

**ADVISORY CABINET/
COMMISSIONERS' DECISION MAKING MEETING
Monday, 18th January, 2016**

Present:- Councillor Read (Chair); Lead Commissioner Sir Derek Myers, Commissioner Kenny, Councillors Alam, Lelliott, Roche, Sims, Wallis, Watson and Yasseen.

Apologies for absence were received from Commissioner Manzie, Commissioner Newsam, Commissioner Ney and Councillor Steele, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest reported to this meeting.

(THE CHAIRMAN AUTHORISED CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC QUESTIONS AT THIS MEETING)

2. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC/COUNCILLORS

(1) Councillor Parker referred to the previous Commissioners' Public Meeting with Councillors where figures of possible redundancies were indicated. Information shared indicated 500 people may be affected where actuals may be around 200. He asked for the confusion to be clarified.

The Leader explained that in the next financial year a further 200-230 posts may be affected, which was part of the 300 figure formally reported to the Trades Unions. It was further documented that around 500 may be probably identified over the next three years. The Medium Term Financial Strategy highlights a likely rise in the longer term when 1500 jobs were predicted to be lost over the next fifteen years.

(2) Mr. Thirlwall thanked those present for the opportunity to speak. He referred to the Parish Council grants which were to be phased out over the next three years.

He was aware that the Area Assemblies were funded from the Housing Revenue Account and suggested that, as the meetings were so poorly attended and used only for consultation, Area Assemblies be disbanded and the funds be given to Parish Councils with additional duties to carry out.

The Leader thanked Mr. Thirlwall for his contribution and pointed out the Governance Review would be making recommendations in the next few weeks. There was a commitment to work in neighbourhoods and Councillor Yasseen was to undertake a piece of work that would involve

Area Assemblies and it was suggested she contact Mr. Thirlwall as part of this work.

3. THE PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2016/17

Consideration was given to a report presented by Councillor Alam, Advisory Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Budgeting, which summarised the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2016/17, a Consultation Paper on the future of the New Homes Bonus (NHB), guidance on the flexible use of Capital Receipts, the draft Council Tax Referendum Principles for 2016/17 and a letter to Council Chief Executives providing details of the additional 2% flexibility on the proposed Council Tax Referendum Thresholds for Adult Social Care which were released in December 2015.

Rotherham's provisional Settlement allocation was some £0.349m less than had been projected within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). However, consultation on many of the proposals was still ongoing and details of other funding streams (such as Public Health Grant) have not yet been confirmed. Consequently details were subject to change and the Council's MTFS would be updated as information became available.

A number of key issues were highlighted which included:

- Phasing out of the Revenue Support Grant. The present system of business rates top-ups and tariffs which redistributed revenues between local authorities would be retained but the Uniform Business Rate would be abolished permitting local areas to cut business rates.
- The four-year settlement running to 2019/20 to any Council that wished to take it up. Councils would need to request the four-year settlement and have an efficiency plan in place in order to qualify.
- Although the New Homes Bonus (NHB) programme would continue in its current form and allocations to authorities would continue on the current basis in 2016/17, changes to the programme are likely to take effect from 2017/18, with major changes affecting 2018/19 onwards. The consequent saving of around £0.55bn nationally in the cost of the scheme was part of the £1.5 billion additional Better Care Funding announced in the Autumn Statement and Spending Review. In addition it was thought that the £250m DCLG contribution to the New Homes Bonus would also be included in the Better Care Fund.
- The draft Council Tax Referendum Principles for 2016/17 were also issued on 17th December, 2015. In line with the assumptions in the Council's MTFS, an increase in Council Tax of 2% or more would

require a local referendum – (the MTFS currently included an increase of 1.95%). However the Draft Principles also confirmed that, as announced in the Autumn Statement, there would be additional flexibility for local authorities responsible for social care. These authorities (including Rotherham) would be allowed the flexibility to raise Council Tax in their area by up to 2% above the existing referendum threshold of 2% - giving the Council a referendum threshold for 2016/17 of 4%

Minded to Grant Decision: That the contents of this report and the financial implications identified for the Council's 2016/17 Revenue Budget and future Medium Term Financial Strategy be noted.

4. FINANCIAL AND SERVICE CHANGES - PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION PRIOR TO BUDGET-SETTING FOR 2016/17

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Leader where he referred to the impact on budgets of the savings required over the next three years and how this would be managed requiring a number of financial and service changes that officers were continuing to work on in order to deliver a balanced budget for the Council from 2016/17. This was in line with the outline Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the new vision for the Council, prior to the formal Budget-setting report for 2016/17 which would be presented to the full Council meeting on 2nd March, 2016.

