

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Cabinet

Wednesday, 29 November 2023 at 7.00 pm

Councillors Present:

M G Jones (Chair)	Leader of the Council
I T Irvine	Cabinet Member for Housing
Y Khan	Cabinet Member for Public Protection
C J Mullins	Cabinet Member for Leisure and Wellbeing
S Mullins	Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Culture
A Nawaz	Deputy Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development
T Rana	Cabinet Member for Resources

Also in Attendance:

Councillor D Crow and M L Ayling

Officers Present:

Carolin Martlew	Head of Corporate Finance
Siraj Choudhury	Head of Governance, People & Performance
Ian Duke	Chief Executive
Chris Pedlow	Democracy & Data Manager
Georgina Bouette	Head of Community Services
Vicki Basley	Chief Accountant
Amanda Kendall	Head of Crawley Homes
Clem Smith	Head of Economy and Planning

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor B Noyce

1. Disclosures of Interest

No disclosures of interests were made.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 27 September 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

3. Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public.

4. Further Notice of Intention to Conduct Business in Private and Notifications of any Representations

It was reported that no representations had been received in respect of agenda item 15: Crawley Innovation Centre - Additional Towns Fund Monies.

5. Matters referred to the Cabinet and Report from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

It was confirmed that no matters had been referred to the Cabinet for further consideration.

6. 2023/2024 Budget Monitoring - Quarter 2

The Leader presented report [FIN/635](#) of the Head of Corporate on the quarter 2 budget monitoring, which set out a summary of the Council's actual revenue and capital spending for the quarters to September 2023 together with the main variations from the approved spending levels and impact on future budgets. It was added that the council had made significant in-year savings.

Councillor Ayling presented the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's comments on the report [OSC/315](#) to the Cabinet following consideration of the matter at its meeting on 27 November 2023, which included:

- Explanation provided on the latest revenue and capital budget.
- Acknowledgement that the interest rate projections would be kept under regular review.
- Clarification sought and obtained on the costings on various elements for the new town hall.
- Confirmation that Project Jupiter referred to the works at Metcalf Way Depot.

Councillor C Mullins spoke as part of the discussion on the report.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet:

- a) agrees to note the projected outturn for the year 2023/2024 as summarised in this report.
- b) approves the addition to the Capital Programme of £202,191 for CCTV funded by £59,300 contribution from Sussex Police, £33,291 from S106 and £109,600 from capital receipts. (as detailed in paragraph 8.3 of report [FIN/635](#))

- c) approves the addition to the Capital Programme of £50,000 for the replacement of the Hawth Main Theatre Lights funded from the K2 Crawley and Hawth replacement reserve. (as detailed in paragraph 8.3 of report [FIN/635](#))

Reasons for the Recommendations

To report to Members on the projected outturn for the year compared to the approved budget.

7. Budget Strategy 2024/25 – 2026/27

The Leader presented report [FIN/636](#) of the Head of Corporate on the Budget Strategy 2024/25-2026/27. The report set out financial projections with particular reference to the period 2024/25-2026/27 as well as the policy framework for improving financial efficiency and meeting the long-term investment needs of the town, as well as proposals for the annual budget process. It was noted that the strategy assumed several factors including that:

- Government grants would rise in line with inflation and rolled forward into 2024-25
- That Council Tax be increased at 2.99%
- That fees and charges be increased by 7% where feasible.

It was emphasised that the increasing cost of temporary accommodation was a having a real impact on the Council's finance and the strategy as such proposes shorter term focus of 12-15 months to enable better control and monitoring of the budget gap.

Councillor Ayling presented the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's comments on the report [OSC/315](#) to the Cabinet following consideration of the matter at its meeting on 27 November 2023, which included:

- Recognition that Ashdown House may remain vacant for a period from 2024 and this would allow the building to be refurbished and a new tenant to be sought.
- Explanation provided of the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) review having identified a saving of £778k in 2023/24 being due to technical adjustments.
- Recognition that additional cost pressures were predicted to impact the budget, some of these related to homelessness, pay award, town hall rates and inflation.
- It was commented that whilst there had recently been changes to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA), the overall impact was yet unknown.

Councillor S Mullins spoke as part of the discussion on the report.

RESOLVED

That Full Council be asked to:

- a) approve the process for of balancing the budget over the next 12 to 18 months, including the use of reserves to balance the budget as outlined in Section 8 of the report [FIN/636](#).
- b) approve the minimum recommended General Fund Balance remains at £3m.

