

Minutes of a meeting of the **CABINET** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priors Road, Spalding, on Wednesday, 21 September 2022 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

P E Coupland (Deputy
Leader)
C N Worth (Deputy
Leader)
J R Astill

A Casson
R Gambba-Jones
R Grocock

C J Lawton
E J Sneath
G J Taylor

Cabinet Support Members: A C Beal

The Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Development), the Deputy Chief Executive (Programme Delivery), the Assistant Director (Finance), the Assistant Director (Strategic Projects), the Senior Change and Improvement Business Partner, the Revenues and Recovery Team Leader, the Democratic Services Manager and the Democratic Services Team Leader.

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors G A Porter, A R Woolf, T A Carter, R Gibson, N H Pepper, J Reynolds together with the Joint Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) and the Deputy Chief Executive (Growth).

In Attendance: Councillor B Alcock (Chairman, Performance Monitoring Panel)

26. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2022 were agreed and signed by the Deputy Leader.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were none.

28. QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE PUBLIC UNDER THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION (STANDING ORDERS).

There were none.

29. TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS WHICH HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO CALL-IN.

There were none.

30. TO CONSIDER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANELS

Action By

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There were none.

31. SPALDING SPECIAL EXPENSES DRAWDOWN

Consideration was given to the report of the Spalding Town Forum, which recommended that a £10,000 drawdown from Spalding Special Expenses Reserves be made to be used for the construction of a float on behalf of Spalding residents.

Members were advised of an additional proposal to recommend that a 10% contingency to the drawdown amount of £10,000 be agreed, should it be required.

The following points were raised:

- In response to a question regarding the impact to finances should the Flower Parade continue, the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Chairman of the Spalding Town Forum commented that it was not the intention to continue using the Spalding Special Expenses Reserves. Should the Parade prove successful in 2023, the intention was to start fundraising immediately to ensure that future parades were self-sustaining.
- The report stated that all Parish Councils had been invited to enter a float into the parade – it was important that this was done and to include all.
- The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Facilities advised that meetings were underway to confirm the route for the Parade and that further details regarding the route would be shared in due course.

DECISION:

- 1) That a £10,000 drawdown from Spalding Special Expenses Reserves be made to be used for the construction of a float on behalf of Spalding Residents; and
- 2) That a contingency amount of 10% of the £10,000 drawdown be agreed, should it be required.

(Other options considered:

- *Do Nothing – a draw down from Spalding Special Expenses reserves would not be made and members of Spalding Town Forum would need to fundraise separately to enter a float in the parade on behalf of Spalding residents;*
- *A lesser amount be drawn down from Spalding Special Expenses reserves;*

Reasons for decision:

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- *To enable a float to be entered on behalf of Spalding residents as Spalding does not have its own Parish/Town Council).*

32. SHDC DRAFT DERELICT AND UNTIDY SITES POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Strategic Projects which asked that the Cabinet consider the draft South Holland District Council Derelict and Untidy Sites Policy.

The following points were raised:

- The document was welcomed however, it was important that progress on addressing derelict and untidy sites in line with the Policy was reported – some sites had been problematic for a long time and it was essential that sufficient resource was given to addressing the problems. It was agreed that an update on progress would be provided to Cabinet on a six-monthly basis.
- It was not felt appropriate to include within the Policy a list of current sites being looked at however, a list of sites was held within an information plan and updates on assets were regularly provided at fortnightly Assets Portfolio Group meetings.
- The draft Policy and good practice would be shared between the authorities within the S&ELCP.
- It was important to manage public expectation around how quickly derelict and untidy sites could be dealt with – delays were often related to issues around money and ownership of properties.

DECISION:

That the draft Derelict and Untidy Sites Policy be approved.

(Other options considered:

- *Do nothing – the Council could decide not to adopt a policy and manage issues on a site-by-site basis based on good practice. Whilst it would continue to do this, having a wide-ranging policy with actions set out would provide a clear and concise reference point for officers, ward councillors, residents and business owners when seeking to address matters relating to derelict and untidy sites;*
- *To adopt an enforcement only based policy rather than a policy document that covered wider issues. A more comprehensive policy setting out a wide range of matters in addition to enforcement was considered by officers as a good way of setting out, in a single document, a broad range of options for dealing with derelict and untidy sites. This included*

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process for reviewing assets, monitoring sites, liaison with landowners and also how officers could approach the acquisition of certain assets if there was a viable business case to do so;

Reasons for decision:

- *The recommended policy is founded on having an informative, meaningful, consistent and flexible approach to seek to deal with derelict and untidy sites to compliment traditional enforcement action).*

33. PERFORMANCE UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Corporate which provided an interim update on how the Council was performing for the period 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2022.

