

## **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**23 FEBRUARY 2022**

### **COUNCILLOR ANGIE DICKINSON - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE**

For the period 25 January 2022 – 23 February 2022

#### **1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

Just one word covers the majority of my work since my last report and that is BUDGET. This is the most significant area of responsibility for me across my portfolio and has included close scrutiny of the Council's projected expenses in relation to the amount of income it might receive. The Financial Plan report on this agenda details everything to do with Council Tax levels, revenue costs and capital projects, together with statutory requirements but sitting behind that has been a significant review of fees and charges and a review of the phasing of capital projects and therefore when delivery of such projects can be expected, including those covered by the Town Deal Fund.

Throughout Covid the Council has seen significant reductions to its anticipated income in a number of areas and whilst it has received significant, welcome central Government assistance this has not bridged the entire shortfall. Now, as we come out of Covid restrictions and can look towards a revision of a normal way of life, it is prudent to take decisions now as to how such gaps can be filled in the longer-term, with long-term central government financial support currently uncertain, to ensure we can continue to deliver core services and support our aspirational plans in the years ahead. Wherever possible we have tried to minimise the impact on our residents and businesses but this council is understandably just as much impacted by inflationary issues and uncertainty as everyone else. I hope everyone can see the efforts that have been made to achieve the right balance.

A meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Panels was called to receive a presentation on the budget so that all members are aware of how the budget is constructed and the various pressures that have to be dealt with, pressures that don't emanate from the Council. A number of questions were responded to during the meeting but members submitted further questions after the meeting, indicating that members are engaged with the process and the impact on our residents.

In the meantime the Member Major Projects Board (MMPB) continues to work towards its objectives, as highlighted in previous reports. A series of briefings are in progress that have been made available to all members not just those sitting on the Board, Those briefings cover all projects that are currently approved and each project is examined in fine detail so that its objective, duration, any issues to overcome, benefits to the Council and its residents/businesses, etc., are fully understood.

Progress on the Independent Remuneration Panel's (IRP) report on Members' Allowances accelerated since my last report to the extent that the review concluded with

a report to Cabinet on 9 February. Cabinet members supported the findings detailed in that report and made recommendations for consideration by Council. The report is therefore on the agenda for this meeting for all members to consider. The review is ongoing but will conclude shortly.

## **2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.**

The budget process formally culminates with decisions made at this meeting, however, a number of relatively minor issues that do not require formal approval will need to be dealt with under delegated powers. Focus will revert to the closure of previous years' accounts and the work of the MMPB will continue in order to achieve appropriate control of our major project spending and its future impact on the Council's finances.

## **3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled**

Please note that the first six items on this list replace meetings during the same period on my last report due to last minute re-scheduling

- 19-Jan Cabinet Briefing
- 20-Jan Informal Cabinet meeting on fees & charges  
Car parking options with Cllrs. Dark and Long, and Assistant Director
- 20-Jan Operations
- 21-Jan Portfolio Briefing with Asst Direction - Resources/S151 Officer
- 24-Jan Cabinet Sifting
- 25-Jan Cabinet Briefing  
Fees & Charges Feedback with Leader, CEX and Asst Direction -
- 26-Jan Resources/S151 Officer
- 26-Jan QEH update/Covid briefing
- 28-Jan Portfolio Briefing with Asst Direction - Resources/S151 Officer
- 28-Jan Members Allowances review with Cabinet Members
- 29-Jan Members Allowances review with Cabinet Members
- 01-Feb Corporate Performance Panel
- 02-Feb Cabinet Briefing
- 03-Feb Legal Services Review with CEX and Asst to CEX
- 03-Feb Portfolio Briefing with Asst Direction - Resources/S151 Officer
- 03-Feb Joint Panels Budget Briefing
- 07-Feb Portfolio Briefing with Asst Direction - Resources/S151 Officer
- 08-Feb County Lines Briefing by NCC
- 09-Feb Cabinet  
Budget Setting Follow Up with Leader, CEX and Asst Direction -
- 09-Feb Resources/S151 Officer
- 09-Feb Cabinet Briefing
- 11-Feb Legal Services Review with CEX and Asst to CEX
- 11-Feb MMPB Briefing
- 11-Feb Portfolio Briefing with Asst Direction - Resources/S151 Officer
- 16-Feb Cabinet Briefing

21-Feb MMPB Briefing  
Budget Setting Follow Up with Leader, CEX and Asst Direction -  
23-Feb Resources/S151 Officer  
23-Feb Council