Other Advisory Cabinet Members were invited to comment on their own area of responsibility in terms of the changes and proposals moving forward:-

- Councillor Alam commended the report to the Commissioner and in doing so referred to the work being undertaken by officers, including Trades Unions and staff.
- Councillor Yasseen highlighted the equality impact assessments for library services and where possible how the impact on services was minimised. Customers were being encouraged to access services digitally and where required support provided.
- Councillor Watson pointed out that Children's Services were improving, but this could result in an increase in demand. Unit costs for children placed in residential care and out of authority placements were high and every effort was being made to address this. There were no quick fixes and all the improvements would take time to embed.
- Councillor Roche referred to the grant for Public Health which was expected to be cut and the greater 1.8% efficiency savings the hospital were being asked to make.

In terms of Adult Social Care the traditional service needed to transform in order to become more effective. Overall savings in the order of £10 million were required, but a ring-fenced precept on Council Tax to raise funds for Authorities with Adult Social Care responsibilities, set to a maximum level of 2%, would raise additional funding in the region of £1.7 million.

- Councillor Wallis referred to the significant threats to social housing, the proposed 1% rent reduction through the welfare reform proposals, fixed term tenancies and the impact on the Housing Revenue Account.
- Councillor Sims acknowledged the great pressure on budgets and the work taking place in her own area of responsibility where the level of service was still provided whilst ensuring the level of savings needed were achieved.
- Councillor Lelliott reported on the reliance of economic development to bring in investment in order to grow jobs and the local economy.

The Leader confirmed this report focused on the expected impact on services with service specific changes, which excluded the £5 million from the Government to support Children's Services reform.

The next five years in Local Government were going to be tough and the Council had given itself the difficult task of delivering the Medium Term Financial Strategy and sustaining the savings required which amounted to £21 million in 2016/17.

Councillor Parker expressed his concern about the 2% precept on Council Tax for Adult Social Care and the need to make it clear what these additional funds would be spent on as this would not be recognised by members of the public.

Commissioner Sir Derek Myers pointed out that there would be service reductions as well as service increases and new money would be available for Children's Services and Adult Social Care. It was right and proper that service reductions were placed into the public domain and a more balanced view would be available at the next meeting in February, 2016.

Minded to Grant Decision:- (1) That the content of the report to form the basis of further public and partner consultation on the financial and service implications of the Council setting a balanced Budget from 2016/17 onwards be approved.

(2) That it be confirmed the Council is minded to take up the flexibility of a 2% levy on Council Tax for Adult Social Care, following Central

Government's Provisional Local Government Settlement announcements, to support a balanced budget in 2016/17 and ongoing service modernisation.

(3) That specific, detailed consultations with service users, delivery partners and contractors as appropriate are ongoing (including further Equalities Assessments) be noted.

(4) That detailed consultation with staff and Trade Unions on the workforce implications of these proposals be ongoing.

5. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2015/16 AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME BUDGET 2016/17 TO 2017/18

Consideration was given to a report presented by Councillor Alam, Advisory Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Budgeting, which provided details of the current forecast outturn for the 2015/16 Capital Programme, the existing approved Capital Programme for the financial years 2016/17 to 2017/18 and provided an update to the budget monitoring position reported to Commissioner Manzie's meeting of the 7th October, 2015.

It was vital that the Council's Capital Programme and Capital Strategy maintained a strategic link with the Council's Corporate Plan, as capital projects played a key role in delivering the Council's strategic priorities. In addition, key themes within the Rotherham Improvement Plans (Children and Young People's and Corporate) required input from key capital projects.

In order to ensure that the Council made efficient and effective use of the capital resources available to it, it was important that the existing approved Capital Programme was kept under regular review and where necessary, revisions were made. This programme was last reviewed in October 2015, and had now been the subject of a further quarterly review.

The review of the current Capital Programme needed to be considered in the context of the work that was being undertaken to develop a five year Capital Programme for the period 2016–2021.

Clarification was sought on the re-profiling of funds for projects into 2016/17 for property adaptations for foster carers and early years and the progress to date.

Minded to Grant Decision: That the current forecast outturn position for the 2015/16 Capital Programme be noted and the update to the Programme for 2016-2018 be approved.

6. AUTHORISATION OF OFFICER TO APPEAR IN COURT PROCEEDINGS

Consideration was given to a report presented by Councillor Alam, Advisory Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Budgeting, which sought authorisation from the Council under Section 223 of the Local Government Act 1972, for a newly recruited Technical Officer to the Council's Account Management Team to appear in the Magistrates' Court on behalf of the Council.

