet that, whilst the initial financial impact of Covid-19 is becoming clear, there will be a far-reaching impact across all Council activities and some of these will carry on into the next financial year. However, the

CABINET

6 JULY 2020

Council has been prudent in setting aside sufficient reserves to cope with unexpected events in the short term, but will need to replenish the reserves in the future.

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy will be updated and will look to provide indicative financial forecasts for the 5-year period 2020/21 to 2024/25. It is intended that this will be considered at Cabinet on 1 September 2020.

Councillor Chowney proposed approval of the recommendations, seconded by Councillor O'Callaghan.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that:

(i) An updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy be considered by Cabinet on the 1 September 2020; this will include a mid-year review of the Capital Programme and the impacts on reserves.

(ii) To continue to review expenditure pressures and income opportunities as part of the Council's Priority Income and Expenditure Review (PIER) process in order to help achieve sustainable budgets in the future.

(iii) The Council continue to make representations for additional funding from government – both in the short and long term.

Reasons for the decision

1. Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the Council. Most, if not all, areas of council activity have been substantially impacted. The Council's financial position was difficult before the pandemic and it is now even more challenging.

2. The Council's revised Medium Term Financial Strategy will look to provide revised expenditure and income projections for 2020/21 and the years beyond. This will form the basis for producing a budget for 2021/22 albeit that until the final funding settlement is known (expected December 2020), much of the budget planning work will need to consist of scenario planning and identifying potential savings.

3. The Council was already exposed to a much greater degrees of volatility in terms of its income from Non-Domestic Rates and expenditure in terms of Council Tax Support claims – the costs falling directly on the Council and the preceptors. Deficit incurred during the year will impact on the 2021/22 accounts The potential downside risks of Covid-19 and Brexit and the increased reliance on income streams are difficult to estimate accurately as yet; the Council needs to maintain sufficient reserves to deal with these and other unexpected events still to come.

4. The Council has had enormous budget cuts every year since 2010. Given the financial pressures now being faced services will need to continue to identify and make savings in order to produce balanced budgets for future years unless there is more funding. The Council will continue to make representations to government for additional funding both in the short and long term.

264. HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS RECOVERY PLAN

CABINET

6 JULY 2020

The Assistant Director, Housing and Built Environment, presented a report to update the cabinet on the impact of the Coronavirus outbreak on housing and homelessness services and to set out our recovery plans for the next 12 months.

The number of homeless households living in emergency accommodation has increased from 205 at the start of lockdown to 240 at the end of June. Of these, 51 are discretionary placements for former rough sleepers.

The increasing use of emergency accommodation is due to ongoing homelessness presentations during lockdown; additional placements made for rough sleepers as a result of the “everyone in” instruction from the government; and a lack of move-on options in both the social and private rented sectors.

Demand for homelessness services is expected to rise significantly when the current restrictions on evictions are lifted at the end of August, particularly if this coincides with an economic downturn.

Councillor Batsford proposed approval of the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Rogers.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that:

- 1. To support the 3 priorities set out in the council’s housing and homelessness recovery plan, as set out in paragraph 11**
- 2. For Hastings Borough Council to host a Housing Solutions role, within the Mental Health Specialist Accommodation Team. To allocate funding of £6,842 for the role.**
- 3. To continue to provide dispersed temporary accommodation placements for rough sleepers. The full year net cost to the council is estimated at £643,000**
- 4. To note the net cost of the council’s statutory emergency accommodation is estimated to be £343,000 above the original budget projection for 2020/21**
- 5. To continue to lobby government to provide additional funding to help meet the rising costs of homelessness**
- 6. To resume the launch of Live, Work, Thrive and extend the programme end date until March 2023**

Reasons for the decision

The outbreak of Coronavirus has placed additional demand for on the council’s homelessness services. A range of activities are underway with partners to help reduce pressure upon the service and help mitigate the additional costs associated with extended temporary accommodation usage.

CABINET

6 JULY 2020

Councillor Forward proposed a motion for the exclusion of the public from the meeting, seconded by Councillor Rogers.

RESOLVED that the public be excluded from the meeting during the, consideration of the items of business listed below because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of “exempt” information as defined in the paragraphs of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 referred to in the relevant report.

265. FREEDOM LEISURE FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Assistant Director, Culture and Regeneration, presented a report to propose support for Freedom Leisure.

Councillor Evans proposed approval of the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Chowney.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that:

- 1. To agree financial support to Freedom Leisure with the unmitigated costs of reopening the leisure centres and reconciled through an open book process. Up to the approved amount by Cabinet, for the remainder of this financial year up to 31st March 2021.**
- 2. To delegate authority to the Assistant Director, Regeneration and Culture, and the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the lead councillor for Financial Management and Estates, and lead councillor for Natural Environment and Leisure to reduce this figure, in terms of HBC cost, in line with any additional funding received from government.**

Reasons for the decision

1. The council are committed to assisting Freedom Leisure in reopening the leisure centres in Hastings as soon as it is practicable, and officers are working with them to minimise costs to HBC for the remainder of the financial year.
2. Further detail of government funding, for HBC loss of income and expenditure, and what support government are considering for council owned leisure centres are still to be released, though this is expected shortly. Officers, under delegated authority, will work with Freedom Leisure and lead councillors in mitigating costs to HBC via utilising whatever funding is available via the government.
3. The cost of supporting these centres as closed, or mothballed, is more than opening the facilities.
4. The health and wellbeing of our residents is a priority and particularly prominent at this time of COVID-19. Ensuring the resilience of our leisure facilities will play a vital role in securing positive outcomes for our residents now and for the future.

CABINET

6 JULY 2020

266. NOTIFICATION OF ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEMS

267. POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT - CONWALLIS STREET CAR PARK

Due to a prejudicial interest Councillor Forward left the meeting for the duration of this item and Councillor Fitzgerald took the chair.

The Assistant Director, Financial Services and Revenues, presented a report to consider the revised terms for the potential development of a hotel on Cornwallis Street car park.

Councillor Chowney proposed approval of the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Rogers.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that:

Agree to proceed on the basis of revised terms – subject to the hotel chain achieving board approval.

Reasons for the decision

The revised terms may result in the scheme proceeding. The scheme remains a viable option should the Council wish to proceed.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7:06pm)