

Minutes

Cabinet
Tuesday, 10 December 2019



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

The Leader: Councillor Kelham Cooke, The Leader of the Council (Chairman)

The Deputy Leader: Councillor Barry Dobson, The Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairman)

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Helen Goral, Cabinet Member for Growth
Councillor Dr Peter Moseley, Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations
Councillor Robert Reid, Cabinet Member for Communities and HR
Councillor Nick Robins, Cabinet Member for Planning
Councillor Adam Stokes, Cabinet Member for Finance
Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew, Cabinet Member for Culture

Non-Cabinet Members present

Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Judy Stevens
Councillor Mark Whittington
Councillor Ray Wootten

Officers

Interim Chief Executive (Paul Thomas)
Interim Strategic Director, Growth (Harry Rai)
Interim Strategic Director, Resources (Richard Wyles)
Interim Head of Legal (Shahin Ismail)
Strategic Director, Commercial & Operational (Gary Smith)
Assistant Chief Executive, Transformation & Change (Lee Sirdifield)
Assistant Chief Executive, Housing Delivery (Ken Lyon)
Assistant Director, Commercial & Operational (Ian Yates)
Scrutiny Officer (Zena West)
Interim Principal Democracy Officer (Sarah Evans)

47. Apologies

An apology for late attendance was received for Councillor Trollope-Bellew.

48. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 12 November 2019 were proposed, seconded and agreed as a correct record.

49. Disclosure of Interests

No interests were disclosed.

50. Council Tax Base for the financial year 2020/21 (Budget Framework)

The Cabinet Member for Finance presented a report which asked the Cabinet to recommend the Council Tax base for 2020/21 and set the collection rate for council tax. He referred to the table in the report at paragraph 1.4 which set out the tax base for Band D equivalents since 2016/17 and showed there was only a small increase for the coming year on the previous year which was positive for the district.

The Leader said he was pleased that the Council had the third highest collection rate for 2018/19 of similar sized authorities and asked how the Council could continue that rate and even improve over the next year.

The Director for Finance responded that the Council was liaising with other authorities and continually looking at ways to improve collection rates.

A Cabinet Member asked what the difference was in value by collecting 98 percent on the best performing level of band D in monetary terms as opposed to collecting the full 100 percent.

Action point

The Director for Finance advised he would respond to Cabinet Members on the above query following the meeting.

A Cabinet Member stated that the Council should promote its collection rate and thank Council tax payers for ensuring this success by paying their Council tax on time.

There was a question on the Council's policy for chasing outstanding debt. The Interim Director for Finance explained that the Council Tax team was dedicated in checking up on current occupiers, referring non-payers to other bodies and for enforcement action to recover payment and write offs were the last resort. With regard to the debt percentage, it was noted that only 10 percent was due to this Council but it was the authority's duty to provide the resource for collection but the cost incurred was shared with the County Council and other relevant bodies.

The recommendations in the report were proposed, seconded and **AGREED**:

1. Cabinet recommends to Council the Council Tax base for the forthcoming financial year equating to 47,918.40 in accordance with the relevant legislation.

This will form the basis upon which the Council will estimate Council Tax income for the 2020/21 budget.

51. Finance update report - Quarter 2 2019/20

The Cabinet Member for Finance presented a report which gave Cabinet Members the Council's forecast financial position as at the end of Quarter 2 (30 September 2019). He advised that the report had been to the Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review and they and he were satisfied with the savings, capital and variances as set out in the report.

The Leader thanked the Cabinet Members and Officers for their work on the budget and despite the variances, he was confident that within the next few weeks a balanced budget would be achieved.

The Vice Chairman of the Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee reported that there had been a robust debate at their meeting and they were satisfied with the responses from the Cabinet Member and that a good plan was in place to bring a balanced budget by the year end.

The recommendations in the report were proposed, seconded and **AGREED**:

1. Cabinet approves the forecast 2019/20 outturn positions for Revenue, Savings and Income Generation and Capital as at the end of September 2019 and notes the variances that require further action.

52. Tenancy Agreement (Key Decision)

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Deputy Leader advised Cabinet Members that the current Tenancy Agreement adopted in 2002 no longer reflected the needs of the housing services or the context in which social housing now operated. The new Tenancy Agreement proposed would replace the current agreement and the main changes were outlined in the report. He reported that the new agreement had been subject to consultation with tenants and 440 responses had been received as well as comments from the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The feedback received had been reviewed and incorporated into the agreement where relevant and practical. However it was considered that further minor amendments may be needed to reflect good practice and current arrangements and therefore a delegation to himself in consultation with the Interim Strategic Director of Growth was requested as an additional recommendation.

Clarification was requested as to the meaning of 'immoral' mentioned in the agreement. The Interim Strategic Director for Growth responded that some further thought was needed for an appropriate form of wording to reflect this.

The Leader thanked all those who had contributed to the agreement especially the Deputy Leader.

The recommendation in the report together with the delegation proposed by the Deputy Leader were proposed, seconded and **AGREED**:

1. The Cabinet approves the proposed Tenancy Agreement, as appended (Appendix 1) to the report, and for it to be sent as a 'notice of variation' to all tenants of South Kesteven District Council ('the Council') in accordance with Section 103 of the Housing Act 1985.
2. To delegate authority to the Deputy Leader in consultation with the Interim Strategic Director, Growth to make any minor changes to the final document.

53. Matters Referred to Cabinet by the Council or Overview & Scrutiny Committees

The Leader of the Council presented a report which highlighted matters referred to the Cabinet by the Council or the Council's overview and scrutiny committees since the Cabinet's last meeting held on 12 November 2019. The Leader invited representatives of the overview and scrutiny committees to report on their recent activities.