Minded to Grant Decision:- That the report be referred to Council recommending that Vivian Wadsworth be authorised under Section 223 of the Local Government Act 1972 to prosecute, defend or appear in proceedings on behalf of the Council in the Magistrates' Court.

7. SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS FOR VARIOUS COMMISSIONS SUPPORTING WORK ON THE BASSINGTHORPE FARM DELIVERY PROJECT

Consideration was given to a report presented by Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy, which detailed a request for exemption under Standing Order 38 from Standing Order 47 (requirement for contracts valued at less than £50,000 to be tendered) so that commissions could be issued to various consultants to undertake reports, to enable further assessment of the Bassingthorpe Farm development.

The Bassingthorpe Farm site required further detailed information to assist with masterplanning and delivery, prior to the site being marketed. The funding for the work had been drawn down from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) with the remainder sought from RMBC capital.

The Interim Strategic of Environment and Development Services outlined the work expected of the Consultants on what was an important site for Rotherham.

Minded to Grant Decision:- (1) That an exemption under Standing Order 38 from Standing Order 47 (requirement for contracts valued at less than £50,000 to be tendered) be granted and the Council commission the companies detailed in the report to carry out further site investigation work and masterplanning.

(2) That the works to be commissioned totalling £58,600 be paid from the Homes and Communities Agency – Large Sites Infrastructure Fund and the ground conditions investigations work be funded by the Council's capital programme, totalling £45,000.

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

That under Section 100(A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it/they involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of such Act indicated, as now amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

9. SECURE ONLINE CITIZENS ACCOUNT

Consideration was given to the report presented by Councillor Yasseen, Advisory Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood working and Cultural Services, which sought approval for the award of the contract for the Council's Secure Online Citizen's Account, known as 'Your Account', which underpinned the provision of digital council services and enabled residents, businesses and landlords to apply for services, pay bills, review personal account information and report changes online.

Minded to Grant Decision:- That the award of the contract for the Council's Secure Online Citizen's Account, to the company named in the report, be approved.

10. APPROVAL OF LISTS OF FRAMEWORK CONTRACTORS FOR THE YORBUILD2 CONSTRUCTION FRAMEWORK

Consideration was given to the report presented by Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy, which sought approval of the lists of contractors to appoint to the YORbuild2 contractors framework for the South Area for a period of four years with the option to extend for a further two years and for the use of contractors from the other YORbuild2 framework lists as required to provide building construction services for Councils and other public bodies, including the voluntary sector.

Clarification was sought on the first and second lists and it was suggested that local contractors who were not successful for the Yorbuild 2 framework lists still be appropriately used.

Minded to Grant Decision: (1) That the lists of contractors highlighted in Appendix A to this report forming the YORbuild2 South framework lists be approved.

(2) That the use, if required, of contractors listed in Appendix B for the YORbuild2 North, West and East frameworks be approved.

(3) That the Interim Strategic Director, Environment and Development Services, be authorised to consider and, if possible, resolve any objections arising from the procurement process.

11. NEWPORT PAPER PLC RECYCLING CONTRACT - CONTRACT PRICE REVIEW

Consideration was given to the report presented by Councillor Sims, Advisory Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety, which detailed a further request from Newport Paper PLC for an additional six month reduction in the contract price paid per tonne.

The reasons for the request and comparisons to the original contract price, current price offered and the market price were competitive and measured against demand.

Minded to Grant Decision:- (1) That a further six month reduction in the contract price paid to the Council for its kerbside collected recycled paper and cardboard from £65 to £55 per tonne be approved.

(2) That the new price take effect from 10th December 2015.

(3) That a further review of the UK market position be undertaken in three and six months' time to reassess the contract price paid.

(4) That the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment be delegated to review any future re-assessment of the price mechanism for this contract

12. COMMUNITY DEMENTIA CAFES PILOT 2016

Consideration was given to the report presented by Councillor Roche, Advisory Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, which detailed a request for exemption under Standing Order 38 from Standing Order 47 (requirement for contracts valued at less than £50,000 to be tendered) for the execution of a 12 month pilot of the Community Dementia Cafes and the funds be awarded accordingly.

Whilst the current model of service had been successful, an alternative needed to be considered to accommodate current and increasing demand. A model which incorporated an additional 'step down' service run by volunteers and co-ordinated by a paid member of staff would resolve the current pressures and a request was, therefore, made that the current organisation be awarded funds to support the execution of a 12 month pilot of such a service.

Minded to Grant Decision: That an exemption under Standing Order 38 from Standing Order 47 (requirement for contracts valued at less than £50,000 to be tendered) be granted and the 12 month pilot of the Community Dementia Cafes be commissioned.