

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES

Monday, 8th July, 2024

Present: Cllr M A Coffin (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Cllr R P Betts, Cllr D Keers, Cllr K B Tanner and Cllr M Taylor

In attendance: Councillor M A J Hood was also present pursuant to Access to Information Rule No 23.

Virtual: Councillors L Athwal, Mrs A S Oakley, W E Palmer and M R Rhodes participated via MS Teams and joined the discussion when invited to do so by the Chair in accordance with Access to Information Rule No 23.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M D Boughton (Chair).

PART 1 - PUBLIC

CB 24/76 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

For reasons of transparency, Councillor M Taylor declared an Other Significant Interest on the grounds of being the Chairman of Borough Green Parish Council who were referenced in the report on Community Development Grants (Item 7). He withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item and took no part in the discussion and voting thereon.

CB 24/77 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 4 June 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR CORPORATE MONITORING

CB 24/78 CORPORATE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The report of the Management Team provided data on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that were aligned to the Corporate Strategy 2023 – 2027 and monitored on a quarterly or annual basis. The data provided related to the period up to the end of March 2024 and aimed to provide analysis about the performance of the Borough Council and support its improvement.

Members noted a number of positive trends including those relating to Affordable Housing delivery, the running of the Leisure Centres, Anti-Social Behaviour and residents signing up to Myaccount and the TMBC app. Conversely, decisions on planning applications had seen a negative trend, as had the number of fly tipping incidents in the borough. Further detail on these trends were set out at 1.1.2 to 1.1.5 of the report.

Questions were raised over KPI Refs 100 to 102 regarding planning applications and as advised by the Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor M Taylor, officers would be requested to report on the slight downward trend at a future date. Reference was also made to the restricted contact hours currently in place to enable Planning officers to address case backlogs and support the implementation of the Agile system, for which Councillor Taylor undertook to investigate and report in due course. He also took the opportunity to provide a positive update on KPI Ref 032 in respect of Housing Land Supply which had since improved to 4.3 (years).

With regard to KPI Refs 013 and 014 regarding sickness absence, it was noted that whilst no emerging trend had been identified, sickness levels had been kept under regular review by the Management Team.

In response to a query raised over KPI Ref 029 regarding fly tipping incidents, the Deputy Leader confirmed that new signages would be installed to reflect the new increased fines and active enforcement would be imposed through any retendered contractor to ensure a strong message would be sent to any offenders.

Positive trends in respect of KPI Refs 005 and 006 in addressing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) cases and victim-based crimes were welcomed and the benefit of having an ASB Enforcement Team was acknowledged by Members.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL

CB 24/79 DECARBONISING AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY CAPITAL PLAN SCHEMES

Consideration was given to an updated 'Decarbonising the Council's Estate' List A Capital Plan scheme to cover all of the projects as outlined in the report, including a number of decarbonising and energy efficiency projects for which grant funding applications had been successful and several other projects being funded directly by the Borough Council, with a view to supporting delivery of the Climate Change Strategy.

Members welcomed the positive outcomes in relation to the external grant awards, details of which were set out in 1.2 of the report. In addition to the projects for which external funding had been obtained, a number of other projects which were either linked to those or had

already received approval by the Council utilising its own funding were set out in 1.3 of the report.

It was noted that the capital plan scheme 'Decarbonising the Council's Estate (P06AM)' was previously approved based on an estimate of an external funding of £800,000 and a Council contribution of £430,000, which figures now required updating following confirmation of the grant awards. A revised set of allocations to individual projects to be covered by the updated capital scheme were suggested in 1.4.3 of the report, with a total of £930,000 from TMBC funding and £1,644,799 from external grant funding.

Individual project evaluations for the new schemes were attached at Annexes 1 to 3 for information.

Although slight concern was expressed over the uncertainty around the noise level of the air source heat pumps to be installed at the Larkfield Leisure Centre, Members were assured that the level of noise would be taken into account as part of the planning process with due consideration given to mitigation measures if necessary.

In addition, particular reference was made to 1.6 of the report where the proposed procurement routes for the projects were set out and duly considered by Members.

