



Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday, 7 February 2023 at 18:30

Present: Councillor

Councillors Marland, R Bradburn, J Carr, Darlington, Middleton, Nolan, Townsend, Trendall and Wilson-Marklew

Councillor Marie Bradburn, Councillor Peter Cannon, Councillor Sam Crooks, Councillor Peter Geary, Councillor David Hopkins, Councillor Ed Hume, Councillor Shanika Mahendran and Councillor Chris Wardle and X members of the public

Apologies Councillors

CAB39 Cabinet Announcements

The Leader welcomed Councillor Townsend back from maternity leave and advised that she would be returning to the Community Safety portfolio and would return to the Public Realm portfolio at a future date.

CAB40 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 1 November 2022 be approved and signed by the Leader of the Council as a correct record.

CAB41 Disclosures of Interest

None.

CAB42 Questions from Members of the Public

None received.

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CAB43 Councillors' Items

None received.

CAB44 Councillors' Questions

Councillor D Hopkins, referring to the recent earthquake in Turkey and Syria, asked Councillor Marland if he and Councillor R Bradburn would meet with him to consider what the Council could do to support local residents and those affected on the ground.

Councillor Marland indicated that he would be happy to arrange to meet but that their focus would be best placed in supporting the local Turkish and Syrian communities who may have relatives affected by the disaster.

ACTIONS:

Councillor Marland and Councillor R Bradburn agreed to meet with Councillor D Hopkins to discuss what support the Council could provide to the local Turkish and Syrian communities in response to the recent earthquakes in the region.

(Group Leaders)

CAB45 Regeneration and Renewal Scrutiny Committee - 15 December 2022

Councillor Crooks introduced the referral and noted his thanks for the written response that had been provided in advance. Councillor Crooks welcomed the flexibility of approaches to regeneration in the target estates but noted the concern that in the current financial situation that regeneration should not slip down the list of the priorities of the Council so that Milton Keynes did not become a two-speed city.

Councillor Darlington noted her written response to the referral and thanked the Committee for the scrutiny work they were carrying out on this issue including inviting the Chairs of the ERF's to ensure that the views of the local residents was heard.

RESOLVED:

That the referral and the written response provided, be noted.

CAB46 NHS GP and Dentists - Task and Finish Group

Councillor Mahendran introduced the referral as Councillor McQuillan was unable to attend the meeting. Councillor Mahendran noted that the task and finish group had

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met a number of times over a three month period and had heard from inciteful and knowledgeable professionals. She thanked those witnesses for engaging in the scrutiny of this topic and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer for his excellent work and support to the group.

Councillor Darlington noted that the lack of access to dentists and GP's was one that councillors frequently heard about from residents. She noted that the Council plays an active role on the ICB which was an opportunity for all to understand issues and work with partners to deliver change.

RESOLVED:

That the referral and the written response provided, be noted.

CAB47 Corporate Parenting Panel - 4 January 2023

Councillor M Bradburn introduced the referral noting the importance of the corporate parenting role. She indicated that the decision to dissolve the Corporate Parenting Panel as a committee of the Council and moving it to a private meeting would make the panel much stronger, allowing for the voice of children in care, care leavers and their families to be heard more effectively.

Councillor Z Nolan noted her written response to the referral.

RESOLVED:

That the referral and the written response provided, be noted.

CAB48 Strategic Placemaking Scrutiny Committee - 11 January 2023

Councillor Cannon introduced the referral and welcomed the written response.

Councillor Trendall noted that parking controls could not be looked at in isolation and that it had to be part of the wider transportation offer.

RESOLVED:

That the referral and the written response provided, be noted.

CAB49 Budget and Resources Scrutiny Committee - 17 January 2023

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The referral was taken with the Council Budget 2023/24 item.

RESOLVED:

That the referral and the written response provided, be noted.

CAB50 Council - 18 January 2023

Councillor D Hopkins introduced the referral and welcomed the written response provided. Councillor D Hopkins highlighted that people needed and deserved certainty as to what the impact of growth will mean to them and their communities. The impact of ongoing development on the health and mental wellbeing was also critically important and must be taken seriously.

Councillor Marland noted his written response and added that he thought the Planning Cabinet Advisory Group was working well and advised that there was a consultation currently taking place around the planning objectives. Councillor Marland acknowledged that he did not feel that the scrutiny system was not currently set up to address planning and that it was important that the New Plan could be scrutinised effectively.

RESOLVED:

That the referral and the written response provided, be noted.

CAB51 Planning CAG - 25 January 2023

Councillor Mahendran introduced the referral that had originated from the Planning Committee. She noted that upgrade crossings had been the subject of debate at recent committee meetings and was an area of concern to some members of the committee.

Councillor Marland noted his written response.

