

CABINET

THURSDAY, 9 JANUARY 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 S Tierney and Councillor S Wallwork

APOLOGIES: Councillor C Seaton

OBSERVING: Councillor A Maul

CAB1/19 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 4 November 2019 were confirmed and signed.

CAB2/19 AMENDMENT TO RESERVES

Members considered the Amendment to Reserves report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden said that Councillor Count had questioned why the reserve balance was reduced from £2.622M to the exact sum of £2M, suggesting that a detailed calculation may produce a more appropriate and precise figure. Councillor Boden will be sending a more detailed explanation to Councillor Count to show what officers have suggested. However, the amount of reserves as a proportion of our spend is what is important and Members will be considering the figures further before setting the main budget.

Councillor Mrs French said that in respect of elections she has repeatedly asked why the parish and town councils have not been sent their invoices. Councillor Boden said that he was pleased to confirm that the invoices will be sent before the end of this month, giving the councils plenty of time to pay before the end of the financial year. Councillor Mrs French thanked Councillor Boden.

Cabinet AGREED to approve the reallocation of reserves set out in the report, including the creation of an Investment Strategy Reserve, and recommend that Council approve the creation of a Budget Equalisation Reserve and an Elections Reserve for the reasons set out in the report.

CAB3/19 DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN 2020/21

Members considered the Draft Business Plan 2020/21 report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Mrs French asked for a definitive answer as soon as possible regarding the parish street lights. Councillor Boden said this is a complex situation and agreed it had been going on for years. A number of attempts have been made to solve the problem but while he accepts there is significant and justified unrest over this issue he is determined to resolve it correctly and therefore will not promise to resolve it quickly. However, he will endeavour to get something in place before the annual maintenance contract commences from September. Councillor Mrs French thanked Councillor Boden but added that some of the parish councils are coming up to the time when they set their budgets; they are very unhappy with us and she expects some backlash. Councillor Boden responded that some parish councils have raised their precepts to meet their liabilities but

these liabilities were set back in September 2018 and so this is not something new. Councillor Boden reiterated that a definitive and final solution is required and he will not rush to provide a solution which may then be ineffective.

Councillor Tierney stated that this is a well put together document. However he felt it gave the impression that it was business as usual and he would like to highlight that behind the scenes the Council for Future projects are emerging and people will soon see new, fresh ideas that will change and improve the council for everyone. Therefore it is not just a case of business as usual. Councillor Boden thanked Councillor Tierney for his extremely helpful comment. He said that while it was appropriate for the draft business plan to be circulated for consultation in its current form, it is a comment worth noting for next year to have a particular change section within the report to highlight the changes taking place. The Chief Executive agreed that this could be captured in next year's document, adding that another opportunity to profile these changes is in the Annual Report put together in June.

Cabinet AGREED to approve the Draft Business Plan 2020-21 for public consultation.

CAB4/19 DRAFT BUDGET 2020/21 & MTFS

Members considered the Draft Budget report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden praised the work undertaken by officers to keep costs down and to remain value for money.

Cabinet AGREED to approve:

- the draft budget proposals for 2020/21 outlined in the report for consultation;
- the revised General Fund Budget and revised Capital Programme for 2019/20;
- the proposed Capital Programme for 2020-23.

CAB5/19 APPROVAL AND IMPLEMENTATION OF FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL'S COMMERCIAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Members considered the Approval and Implementation of Fenland District Council's Commercial Investment Strategy report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden said that comments have been made that the only voting members of the LATCo will be officers. He advised that this is because it is an implementation board and therefore it needs to act quickly. It is opinion that the involvement of members will cause delay and lack of focus in what the board is meant to achieve. The LATCo is heavily controlled by the member-led Investment Board, which will determine the policies and strategy of the LATCo and will monitor its work. Councillor Tierney said he agreed with the setup, which he found sensible. Councillor Boden thanked Councillor Tierney and added that he thought the introduction of an independent Chairman of the LATCo would be very helpful.

Cabinet AGREED to recommend the following to full Council for approval:

- the draft Commercial and Investment Strategy ("the Strategy") at Appendix 1 of the report;
- amendments to the terms of reference of Cabinet so as to delegate to it the functions set out at paragraph 3.1 of Appendix 4 of the report;
- the proposed creation of a new sub-committee by Cabinet at its meeting on 16 January 2020 called the 'Investment Board' which will be responsible for implementation of the Strategy in accordance with the purposed delegations set out in paragraph 3.2 of Appendix 4 of the report;

- the establishment of a Local Authority Trading Company (“LATCo”) (via the above delegations) for the purpose of facilitating delivery of the Strategy with effect from April 2020 or as soon as reasonably possible after that;
- the Constitutional amendments required to give effect to the above proposals as set out at paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Appendix 4 to the report;
- insofar as the establishment of the LATCo is concerned delegation to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with CMT and the Leader the authority necessary to finalise and put in place any agreements and legal documentation necessary to bring it into effect;
- notes the proposed intention that the Investment Board will be able to utilise reserves and/or borrow sums up to a combined maximum of £25 million in order to deliver the objectives of the Strategy.

