

THE CABINET

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Luttrell Room, County Hall, Taunton, on Monday 27th September 2017 at 10am.

PRESENT

Cllr D Fothergill (in the Chair)

Cllr D Hall
Cllr D Huxtable
Cllr C Lawrence
Cllr F Nicholson
Cllr J Woodman

Junior Cabinet members:
Cllr C Aparicio Paul
Cllr F Purbrick
Cllr Fraschini
Cllr G Verdon

Other Members present: Cllr S Coles, Cllr H Davies, Cllr M Lewis, Cllr L Leyson, Cllr T Lock, Cllr T Munt, Cllr H Prior-Sankey, Cllr B Revans, Cllr N Taylor, Cllr W Wallace

Apologies for absence: Cllr A Groskop

28 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – agenda item 2

Members of the Cabinet declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a District, City/Town or Parish Council:

Cllr J Woodman Sedgemoor District Council

Junior Cabinet Members declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a District, City/Town or Parish Council:

Cllr C Aparicio Paul South Somerset District Council

Cllr F Purbrick Yeovil Town Council

29 **MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON 16 AUGUST 2017** - agenda item 3

The Cabinet agreed the minutes and the Chairman signed these as a correct record of the proceedings.

30 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (PQT)** – agenda item 4

There was one submission from Mr Nigel Behan who asked a series of questions about item 5 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2017/18.

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development, Cllr David Hall, thanked Mr Behan for his questions, noting that the Council is a learning organisation; that the recent robustness report found the Council had set a balanced budget; that the most recent changes to the Discovery contract were made in April 2017; and that no Better Care Fund monies had

been transferred to Discovery. Cllr Hall further offered to provide Mr Behan with a full written response.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr David Fothergill, requested that all Members be sent a copy of the response.

31 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2017/18 – MONTH 4 - agenda item 5

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development, Cllr David Hall, introduced the report, noting that: the projected overspend was currently £10.034m or 3.22% of the total budget; and that Children's Services accounted for a large proportion of the overspend.

The Strategic Manager - Adults, Children and Public Health informed members that the current budget position had been considered at the Audit Committee on the 21st September, and was due to be considered at the Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee on the 3rd October.

Further points raised in the debate included: improving the aged debt position; mitigating the Children's Services overspend; the cost of out of county placements; the availability of foster carers; risk implications if the projected overspend is not reduced; closing Children's Centres; the cost of locum workers and associated budgets; holding Adult Social Care vacancies; and plans to compensate for unachievable savings.

The Director of Children's Services responded to the points raised in debate noting that: the Council is doing further promotional work to recruit foster carers; there is a national shortage of residential placements; Somerset is a part of the Peninsula commissioning group; the overall the number of children in care has stabilised; and Children's Services budgets were stretched nationally. The Director further informed Members of the current position regarding Asylum seekers, noting that a number of individuals had been placed in Somerset under the National Transfer Scheme but that many found the county to be too rural, and that the DCLG and Home Office were being lobbied regarding this.

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development, Cllr David Hall, highlighted the Early Help and Family Support Services consultation and clarified that any decisions regarding Children Centres would be subject to a future report to Cabinet.

The Strategic Manager - Adults, Children and Public Health further noted that: a recent Grant Thornton Audit had rated the Council's reserves position as 'green'; that a number of other Local Authorities nationally were in a similar financial position; that the budget for locum workers was £9m, with a £2.6m overspend; the MTFP savings rated as 'red' would be delivered, but not fully during this financial year; and the Adult Social Care restructure was on-going but vacancies were no longer being held.

The Chief Executive highlighted that: the budget forecast overspend was based on the worst-case scenario; the budget had been set based on best projections; control measures had been put in place; there would be a growth in the Council Tax base; and that he was confident that the budget

would be balanced.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Frances Nicholson, further highlighted the Early Help and Family Support Services Consultation.

The Leader of the Council summarised the points raised in debate; encouraged all Members to attend the consultation event in their area; noted that the current overspend was unacceptable; and asked officers to look into ways in which the aged debt position could be improved.

The Chairman clarified that there was support for the management actions being taken from junior and cabinet members.

Following consideration of the officer report, appendices and discussion the Cabinet RESOLVED to note the contents of this report and the potential outturn position for the year.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report

REASON FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report

32 **CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2017/18 – QUARTER 1 – agenda item 6**

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development, Cllr David Hall, introduced the report highlighting that: the programme had been well managed; and there was currently a small overspend of £226k, which is less than 0.5% of the total budget.

Further points raised in the debate included: new school developments; future plans for the former St Augustine's School site; and the ICT corporate programme budget.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cllr Frances Nicholson informed Members that the free school bid for the St Augustine's site had been unsuccessful, but that the Council was committed towards enabling the provision of the required Special School secondary age places by pursuing any potential sources of funding.

The Commercial and Business Services Director highlighted that ICT corporate programme funding had been brought forward from future years approval, and that this would allow productivity savings to be realised.

The Chairman asked if there was support for the proposal and both junior and cabinet members were in consensus.

Following consideration of the officer report, appendix and discussion the Cabinet resolved to note the contents of this report.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report

REASON FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report

33 **COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – END OF JULY 2017/18** – agenda item 7

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Development, Cllr David Hall, introduced the report and highlighted the improved performance as detailed in the report.

The Strategic Manager – Performance informed members that: two of the three indicators rated as ‘red’ were improving; in this quarter there was only one segment with declining performance; and that a number of indicators had been refreshed, to include consideration of areas in which it is known improvements are required.

Further points raised in the debate included: the total number of indicators rated as ‘amber’ and ‘red’.

The Chief Executive informed members that a number of indicators were expected to improve by the end of 2017/18 following: the OFSTED reinspection; the balancing of the 2017/18 budget; and the completion of transforming services for vulnerable and elderly people.

The Leader of the Council summarised the points raised in debate and noted concern at the indicators which have downward trajectories.

The Chairman asked if there was support for the proposal and both junior and cabinet members were in consensus.

Following consideration of the officer report, appendices and discussion, the Cabinet RESOLVED to:

1. Consider the information contained within the report specifically those areas identified as a potential concern under Section 3.0 of this report and the “issues for consideration” section of Appendix A.
2. Agree the report and Appendix A as the latest position for Somerset County Council against its County Plan.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED: As set out in the officer report

REASON FOR DECISION: As set out in the officer report

34 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS** – agenda item 8

None.

(The meeting ended at 10.57 am)

CHAIRMAN