

# CABINET



**THURSDAY, 6 AUGUST 2020 - 2.00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor C Boden (Chairman), Councillor Mrs J French (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor S Clark, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor C Seaton, Councillor S Tierney and Councillor S Wallwork

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Amy Brown (Chief Solicitor and Deputy Monitoring Officer), Peter Catchpole (Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer), Paul Medd (Chief Executive), Carol Pilson (Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer) and Mark Saunders (Chief Accountant)

Councillor Boden welcomed members of the public and press watching the livestream of the Cabinet meeting via YouTube due to Government guidance on social distancing. The meeting was held in accordance with the provision set out in the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 and with Fenland District Council's Virtual Meeting Protocol.

## **CAB8/20 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL 2019/20**

Members considered the Annual Report of the Council 2019/20 presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden said this was a report full of good news, highlighting the achievement of the meeting of planning determination targets and the admirable work of the street cleansing and refuse collection services. He added that the targeted work led by Councillor Hoy in acting against seriously defected private rented accommodation is starting to bear fruit. Furthermore, he praised the magnificent way that officers stepped up to deal with preparing for the COVID-19 emergency just two weeks before the end of the fiscal year. He cannot overstate just how much effort, work, commitment and passion went into this and for that he and Fenland residents are extremely grateful.

Councillor Hoy wanted to place on record her thanks to all the staff within the Housing Team, particularly with the way they took on the private sector housing enforcement work. Although it was a big change and a risk to try something new staff grasped it with both hands, taking a proactive approach to make it work. Councillor Boden thanked Councillor Hoy.

Councillor Tierney endorsed Councillor Boden's comments about officers' response to COVID-19. Working with volunteers around Fenland it was easy to see first-hand the incredible work done by officers, and the people of Fenland owe a debt of gratitude to those who have worked so hard. In the early stages people were understandably frightened but staff at every level were amazing in their communications with the public, particularly on the helpline. The work was exemplary and it will be shown that we performed better than many other councils in this situation. Councillor Boden thanked Councillor Tierney.

**Cabinet AGREED to approve the Annual Report of the Council 2019/20.**

## **CAB9/20 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20**

Members considered the Treasury Management Annual Report 2019/20 presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Seaton said that following on from the Annual Report, this is another example of how well the Council has performed with the problems experienced due to COVID-19. Everyone has worked to make this as painless as can be under the circumstances.

**Cabinet AGREED to note the report and to recommend that Council receive the Treasury Management Annual Report.**

#### **CAB10/20 FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT 2019/20**

Members considered the Financial Outturn Report 2019/20 presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden thanked officers once again for the hard work undertaken to achieve last year's excellent outturn. He added that the underspend of £115,307 transferred to the Budget Equalisation Reserve could have been much higher at £747,000 had we not taken the prudent decision of paying for our leisure equipment from reserves instead of borrowing this money. Furthermore, whilst the accounts are fairly standard, COVID-19 continues to have a financial impact and more post balance events sheet audit work will continue to be done by Ernst & Young up to 2 November 2020 when the accounts are scheduled to be signed.

**Cabinet AGREED to recommend that:**

- (i) The Outturn for the Council's General Fund services in 2019/20, as detailed at Appendix A and Section 2 of this report be noted and that Members note the transfer of the underspend to the Budget Equalisation Reserve;**
- (ii) The reasons for the variations from revised estimate be noted; and**
- (iii) The proposed Capital Funding schedule for 2019/20 at Appendix B(i) be approved.**

#### **CAB11/20 CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE**

Members considered the Capital Programme Update Report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Mrs French asked what the allocation of £19,000 was for in respect of item 19 of the Capital Programme Summary as over £90,000 has been spent on replacement of the skate park at West End in March, and further money has been awarded to finish off the fencing and improve footpaths.

Councillor Murphy said that this figure was originally set aside to pay for replacement of the skate ramps. However, when it came to it there had been enough money received from a variety of sources to be able to update the entire skate park. He agreed that all the work had been done and said he would look into this further as to why the figure had not been removed.

Mark Saunders said that although he did not have the details to hand it was most likely that this figure was for residual payments due for the actual scheme as they take a while to finalise. Councillor Boden thanked Mark Saunders and asked Councillor Murphy if he could circulate the information to Cabinet members once it had been identified.

**Cabinet AGREED to approve the updated capital programme and funding schedule at Appendix A of the report.**

#### **CAB12/20 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME**

Members considered the Council Tax Support Scheme Report presented by Councillor Mrs French.

Councillor Mrs French said that this report is extremely complex and thanked officers for doing a fantastic job under the circumstances.

Councillor Boden said that it is an unusual situation as we have very little idea what the financial position will be when it comes to 2021/22 and how the council tax support scheme will work and what the financial impact will be on all councils within the system as well as on individual residents.

**Cabinet AGREED to:**

- (i) Note the comments from Overview & Scrutiny Panel;**
- (ii) Carry out a consultation exercise on increasing the current contribution rate to 20%, 25% or 30%;**
- (iii) In the event of any possible increase in contribution rates, seek in advance a commitment from Cambridgeshire County Council to fund additional resources required to maintain Council Tax collection rates.**

**CAB13/20 OUTSIDE BODIES REPORT**

Members considered the Outside Bodies Report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden thanked Councillor Tanfield for the flexibility shown in that both the ruling Conservative Group and Independent Group have swapped two places to mutual satisfaction. He also pointed out that Councillor Marks' name should be added as a member of the Manea and Welney Drainage Commissioners.

**Cabinet AGREED to:**

- The proposed nominations in respect of Outside Bodies which require Fenland District Council representation with the addition of Councillor Marks being a nominated representative of the Manea and Welney Drainage Commissioners.**
- Note where requirements to provide representatives on outside organisations cannot currently be fulfilled.**
- Delegate the Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Group Leaders the addition or deletion of outside bodies as the need arises during the municipal year and appointment of Members to vacancies on outside bodies during the municipal year.**

**CAB14/20 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN**

Councillor Boden presented the Cabinet Forward Plan for information.