- c) approve the growth items for the General Fund as outlined in sections 6.3 of the report [FIN/636](#).
- d) approve the inclusion of new capital schemes in future budgets with the value of £652,000 as identified in section 9.2 of the report [FIN/636](#).
- e) note the following highlights of the Budget Strategy:
 - i. that the Budget is aligned to the Council's Corporate Priorities.
 - ii. the outline 3 year forecast as shown in table 6 paragraph 6.5 of the report [FIN/636](#).
 - iii. that the current budget deficit of £1.012m for 2024/25 (section 6.5 of the report [FIN/636](#)) is based on a Council tax increase of 2.99% which is £6.74. However, table 10 highlights that the gap could be higher when looking at sensitivity analysis.
 - iv. that there are uncertainties around Government funding prior to the settlement in December and the delay in Local Government Funding reforms such as business rates retention and the future of New Homes Bonus.

Reasons for the Recommendations

- 1) To agree the Council's Budget Strategy for 2024/25 to 2026/27 including the assumptions made.
- 2) To agree growth items and capital schemes outlined in the report.
- 3) The 2024/25 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Budgets and the revised capital programme will be set by the Full Council in February 2024. The Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Strategy will be considered at the same meeting.
- 4) To note that until the Local Government Finance Settlement is published in December 2023 these projections are highly likely to change.

8. Treasury Management Mid Year Review 2023-2024

The Leader presented report [FIN/637](#) of the Head of Corporate Finance. The report provided an update on the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24. The report detailed that the current projection was that the Council would earn an additional £2.4m income from investments, which was up by £600k from the forecast in quarter 1. It was noted that the Council prioritises its investments as security of capital, liquidity, yield and ethical.

Councillor Ayling presented the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's comments on the report [OSC/315](#) to the Cabinet following consideration of the matter at its meeting on 27 November 2023, which included:

- Acknowledgement that the ethical investment policy was considered prior to every investment undertaking.
- Explanation was sought on the investment limits across detailed holdings and portfolios.
- Recognition that the new strategy would be approved by Full Council in February 2024 (having been considered at OSC and Cabinet).

Councillor Crow was invited to speak on this item. Matters raised included disappointment with some of the levels of interest rates achieved on some of the Council's investments including the 1.5% with Derbyshire CC.

Councillor Jones and the Head of Corporate Finance spoke as part of the discussion on the report and provided clarification on several of the comments raised.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet considered and notes report [FIN/637](#) and the treasury activity for the first two quarters of 2023/2024.

Reasons for the Recommendations

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice for Treasury Management (the TM Code) recommends that members be updated on treasury management activities regularly (Treasury Management Strategy, annual and mid-year reports). This report, therefore, ensures this Council is implementing best practice in accordance with the Code.

9. Crawley Station Gateway - Phase 1

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development presented report [PES/443](#) of the Head of Economy and Planning. The report presented the refreshed concept designs for the Station Gateway (Phase 1) public realm and bus station improvements. It sought approval to go out to public and stakeholder consultation and to combine two funding streams (Crawley Growth Programme and Towns Fund) already allocated within the Council's capital programme.

Councillor Ayling presented the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's comments on the report [OSC/315](#) to the Cabinet following consideration of the matter at its meeting on 27 November 2023, which included:

- Acknowledgement that the delivery of the detailed designs of the scheme would be delivered as part of the Crawley Growth programme.
- Clarification was obtained regarding various elements of the concept design including connectivity improvements for pedestrians and cyclists, together with route access and pick up/drop off areas.
- Confirmation was provided regarding the £7.4m funding to deliver the scheme ("Phase 1") which was in anticipation of a renewed bid to be led by WSCC to the Department for Transport in the future for "Phase 2" Station Way highway/bus lane infrastructure upgrades.

Councillors Jones, S Mullins, C Mullins, Irvine and Rana spoke as part of the discussion on the report.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet:

- a) approves the refreshed concept design for the Station Gateway Phase 1 project found at Appendix A of report [PES/443](#); comprising a public realm and bus station improvement scheme focusing on Friary Way, Haslett Avenue West and The Martlets.
- b) approves the refreshed concept design to go out to public and stakeholder consultation, prior to the submission of a planning application and procurement of a construction contractor.
- c) delegates authority to approve the final designs for Station Gateway Phase 1 to the Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services, in consultation with the Head of Economy & Planning and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, following the period of stakeholder consultation and undertaking minor modifications as required.
- d) delegates to the Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services the submission of a planning application to the Local Planning Authority on behalf of Crawley Borough Council
- e) delegates authority to the Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services to undertake a procurement tendering exercise to appoint a construction contractor in accordance with the Council's Procurement Code.
- f) delegates authority to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member and Head of Major Projects and Commercial Services, to approve the award of the construction contact following an appropriate procurement process.
- g) delegates the negotiation, approval and completion of all relevant documentation, including legal paperwork, to the Head of Economy and Planning, Head of Governance, People and Performance and the Head of Corporate Finance
(*Generic Delegations 2 & 3 will be used to enact this recommendation*).
- h) that the Full Council be asked to approve the amalgamation of the two funding streams (£5.4m from the Crawley Growth programme and £2m from the Towns Fund) already allocated within the Council's capital programme to enable delivery of the project as set out in section 7.2 of report [PES/443](#);

Reasons for the Recommendations

To enable the successful delivery of the Station Gateway Phase 1 scheme which will deliver significant public realm and bus station improvements whilst future-proofing future town centre regeneration schemes.

