

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held remotely on Monday, 9 November 2020

Commenced 10.35 am
Concluded 12.25 pm

Members of the Executive – Councillors

LABOUR
Hinchcliffe
I Khan
Ross-Shaw
Ferriby
Jabar
Farley

Observers: Councillors Kyle Green (Minute 167) , Pollard (Minute 164) and Poulsen (Minutes 166 & 168)

Councillor Hinchcliffe in the Chair

160. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

161. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 September and 6 October 2020 be signed as a correct record.

162. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted to review restricted documents.

163. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE

There were no referrals to the Committee.

164. QUARTER 2 FINANCE POSITION STATEMENT 2020/21

The Director of Finance submitted a report (**Document “CJ”**) which provided Members with an update on the forecast financial position of the Council for 2020-21.

It examined the latest spend against revenue and capital budgets and forecasted the financial position at the year end. It stated the Council’s current balances and reserves and forecasted school balances for the year.

The impact of the current pandemic on the Council’s finances was alluded to both in terms of the additional spend that had been required and the loss in service income, however as a result of additional monies that had or were in the process of forthcoming from Central Government, the position of the Council’s finances was now much healthier than had been the situation and reported at the quarter 1 stage.

The Leader stated that financially it had been a difficult year for the Council and that these financial uncertainties would continue into the planning process for the 2021/2022 budget. The Impact of the pandemic had stretched the Council’s finances significantly with unprecedented spend on items such as PPE and ensuring that the Council continues to provide services to the most vulnerable, and she commended staff for their hard work and dedication during this difficult time.

A Conservative Group Councillor was present at the meeting and stated that despite the earlier funding gap, additional monies had now been provided by Central Government and this should be welcomed and acknowledged, however he suggested that in terms of the capital spend, resources should be allocated as a priority to complete the repairs on the Buck Lane bridge.

In response the Leader stated that the Council was eternally grateful and welcomed the additional funding from Government, however Bradford was deserving of this money and this had to be seen in the context of poor funding of the region over many years, however in order to plan for future budgets a sustainable funding model had to be in place going forward.

In response to a question on Buck Lane, the Portfolio Holder stressed that a number of options were being worked through and these would be shared with ward councillors in due course, before proceeding with the repairs.

Resolved -

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.**
- (2) That the £3.1m of additional support for Adult Social Care providers as detailed in section 3.7. to Document “CJ” be approved. Funding to derive from Emergency Covid Grants.**
- (3) That the £100k of additional support for the Social Care team in Legal Services be approved to help manage increased caseloads. Funding to derive from Emergency Covid Grants.**

(4) That the following capital expenditure schemes be approved:

- £0.21m for new automated Bradford City Centre Bollards as part of the on-going replacement programme. This will be funded by corporate borrowing from the General Contingency Budget.
- £0.194m for IT Core Infrastructure projects to increase the bandwidth for internet access. The scheme to be funded by using the previously agreed budget in February 2020 from the remaining £0.7m Reserve schemes for IT Capital Projects.
- £0.22m for the purchase and implementation of a new Libraries Management System and self-service machines. The will be funded by a mixture of corporate borrowing and savings on annual maintenance costs.
- £0.655m additional budget to enable the completion of unforeseen works at Ilkley Lido and a new scheme to replace the water filtration system. This will be funded by the additional contingency that was set aside in the 2020-21 Quarter 1 Finance Position Statement for future budget requests within the Capital Investment Plan.
- £1.075m Affordable Housing Programme. This is to be funded by a combination of additional grant income and/or commuted sums.

That it be noted that the following has been approved under Section 1.7 of the Financial Regulations:

- £0.09m for works to install a Stage Lift at the Alhambra Theatre. This will be funded by corporate borrowing from the General Contingency.

ACTION: Director of Finance

Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Corporate

165. MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chief Executive submitted a report (**Document “CK”**) which provided the Executive with a summary of the Council’s overall achievements in the first six months of the 2020/21 municipal year. Alongside this was an overview of performance against the Council’s KPIs for the first 6 months of 2020/2021. This overview focused on measures where there had been new, comparable data since the update provided at July’s Executive.

This report was originally tabled as part of the Quarter 2 finance performance report and had not been included on the published forward plan. Given the length of detail of activity as a result of the response to COVID-19, it was decided to include this as a separate report, as it was impractical to defer the decision until it had been included in the published Forward Plan, the report was therefore submitted in accordance with paragraph 10 of the Executive Procedure Rules as set out in the Council’s Constitution.

