

Minutes of the **Cabinet**
of the **Test Valley Borough Council**
held in The Annexe, Crosfield Hall, Broadwater Road, Romsey
on Wednesday, 12 January 2022 at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

Councillor P North
(Chairman)

Councillor N Adams-King
(Vice-Chairman)

Councillor P Bundy
Councillor D Drew
Councillor M Flood

Councillor I Jeffrey
Councillor A Johnston
Councillor T Tasker

Also in attendance

Councillor D Baverstock
Councillor A Dowden

Councillor C Dowden
Councillor N Gwynne

390

Public Participation

No members of the public registered to speak.

391

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

392

Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

393

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2021

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2021 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

394 **Recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

There were no recommendations to consider from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

395

Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23

Consideration was given to a report of the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder which presented the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2022/23.

The Council was required to have a Council Tax Support scheme to assist residents with their liability to pay Council Tax. Given the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic and the financial uncertainty this brings to many families, no significant changes were proposed to Test Valley Borough Council's Council Tax Support Scheme for the forthcoming 2022/23 financial year.

Having considered the options and for the reasons set out in the report, Cabinet agreed the following:

Recommended to Council:

- 1. That the Council Tax Support scheme for 2022/23, as shown in Annex 1 to the report, be approved.**
- 2. That the Head of Finance and Revenues, in consultation with the Finance & Resources Portfolio Holder, be authorised to make any necessary changes to the Scheme that are required by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) Regulations 2022 when they are confirmed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities.**
- 3. In the event that further temporary uplifts to Universal Credit are introduced, the Head of Finance and Revenues, in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder, be authorised to disregard the increase in income as part of a national response to the Covid-19 pandemic.**

396

Budget Update 2022/23

Consideration was given to a report of the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder which provided an update on changes to the 2022/23 budget forecast since the Medium Term Financial Strategy was presented in October.

Changes included; the impact of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, New Homes' Bonus provisional allocations, the impacts of coronavirus, revenue savings and budget pressures.

The report also provided an updated Medium Term Financial Forecast covering 2022/23 to 2024/25.

In order to achieve a balanced budget, work would be undertaken to close the remaining gap of £62,000 before the figures were finalised in February.

Having considered the options and for the reasons set out in the report, Cabinet agreed the following:

Resolved:

1. **That the savings options, income generation proposals and budget pressures, shown in Annexes 2 – 4 to the report, be noted.**
2. **That the Medium Term Financial Forecast, shown in Annex 5 to the report, be noted.**

397

Appointment of External Auditors

Consideration was given to a report of the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder which presented details of arrangements for the provision of external audit services.

The Council's current contract for external audit services was procured through a national exercise undertaken by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd and is due to expire at the end of the 2022/23 financial year.

It was recommended that the Council sign up to the national procurement exercise to appoint a new external auditor in order to provide certainty that the procurement requirements could be achieved within the statutory timescale and to deliver value for money to the Council over the contract period.

Having considered the options and for the reasons set out in the report, Cabinet agreed the following:

Recommended to Council:

1. **That the Council opts in to the national scheme for external auditor appointments being administered by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd.**
2. **That the Head of Finance and Revenues be authorised to complete all matters necessary to implement a new auditor appointment at the conclusion of the PSAA procurement exercise.**

398 **Capital Programme Update - addition of Andover BMX track floodlighting project**

Consideration was given to a report of the Community, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder which set out details of an Andover BMX track floodlighting project that was proposed to be added to the Capital Programme.

The Andover BMX Club, with support from the Council, had been successful in raising £75,000 of external funding to deliver the scheme at the Charlton Leisure centre site.

The floodlighting of the track would increase the hours of use and the clubs ability to host midweek events and races with the potential to develop a BMX coaching hub for the southern region. Andover would be the only track outside of London and the midlands with floodlights. It was noted that the project would require planning permission which will be sought in the usual way.

Having considered the options and for the reasons set out in the report, Cabinet agreed the following:

Recommended to Council:

The project described at paragraph 6.1 of the report is added to the Council's capital programme.

399 **Community Transport Funding - 2022/23**

Consideration was given to a report of the Recycling, Environmental Services and Parking Portfolio Holder which sought agreement to extend the Community Transport contract with Unity for the year 2022/23 and provide funding of £20,064 from within existing budget.

The Test Valley Community Transport Scheme has existed in Test Valley since 2001 and is an essential service for those without a car, with mobility issues or suffering from social isolation. It is operated by Unity with funding shared between Hampshire County Council and TVBC.

The pandemic continues to affect the community transport service within the Borough. Given the level of uncertainty it was proposed to extend the existing contract for a one year period covering 2022/23 to be funded from existing budgets.

Having considered the options and for the reasons set out in the report, Cabinet agreed the following:

Resolved:

That the Community Transport contract be extended for one year (2022/23) and that funding of £20,064 is provided.

400 **Social Inclusion Services Contribution**

Consideration was given to a report of the Housing and Environmental Health Portfolio Holder which sought approval to make a further £55,000 contribution to maintain social inclusion services at current capacity for financial year 2022/23, representing the last year of the current social inclusion services contract extension.

As well as having a role in supporting people who may be on the cusp of social care eligibility, social inclusion services were an important aspect of the local strategic approach to preventing and relieving homelessness.

Having considered the options and for the reasons set out in the report, Cabinet agreed the following:

Resolved:

That Cabinet approves the use of £55,000 ring-fenced grant funding from the Homelessness Reserve for the purposes of supporting local social inclusion during 2022/23.

401 **Future Housing Options Service Provision**

Consideration was given to a report of the Housing and Environmental Health Portfolio Holder which sought delegated authority to enable the housing options service to better plan and target funding.

The Council is subject to a complex range of legal duties associated with allocations and homelessness, and experiences a high demand for front line housing services locally.

The proposals would allow the service to plan ahead and further respond to windfall grants that may be allocated in year and which are ring fenced for the purpose of preventing and relieving homelessness.

Having considered the options and for the reasons set out in the report, Cabinet agreed the following:

Resolved:

1. **That the financial position with regard to the Homelessness Reserve and resourcing the front line housing options service be noted.**
2. **That the Head of Housing & Environmental Health, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Environmental Health and the Head of Finance & Revenues, be given delegated authority to draw from ear-marked grant reserves for homelessness to support the delivery of effective TVBC housing services.**
3. **That the Head of Housing & Environmental Health, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Environmental Health, the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources, and the Head of Finance & Revenues, be given delegated authority to draw monies received from central government that are ring fenced for homelessness that may, from time to time, be provided to meet identifiable homelessness pressures, for purposes that meet the terms of those grants.**

(The meeting terminated at 6.03 pm)