

CABINET

THURSDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2022 - 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 A Lynn and Councillor P Murphy

APOLOGIES: Councillor C Seaton and Councillor S Tierney

CAB45/21 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held 3 February 2022 were agreed and signed.

CAB46/21 BUSINESS PLAN 2022/23

Members considered the Business Plan 2022/23 report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden thanked Councillor Tierney and officers for making the report easier to read this year.

Councillor Benney said he was very pleased with the report considering we could have been in the most terrible financial situation due to Covid-19. This report is a credit to Councillor Boden and officers of the Council.

Cabinet considered and AGREED to recommend to Council the approval of the Final Business Plan 2022-2023.

CAB47/21 CORPORATE BUDGET 2022/23 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Members considered the Corporate Budget 2022/23 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden advised of a slight alteration to the recommendation and asked Mark Saunders to clarify. Mark Saunders confirmed that an alteration to the recommendation would be made at full Council that the scheme to be approved will disregard the £150 council tax rebate people will receive in the New Year when determining council tax support applications. However, this relates to the Council Tax Support Scheme and does not affect the Corporate Budget.

Cabinet AGREED that:

- (i) the revised estimates for 2021/22 as set out in Section 8 and Appendix A showing an estimated shortfall at outturn in the region of £243,000, be approved;**

and AGREED to recommend to Council that:

- (ii) the General Fund revenue budget for 2022/23 as set out in Section 9 and Appendix A be approved;**

- (iii) the Medium-Term Financial Strategy as outlined in this report and Appendix B be adopted;
- (iv) the Capital Programme and funding statement as set out in Appendix D be approved;
- (v) the adoption of the additional Business Rates Relief measures as detailed in Section 6 and Appendix H using Discretionary Relief Powers be approved;
- (vi) the expenses detailed in Section 12 be approved to be treated as general expenses for 2022/23;
- (vii) the Port Health levy for 2022/23 be set as shown in Section 13;
- (viii) the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision, Treasury Investment Strategy, Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2022/23 and Capital Strategy 2022/23 as set out in Section 15 and Appendix E be approved; and
- (ix) the Band D Council Tax level for Fenland District Council Services for 2022/23 be set at £260.46, no increase on the current year.

CAB48/21 ECONOMIC GROWTH UPDATE

Members considered the Economic Growth Update report presented by Councillor Benney.

Cabinet considered and AGREED to recommend the Economic Growth Strategic Refresh 2022-25 for approval by Full Council.

CAB49/21 AUTHORISATION OF EXTERNAL FUNDING IN RELATION TO ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Members considered the Authorisation of External Funding in relation to Energy Efficiency report presented by Councillor Hoy.

Councillor Mrs French asked how this will be monitored so that we can ensure this is done in a timely manner, as Clarion are not always good at communicating with us. Councillor Hoy responded that we are the lead agency, and we will have support officers on this project ensuring that they are keeping to time.

Councillor Lynn asked if this is a one-off project from central Government. Councillor Hoy said it is difficult to know; much of the decarbonisation work is costing a lot of money as is the pledge for net zero, which will harm a lot of the poorest people, but it is a balancing act. If we do not take the money from central Government when it is offered, how can we improve properties. We just need to ensure it stays well intentioned.

Councillor Lynn said he would support this on this occasion but hopes we can protect ourselves further down the line from something that could be catastrophic for Fenland. We have a ceiling on property prices, and it is a struggle to get contractors to develop here because of viability. His concern is that costs could spiral and make it impossible for anyone to take this on. Councillor Boden asked if Councillor Lynn is suggesting we contact our MP to advise we have concerns about how the Government were to finance this if it were to go nationwide. Councillor Lynn said that would be a good idea.

Councillor Hoy said she would be happy to add that as an addition to the recommendations because the costs could be too great in the future, both for the country as a whole and the Fenland taxpayer. Councillor Clark seconded that amendment.

Cabinet AGREED to:

- **Note the successful bid for funding from BEIS in the sum of £5,202,622 to assist in the delivery of energy efficiency improvements in social housing stock belonging to Clarion;**
- **Authorise Fenland District Council's entry into BEIS' Memorandum of Understanding at Appendix A of this Report;**
- **Authorise officers to enter into all required legal and financial documentation necessary to give effect to this decision, to include a separate grant funding agreement with Clarion Housing to be approved in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Housing and Transformation and Communication (Energy Conservation).**
- **Delegate to the Portfolio Holder for Housing to write to the MP expressing Cabinet's concerns over the cost of schemes such as this being expanded nationwide.**

CAB50/21 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Boden presented the draft six-month Cabinet Forward Plan for information.

CAB51/21 PREVIOUS MINUTES (CONFIDENTIAL)

The confidential minutes of the meeting held 3 February 2022 were agreed and signed.

2.27 pm

Chairman