RESOLVED: That quotations and tenders in respect of the following decarbonising and energy efficiency projects be sought and procurement routes be approved as required by paragraph 8.1 of the Borough Council's Contract Procedure Rules, including the use of frameworks where appropriate, as set out below and detailed in 1.6 of the report:

- (1) in respect of the re-felt work at Larkfield Leisure Centre, the LHC RS4 Roofing Systems Framework be utilised;
- (2) in respect of the installation of solar PV at Larkfield Leisure Centre, the Laser Consult, Design, Install Framework be utilised; and
- (3) in respect of the installation of air source heat pumps at Larkfield Leisure Centre, an open tender exercise be undertaken.

(Agreed by Cabinet under Decision Notice D240070CAB.)

RECOMMENDED*: That

- (1) the List A capital plan scheme 'Decarbonising the Council's Estate' be updated to include all of the projects as outlined in the report;

- (2) a revised figure of £1,644,799 attributable to external grant funding, be reflected in the updated Capital Plan Scheme; and
- (3) an increased contribution of £500,000 by the Borough Council to the Capital Plan Scheme, with £225,000 being funded from the Revenue Reserve for Capital Schemes and £275,000 being funded from the Climate Change Reserve, be approved.

***Recommended to Council**

DECISIONS TAKEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION

EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS

CB 24/80 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

(Decision Notice D240071CAB)

The report of the Deputy Chief Executive presented the assessment outcome of the applications for the second round of the Community Development Grant Scheme and sought approval of a set of grant allocations, attached at Annex 2.

The Community Development Grant Scheme was allocated with a total sum of £165,269 as part of the Borough Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan and the first round of the Scheme had successfully allocated grants to support a number of local organisations and voluntary sector groups with a total sum of £33,962, leaving an allocation of £131,307 for the second round. During the 8-week application window, 45 eligible bids had been received for grant funding of up to £5,000 and were scored against the agreed criteria as set out in Annex 1. A scaled allocation approach had been adopted due to oversubscription of the Scheme and a schedule of suggested allocations including scoring were set out in Annex 2. Detailed summary of every eligible application was included in Annex 3.

Members welcomed the positive results arising from the implementation of the second round of the Scheme and recognised the significant benefits the Scheme would bring to contribute to the local communities in addressing the cost-of-living crisis for the vulnerable, supporting healthy lifestyles, improving community safety, helping people gain skills to access the workplace and supporting environmental and carbon reduction initiatives.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the grant allocations, as set out in Annex 2 of the report, be endorsed.

CB 24/81 HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND

(Decision Notice D240072CAB)

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation presented a draft Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Household Support Fund Scheme April – September 2024 (Annex 1) and sought Members' approval of the Borough Council's approach in use of the current grant of the Household Support Fund for the borough.

Following the agreement made in April for the Borough Council to accept a grant from the Fund of £139,263 and to use it in accordance with Government guidance, a Household Support Fund Scheme had been drafted to set out the proposed use of the fund, with an objective to provide crisis support for households. The strategy for direction of funding was based on successful outcomes of previous awards, statistical returns and experience.

Particular reference was made to the deadline for the grant to be used by 30 September 2024 as unspent grant could not be carried forward. It was expected that a minimum of 50% funding would be allocated to foodbanks and fuel voucher schemes under the proposed Scheme, which also allowed for a mechanism to adapt the direction of funds in response to changing or emerging priorities throughout the lifespan.

Furthermore, Members were assured that engagements would be made with foodbanks across the borough to ensure coverage of the Scheme and support for those who were most in need.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Household Support Fund Scheme April 2024 – September 2024, attached at Annex 1, be approved;
- (2) authority for the Director of Finance & Transformation to establish an effective operational scheme to disburse funds in accordance with that document, be granted; and
- (3) significant variance in direction of spend in response to any emerging events or needs over the lifetime of the Scheme and in line with the general parameters of the Household Support Fund, be allowed, subject to agreement of the Leader, the Cabinet Member for Finance & Housing, the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance & Transformation.

EXECUTIVE NON-KEY DECISIONS**CB 24/82 2023/24 FINANCIAL OUTFURN AND MAY 2024 BUDGETARY CONTROL**

(Decision Notice D240073CAB)

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation presented Members with the 2023/24 Financial Outturn and the current financial position to the end of May 2024 for the 2024/25 Financial Year, in accordance with the Borough Council's Financial Procedure Rules. It also provided details of the savings identified to date against the current year's savings target of £305,000 and sought advice from the Cabinet on a budget consultation in the lead up to the 2025/26 budget.

