

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Wednesday, 18 October 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Nunn (Chair); Councillor Larratt (Deputy Chair); Councillors Eldred, Hallam, Hibbert and King

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Hadland.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 13th September 2017 were agreed and signed by the Leader.

3. INTENTION TO HOLD PART OF THE MEETING IN PRIVATE

There were no items to be heard in private.

4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none

6. ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

6.A RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - INTERIM REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY RE-PROVISION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES CONTRACT WORKING GROUP

Councillor Stone addressed Cabinet and noted that she had welcomed the Call-in despite the recommendations not being upheld. She reported that she did not consider the proposed cost of the new contract as achieving value for money and noted that numerous other local authorities who had outsourced services only for them to be brought back in house. She commented that she considered this to be the preferable as it would offer value for money and that lessons needed to be learned from difficulties experienced with the current contract. She questioned if a contract devised now would still be relevant in 5 or 10 years' time and whether there were the skills to monitor and manage the contract.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Stone commented that she had not raised her concerns to the relevant Scrutiny Committee as she did not agree with the principle of the Committee but noted that she had raised her objections through other channels.

The Leader commented that Members should be mindful of the fact that the paper submitted was an interim report and a more detailed report would be considered by Cabinet. He further commented that lesson had been learnt from previous mistakes made and that any new contract would be monitored and well managed. He reported that the contract needed to be fit for purpose and the importance of contract management was recognised.

Councillor Hallam, as the relevant Cabinet Member submitted a report and elaborated thereon. He made the distinction between the length of the contract and the life of the vehicles that would be used, which he reported would be 10 years. He explained that the

current contract was inflexible but any future contracts would be more flexible and adaptable to the Councils requirements.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

7. CABINET RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS (PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY)

Councillor Hibbert, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted a report and noted that the report sought Cabinets approval of the recommendations included in the Panel's report on homelessness. He explained that the Rough Sleepers Strategy was already addressing some of the issues that had been recommended by the Panel.

RESOLVED:

1. That the recommendations included in the Overview & Scrutiny Panel's report on Homelessness be accepted
2. That the task and finish group be congratulated on a high quality and comprehensive report and thanked the group for the time and effort given to produce it

8. EFFICIENCY AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Councillor Stone addressed Cabinet and expressed her concerns with regards to the increase in the budget gap. She commented that the current financial climate resulted in increased unpredictability which included the effects of Brexit and the finances of the County Council. She raised concerns about the increased cost of Council Tax when the services provided had decreased, particularly with regards to litter clearance. She further reported that there was a lack of an investment strategy which was a cause for concern as was the potential cost of a new environmental services contract.

Councillors Hibbert and Hallam concurred that community-lead litter picking was beneficial to local residents as it increased community spirit and gave residents a sense of community pride.

Councillor Larratt further explained that the environmental services contractors were not obliged to maintain land that did not belong to the Council and litter picking by residents was an asset and benefited the whole of the Town.

The Leader stated that every authority faced unpredictability with regards to Brexit but noted that there was a need to address issues that were current and known. He confirmed that work had been undertaken with regards to an investment strategy.

Councillor Eldred, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted a report and explained that the administration would seek to maximise the delivery of services and levels of performance in order to ensure that resources would be targeted to meet its objectives and priorities. He commented that the Council would set a balanced budget and noted that work was being undertaken to address the 3.3 million shortfall. It was reported that a consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme has been launched and welcomed all Councillors and members of the public to feed into it. He further reported that since the administration had been in place a substantial amount of money had been put into reserves.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That the draft Efficiency and Medium Term Financial Strategy as attached at Appendix 1 of the report be approved.
- 2.2 That the key principles as set out at paragraph 3.2.4 of the report be adopted
- 2.3 That the process and milestones to achieve a balanced budget for 2018/19, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report be noted.

9. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - ALL MEASURES REPORT APRIL-JUNE 2017

Councillor Birch addressed Cabinet and questioned whether increased numbers of days lost to sickness was related to the increased hours and explained that the correlations between morale and productivity. She expressed her disappointment at the lack of new businesses attracted to the Enterprise Zone. She asked for assurances that the remaining length of the Environmental Services contract would be honoured and a decent service provided to residents.

Councillor Nunn commented that staff conditions and morale was extremely important and work was being carried out to establish the increase into the number of days lost to sickness.

Councillor Larratt, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted a report and noted that the majority of indicators was improving but noted that there was an increase in the number of red ones that had been identified and compared to last year. He commented that there were currently 6 members of staff off sick with stress and noted that there was not particular area where the figure was particularly prominent. In response to comments made by Councillor Birch, it was noted that ongoing work was being carried out with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) to promote new business opportunities in the Enterprise Zone and noted the progress towards the St James Mill link road and the potential relocation of Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) to the Zone.

The Interim Chief Executive echoed the Leaders comments with regards to the welfare of staff and noted the drive to improve the performance of the Council.

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents of the performance report (Appendix 1) be noted
2. That it be approved for the performance report be presented to Audit Committee.

10. FINANCE MONITORING TO 31 AUGUST 2017

Councillor Eldred, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted a report and elaborated thereon and noted that report provided an update on volatile areas of the Council's budget and information on updated forecasts for all revenue and capital budgets.

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents of the report be reviewed.
2. That the principle of the Council submitting a bid to be a pilot for 100% Business Rates retention in partnership with other Northamptonshire local authorities be agreed.

3. That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and the Leader of the Council, to finalise such a bid, subject to satisfactory completion of financial modelling, assessment of the potential financial benefits and risks, and suitable governance procedures being in place.
4. That it be noted that under the Management Agreement with Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) a restricted virement had been authorised which moves £150k from the Capital investment managed budget to the Operational Management fee pot.
5. That the creation of an HRA Capital Budget of £500k for Repurchase of Right-to-buy properties and/or spot purchases be agreed and to be funded from 141 receipts and additional non 141 capital receipts received in year.

The meeting concluded at 6.44pm