

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET
HELD ON**

23 January 2020

7.30 - 8.40 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor Mark Ingall, Leader of the Council

Councillor Eugenie Harvey, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing

Councillor Mike Danvers, Portfolio Holder for Resources

Councillor Tony Durcan, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth

Councillor Danny Purton, Portfolio Holder for Environment

Councillor Lanie Shears, Portfolio Holder for Governance, Equality and Diversity

Councillor John Strachan, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration

Councillor Mark Wilkinson, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Additional Attendees

Councillor Tony Edwards

Councillor Stefan Mullard

Other Councillors

Councillor David Carter

Councillor Simon Carter

Councillor Joel Charles

Councillor Andrew Johnson

Councillor Russell Perrin

Councillor Chris Vince

Officers

Brian Keane, Chief Executive

Andrew Bramidge, Head of Environment and Planning

Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Deputy to the Chief Executive

Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing

Simon Hill, Head of Governance

Andrew Murray, Head of Housing

Adam Rees, Governance Support Officer

95. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

96. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

97. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2019 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

98. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

99. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

The questions, together with the answers, are appended to the minutes.

100. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

101. **PETITIONS**

- a) Stop Expansion of Harlow and Building on Green Wedges with 23,000 New Houses

Cabinet received a petition which requested that the Council stop development of a number of sites within Harlow, as well as the Gilston/Hunsdon Garden Villages.

RESOLVED that the petition was noted.

102. **FORWARD PLAN**

Councillor Mark Ingall, Leader of the Council, said that the item 'Town Wide Employment Sites Article 4 Direction' no longer needed to be considered by Cabinet as the Council had received no objections to the proposed Article 4 Direction at the Pinnacles. He added that a prior notification of a development had been received. Due to the Article 4 Direction, the application could not proceed automatically under Permitted Development Rights and would be subject to the full planning application process.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan is noted.

103. **RECENT RELEVANT DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE LEADER, DEPUTY OR PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S)**

None.

104. **CORPORATE PLAN 2020/21**

Cabinet received a report proposing a Corporate Plan for 2020/21 to 2022/23.

Proposed by Councillor Mark Ingall (seconded by Councillor Eugenie Harvey) it was:

RESOLVED that Cabinet recommends to Full Council that:

- A** The Corporate Plan 2020/21, attached as Appendix A to the report, is adopted.

- B** Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make minor and inconsequential amendments to the Corporate Plan.

105. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020/21 - 2022/23**

Cabinet received a report proposing a Medium Term Financial Strategy for the Council from 2020/21 to 2022/23.

Proposed by Councillor Mike Danvers (seconded by Councillor Mark Ingall) it was:

RESOLVED that Cabinet recommends to Full Council that:

- A** The Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2020/21 to 2022/23 (attached as appendix B to the report) is adopted.
- B** The planned Council Tax increase of 1.99 per cent for 2020/21 as set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan be approved.
- C** The proposals in relation to reserves as set out in this report at paragraphs 23 to 29 of the report and contained within Section 8 of the Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved.

106. **GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2020/21**

Cabinet received a report which set out the annual General Fund Budget for the Council. The report included a proposed increase to the Council Tax charge of 1.99 per cent.

Proposed by Councillor Mike Danvers (seconded by Councillor Mark Ingall) it was:

RESOLVED that Cabinet recommends to Full Council that:

- A** The General Fund estimates for 2020/21, as set out in Appendix A to the report, are approved.
- B** The proposed transfers between the General Fund and Earmarked Reserves, referred to in paragraphs 28 to 30, Table 3 of this report and set out in Appendix C to the report, are approved.
- C** The proposed Fees and Charges, as set out in Appendix E to the report, are approved.
- D** The Pay Policy Statement, as set out in Appendix G to the report, is approved.

- E The Council's Band D Council Tax for 2020/21 is set at £283.26 representing an increase in Council Tax of 1.99 per cent for the forthcoming year.

107. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN 2019-2049**

Cabinet received a report proposing a formal update of the Council's Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

Proposed by Councillor Mike Danvers (seconded by Councillor Mark Ingall) it was:

RESOLVED that Cabinet recommends to Full Council that:

- A The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved.
- B Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to make minor amendments to the Plan, if necessary, following consultation.

108. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2020/21**

Cabinet received a report which provided a forecast of the outturn budget for the Council's Housing Revenue Account for the current financial year, as well as a proposed budget for 2020/21.