The work around the response to the pandemic was particularly highlighted and the dedication and work of staff was commended, in particular the effort to tackle rough sleepers and the support offered to those who were shielding during the first

lockdown. The roll out and success of the track and trace arrangements in Centenary Square and the Marley Fields site was also alluded to. In relation to the performance data, the new Council Plan that would be published in due course would take over much of this work, however the target position in most service areas remained good.

The Leader acknowledged that the performance data contained in the report was remarkable given that we were in the midst of a pandemic and again she commended staff for their efforts in ensuring delivery of services across the piece, and in many cases staff going above and beyond and working over weekends to ensure vital service provision was maintained. Mention was also made on the achievements in dealing with rough sleepers and she hoped that this work would continue into the future so that homeless people had sustained tenancies. She also extended her thanks to the voluntary and business sectors for their work during the current time, stressing that partnership working was key in moving forward and dealing with the impacts of the pandemic.

Resolved

That the contents of the report be noted.

ACTION: No Action

Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Corporate

166. COVID-19: RESPONSE, RESILIENCE, RECOVERY

COVID-19 has had a significant and disproportionate impact on the Bradford district. Council resources have been key to managing the response and planning for recovery but are insufficient to meet the direct financial impacts.

The Chief Executive submitted a report (**Document “CL”**) which examined the impact and outlook in key areas of activity. Persistent uncertainty around infection rates, restrictions and the socio-economic effect hinder effective planning and resourcing. Brexit and the annual winter flu will place a further burden on resources and another emergency event would stretch them beyond breaking point. Additional Government support is needed to manage complex scenarios and demands, avoid system failure, protect the NHS, keep services running and plan for recovery. Looking further ahead, the Council needs certainty in funding arrangements and support to invest in education, skills and infrastructure in order to achieve public service reform with improved outcomes and a more inclusive and sustainable district as we recover from COVID-19. These requirements form the basis of a series of recommendations to Government.

The Leader stated that we were currently living through a national emergency, with the recent lockdown measures now in place and with the rise in infection rates and hospital admissions and the consequent sad loss of life, it was imperative that people stayed at home and followed the guidance.

The Chief Executive acknowledged and echoed the sentiments expressed by the Leader and stated that this report set out the issues and concerns in detail. To this end a collaborative approach with Government was imperative to deal with the pandemic and its impacts. The sterling work to reduce infection rates in the district had been acknowledged by the Chief Medical Officer for England, however more needed to be done and this work would continue, particularly as we head into the winter months and beyond. In the context of the lockdown further work was now planned for those that were shielding and how we can support the most vulnerable, as well as the support we can offer businesses during this period.

To this end it was important to continue to lobby the Government on ensuring the effectiveness of the track and trace system, the support we can offer to those who were self isolating and generally on the sustainable funding of vital services going forward.

The Opposition Group Leader was present at the meeting and stated she fully supported all the work that was on going to deal with the pandemic , however she questioned what discussions had taken place to ensure people self isolated once they had tested positive and that there was compliance in this area, or where businesses were flouting the rules what enforcement action had been taken. She also questioned why Full Council had failed to meet, where these and other matters could be openly discussed and what discussions had taken place to change this situation.

In response the Leader stated that self isolation and compliance was a national issue and it was important that financial and other support was in place for this cohort; in relation to businesses, information on enforcement would be provided outside of this meeting. Finally in relation to Council meetings a meeting of Full Council was scheduled for December, however the Executive had discussed all the important issues pertaining to the pandemic from the outset, whilst encouraging Members across the political spectrum to participate in those meetings.

In relation to a question on Business Grants/support it was stated that the Council was awaiting the details of the latest scheme from Governments, and that officers in the revenues team would then roll this out as they had done so efficiently during the first lockdown.

The Leader stressed the need to ensure financial support was in place for those on low pay, adding that the Council was working had with its partner to ensure that a viable economic recovery plan was in place going forward.