Subject to the approval of the above by Council, Cabinet **AGREED** to recommend that CMT formulate a fully costed business case in relation to the development of Nene Waterfront in Wisbech with a view to this then being comprised within the business plans of the LATCo (once established).

CAB6/19 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME REVIEW 2020/21

Members considered the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Review report presented by Councillor Boden.

Cabinet AGREED to recommend to Council that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) effective from 1 April 2020 as set out in the Report and at Appendix B of the report be approved.

CAB7/19 GROWING FENLAND - TOWN REPORTS

Members considered the Growing Fenland – Town Reports presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden said significant input had been received from local people to produce these four distinct separate reports and a lot of work and effort had gone into them.

Councillor Hoy said that a small change needed to be made to p.295 of the report. Paragraph 5.2 said that the ‘Growing Fenland – Wisbech’ report was approved by Cllr Sam Hoy and Cllr Steve Tierney, when in fact the report had been approved by Wisbech Town Council on 21st October. The Chief Executive said that this can be articulated in the minutes of the meeting to reflect we have had that conversation. However, Councillor Hoy said the report needs amending as it is incorrect and it lists every other town council. Councillor Boden said there would be no procedural problem with changing that in the report.

Councillor Boden thanked those who had been involved in the production of these reports, saying they had put in a lot of hard work.

Cabinet AGREED to approve the recommendation of the progression of the reports to future CCC and CPCA meetings as outlined in the main report to enable projects to be delivered through external funding opportunities.

CAB8/19 GROWING FENLAND - OVERARCHING STRATEGIC REPORT

Members considered the Growing Fenland – Overarching Strategic Report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Mrs French highlighted an error within the report where it incorrectly stated that Justin Wingfield is a Corporate Director, and requested this be corrected. Councillor Boden confirmed the

amendment.

Councillor Boden advised this report is a supplement produced in conjunction with the previously discussed four town reports. Although they are the core reports for the short term funding, this report will be separated from them but will still be forwarded to the CCC and CPCA and can be viewed as more of an aspiration. The Chief Executive added that it does not impose any obligation on this council. There are a number of issues within it that are contentious and complex in nature that need more work and thought.

Councillor Hoy pointed out the same correction needed making within the report that she raised when discussing the previous agenda item. She agreed with the Chief Executive that more work was required on this report.

Councillor Tierney added that he would like it on record that whilst he welcomes this set of ideas, it does not mean he supports them all as some of them are controversial. Some of these are aspirations that have been brought to us and not all are driven by this Council. Councillor Boden asked how we would get the message across in that case. The Chief Executive suggested this be clarified in the recommendation to the report with the Leader's approval. Councillor Boden asked Councillor Tierney if he would be satisfied if the recommendation was updated to confirm that this was a discussion document. Councillor Tierney agreed this was reasonable as he wanted to clarify this is not our strategy document but a set of ideas brought to us. Councillor Mrs Laws stated that she agreed with Councillor Tierney that this is a discussion document for the future. Councillor Boden added that this was a point that members could also stress to the various bodies they are involved with.

Councillor Boden therefore proposed that the recommendation be updated to reflect this is a discussion document.

Cabinet AGREED to note the report, which will be presented to future CCC and CPCA meetings as outlined in the main report, as a discussion document for potential options for the future.

CAB9/19 ENVIRONMENTAL & WASTE STATEMENT OF INTENT (3RS)

Members considered the Environmental & Waste Statement of Intent report presented by Councillor Murphy.

Councillor Boden questioned whether the recommendation to agree the Statement of Intent at appendix 1 should read 'annex 1'. Councillor Murphy agreed this was an error and accepted the amendment.

Cabinet AGREED:

- **to note the contents of the report in relation to the existing waste and energy commitments;**
- **The Statement of Intent, and Action Plan at annex 1, in relation to the application of the Council's current and future business plans and that this be published on the Council's website.**

CAB10/19 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Boden presented the draft Cabinet Forward Plan for information but advised that the Street Lighting Report scheduled for 16 January has been deferred to the meeting in February or a date beyond that when it is complete.

CAB11/19 MARCH FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND UPDATE - CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX B

Members considered the March High Street Fund Update report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden proposed that, in the interest of openness, unless members wanted to make specific recourse to the confidential Appendix B to the report, members discuss the item with reference only to Appendix A and the main report. Members agreed to this proposal.

Councillor Mrs French said that having been on the Council for almost 21 years, this is the most exciting time for March and she hopes that other towns get the same opportunity. A presentation was made at a confidential meeting of March Town Council earlier this week, and they welcomed the projects involved with open arms. Councillor Mrs French thanked all the officers involved with the work highlighted in the report.

Councillor Boden asked if members could formally agree that Appendix B should be treated as a confidential item. Members agreed.

Cabinet AGREED to note and approve the progression of the project to date and the planned next steps.

2.51 pm

Chairman