Proposed by Councillor Mike Danvers (seconded by Councillor Mark Ingall) it was:

RESOLVED that Cabinet recommends to Full Council that:

- A The rents for individual dwellings as set out in paragraph 28 of this report are approved with effect from 6 April 2020. This equates to an average weekly rent of £92.28 an increase of 2.7 per cent.
- B Service charges for individual dwellings, as set out in paragraphs 21 to 27 of this report are approved with effect from 6 April 2020 for tenants and from 1 April 2020 for leaseholders. This equates to an average weekly service charge to tenants of £2.79.
- C Heating charges as set out in paragraphs 29 to 34 of this report are approved with effect from 6 April 2020 for tenants and from 1 April 2020 for leaseholders. Average weekly general needs charges are £9.23 per week (leaseholders 223 Agenda Item 14 £18.19 per week, equivalent) and, for sheltered accommodation, £6.84 per week.
- D Rents for garages held within the category 'Retain and Invest' as defined in the 'Garages and Hardstanding Improvement Strategy

2015' will increase by five per cent, to £10.67 per week (for a standard garage) and proportionate increases for other garages, car ports and car spaces from 1 April 2020, as set out in paragraphs 35 and 36 of this report.

- E** Housing related support charges are as set out in paragraphs 17 to 19 and Table 1 are approved for service users with effect from 6 April 2020.
- F** Other Leasehold charges set out in paragraphs 25 and 37 of this report are approved with effect from 6 April 2020.
- G** Other Tenant charges are set out in paragraphs 38 and 39 and are approved with effect from 1 April 2020.
- H** The growth items outlined in paragraph 42 in respect of 2020/21 are approved.
- I** The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget (attached as set out in Appendix A to the report) is approved.
- J** The minimum HRA working balance shall be £4 million as at 31 March 2021.

109. **CAPITAL AND TREASURY REPORT 2020**

Cabinet received a report which provided a forecast of the outturn budget for the Council's Housing Revenue Account for the current financial year, as well as a proposed budget for 2020/21.

Proposed by Councillor Mike Danvers (seconded by Councillor Mark Ingall) it was:

RESOLVED that Cabinet recommends to Full Council that:

- A** The following Capital and Treasury Reports be approved:
 - i) The Capital Strategy Report (attached as Appendix A to the report)
 - ii) The Capital Programme Strategy Statement 2020/21 (attached as Appendix B to the report)
 - iii) The Investment Strategy Report 2020/21 (attached as Appendix D to the report)
 - iv) The Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2020/21 (attached as Appendix E to the report).

- B** The proposed revised Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2020/21 (attached as Appendix C to the report) be approved for implementation with effect from 1 April 2020.

110. **CAPITAL PROGRAMMES 2019/20 - 2021/22**

The Cabinet received a report on the outturn for 2019/20 and proposed programmes for 2020/21.

Proposed by Councillor Mike Danvers (seconded by Councillor Mark Ingall) it was:

RESOLVED that Cabinet recommends to Full Council that:

Housing Capital Programme

- A** The Housing Capital Programme 2019/20 revised outturn of £23,005,000, as set out in Table 2 of the report is noted.
- B** The Housing Capital programme 2020/21 of £27,739,000, as set out in Table 5 of the report is approved, including £10.2 million of external borrowing in 2020/21 and a further £8.7 million in the following two years to support building council homes. Total borrowing £18.9 million.

Non Housing Capital Programme

- C** The revised Non Housing Capital Programme 2019/20 of £13,738,000, as set out in Table 6 of the report is noted.
- D** The Non Housing Capital Programme for 2020/21 £11,048,000 including the Enterprise Zone (Modus), £5,363,000, and Elm Hatch £1,185,000, as set out in Table 10 of the report is approved.
- E** External borrowing of £13.8 million is approved to support the Non Housing Capital Programme in 2020/21 and a further £10.2 million in respect of the Housing Capital Programme.

111. **DEBT WRITE OFFS**

Cabinet received a report which requested approval to write off irrecoverable debts totalling £500,373.19.

Proposed by Councillor Mike Danvers (seconded by Councillor Mark Ingall) it was:

RESOLVED that:

- A** Irrecoverable non domestic rates amounting to £500,373.19 (as set out in Appendix A to the report) be written off.

112. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM COMMITTEES/WORKING GROUPS/PARTIES AND PANELS**

None.

113. **MINUTES OF PANELS/WORKING GROUPS**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following meetings are noted.

- a) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 28 November 2019 of Cabinet Overview Working Group

114. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Cabinet – 23 January 2020

Questions from the Public

1 Mr Nicholas Taylor to Councillor Mark Ingall, Leader of the Council

The Harlow Alliance Party and no doubt hundreds of residents were delighted to see the Main Modifications made by the Inspector of Harlow Council's Local Plan. These changes will see a reduction of some 200 homes being built on Council owned playing fields and green spaces between housing estates.

