

AT A MEETING of the Cabinet of HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at the  
Castle, Winchester on Tuesday, 12th October, 2021

Chairman:

\* Councillor Keith Mans

Councillor Rob Humby	* Councillor Edward Heron
* Councillor Roz Chadd	* Councillor Russell Oppenheimer
* Councillor Liz Fairhurst	* Councillor Stephen Reid
* Councillor Steve Forster	* Councillor Jan Warwick

Also present with the agreement of the Chairman: Councillors Carpenter, Glen, Hayre, House, Latham, Philpott, Porter, Tod and Withers.

**15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Humby

**16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 3, Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Personal interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 5 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

With regards to the County Deal elements of the "Recovery from and learning to live with Covid-19" item, Councillor Heron declared a personal interest as Leader of a District Council.

**17. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed and agreed.

**18. DEPUTATIONS**

No deputation requests had been received for the meeting, however it was noted that a number of non-executive Members would speak on items on the agenda with the agreement of the Chairman.

19. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no Chairman's announcements on this occasion.

20. **RECOVERY FROM AND LEARNING TO LIVE WITH COVID-19**

Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive regarding the County Council's continuing responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was noted that since publication of the report a meeting with Council Leaders in Hampshire regarding the proposed County Deal had highlighted areas requiring further discussion. For that reason, discussion by Cabinet would be deferred to a future meeting.

The report was introduced with reference to the economic impact and recovery, rates of infection, staffing and the return to office working, support for Afghan refugees, the return of children to school in September and safeguarding and a number of other service specific impacts.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor House addressed Cabinet, highlighting that there were a number of unknowns relating to the County Deal and therefore caution should be exercised. He welcomed further consideration being given to proposals, and confirmed his support for an outcome based on genuine partnership and devolution of power.

Cabinet discussed the latest statistics for Hampshire relating to Covid-19 infections, noting the success of the vaccination programme and higher rates of infection in younger, unvaccinated age groups. It was confirmed that data on the booster vaccine was still emerging and Cabinet heard that the flu vaccine was being rolled out earlier than normal.

The increase in child protection plans was considered and it was explained that this was likely a short term increase, however the number of referrals to children's social care was now constantly raised by around 20% reflecting heightened professional concern. This increase in referrals was part of the national picture and the cost pressure of responding to it had been raised with government.

The recommendations set out in the report were considered and noting that the County Deal proposals were subject to discussion at a future meeting, the recommendations were agreed. A decision record is attached to these minutes.

21. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE AND SAVINGS PROGRAMME TO 2023 SAVINGS PROPOSALS**

Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Finance Officer and Director of Corporate Operations regarding the overall financial strategy for dealing with the budget gap to 2023/24 in light of the various options available to the County Council and the high level outcomes from the public consultation exercise on balancing the budget.

With the agreement of the Chairman, Councillors Porter and House addressed Cabinet. Councillor Porter expressed her concern about specific reductions to the Children's Services budget, in particular in the areas of fostering, home to school transport, school funding and the youth offending team.

Councillor House welcomed no further changes to HWRC or school crossing patrol budgets, but noted that previously agreed budget reductions had not yet been achieved and expressed concern about Council Chamber refurbishment costs, a reduction in spending on vulnerable adults and an increasing dependence on volunteers to deliver services. He called on Cabinet to meet with Hampshire MPs to lobby for fair funding to support local services.

With reference to the report, key details of the MTFs and SP23 proposals were highlighted to Cabinet, including investment recommendations and proposed recommendations to the County Council.

Cabinet welcomed the report and heard that the Leader held regular meetings with Hampshire MPs to make the case for the importance of fair funding, furthermore service specific issues were brought to government attention via professional networks. It was noted that the Council Chamber was a listed building and provided accommodation for the coroner which would otherwise require alternative facilities, therefore the proposed maintenance was both necessary and cost effective. It was recognised that reductions in the youth offending budget were in combination with initiatives to reduce youth crime and therefore the demand on the service. The benefits of Extra-Care both in terms of cost reduction and the customer experience were set out and noted. Cabinet also discussed the current limitations on home to school transport, which are bound by national legislation, and the potential benefits of being able to control this locally to achieve better alignment with need and the use of more sustainable transport methods.

The recommendations in the report were considered and agreed. A decision record is attached to these minutes.

## 22. **CLIMATE CHANGE ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021**

Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment setting out the Climate Change Annual Report 2020-21.

With the agreement of the Chairman, Councillors Porter and Tod addressed Cabinet. Councillor Porter noted the emphasis on engaging with young people in the findings of the Hampshire 2050 Commission and highlighting the role that young people will play in progressing climate change initiatives, expressed concern that the climate change programme was not engaging enough.

Councillor Tod highlighted the links to climate change in the County Council's Strategic Plan (2021-2025). With reference to inconsistent wording between the Plan and covering Cabinet report (from the July Cabinet meeting), he noted that "sustainable" had been removed from Outcome 1 and felt that a clearer ambition for recycling was needed. Councillor Tod also proposed areas where the climate change programme could develop further, relating to local energy generation, solar PV, tree planting and carbon reduction.

One year into the Climate Change programme, key areas of progress were highlighted to Cabinet, as was the focus for the second year. Actions to embed the programme within the organisation were drawn to Members' attention, as was extensive partnership and engagement work. It was noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had limited progress in some areas.

Cabinet welcomed the report and the success and ambition of the climate change strategy. In particular initiatives such as "walktober", the promotion of staycations, the use of bio-fuels and electric machinery, the greening campaign and the recycling of asphalt were recognised.

In response to Councillor Tod's comments, it was clarified that the wording of the Strategic Plan as adopted by the County Council took precedence over any covering reports. An additional recommendation was proposed by Councillor Warwick and seconded by Councillor Oppenheimer that:

Cabinet recognise the importance of waste minimisation through promotion of the circular economy as a key element of the climate change strategy and accordingly recommends that County Council amend Outcome One of the "Serving Hampshire's Residents – Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025" to reflect this, as detailed in the extract from the Strategic Plan attached to the Decision Record.

The recommendations in the report, along with the additional recommendation were considered and agreed. A decision record is attached to these minutes.

### **23. NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment regarding the New Forest National Park Partnership Management Plan 2021-2026.

The key purpose of the Management Plan was set out and Cabinet welcomed the report, noting in particular sections on climate change and nature recovery.

The recommendations set out in the report were considered and agreed. A decision record is attached to these minutes.

### **24. PROPOSALS REGARDING BUSINESS EFFICIENCY & REVIEW OF FINANCIAL THRESHOLDS**

Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive regarding business efficiency and a review of financial thresholds.

With the agreement of the Chairman, Councillor House addressed Cabinet expressing concern about a reduction in transparency should more decisions be taken in private. He also noted that the increase in the Key Decision threshold was not in line with inflation.

The report was presented and it was highlighted in particular that the increase in the Key Decision threshold to £2 million reflected the substantial change in significance of contractual value to departmental budgets since the previous review. It was furthermore noted that the alternative “significant impact” criteria for a Key Decision remained and was regardless of monetary value. It was explained that the revision to tendering procedures created an efficient alignment between any waiver decision and the decision maker.

Cabinet welcomed the report, noting that recommendations were based on lessons learned, that there must always be a balance between transparency and efficiency and that these changes didn’t preclude Cabinet Members from making a decision on a matter that could be decided by officers where it was appropriate to do so.

The recommendations set out in the report were considered and agreed. A decision record is attached to these minutes.

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Chairman,