

AT A MEETING of the Cabinet of HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at the
Castle, Winchester on Tuesday, 8th February, 2022

Chairman:

* Councillor Keith Mans

* Councillor Rob Humby
* Councillor Roz Chadd
* Councillor Liz Fairhurst
* Councillor Steve Forster

* Councillor Edward Heron
* Councillor Russell Oppenheimer
* Councillor Stephen Reid
* Councillor Jan Warwick

* Present

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

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

All Cabinet Members were present and no apologies were noted

38. 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.

Members were reminded of a general dispensation granted by the Conduct Advisory Panel relating to the Revenue Budget and Precept item. This dispensation enables Members with a beneficial interest in land within the administrative area of the County Council to participate and vote in County Council business relating to the setting of Council Tax or Precepts. It was therefore taken as read that all Cabinet Members had declared an interest in item 7 on the agenda.

39. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2021 were reviewed and agreed.

40. **DEPUTATIONS**

It was confirmed that no requests to make a deputation had been received. It was noted that Councillor House would speak on a number of items on the agenda, with the agreement of the Chairman.

41. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made announcements relating to the Covid-19 pandemic; noting that recovery from the impacts of the virus was progressing in numerous areas, including an increasing return to the office by County Council officers.

With regards to the recently published Levelling Up White Paper, the Chairman noted that Hampshire hadn't expected to be in the first wave of County Deals, but that the work undertaken to date meant it was well placed when an opportunity arose. It was highlighted that alongside a possible County Deal, consideration was being given with partners to an economic prosperity board to enable closer working for the benefit of the people of Hampshire.

42. **LEARNING TO LIVE WITH COVID-19 AND WORKING TOWARDS ECONOMIC RECOVERY**

Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive regarding the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the agreement of the Leader, Councillor House addressed Cabinet, welcoming the detailed economic analysis in the report. Highlighting that Hampshire would not be amongst the first to receive a County Deal, he asked for more detail on the County's position.

Cabinet felt that Hampshire was in a stronger position than many areas to take advantage of opportunities arising from the Levelling Up White Paper and noted that close attention would be paid to the governance models being progressed in Devon, which had a similar mixture of County and Unitary authorities.

With reference to the report, key trends in the public health position were highlighted to Cabinet, in particular that infection levels were again decreasing and children under 14 were the group most impacted due to mixing at school and lower vaccination levels. The majority of those infected were not becoming seriously ill and therefore pressure on acute hospital facilities were limited. The vaccination programme was focussed on those who remained unvaccinated. It was furthermore drawn to Cabinet's attention that pressures within Adult and Children's Services remained high, however school attendance in the county was above the national average.

The recommendations in the report were considered and agreed with amendments and additions to recognise the opportunities set out in the White Paper. A decision record is attached to these minutes.

43. **REVENUE BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2022/23**

Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Finance Officer and Director of Corporate Operations regarding the revenue budget and precept 2022/23.

With the agreement of the Leader, Councillor House addressed Cabinet. He recognised the difficulty of budget setting when income didn't match long term cost pressures and, noting that this appeared to particularly affect upper tier counties, asked what direction should be taken to address the deficit.

The serious issues with local government financing were acknowledged by Cabinet, who agreed that a reset was needed and highlighted the need to separate the funding for local discretionary services from statutory service provision.

The report was introduced and it was noted that this was an interim year in the budget setting cycle. Changes since the budget was originally set were highlighted and pressures in the areas of Adult Services, Children's Services, National Insurance increases and energy cost inflation were detailed. It was explained how the budget could be balanced for 2022/23 and 2023/24 through the use of the budget bridging reserve, however the longer term inflationary pressures meant that a significant deficit was anticipated beyond that. The solution to these longer term pressures lay with government, in particular with the funding of social care and it was confirmed that a discussion with senior civil servants was scheduled to discuss the issues.

Cabinet welcomed the pragmatic budget set out in the report and recognised the need for long term flexibility and support. The unpredictability of inflationary pressures and the potential for prices to continue to rise was acknowledged.

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

44. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23 TO 2024/25

Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Finance Officer and Director of Corporate Operations regarding the capital programme 2022/23 – 2024/25.

The update on the ongoing capital programme was introduced and it was highlighted in particular that approval was sought for additional funding for a number of previously approved schemes where inflation had increased the projected cost.

Cabinet welcomed the scale of the capital programme and the positive balance of projects around the county. A number of key projects, including those relating to waste management, flood defences and highways were highlighted in particular and the overall benefit to the wider local economy was recognised.

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

45. SERVING HAMPSHIRE – 2021/22 HALF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT

Cabinet considered a report of the Director of HR, OD, Communications and Engagement presenting the 2021/22 half year performance report.

An oversight of the performance for the first half of 2021/22 against the performance management framework in the strategic plan was presented to Cabinet with reference to the report. It was noted that performance had been high and details of the risk analysis were set out. The outcomes of a recent inspection of Children's Services was highlighted.

Cabinet recognised and welcomed that the County Council's business had continued with excellent results despite the pressures from Covid.

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

Chairman,