Resolved –

- (1) That the range and scale of activity undertaken to date by Council services, working with partners to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the outstanding nature of that collective effort be noted, and that the Executive puts on record its thanks to everyone involved for their on-going work in supporting the communities and businesses of the district during a time of unprecedented difficulty and uncertainty.**

- (2) That the key areas of focus for the Council over the winter months and the pressures on services and resources be noted, and requires all services to develop business continuity and contingency plans.
- (3) That it be noted that Council capacity and resources are stretched to the limit and that the need to respond to any further emergency would inevitably reduce the resources available to minimise and prevent infection deliver key services, support our communities and economy and plan for the future.
- (4) That the recommendations to Government set out at section 7 to Document “CL” be agreed, endorses them as the basis on which to negotiate and position Bradford District with Government as a key partner in preventing and minimising the spread of infection, staying resilient over Winter, maintaining vital services, levelling up the national economy and securing public sector reform.
- (5) That the Chief Executive be requested to ensure that Government is made aware of the Council’s position and seek a meeting with Ministers to discuss how we work more effectively together through the pandemic and in building a better future.

ACTION: Chief Executive

Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Corporate

167. PERSONAL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE BUDGET RATE: AUTHORITY TO CONSULT

The Strategic Director Children’s Services submitted a report (**Document “CM”**) which sought approval to begin a public consultation on the Personal Travel Assistance Budget (PTAB) rate currently awarded to parents/carers of eligible children of compulsory school age using home to school transport.

It was stressed that the proposal to go out to consultation was aimed at ensuring that out mileage rate was in line with the HMRC rate and those of our neighbouring authorities.

A Conservative Group Councillor was present at the meeting and suggested that appropriate support mechanisms should be in place for families whatever comes out of the consultation, in particular those that lived in the outlying areas of the district, where children were sometimes making long journeys to their nearest special needs provision. In response the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder in acknowledging the point, stressed that all ward councillors would be consulted on the proposed changes.

Resolved –

That approval be given to commence a public consultation on both elements of the PTAB rates (Option 9.2 to Document “CM”) as outlined at point 1.4 to Document “CM”.

ACTION: Strategic Director Children’s Services

Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Children’s Services

168. PROTECTING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS AT RISK OF EXPLOITATION

The Chief Executive submitted a report (**Document “CN”**) which provided an update to and built on the report presented to the Executive on 5th November 2019 and subsequently to the district’s Area Committees regarding the issue of Child Exploitation (CE). It focused on the strategic response to all forms of exploitation in Children and Adults and how partners from the Working Together to Safeguard Children – the Bradford Partnership and the Bradford Safeguarding Adults Board work to drive improvements across the district and to hold agencies to account for their work in their area. This report also outlined the emergence of other complex safeguarding themes and outlined how partners are effectively collaborating and focussing upon the protection of vulnerable Children and Adults.

A number of people were present at the meeting including a representative from West Yorkshire Police and the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner. In terms of the different forms of exploitation the following points were made by the participants:

- That as a result of the pandemic aspects of exploitation were hidden as face to face contact had declined, however exploitation had continued through other mediums.
- That the exploitation of vulnerable individuals remained a particular area of concern and focus for all agencies, whether it was exploiting them through drug dealing, scams, phishing or other methods.
- That good inroads had been made by the Police in tackling the issue of missing children with significant reductions in the numbers.
- That the work in the Bradford district in tackling all forms of exploitation had been exemplary, particularly in terms of managing risks, supporting those at risk and pursuing perpetrators through the legal system.
- That many of the projects around safeguarding relied on Home Office funding and some of this funding would be coming to an end, so conversations needed to be had on how this work would continue into the future.

- That enormous inroads had been made in dealing with the issue of modern slavery, that this was a national issue and took many forms including labour exploitation, domestic servitude and also involved a large number of British nationals. To this end the Modern Slavery Charter had been adopted in Bradford.

The Opposition Group leader was present at the meeting and stated that she welcomed the continued training for members in this area and the imperative of tackling the issue of 'county lines'.

The Deputy Leader also endorsed the work that had been done in Schools as they were in a position to spot many of the initial warning signs.

The Leader thanked all partners for the work undertaken in Bradford to deal with the issue of exploitation in all its forms.

Members in welcoming the input of partners, stressed that tackling exploitation in all its forms was a collective responsibility, and that any issues or concerns should be reported accordingly.

Resolved –

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted
- (2) That the Executive shall receive a further update on the progress of the response to exploitation in 12 months' time.
- (3) That subsequent reports be provided to Area Committees
- (4) That all councillors undertake training and refresher updates on Child Exploitation as part of their induction and ongoing training with regular refreshers.

ACTION: Strategic Director Children's Services

Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Children's Services, Health and Wellbeing

169. MINUTES OF THE WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting(s) of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority held on 6 February 2020; 16 April 2020; 21 May 2020; 25 June 2020 and 27 July 2020 be received.

ACTION: No Action

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Executive