

Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held in Court Room at Eastbourne Town Hall, Grove Road, BN21 4UG on 1 December 2021 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor David Tutt (Chair).

Councillors Stephen Holt (Deputy-Chair), Margaret Bannister, Jonathan Dow, Alan Shuttleworth and Colin Swansborough.

Officers in attendance:

Homira Javadi (Chief Finance Officer), Ian Fitzpatrick (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning), Tim Whelan (Director of Service Delivery) and Simon Russell (Head of Democratic Services).

31 Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2021 were submitted and approved and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

32 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was reported from Councillor Whippy.

33 Declaration of members' interests

Councillor Swansborough declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 10 (Levelling Up Fund) as a Trustee of Towner. He withdrew from the room whilst the item was being considered.

Councillor Holt declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 (Levelling Up Fund) due to his role with Your Eastbourne Business Improvement District (BID) and Chamber of Commerce, who formed part of the Stakeholder Group that supported the bid. He remained in the room and voted on the item.

34 Council tax and business rate base 2022/23

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer, asking them to approve the Council Tax Base and net yield from Business Rate Income for 2022/23, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

In presenting the report, the Chief Finance Officer reported a correction to paragraph 4.3 of the report that should read:

“The current level of Council Tax collection for mid-year is forecast to show an

in-year surplus balance of £0.996m at the end of 2021/22. However, a current collection rate of 96.52% is considered as high for 2022/23 and therefore the rate has been reduced to 96.06%.”

The Chief Finance Officer added that this was necessary as the Council was anticipating a difficult financial environment, following the withdrawal of several Government support packages and therefore the Council was taking the appropriate prudent action. The revised wording was unanimously accepted by Cabinet.

Resolved (Key decision):

(1) To agree the provisional Council Tax Base of 34,754.0 for 2022/23.

(2) To agree that the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, determine the final amounts for the Council Tax Base for 2022/23.

(3) To agree that the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, determine net yield from Business Rate income for 2022/23.

Reason for decisions:

Cabinet is required to approve the Tax Base which will be used for the purposes of calculating the 2022/23 Council Tax.

35 Local Council Tax Reduction scheme 2022/23

The Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery, seeking their recommendation to Full Council that the 2021/22 Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is adopted as the 2022/23 scheme.

Recommended to Full Council (Budget and policy framework):

(1) To recommend to Full Council that the 2021/22 Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is adopted as the 2022/23 scheme.

(2) That the Exceptional Hardship Scheme is continued in 2022/23.

Reason for decisions:

The 2022/23 scheme meets the principles of supporting the most vulnerable with the Exceptional Hardship Scheme providing an extra level of support for those most affected.

36 Corporate performance - quarter 2 - 2021/22

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Regeneration of Planning, updating members on

the Council's performance against Corporate Plan priority actions, performance indicators and targets for the second quarter of the year 2021/22.

Commentary on those performance indicators that were currently below target was detailed in the report.

The Director of Service Delivery updated the Cabinet on key performance indicator 2, and reported that 20 of the 68 outstanding businesses had now been signed up to claim expanded retail discount. Those businesses still outstanding would be receiving personal visits from the Neighbourhood First team, encouraging them to sign up.

Part B of the report detailed the Council's financial performance for the same quarter.

Thanks were conveyed to officers for their continued high performance during an exceptional period.

Resolved (Non-key decision):

(1) To note the achievements and progress against Corporate Plan priorities for 2021-22, as set out in Part A of this report.

(2) To note the General Fund, HRA and Collection Fund financial performance for the quarter, as set out in Part B of the report.

Reason for decisions:

To enable Cabinet members to consider specific aspects of the Council's progress and performance.

37 Levelling Up Fund

The Cabinet considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning, providing an update on the successful bid for Levelling Up Funding and seeking to secure the necessary delegations to enable the programme of works to commence.

Thanks were conveyed to all those involved in securing the £19,847,287 towards the regeneration of Eastbourne. The bid was focused on three projects which were a new year-round 'destination' for residents and visitors at Victoria Place, a world-class cultural, education and visitor centre at Black Robin Farm and Towner 2023, linking with the centenary celebrations of the Towner Gallery.

Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 29 November 2021 considered the report and made the following recommendation.

To request that the Cabinet consider that clear streamlined and transparent governance arrangements for Levelling up Funds are

circulated at the earliest opportunity to all Council members and key stakeholders, whilst retaining any commercial sensitivities.

The Cabinet agreed to incorporate Scrutiny Committee's recommendation into their resolution and this was detailed below.

Councillors Holt and Swansborough declared interests in this item. Councillor Swansborough withdrew from the room whilst the item was considered. Councillor Holt remained in the room and voted on the item.

Resolved (Key decision):

(1) To note the successful bid to the Levelling Up Fund, which has secured £19,847,287 towards the regeneration of Eastbourne.

(2) To approve an allocation of up to £19.9m in the General Fund Capital Programme, to be financed in full by the grant funding secured as per the recommendation above.

(3) To authorise the Director of Regeneration and Planning to enter into the Funding Agreement that will set out the commercial terms associated with the grant award, including use, access, and ongoing monitoring.

(4) To authorise the Director of Regeneration and Planning, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, in conjunction with any Project Oversight Board, to carry out all necessary actions to facilitate the recommendations and deliver the programme of works, including feasibility, financing, appointment of professional services, development, contract award(s), lettings, and determining the terms of, and authorising the execution of, all necessary documentation, in accordance with the funding parameters.

(5) To agree that clear streamlined and transparent governance arrangements for Levelling up Funds would be circulated at the earliest opportunity to all Council members and key stakeholders, whilst retaining any commercial sensitivities.

Reason for decisions:

(1) A funding offer of £19,847,287 for Eastbourne was announced on 27 October.

(2) There is a need to move at pace since the Levelling Up Fund award must be spent by March 2024 in line with Government guidance.

(3) To enable Officers to deliver in an effective and timely manner, the necessary delegations to Lead Members and Executive Officers are required to ensure that the Council can deliver the programme within the context of the timeframe.

The meeting ended at 6.27 pm

Councillor David Tutt (Chair)