At the Cabinet’s last meeting on 19 July, the following had been requested:

- That the Cabinet be presented with performance updates sooner - it was noted that due to the information first being considered by the Performance Monitoring Panel, that earlier reporting to Cabinet would be difficult.
- An interim report on underperforming areas had been requested, and this information was provided within the report – if the Cabinet was content with the format of the report, it would come forward in this way to future meetings.
- Attention was drawn to the fact that although Customer Contact remained an area with performance below target, it was in a significantly better position than it had been last year. Staffing levels were now improved and staff were being trained. There had been issues as a result of the telephony system not having sufficient capacity and the huge volume of additional enquiries relating to the Government’s £150 fuel payment to all households. However, extra staff had been brought in to deal with the additional workload, and the way in which the project had been dealt with would be analysed to improve the way in which any potential future initiatives were handled.

DECISION:

That the contents of the report be noted.

(Other options considered:

- *Not to monitor performance;*

Reasons for decision:

- *To ensure council performance is properly scrutinised.)*

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34. PROVISIONAL FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2021/2022

Consideration was given to the report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercialisation and Partnerships, the Strategic Finance Manager (PSPS), and the Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Client) (PSPS)), which set out the provisional outturn position for South Holland District Council for 2021/22, subject to final audit, and provided information on the implications for the Council's balances and reserves including the capital position for the year.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance commented that since the start of the pandemic, the Council has seen numerous impacts on its finances. In addition, increased living costs impacted the public and also made it difficult for the Authority to budget, and there had been significant changes as South Holland District Council had separated from its partnership with Breckland Council and joined the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership. It had been a challenging year for the Finance Team and the Portfolio Holder thanked them for their dedicated work.

The following points were raised:

- In response to a question as to whether local councils would receive any support themselves towards increased energy costs, the Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Development) advised that representations had been made by Chief Executives regarding the impact that these increased costs were having on council finances and thus spending on public services. However, councils were in the same position as many others, and it would be important to see the outcome of the settlement process.
- It was encouraging to see the increased spend on Disabled Facilities Grants.
- Collection figures were high and this was very encouraging, particularly during the period of the pandemic.

DECISION:

- 1) That Cabinet notes the outturn position for 2021/22 as detailed in Table 1 and recommends to Full Council its financing from the Council Tax Reserve;
- 2) That the reserve movements and balances, as detailed in Table 3 be noted;
- 3) That Cabinet note the general fund capital position and

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recommends to Council to approve the 2021/22 capital budget carry forward to 2022/23 due to slippage/re-profiling as detailed in column 3 of Table 8; and

- 4) That Cabinet note the HRA capital position and recommends to Council to approve the budget carry forward due to slippage/re-profiling as detailed in column 3 in Table 12.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL:

- 5) That the outturn position for 2021/22 as detailed in Table 1 be financed from the Council Tax Reserve;
- 6) That Cabinet recommends to Council approval of the following reserve movements:
 - a) A contribution of £1,419,065 to the Earmarked Grants reserve of additional section 31 grants received in year which are required to fund the Collection Fund Deficit in 2022/23;
 - b) A contribution from the Earmarked Grants Reserve of £2,922,033 which is required to drawdown section 31 grants received in 2020/21 but are required to fund the Business Rates deficit in 2021/22
- 7) General Fund capital position – That the 2021/22 capital budget carry forward to 2022/23 due to slippage/re-profiling, as detailed in column 3 of Table 8, be approved; and
- 8) HRA capital position – That the budget carry forward due to slippage/re-profiling, as detailed in column 3 in Table 12, be approved.

(Other options considered:

- *To not approve the reserve movements outlined.*

Reasons for decision:

- *To ensure the Council's provisional financial position for 2021/22 is considered and related decisions approved. It is important that the Cabinet is aware of the financial position of the General Fund to ensure that they can make informed decisions that are affordable and financially sustainable for the Council.)*

35. DEBT WRITE OFF

Members wished to discuss information detailed within the exempt appendices, and it was therefore necessary to consider the report in exempt session.

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36. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE LEADER DECIDES ARE URGENT.

There were none.

37. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Under section 100a (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) 1,2 and 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the act.

38. DEBT WRITE OFF

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Revenues and Benefits (PSPS) which sought approval for the write off of uncollectable debt.

DECISION:

That the amounts identified in the report, as detailed below, be approved for write off:

Council Tax	£33,798.82
Business Rates	£14,309.90
Total	£48,108,72

(Other options considered:

- *Not to approve the amounts for write off, however this would leave uncollectable debt on the council records;*

Reasons for decision:

- *All recovery methods have been considered and where appropriate pursued, before making the decision to write off.*
- *Officer time can be maximised on greatest returns, at the same time as ensuring robust procedures for debt management are in place across all revenue streams.)*

39. RESTRICTED MINUTE

The restricted minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2022 were agreed and signed by the Deputy Leader.

(The meeting ended at 11.16 am)

(End of minutes)

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Any RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL detailed above will be submitted for consideration to the meeting of the full Council on 28 September 2022.