Members will be aware that despite this, the Plan if implemented in full will still see 1600 more homes being constructed in the area than is required by government targets.

It was announced last week that the Council would be commencing a £12 million house building programme shortly. How does the Council plan to meet the shortfall in Council house building numbers as a result of the Inspectors findings?

Reply from Councillor Mark Ingall (Leader of the Council):

The Council is developing a proposed housing delivery programme, comprising a number of sites that can be developed for council housing over the coming years.

It is anticipated that there will not be a shortfall in the required council house building numbers as a result of the Inspector's Main Modifications.

Supplementary Question from Mr Nicholas Taylor to Councillor Mark Ingall, Leader of the Council

Does this mean that sites outside of those identified in Local Plan will be built on?

Supplementary Reply from Councillor Mark Ingall, Leader of the Council

No, it does not.

2 Mr Nicholas Taylor to Councillor Mark Ingall, Leader of the Council

The Conservative Government said in 2012 that for every Council house sold under the Right to Buy, a Council house would be built to replace it. Since then, nationally, a new house has been built only when seven Council homes have been sold. In view of these figures, can you tell me how many homes Harlow Council owned in April 2012 compared with in April 2019?

Reply from Councillor Mark Ingall (Leader of the Council):

The Council's stock in April 2012 was 9,824. The Council's stock in April 2019 was 9,180.

Supplementary Question from Mr Nicholas Taylor to Councillor Mark Ingall, Leader of the Council

Will there still be a lower level of council stock by the end of the Local Plan period?

Supplementary Reply from Councillor Mark Ingall, Leader of the Council

The Council has an ambitious pipeline of developments, but Government action is needed to address this issue.

3 Mr Alan Leverett to Councillor Mark Ingall, Leader of the Council

In March last year the Council undertook to consult with residents about the proposed sustainable transport corridors, after the Local Elections in May.

Until now, almost nothing has been done by Harlow Council to advertise exhibitions held in respect of the Plans relating to Gilston and Latton Priory. It has to be said that these included only very vague details of the transport proposals. The exhibition which took place yesterday (22 January) was not advertised on the Council's website or that of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.

Is yesterday's event the sole attempt by Harlow Council to consult residents? If not, when and how is the Council going to consult with residents in Harlow about these specific plans?

Reply from Councillor Mark Ingall (Leader of the Council):

I am pleased to be able to say that public consultation on the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Transport Strategy will commence at the end of January and run until the beginning March 2020. There was in fact no event that took place yesterday, which is why neither the Council nor the Garden Town team had publicised anything. This was a tentative date for the launch of the consultation which erroneously found its way into the local media.

The consultation exercise, when it is launched next week, will see material available on the Garden Town website for review and comment and this will be supported by social media activity through the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town team. Harlow Council's communications team will also support this activity. There will be two staffed exhibitions in the Harvey Centre (dates are currently being confirmed with the Harvey Centre's management team) with Officers available to hand out materials

and answer questions. A similar event is also planned for Harlow College and a presentation is to be given to the Harlow Chamber of Commerce on 19 February.

During the entire length of the consultation period there will also be exhibition panels on display in the Civic Centre reception. We welcome as many people as possible to get involved with this consultation process, which will be the first in a series of consultation exercises on the Garden Town proposals in the coming months and years.

Supplementary Question from Mr Alan Leverett to Councillor Mark Ingall, Leader of the Council

Are you going to engage with Residents Associations during the consultation?

Supplementary Reply from Councillor Mark Ingall, Leader of the Council

We will ask the Garden Town Board about their plans to engage with Residents Associations.

4 Mr Alan Leverett to Councillor Mark Ingall, Leader of the Council

With over 4000 applicants on the Housing Register, what analysis if any has been carried out to determine the most useful type of home the Council should build to make best use of its stock of homes and reduce the number of applicants on the Housing Register?

Reply from Councillor Mark Ingall (Leader of the Council):

The Council's strategic housing market assessment (SHMA) sets out the number of homes needed in future to inform our local plans and housing strategies. This seeks to meet housing need, support a healthy local economy and achieve a 'balanced' housing market.

Harlow's overall housing needs require all dwelling types. Current indicators show there is a significant need for two bedroom properties and a need for bungalows to meet the aging population in Harlow.

Supplementary Question from Mr Alan Leverett to Councillor Mark Ingall, Leader of the Council

Is the Council aware that a number of council tenants wish to downsize their properties?

Supplementary Reply from Councillor Mark Ingall, Leader of the Council

The Council is aware that some tenants wish to downsize. Where tenants wish to downsize they should contact the Council.