

Minutes

Cabinet

Tuesday, 10 January 2023



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

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

The Deputy Leader: Councillor Adam Stokes, The Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairman)

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Annie Mason, Cabinet Member for People and Safer Communities

Councillor Robert Reid, Cabinet Member for Housing and Property

Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew, Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor Economy

Councillor Mark Whittington, Cabinet Member for Waste Services and Climate Change

Councillor Linda Wootten, Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing

Non-Cabinet Members present

Councillor Mary Whittington

Officers

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive

Nicola McCoy-Brown, Director of Growth and Culture

Craig Spence, Acting Director of Housing

Graham Watts, Assistant Director of Governance (Deputy Monitoring Officer)

Chris Prime, Communications Manager

Debbie Roberts, Head of Corporate Projects, Policy and Performance

James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

Patrick Astill, Communications Officer

69. Register of attendance and apologies for absence

Prior to the commencement of formal business the Leader of the Council, on behalf of the Cabinet wished the Deputy Chief Executive a speedy recovery from illness and passed their best wishes onto his family.

Thanks were given to all officers involved in the move to the new office space at The Picture House; all staff were now able to use the open-plan office accommodation and it would support collaborative working.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Nick Robins.

70. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 December 2022 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to a typographical error in the 'Finance Update' report being corrected.

71. Disclosure of Interests

There were no disclosures of interests.

72. Draft Budget Proposals 2023/24

Purpose of report

This report presented to Cabinet the draft Budget estimates for 2023/2024, Revenue and Capital, for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account and provided the details that had been included in the budget proposals.

Decision

That Cabinet:

1. Considered the budget proposals for 2023/24 in respect of:
 - General Fund – Revenue and Capital
 - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – Revenue and Capital
2. Approves a rent setting increase of 7% for 2023/24.
3. Approves consultation in accordance with the requirements of Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for the financial year 2023/2024.
4. Notes the removal of the Stamford Special Expense Area budgets from 1 April 2023.
5. Considered the proposed fees and charges for 2023/24 as set out at Appendix B.
6. Approves the following proposed movements in reserves:
 - General Fund - Movement of £1.547m from the Housing Delivery Reserve to the Local Priorities Reserve
 - General Fund - Movement from the Budget Stabilisation Reserve of £1.534m in order to achieve a balanced position for 2023/24
 - Housing Revenue Account - Movement of £1.316m from the HRA Improvement and Residents Involvement Reserves to the HRA Priorities Reserve.
7. Considered the communications budget and longer-term plans for climate change.

Alternative options considered and rejected

No other options were considered.

Reason for decisions

The Council was required to set a balanced budget each financial year.

The Deputy Leader updated Cabinet following engagement with the Joint Budget Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had discussed the draft budget proposals on 9 January 2023. That Committee had suggested an additional recommendation to Cabinet around the Council's communications budget and longer-term plans to combat climate change. Final budgetary recommendations would be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 7 February 2023 ahead of the Full Council meeting on 1 March 2023.

Budget proposals would be driven by the current Corporate Plan within the context of a difficult financial climate. The Deputy Leader had regularly attended and updated Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny meetings throughout the previous financial year.

The Deputy Leader outlined the areas that the Draft Budget Proposals Report covered:

- Spending overview – the Council had been notified of a provisional settlement on 19 December 2022, and it had been largely in line with previous expectations. It had contained no additional monies to aid increased energy costs to the Council. The Council would use its reserves to cover any shortfalls.
- The General Fund Revenue account – it was anticipated that this account would see a balanced position for 2023/2024 after using reserves but there would be an unbalanced position for future years as things stood. This future position would need addressing in the next financial year to provide a sustainable outlook for the General Fund.
- HRA outlook – there were two key elements; the rent setting proposals and building in budgets to meet ongoing housing requirements. Further investment in the HRA totalled £1.3 million and this was being met in part by the proposal to increase rents by 7%. The increase was necessary to ensure that the ongoing expenditure pressures could be met from the income the HRA received from the rent. Those in receipt of welfare assistance would receive support for any rent increases.
- Fees and charges – discretionary charges were broadly in line with inflation. The annual collection charge for green waste saw a proposed £5 increase and would be considered by Full Council on 26 January 2023.
- The capital programme contained key investments to support services and included fleet replacement, asset maintenance and investment in Future High Streets and the Heritage Action Zone.
- The HRA capital programme again focused on investment in the housing stock. For the first time for a number of years the programme was driven by

the knowledge and information received by the recently completed stock condition survey.

- Over £1 million in receipts was received from capital sales.
- Movements in the reserves for the HRA and General Fund were reviewed regularly, along with the risk register.

The following points were raised during discussion:

- There was a look to the future as to how the Council communicated with its residents. There was currently a quarterly, printed copy of the publication SK:Today. In line with climate change objectives and ongoing costs the approach proposed was to cease SK:Today in its current printed form, and to not deliver it to residents across the District. Instead, it would be available quarterly in electronic form, with some printed copies available in Stamford, Bourne, Grantham and the Deepings.
- There was a Corporate Asset Management Strategy looking at what the Council owned with the aim of ensuring the Council got use out of its best assets. In terms of local devolution, parish and town councils would take on local assets where required.
- The Council had a Climate Change Working Group with an allocated reserve of money. It was key that this reserve was used to come up with plans and progress towards decarbonisation. Currently, the technology was not yet at the stage to enable the Council to become 'net zero'; however, as time progressed there would be rapid development towards this goal. The new office was a good starting point towards this net zero target.
- Food bank funding should be extended to further relevant groups in the District and therefore should be included in the budget.
- The Community Fund was vitally important for charitable and community organisations trying to gain match funding and when supporting community led funding. In relation to the festivals budget; at the present time the Council's funding from Arts Council England was lower than that previously received. However, the Community Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund could still be used to support community led events, such as festivals.
- In Stamford, Market Deeping and Bourne the Christmas lights were managed by the town councils, but this was not the case in Grantham. It was hoped that money could be spent on new lighting for Christmas 2023.
- A climate change strategy was being developed firstly with the aim of being shared with the Climate Change Working Group.

73. Contract Awards in relation to social landlord responsibilities

Purpose of report

The report was for the contract award for Asbestos removal, surveying, inspection and consultancy works which had been subject to a compliant procurement process.

Decision

That Cabinet approves the award of a contract for Asbestos removal, surveying, inspection and consultancy works to MCP Environmental at a projected cost of £300,000 per annum.

Alternative options considered and rejected

There were no other options available.

Reason for decisions

The contract award had followed compliant procurement processes and would provide the Council with the appropriate contracts to aid the delivery of the Corporate Priority to provide “Housing that meets the needs of all residents”. This also ensured that the statutory regulations for over 5,900 properties had been met.

74. Key and Non-Key Decisions taken under Delegated Powers

Cabinet noted Key and Non-Key Decisions taken under delegated powers since the previous meeting, as set out in the report.

75. Cabinet's Forward Plan

Cabinet noted the Forward Plan, whilst acknowledging that a further forward plan had been published after the publication of the January Cabinet agenda. This amended Forward Plan included items on St. Martin’s Park, Stamford and the Customer Service Centre in Grantham.

The meeting closed at 2:27pm.