A detailed revenue and capital outturn position for the year 2023/24 was provided in the Revenue and Capital Outturn Booklet attached at Annex 1. Members were pleased with the positive revenue position for 2023/24, reported as a contribution to the Borough Council's General Revenue Reserve of £1,304,159 after taking into account the additional reserve movements as set out in 1.1.10 of the report. Details of the movements in reserve balances as at 31 March 2024 were set out in Annex 2 and a summary of the decisions taken by Cabinet and Committees with budget implications since the revenue budget was approved by Council in February 2024 to the end of May 2024 was attached at Annex 3.

Budgetary Control Monitoring Statements for Salaries and Incomes to the end of May 2024 were attached for information at Annex 4 and Annex 5 respectively. The 2024/25 revenue budget position was summarised in 1.7.1 of the report, which reflected a favourable net variance of £142,438 as at the end of May 2024.

At the request of the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services and under the Constitution's Financial Procedure Rule 13.3, consideration was given to a virement of £60,000 in order to support the recommissioning of the Waste contract in 2027. It was noted that the £60,000 was achieved as a saving to the current year's budget due to the lower than anticipated inflation rate on the Street Cleansing, Refuse and Recycling Contract and this approach was supported by Members.

With regard to Business Rates monitoring, particular reference was made to the variation of £642,000 below the original estimate of an overall net income of £6,184,366, however, the delay in one business property in the Panattoni Park being rated by the Valuation Office due to the complexity of the assessment was noted and Members were made aware that the rates bill would be backdated as appropriate.

In terms of progressing towards the savings target of £1.7m as identified in the Borough Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS),

Members were pleased to note that the savings target for the first tranche of £305,000 to be achieved before 1 April 2025 had been exceeded by approx. £409,000, therefore the remaining tranches for the savings target would need to be adjusted accordingly to take into account the additional savings and growth as identified in the report and any increased budgetary pressures above those identified in the 2024/25 MTFS.

Finally, having duly considered the recommendation from the External Auditors, Grant Thornton, to engage key stakeholders to determine local priorities for resources or opportunities for savings, Cabinet were content with their existing rigorous approach to decision making and the positive financial performance of the Borough Council and therefore did not consider it necessary to undertake a specific consultation leading up to the 2025/26 budget, although it was noted that they would keep the recommendation in mind.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the year end position for 2023/24 be noted and the reserve movements as shown in paragraph 1.1.10 of the report be endorsed;
- (2) the virement of £60,000 proposed by the Director of Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services in respect of support for the recommissioning of the Waste contract in 2027, as set out at paragraph 1.6.2 of the report, be approved;
- (3) as at the end of May 2024, a net favourable variance of circa £142k when compared to the proportion of the 2024/25 budget, as shown in paragraph 1.7.1 of the report, be noted;
- (4) the current business rate pool position as at the end of May 2024, as set out in paragraph 1.8.2 of the report, be noted;
- (5) the current progress on the current savings target of £1.7m, as set out in paragraph 1.9.4 of the report, be noted; and
- (6) there be no budget consultation to be planned in the lead up to the preparation of the 2025/26 budget.

CB 24/83 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING DRAFT PRODUCTIVITY PLAN

(Decision Notice D240074CAB)

The report of the Management Team presented a draft Tonbridge and Maling Productivity Plan (Appendix 1) for endorsement by Members before submission to the Government by the deadline of 19 July 2024.

Four themes were set out in the request letter from the Minister for Local Government to guide the responses that were being sought from local authorities: (1) transformation and use of resources; (2) taking advantage of technology; (3) plans to reduce wasteful spend; and (4) barriers preventing progress.

The proposed Productivity Plan centred around the above four themes and accorded closely with the following three key priorities as set out in the Tonbridge and Malling Corporate Strategy 2023 – 2027: Innovation, Transformation and Delivery.

During discussion, particular reference was made to the benefits of having remote working policies in place to allow for flexible working and productivity improvement and the advantage of having a longer than one year finance settlement to provide certainty.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Productivity Plan, attached at Appendix 1, be endorsed.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

CB 24/84 MINUTES OF PANELS, BOARDS AND OTHER GROUPS

The Minutes of the Parish Partnership Panel of 30 May 2024 and the Minutes of the Joint Transportation Board of 17 June 2024 were received and noted.

CB 24/85 DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS

Details of the Decisions taken in accordance with the rules for the making of decisions by executive members, as set out in Part 4 of the Constitution, were presented for information.

CB 24/86 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions for July to August 2024 was presented for information.

CB 24/87 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.35 pm