

Minutes of The Cabinet

**Wednesday 10 February at 3:30pm
Online Virtual Meeting**

Present: Councillor Crompton (Chair)
Councillors Ali, Allcock, Millard, Shaeen, Taylor and Underhill.

In Attendance: Councillors E M Giles, L Giles, Moore and Rollins.

Officers: David Stevens (Chief Executive),
Sue Stanhope (Interim Director – Human Resources),
Katharine Willmette (Interim Director – Adult Social Care),
Chris Ward (Director – Education, Skills and Employment),
Neil Cox (Director – Prevention and Protection),
Elaine Newsome (Service Manager – Democracy),
Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic Services Manager),
Surjit Tour (Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer).

15/21 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Padda, Preece and Singh.

16/21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests made at the meeting.



17/21 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

18/21 **Additional Item of Business - Construction of 20 Houses at Church Hill Street, Smethwick**

Approval was sought to amend the funding source from Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme administered by Homes England (previously approved at Cabinet meeting on 16th May 2018 - Minute No. 76/18 refers) to Right to Buy 1-for-1 Capital receipts. Approval was also sought to award a contract to Keon Homes Ltd, in the sum of £3,499,796.00 for the construction of 20 Houses at Church Hill Street, Smethwick.

Reason for Decision

It was now more financially beneficial to the Council to fund the scheme through Right to Buy 1-for-1 capital receipts.

Tenders were required to be approved and awarded within 90 days of submission to ensure that no increase in costs could be applied. The tender for the scheme was dated 18th November 2020, so the 90-day period would expire on 16th February 2021.

Alternative Options Considered

The site could be added to the Homes England funding programme in accordance with the previous decision of the Cabinet. However, it was more financially advantageous for the Council to use the Right to Buy Receipts for this scheme. The Homes England funding could be used against other schemes so would not be lost.

Agreed:-

- (1) that, in connection with the Construction of 20 Houses at Church Hill Street, Smethwick, approval is given to change the funding source for the scheme from the Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme administered by Homes England (formally the Homes



and Community Agency) (Minute No. 76/18 of the Cabinet of 16 May 2018 refers) to Right to Buy 1-for-1 Capital receipts;

- (2) that the Interim Director - Regeneration and Growth is authorised to accept the tender and award the contract to Keon Homes Ltd, in the sum of £3,499,796.00, for the Construction of 20 Houses at Church Hill Street, Smethwick as tendered using the Council's Procurement Services In-Tend portal;
- (3) that, in connection with resolution (2) (above) the Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer is authorised to enter into or execute under seal any documentation in relation to award of the contract and/or other agreements as may be deemed necessary.

19/21

Budget 2021/22 to 2023/24 – Provisional Settlement

Approval was sought for the Budget 2021/22 to 2021/24 and Directorate net revenue target budgets. The 2021/22 provisional Local Government Finance Settlement announced by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 17 December 2020 was noted.

The provisional settlement announced on 17 December 2020, included: -

- Core spending power for England councils increased by 4.5%.
- The Improved Better Care Fund remained at the same value as 2020/21.
- The Social Care Grant increased by £300m nationally.
- A new Lower Tier Services grant financed from a reduction in New Homes Bonus.
- Council Tax referendum cap remained at 2% with the ability to set an Adult Social Care precept up to 3% over the next two financial years.
- A further tranche of COVID-19 emergency funding.



- Funding to cover 75% of irrecoverable Council Tax and Business Rates losses in 2020/21.
- A £670m Local Council Tax Support scheme to allow further support to those residents in financial difficulty.
- The Troubled Families programme would continue in 2021/22.
- An extra £125m new burdens funding for local authorities to provide safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and their children.
- £15m to help with compliance with the recommendations of the Redmond Review of external audit.

It was outlined that for the Council this included:

- Business rates top-up of £200,000.
- An additional £600,000 for the new Lower Tier Services grant.
- A Social Care services grant of £4.7m.
- A COVID emergency allocation of £11.28m.
- Council tax support scheme of £3.6m.
- Recoverable council tax and business rate losses for 2020/21 were still to be announced.

The provisional settlement was broadly in line with the prudent planning assumptions contained in the council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy. However, due to COVID-19, actions to address a number of budget pressures had not been possible during 2020/21 and therefore the expenditure budget for 2021/22 onwards had been adjusted to cover these additional costs.

Reason for Decision

The Cabinet was required to approve the net revenue target budgets for Directorates in order for Chief Officers to develop detailed budget plans within these budgets.