RESOLVED:

That the referral and the written response provided, be noted.

CAB52 Council Budget 2023/24

Councillor Middleton introduced the item by thanking the finance team for the work that they had invested in producing the budget papers. Councillor Middleton highlighted the consultation feedback which included mixed views about the increase

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in Council Tax. The consultation also included feedback from social care providers who had lobbied the Council for increases in social care fees. The Council was doing all it could in this area with fees increased by 9-10% however improvements were required from Central Government to the whole social care sector. Councillor Middleton noted that since the budget was published the Council had received the provisional Local Finance Settlement. Increased funding identified in the settlement in areas such as social care was very much balanced by an increase in demand. The Housing Revenue Account, despite extreme challenges, had also been balanced but was subject to some difficult decisions having to be made particularly caused by the 7% rent cap imposed by Central Government.

It was noted that despite increased demands in adult and children social care, homelessness and home to school transport the Council was presenting a balanced budget that included difficult decisions having been made to meet the £11 million in reductions that was required.

The Cabinet heard from Mr Francis, Milton Keynes Green Party, who requested that sustainable transport initiatives should have more funds allocated to them in the budget. He noted that a recent Delegated Decision to approve a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan proposed 300 schemes but that only 4 schemes would be taken forward in the first two years of the plan due to a lack of funding. He noted that more money should be allocated to implementing these schemes in order to speed up delivery. Mr Francis further noted that a large area of Milton Keynes was not serviced by buses and MK Connect was not suitable for a number of types of journeys where people relied on arriving at a particular time. Mr Francis indicated that if Milton Keynes City Council was serious about becoming the greenest city then more funds needed to be invested in walking, cycling and public transport and the budget needed to reflect that.

Councillor Hume, as Chair of the Budget and Resources Scrutiny Committee, highlighted the process of the scrutiny of the budget that had taken place this year noting that inflation, the Housing Revenue Account and infrastructure costs were key issues the committee had considered. Councillor Hume thanked all those that had contributed to the scrutiny process and in particular the finance team and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer who had supported the work of the committee.

Councillor Middleton summed up and noted in regards to the comments about funding sustainable transport infrastructure acknowledged that the capital budget and future funding of it was under resourced and the Council had to look at alternative funding mechanisms such as bringing forward the sale of certain assets and collaborating with Central Government on grant funding for some of these ground breaking initiatives. Councillor Middleton further noted that there was a private bus network in Milton Keynes and the main area of funding to subsidise bus routes was the parking revenue account which was 30% down on where it was pre pandemic.

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Councillor Middleton thanked the Budget and Resources Scrutiny Committee who he noted carried out an important role in ensuring that the Council made prudent budgetary decisions.

Councillor Middleton was pleased to refer this balanced budget which invested in local communities to a full debate at Council.

Councillor Marland further noted that the budget would help people through the cost of living crises, continues to invest in our economy to grow businesses and skills. He further noted that seventy percent of the budget supported children and adult social care and the Council had a strong focus on proactive preventative services.

RESOLVED:

That the following recommendations be approved by Cabinet and recommended to Council:

1. That the Revenue Budget 2023/24 totalling £246.689m be approved and recommended to Council.
2. That the Council Tax at Band D of £1,596.43 for the Milton Keynes element of the Council Tax, be approved and recommended to Council, noting that this is an increase of 4.99%, consisting of a 2.99% general increase and 2.00% Adult Social Care Precept.
3. That the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2023/24 (excluding Parish Precepts) of £150.378m, be noted.
4. That the estimated position for the Dedicated Schools Grant of £334.261m and the Schools block funding formula for 2023/24 be noted and the budget and formula allocations for the High Needs and Early Years blocks be approved.
5. That the forecast parking surplus be noted.
6. That the Housing Revenue Account Revenue Budget 2023/24 be approved and recommended to Council for adoption.
7. That increases to the Housing Revenue Account dwelling rent in 2023/24 of 11.1% for affordable rents, capped at 7% for current tenants (an average of £6.47 over 52 rent weeks), and of 4.1% for shared owners (an average of £9.18 over 52 rent weeks) be approved and recommended to Council.
8. That the Rent and Service Charge Policy for 2023/24 be approved and recommended to Council for adoption and accompanying Rent Affordability and Market report be noted.
9. That the fees and charges for 2022/23 (including those fees and charges which are exceptions to the Income and Collection Policy) be approved and recommended to Council.
10. That the Capital Strategy be approved and recommended to Council.
11. That the Capital Programme for 2023/24 to 2026/27 be approved and recommended to Council.
12. That the resource allocation for the 2023/24 Tariff programme be approved and recommended to Council.

