

MINUTES OF CABINET MEETING HELD 21 SEPTEMBER 2015

PRESENT:

Cabinet Members: Councillor Holdich (Chairman), Councillor Coles, Councillor Fitzgerald, Councillor Elsey, Councillor Hiller, Councillor Lamb, Councillor North, Councillor Seaton and Councillor Serluca.

Cabinet Advisors: Councillor Casey and Councillor Maqbool.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETINGS HELD ON:

3.1 20 JULY 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2015 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

3.2 3 AUGUST 2015 – EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 3 August 2015 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. PETITIONS PRESENTED TO CABINET

There were no petitions presented to Cabinet.

STRATEGIC DECISIONS

5. SUBSIDISED PASSENGER TRANSPORT SERVICE PROVISION

Cabinet received a report following a recommendation that a Cross Party Working Group be established. The Cross Party Working Group's focus was to make recommendations to Cabinet regarding increased funding options for the passenger transport subsidised service.

The purpose of the report was to set out the recommendations of the Passenger Transport Subsidised Service Review Working Group and to consider the views of the Budget Working Group on those proposed enhancements to services. Following a meeting of the Budget Working group on 14 September 2015 a supplementary report was submitted to Cabinet, recommending that the recommended increase be deferred and considered as part of the Phase 2 budget setting proposals.

Councillor North, Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital, introduced the report and highlighted the main issues contained within.

90% of the city's bus services were fully commercialised, which represented a 50% growth from 2004. The work of the Cross Party Working Group was focused on the supported bus and demand response schemes. The recommendation of the Cross Party Working Group was to increase the current service operating in the Fengate area. This had been considered by the Budget Working, and it was now proposed to defer the matter for the Phase 2 budget setting proposals.

Following additional comments from the Principal Passenger Transport Contracts and Planning Officer, Cabinet debated the report and key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Fengate was an area with a large workforce and an active night time economy;
- The proposals would extend current operation times, rather than add any extra vehicles, this included additional stops at Garton End Road;
- Concerns were raised in relation to the calculation of funding. It was questioned whether the proposals had resulted from a genuine need of additional services;
- The original budget for subsidised bus services was £600,000. The Cross Party Working Group had considered reviewing the service as a whole, with a new budget of £750,000. This, however, was not believed to be appropriate as minimum disruption to the services was preferred;
- Cabinet queried why various options had not been presented and split down in terms of cost;
- Questions were asked in relation to fuel consumption. It was advised that there would be no significant change, as many companies bought fuel in advance; and
- It was expected that the scheme would commence approximately three months after any approval was granted.

Cabinet considered the report and supplementary report and **RESOLVED** to defer consideration of the recommended increase as part of the Phase 2 budget setting proposals, so that the potential increase could be considered within the wide context of the Council's overall budget for 2016/17 onwards.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

For Cabinet to consider the views of the Cross Party Working Group and determine whether to introduce improvements to the supported bus network through increased budget provision.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Consideration was given by the Cross Party Working Group to providing a completely new supported bus network, however this was rejected by the Group on the basis that the current provision had been introduced two years ago following a significant budget reduction, taking into account a detailed study and Equality Impact Assessment, that the contract was currently underway with a two yearly review, and it was felt that a level of stability in service provision was required to assist those accessing the transport services.

The proposed enhancement would see operating hours extended, but consideration was also given to enhancing the level of services during the daytime through an additional vehicle, however this was rejected by the Cross Party Working Group on the basis that extending operating hours presents a better value proposal, opening up services to key areas, and potentially growing the bus market.

MONITORING ITEMS

6. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2016/17 TO 2025/26

Cabinet received a report as part of the Council's agreed process within the Budget and Policy framework, which required the Cabinet to initiate and consider financial strategy and budget proposals in order to set a balanced budget for the forthcoming financial year.

The purpose of the report was to update Members on the forecast financial position of the Council for the current and future financial years, to outline national and local issues which would need consideration within the medium term financial strategy for 2016/17 onwards, and to set out the proposed process and timetable for the 2016/17 budget process.

Councillor Seaton, Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and highlighted the main issues contained within. The Government grant was expected to be cut by at least 40%, with a £19 million budget gap for the Council next year. It was proposed to recommend to Council a two stage approach, similar to that previously followed. Consultation with all the political groups would commence soon.

At the current time a balanced budget was forecast. In relation to future financial years the Council was committed to bridging the financial gap.

Cabinet debated the report and key points raised and responses to questions included:

- It was expected that a settlement would be announced by Government, which would provide a better idea of the upcoming deficit. Further cuts, however, were often announced within the year;
- It was advised that delays were not uncommon and that a spending review was expected around January 2016; and
- Officers were confident that their predictions were as accurate as possible, however it was noted that the position could worsen.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED:**

To note:

1. The financial pressures in the current financial year and the continuing work by CMT to deliver a balanced budget; and
2. The forecast budget gap for the financial year 2016/17 and onwards, the key assumptions currently included in the MTFs forecast, and the significant uncertainty surrounding next and future years' government funding for local authorities.

To recommend to Council:

1. Approval of amendments to the 'Budget Framework Procedure Rules' to follow a two stage budget process as set out in section 7 of this report.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Cabinet was responsible for initiating Budget Proposals within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules. The proposed approach and timetable for the 2016/17 budget setting process contained within the report varied from that contained within the Procedure Rules and Cabinet was being asked to put forward this alternative, two stage process, for Council approval. The two stage process had been

used in 2014 and was successful in enabling the Council to set a lawful and balanced budget. Another benefit of the two stage approach was that the early agreement of Phase 1 budget proposals in the December before the start of the new financial year gave Departments more time to implement these proposals, some of which may require long lead in times to achieve successful implementation.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

No alternative option had been considered as the Cabinet was responsible under the Constitution for initiating Budget Proposals and the Council was statutorily obliged to set a lawful and balanced budget by 11 March, annually.

7. OUTCOME OF PETITIONS

Cabinet received a report following the presentation of petitions at the Cabinet meeting of 15 June 2015 and the Council meeting of 15 July 2015.

The purpose of the report was to update Cabinet on the progress made in relation to these petitions, these being:

- i) Noise pollution being created by Peterborough Regional College;
- ii) The creation of car parking spaces for residents of Wild Lake, Orton Malbourne;
- iii) The reduction of the speed limit in Eyrescroft, Bretton, from 30mph to 20mph;
and
- iv) Maintaining the aims of Itter Park Management Plan 2013-2018.

Cabinet considered the report and **RESOLVED**:

To note the actions taken in respect of petitions.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

As the petitions presented in the report have been dealt with by Cabinet Members or officers, it was appropriate that the action taken was reported to Cabinet, prior to it being included within the Executive's report to Council.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

There were no alternative options considered.

Chairman
10.00am – 10.34am