Alternative options considered

An alternative option was not applicable.

Agreed that the proposed Directorate net revenue target budgets for 2021/22 to 2023/24 are approved.



The Cabinet received an update on progress made towards the achievement of strategic priorities of the Corporate Plan 2020 - 2025 and Budget. Approval was sought to consider the refreshed plan, along with directorate business plans in light of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Reason for Decision

A refresh of the detailed actions that underpinned the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives was required to take into account the impact of the pandemic on Sandwell as a whole, and on the organisation.

Alternative options considered

Due to the impact of the pandemic on the Council's budget position and the continued need to respond to the needs of our communities during this time, the Council had not developed savings proposals for the financial year 2021/22. It had taken the position to fund any budget shortfall for this year from one-off use of reserves. This meant that service and financial planning for 2022/23 and beyond would need to take into account this shortfall.

Through planned engagement work on the refresh of the Corporate Plan, members and other stakeholders would be asked to consider a wide range of options around budget savings. Outcomes from these workshops would feed into the future Corporate Plan and budget proposals.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the plan to refresh the Corporate Plan during 2021 is approved;
- (2) **that the Council is recommended to approve** the budget and associated documents outlining how Directorates will direct resources to meet the priorities of the Corporate Plan.



21/21

Admission Priorities for Sandwell's Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2022/2023

Approval was sought to publish the Local Authority's Admission Arrangements for 2022/23 academic year for places in all community and voluntary controlled schools, in accordance with the School Admissions Code 2014.

Reason for Decision

The Council, in accordance with the School Admissions Code 2014 and associated regulations, was required to determine admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools each year.

Alternative options considered

An alternative option was not applicable.

Agreed that the Director - Education, Skills and Employment, in accordance with the School Admissions Code 2014, is authorised to publish the Local Authority's Admission Arrangements for 2022/23 academic year for places in all community and voluntary controlled schools.

22/21

Brandhall Golf Course – Authority to Appoint Master Planning Consultants

Approval was sought to award a contract for the appointment of consultants to undertake the master planning work, including necessary surveys; enabling works and the submission of a planning application, for the redevelopment of Brandhall Golf Course.

The redevelopment would provide much-needed housing, a replacement school and a park for local residents. It was proposed that contracts would be awarded on 1st March 2021, with a view to submitting the planning application in late 2021/early 2022. Additional survey work required could not be identified until after initial surveys had been carried out. Any additional work identified as a result of the surveys would be funded from the Housing Revenue Account Fund up to £76,000.



Reason for Decision

The necessity for a co-ordinated and visionary approach to master planning the development of the former Brandhall Golf Course had been established and approved to enable an exemplar development to be achieved. Authorising the appointment of consultants to undertake the master planning commission was required to meet the timetable for the submission of a planning application.

Alternative options considered

Delays in the appointment of consultants could result in some of this work being unable to be completed in 2021. Specifically, the ecological surveys needed to be undertaken during the Spring and Summer. Should this window of opportunity be missed, these surveys would have to be completed the following year, 2022, thus delaying the submission of the planning application by up to one year.

Agreed:-

- (1) that authority is delegated to the Interim Director - Regeneration and Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economic Growth, to award a contract up to the value of £0.380m (from the Housing Revenue Account and the Land Regeneration Fund) to appoint consultants to undertake a Master Planning exercise; necessary surveys; enabling works; and submit a planning application for the redevelopment of Brandhall Golf Course;
- (2) that, in connection with (1) above, the Section 151 officer is given delegated authority to allocate a total £0.380m from existing resources;
- (3) that, subject to (1) and (2) above, the Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer enter into or execute under seal the contract and any ancillary documentation in relation to the award of the contract for the Master Planning exercise; necessary surveys; enabling works; and submission of a planning



application for the redevelopment of Brandhall Golf Course on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Interim Director of Regeneration and Growth;

- (4) that an exemption is made to rule 8.7 of the Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules (PCPR) 2018-2019 and delegated authority is given to the Interim Director - Regeneration and Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economic Growth, to directly award contracts to the successful contractor, where any additional resources to facilitate any unforeseen services may arise from the necessary surveys initially undertaken up to the value of £0.076m from the Housing Revenue Account.

23/21 **Cabinet Petitions Committee**

The Cabinet noted the progress in responding to petitions, as set out in the minutes of the Cabinet Petitions Committee held on 21 October 2020.

The meeting ended at 4:00pm,
(following an adjournment between 3:35pm and 3:40pm).

To watch this meeting go to [YouTube](#)

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk

