

## **Cabinet**

**Minutes of meeting held remotely on 2 December 2020 at 6.00 pm.**

### **Present:**

Councillor David Tutt (Chair).

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

### **Officers in attendance:**

Robert Cottrill (Chief Executive), Homira Javadi (Chief Finance Officer), Philip Evans (Director of Tourism & Enterprise), Ian Fitzpatrick (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning), Tim Whelan (Director of Service Delivery), Becky Cooke (Assistant Director for Human Resources and Transformation), Oliver Dixon (Head of Legal Services), Jo Harper (Head of Business Planning and Performance), Millie McDevitt (Performance and Programmes Lead), Ola Owolabi (Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Corporate Finance)) and Simon Russell (Head of Democratic Services).

### **Also in attendance:**

Councillor Robert Smart (Opposition Leader).

### **25 Minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2020**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2020 were submitted and approved and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

### **26 Apologies for absence**

None were reported.

### **27 Declaration of members' interests**

Councillor Holt declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 (Council tax and business rate base 2021/22) as Chief Executive of the Business Improvement District. He remained in the room and took part in discussions.

### **28 Right to address the meeting**

Visiting member and Member of Parliament for Eastbourne, Councillor Ansell had requested to speak on agenda item 7 prior to the meeting, but unfortunately was detained on parliamentary business and was therefore unable to attend. Her apologies were noted.

Visiting member, Councillor Smart, had requested to speak on agenda items 7 and 10b. Given Cabinet and visiting members would be receiving a presentation for agenda item 7, it was agreed that Councillor Smart could cover his points under agenda item 10b.

## **29 Latest draft budget position 2021/22**

The Cabinet received a written presentation from the Chief Finance Officer on the latest draft budget position for 2021/22.

The presentation covered a recap of the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances, the latest financial figures, update on continuing discussions with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), impact of the 2021 Spending Review, modification to Section 114 guidance for local authorities, targets for the Council's Recovery and Reset programme and next steps for the authority.

Cabinet reinforced that 50% of the Council's expenditure was paid for by income it generated and fees it charged. 30% of the Council's expenditure was funded by the Council's tourism and cultural offering, which had been significantly hit by Covid-19.

Thanks were conveyed to officers, the MHCLG, Local Government Association, Member of Parliament for Eastbourne and others that had offered support and advice during this difficult time.

Councillor Tutt shared a letter that had been written on behalf of the local business community to the Cabinet Office, that reinforced the precarious situation businesses were in and the potential negative knock on effect for the Council's financial situation.

Cabinet would take advantage of available government grants and continue their commitment to carbon neutrality, looking further at eco-tourism opportunities.

### **Resolved (Non-key decision):**

To note the priority-based budgeting approach for the 2021/22 budget.

### **Reason for decisions:**

To progress the budget setting process for 2021/22.

## **30 Council tax and business rate base 2021/22**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer, seeking their approval for the Council Tax Base and net yield from Business Rate Income for 2021/22, in accordance with the Local Government Act 1992.

**Resolved (Key decision):**

- (1) To agree the provisional Council Tax Base of 34,532.2 for 2021/22.
- (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 2021/22.
- (3) To agree that the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, determine net yield from Business Rate income for 2021/22.

**Reason for decisions:**

Cabinet is required to approve the Tax Base which will be used for the purposes of calculating the 2021/22 Council Tax.

**31 Local council tax reduction scheme**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery, seeking their agreement to recommend the Full Council that the 2020/21 local council tax reduction scheme be adopted as the 2021/22 scheme.

**Recommended to Full Council (Budget and policy framework):**

- (1) To recommend to Full Council that the 2020/21 Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is adopted as the 2021/22 scheme.
- (2) That the Exceptional Hardship Scheme be continued in 2021/22.

**Reason for decisions:**

The 2020/21 scheme meets the principles of supporting the most vulnerable with the Exceptional Hardship scheme providing an extra level of support for those most affected.

**32 Corporate performance - quarter 2 - 2020/2021**

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 2020-21.

Performance highlights for the quarter included council tax and business rate collection, processing of housing benefit claims and call handling times. Thanks were conveyed to officers for their continued high performance.

In addressing fly tipping and enforcement within the recycling and waste portfolio, Councillor Dow reported that fly tipping and enforcement was on the agenda for a future South East Environmental Services Ltd (SEESL) Board

meeting.

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

Visiting member, Councillor Smart addressed the Cabinet on the Council's financial performance.

The Cabinet advised that after stabilising the financial situation, the administration made a conscious decision to invest in Eastbourne's future for the wider community. Devonshire Quarter was a recent example and had it not been for Covid-19, the Council would be seeing a return on its investment. The Council would continue to work on rebuilding its reserves to a higher level.

**Resolved (Non-key decision):**

(1) To note the achievements and progress against Corporate Plan priorities for the second quarter of 2020-21, 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.

The meeting ended at 7.46 pm

Councillor David Tutt (Chair)