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13. That the Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24 to 2027/28 and the Treasury Policy Statement, including the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy, Borrowing Limits be approved and recommended to Council.
14. That the financial forecast set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), in relation to both resources and expenditure, be noted.
15. The equalities impact assessments for the Revenue Budget 2023/24 be noted.

(Councillor Middleton / Director of Finance and Resources)

CAB53 Sustainability Strategy Action Plan Update

Councillor Wilson-Marklew introduced the report noting that the Council had an achievable mapped out route to carbon neutrality. Progress had been made on heat networks, using the energy the Council generates and with the carbon off-set fund that could be used by parish and community groups to make their buildings more energy efficient. The Council was working with local businesses to implement ambitious energy efficient schemes and working with local residents to decarbonise their homes.

Councillor Wilson-Marklew noted that despite the work of officers across the Council she did not believe that the Council was in a position to go as far or as fast as they wanted to but to do this would require more support from Central Government.

Councillor Darlington thanked Councillor Wilson-Marklew for her leadership on the sustainability agenda. There were some clear ambitious schemes that would be delivered and that all portfolio holders were being challenged to deliver more sustainability within their own areas.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet acknowledges the progress to date and continues to support the direction of travel set out within this update.
2. That yearly progress updates continue to be brought to Cabinet, targeting Q4 of 2022/23 in line with the Cabinet meeting for that period.

(Councillor Wilson-Marklew / Director of Environment and Property)

CAB54 Making the North Crawley Neighbourhood Plan

Councillor Marland introduced the report noting that the North Crawley Neighbourhood Plan passed overwhelmingly at referendum, therefore he was recommending that the Cabinet refer the Plan to Council to be formally 'made'.

RESOLVED:

That Council be recommended to make the North Crawley Neighbourhood Plan pursuant to the provisions of Section 38(A)(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

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(Councillor Marland / Director of Planning and Placemaking)

CAB55 Forecast Outturn for Quarter 3 2022/23: General Fund Revenue, Housing Revenue Account, Dedicated Schools Grant and Capital Programme

Councillor Middleton introduced the report noting that this was the opportunity to scrutinise the Quarter 3 Outturn. He was pleased to note that the Council was in a good position although there was an overspend of £1 million forecast which would be covered by Reserves if there was still an overspend at the end of the year.

The Housing Revenue Account was in a challenging position and also included an overspend. More work would be required to address the impact of inflation and the rent cap.

Councillor Middleton noted the investment in the LED street lighting programme which would support the sustainability agenda and reduce energy costs. He further noted that ways to address increasing inflationary costs, which were running at 25% in areas such as highways, needed to be found.

Councillor Marland noted that he had one change to the recommendations which was to bring forward £50,000 of spending from next years budget to be spent before the 1 April on fixing winter potholes.

RESOLVED:

1. That the GFRA forecast outturn of £1.161m against budget be noted, together with the associated management actions set out in the report.
2. That GFRA savings of £4.883m savings are forecast to be achieved (83% of budget) be noted.
3. That the forecast outturn for the HRA is an overspend of £0.397m, which has been funded through a reduction in the transfer to reserves be noted, together with the associated management actions set out in the report.
4. That the DSG forecast surplus carry forward of £3.333m be noted, together with the associated management actions set out in the report.
5. That the reserves position be noted.
6. That the forecast outturn on the 2022/23 Capital Programme of £2.598m after proposed slippage of £104.626m be noted.
7. That the forecast outturn position of the 2022/23 tariff programme be noted.
8. That the Treasury position of the Council at the end of quarter 3 be noted.
9. That the Write-off of an unrecoverable debt that exceeds £20,000 be approved.
10. That the Treasury Management report including prudential indicators be noted.
11. That the virements to the original budget be approved.
12. That the current position on the Collection Fund be noted.
13. That the procurement waiver decisions be noted.
14. That the additions and amendments to resource allocation and spend approval for the 2022/23 capital programme be approved.

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15. That it be agreed that £50,000 be brought forward from the 2023/24 budget to be spent before 1 April 2023 on repairing winter potholes.

(Councillor Middleton / Director of Finance and Resources)

CAB56 Update on the Delivery of the Council Plan

Councillor Marland introduced the report.

The Cabinet heard from the Mr Francis regarding the lack of progress with agreeing the purchase of electric buses with Arriva utilising the Government's ZEBRA grant and he understood that negotiations with Arriva had ground to a halt in Milton Keynes. Mr Francis understood that other local authorities were moving forward with purchases via the scheme and that it was important that the Council did not lose this opportunity. In response, Councillor Marland noted that Mr Francis was not aware of the full facts and that the Council was continuing its negotiations with Arriva.

RESOLVED:

That the progress being made on the Delivery Plan for 2022/23 be noted.

(Councillor Marland / Director Customer and Community Services)

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