The Chairman of the Culture and Visitor Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee updated the Cabinet on the ongoing work on the draft Cultural Strategy, feedback from the Cultural Survey and priorities identified by residents. There was some discussion around cultural events clashing and the need for a calendar. The type of activities that were being developed were networking events for artists and other creatives, a website to promote cultural activities with a booking facility as well as improving management of the budget and bringing in sponsorship for the next Bourne CiCLE festival

The Vice Chairman of the Finance, Economic, Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the committee's reports of 19 November 2019 which focussed on budgetary and financial matters and the second meeting held on 27 November 2019 which had considered the future leisure management options.

The Chairman of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny thanked Ken Lyon for his support at their last meeting on 21 November 2019 and thanked the Council's Scrutiny Officer for her support. He referred to the activity in the committee's report and that arrangements were underway to invite representatives to talk to the committee about Grantham Hospital and Community Policing.

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee's report of 26 November 2019 and outlined the activities of the committee and specifically referred to their review and recommendations relating to scrap metal dealers, grounds maintenance, climate change, textile banks/recycling and performance indicators.

The Leader advised that he valued scrutiny and it was an important function for robust decision-making hence the Council had appointed a dedicated Scrutiny Officer and welcomed this support.

54. Items raised by Cabinet Members including reports on Key and Non Key Decisions taken under Delegated Powers.

The Leader of the Council presented his report giving an overview of decisions taken by individual Cabinet Members since the last Cabinet meeting. It was noted that the first pledges had been agreed and rolled out from CrowdfundSK and this provided positive publicity for the Council.

55. Representations and questions from Non Cabinet Members

A non-Cabinet Member queried whether the Council was intending to put in place alternative arrangements for the hundreds of children affected by the closure of the all-weather pitch at the Deepings and what compensation would be offered to those who had paid for the use of the facilities. The Cabinet Member for Growth responded that conversations were ongoing between the Deepings' Members and the sports club to reach a long-term solution. Alternative provision was being looked into in the meantime and whether other facilities could be used for the short term. The non-Cabinet Member felt the Council had failed to deliver alternative pitches and they were needed in the Deepings.

A non-Cabinet Member referred to the recent sport consultation and when the feedback would be available. The Cabinet Member for Growth responded that the work was ongoing and there would be reports to the Culture and Visitor Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in due course.

A non-Cabinet Member referred to the staff survey and when this would start. The Leader responded that this would be available in the New Year.

A non-Cabinet Member referred to the reduction in footfall at the markets across the district and that they needed to be rejuvenated. The Cabinet Member for Growth responded that regular conversations were taking place with stall holders. She explained that officers were looking to develop a long-term strategy and the Council was committed to improving the market offering. The non-Cabinet Member queried the managerial input. The Leader emphasised that it was his ambition to run good markets across the district and therefore had moved the function back to the Council although InvestSK would still be involved.

56. Cabinet Forward Plan

Cabinet Members noted the Forward Plan for the period 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020 which had been distributed prior to the meeting. The Forward Plan gave an indication of the items that would be presented to Cabinet over the coming 12-month period.

The Leader advised that in consultation with the Chief Executive he had agreed for future Cabinet meetings to revert to a 14:00 start time from January 2020.

Exclusion of the press and public

Cabinet agreed to exclude the press and public at this point in the meeting, to ensure that information in the following item exempt under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) was not disclosed during discussion.

57. Leisure Service – Future Management Options (Key Decision)

The Cabinet Member for Growth presented a report on enhancing leisure opportunities for everyone in the district. She explained that the Council was looking for the best value, reducing the revenue burden and the way forward in getting the long-term procurement right to ensure a cost-effective outcome. This meant that a short-term option was needed to get to that point which was the reason for this report. She advised the proposals had been to the Finance, Economic, Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review and thanked them for their contribution. Some valid concerns had been raised about a potential for a reduced level of service. She proposed the recommendations in the report with an addition at recommendation 1 that the current level of service be maintained.

There was some discussion at the level of detail in the report and a Cabinet Member felt he needed more information. It was explained that this had been previously discussed and there had been opportunities for Cabinet Members to request further information from the Cabinet Member for Growth or the lead Officer prior to the Cabinet meeting.

The Leader used his discretion to allow non-Cabinet Members to speak at the meeting and the following was noted:

- The validity and assurance the proposal would provide in the long-term on getting the procurement right was commended
- The one-off procurement cost would be offset by the savings
- A financial return was expected for leisure provision in the long-term
- ***The legality of contract modification at option 1 was queried and the Head of Legal agreed to review and report back – Action Point***
- If the existing provider continued, the collection of rent for the playing fields needed to be reviewed to ensure good value and it was understood that this was currently in hand by the Head of Leisure

The recommendations in the report were proposed, seconded and **AGREED**:

1. The Cabinet approves an extension to the Council's current leisure management contract arrangement for a term of 15 months, the extension to end on 3 April 2022 subject to the current level of service being maintained.

2. The Cabinet agrees with the result of the long-term management option appraisal and approves the proposal to procure a new contract arrangement.
3. The Cabinet agrees that a Procurement Strategy should be developed to determine the optimum length of contract and ideal route to market.
4. The Cabinet approves a budget of £65,000 be set aside to develop the Procurement Strategy and support the Council in the procurement of a new contract. This is to be funded from the £106,000 saving as detailed in the exempt report.

In response to a series of comments made during the meeting, the Leader explained that although he welcomed open questions and constructive criticism he didn't condone personal attacks and felt this was inappropriate. He said that a good working relationship amongst Members of the Council was essential and all Members needed to work as a team and have respect for each other regardless of party. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

58. Close of meeting

The meeting was closed at 17:05.