10. Western Boulevard Scheme - Crawley Growth Programme

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development presented report [PES/442](#) of the Head of Economy and Planning. The report updated Cabinet on the progress of the Western Boulevard scheme as part of the Crawley Growth Programme with a recommendation that Full Council agree to add £2m of BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan) monies to the scheme, which have been secured, subject to a funding agreement with West Sussex County Council.

Councillor Ayling presented the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's comments on the report [OSC/315](#) to the Cabinet following consideration of the matter at its meeting on 27 November 2023, which included:

- Recognition that the scheme was set to deliver significant improvements to bus connectivity in the town centre alongside better sustainable transport facilities.
- Clarification was obtained regarding various cycle lanes within the scheme, together with the exit closures and carriageway improvements.
- Acknowledgement that funding would be required in order for the scheme to be fully completed along The Boulevard.

Councillors C Mullins, S Mullins and Jones spoke as part of the discussion on the report.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet:

- a) notes the progress of the scheme to date.
- b) delegate authority to the Head of Economy and Planning (in consultation with Head of Governance, Performance and People and the Head of Corporate Finance) to sign a funding agreement with West Sussex County Council with regard to £1,949,419 of BSIP monies.
(Generic Delegation 3 will be used to exact this recommendation).
- c) delegate the negotiation, approval and completion of all relevant documentation, including legal paperwork, to the Head of Economy and Planning, in consultation with the Head of Governance, People and Performance and Head of Corporate Finance
(Generic Delegations 2 and 3 will be used to enact this recommendation).
- d) That the Full Council is asked to approve the addition of the of £1,949,419 of BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan) monies to the Crawley Borough Council capital programme as part of the Western Boulevard scheme, subject to a funding agreement with West Sussex County Council.

Reasons for the Recommendations

The recommendations will allow Crawley Borough Council to progress the Western Boulevard Scheme to the on-site delivery phase.

11. Forward Programme of Key Programmes (January – June 2024)

The Leader presented report [FIN/634](#) of the Head of Corporate Finance. The report requested approval of the current forward programme of key procurements (over £500,000) and sought delegated authority for contract award approvals following the appropriate procurement process. Also provided was an update on the previously identified procurements from July to December 2023.

RESOLVED

The Cabinet:

- a) endorses the procurement forward programme January – June 2024 (appendix A of report [FIN/634](#)).
- b) delegates authority to the Leader of the Council in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, relevant Head of Service, and Head of Governance, People & Performance to approve the award of the contract following an appropriate procurement process.
- c) delegates the negotiation, approval and completion of all relevant legal documentation, following the awarding of the contracts to the relevant Head of Service, Head of Governance, People & Performance, Head of Corporate Finance, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member.
(Generic Delegations 2 & 3 will be used to enact this recommendation)

Reasons for the Recommendations

- 1) By approving the procurement forward programme there is greater transparency of future procurement processes allowing more scope for internal stakeholders to input into how future contracts are delivered.
- 2) The approval of the forward programme provides a key decision that will enable the individual procurement processes to be awarded under delegated authority once the tender process has concluded giving the Council the ability to reduce the time required to complete a procurement process

12. Exempt Information - Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.

13. Crawley Innovation Centre - Additional Towns Fund Monies

Exempt Paragraph 3

Information relating to financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development presented report PES/449 of the Head of Economy and Planning. The report sought agreement to add Towns Fund monies to the Crawley Innovation Centre project and seek additional delegations to ensure the project can commence without delay.

The draft Towns Fund business case for the Crawley Innovation Centre was agreed by Cabinet on 2 February 2022 and Full Council on 23 February 2022.

Councillor Ayling presented the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's comments on the report [OSC/315](#) to the Cabinet following consideration of the matter at its meeting on 27 November 2023, which included:

- Confirmation provided of the processes which had taken place throughout the project were highlighted.
- Clarification sought and obtained on the financial aspects contained within the report.
- Whilst there was support for the proposal which was poised to play a key role within the town, concern was raised regarding the reallocation of £2m of Crawley Towns Fund monies from the Town Centre to Manor Royal cycle route project and this should be noted for the future.

Councillors C Mullins, Irvine, Rana, S Mullins and Jones spoke as part of the discussion on the report.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet noted the progress with the delivery of the Crawley Innovation Centre project and recommended to request Full Council to reallocate £2m of Crawley Towns Fund monies from the Town Centre to Manor Royal cycle route project to the Crawley Innovation Centre project, subject to confirmation of approval of the transfer from the government

Reasons for the Recommendations

To ensure that the project has sufficient capital budget for the required building conversion works for the Crawley Innovation Centre to be delivered in full.

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Cabinet concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.11 pm

M G JONES
Chair

