

Councillor Gareth Jones (Mayor)

Present (for all or part of the meeting):-

Councillors:

C A Baron

J A Barron

R J Barron

F Beatty

A R G Brown

R P Cooke

A G Cooper

B M Cross

M G Dodson

A P Edgeller

P M M Farrington

A T A Godfrey

M Green

A S Harp

A D Hobbs

M V Holmes

J Hood

R A James

P W Jones

W J Kemp

R Kenney

P A Leason

A M Loughran

B McKeown

D McNaughton

A Nixon

J A Nixon

L Nixon

G P K Pardesi

A N Pearce

J M Pert

M Phillips

J K Price

P Roycroft

R M Smith

R M Sutherland

C V Trowbridge

Officers in attendance:-

Mr T Clegg

-

Chief Executive

Mr R Kean

-

Head of Finance

Mr R Simpson

-

Head of Operation

Mr I Curran

-

Head of Law and Administration

Mr W Conaghan

-

Press and Communication Manager

Mr A Bailey

-

Scrutiny Officer

Mr J Dean

-

Democratic Services Officer

C83 Minutes

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 November 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

C84 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor I D Fordham.

C85 Announcements

The Mayor, together with the Chairman of Staffordshire County Council held virtual meetings with Crispin Court Residential Home, Stafford and Heyfield Residential Home, Barlaston in December 2020. Both events were well received.

The Mayor held a series of virtual 'get togethers' with Members before Christmas. The informal meetings gave those attending a chance to catch up during the current restrictions. These events were well received and would be repeated in February 2021.

Finally, the Mayor reported that he had attended the recent virtual Annual General Meeting of Stafford Burgesses.

C86 Councillor Session

Councillor A N Pearce had submitted the following question in accordance with Paragraph 12.3(a) of the Council Procedure Rules:-

Councillor Price - At the last full Council in November 2020 you announced that the post being proposed to lead the Council's programme to achieve carbon neutrality would be full time and permanent.

Could you please advise:-

- (a) when the post will be established?
- (b) where it will sit within the council staffing structure?
- (c) at what level it will be remunerated?
- (d) when the post is to be advertised?

The Cabinet Member - Environment Portfolio responded as provided for in Paragraph 12 of the Council Procedure Rules:-

'The post had been established and would sit in the Corporate Centre in the Corporate Business and Partnerships Team. The post was at Grade H and the advert had been prepared and placed this week'.

As provided for under Paragraph 12.4 of the Council Procedure Rules, Councillor Pearce asked the following supplementary question:-

'When would the new postholder commence work?'

Councillor Price responded by explaining that the correct procedure in terms of interviews etc would need to be followed before a start date could be established.

C87 General Fund Revenue Budget 2021-22 to 2023-24 and Capital Programme 2020-21 to 2023-24

Considered the report of the Head of Finance.

The Deputy Leader introduced the report and reported on the decision of the Cabinet at its meeting on 14 January 2021 (Minute No CAB133/21 refers). After detailing the challenges of budget setting in the current climate and the updates made to the budget reports arising from further measures announced by Central Government, Councillor Smith proposed that the Council approve the recommendations of the Cabinet as follows:

- (a) the Budget Requirement for the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2021-22 be set at £13.617 million (with indicative requirements for 2022-23 and 2023-24 of £13.550 million and £14.774 million respectively);
- (b) that the detailed portfolio budgets as set out in appendix 2 be approved;
- (c) the detailed capital programme as set out in appendix 3; be approved;
- (d) that the Council Tax for 2021-22 be increased by 1.9% to £162.30;
- (e) the Council's Tax Base be set at 47,994.06 (as determined by the Head of Finance).

The proposal was seconded by Councillor P M M Farrington.

Councillor Smith reminded Members of the previous consideration of the portfolio budget reports by the various scrutiny committees and was pleased to detail the major capital schemes completed by the Council, all accomplished without the need for borrowing.

Members were afforded the opportunity to raise any points relating to the budget, where specific reference was made to:

- Garden waste collection service;
- Future uncertainty surrounding New Homes Bonus and Business Rates retention;
- Staffing levels

to which the associated Cabinet Members responded accordingly.

At the conclusion of the debate Members voted on the recommendation which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that (a) the Budget Requirement for the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2021-22 be set at £13.617

million (with indicative requirements for 2022-23 and 2023-24 of £13.550 million and £14.774 million respectively);

- (b) that the detailed portfolio budgets as set out in appendix 2 of the report be approved;
- (c) the detailed capital programme as set out in appendix 3; be approved;
- (d) that the Council Tax for 2021-22 be increased by 1.9% to £162.30;
- (e) the Council's Tax Base be set at 47,994.06 (as determined by the Head of Finance).

Members paid tribute to the Head of Finance and his colleagues in the Finance Department for their efforts in preparing the budget reports.

C88 Treasury Management Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy, Annual Investment Strategy 2021/22

Considered the report of the Head of Finance.

The Deputy Leader moved and Councillor R A James seconded that the recommendations as set out in paragraph 2 of the report be approved.

Members then voted on the proposals as set out, which were declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that:-

- (a) the following be approved:-
 - (i) The Prudential and Treasury indicators;
 - (ii) The MRP Policy Statement;
 - (iii) The Treasury Management Policy;
 - (iv) The Annual Investment Strategy for 2021/22; 2.2
- (b) it be noted that indicators may change in accordance with the final recommendations from Cabinet to Council in relation to both the General Fund Revenue Budget and the Capital Programme.

Members expressed their thanks to the Section 151 Officer and his staff for their efforts in this area of work.

C89 Review of Members' Allowances

Considered the report of the Head of Law and Administration.

The Leader of the Council referred to the previous recommendation of the Panel as submitted to Council (minute C60/20 refers), and noted that the current scheme expired in March 2021. Councillor Farrington thanked the Panel Members for their hard work in reaching their findings which were duly summarised by the Leader. In concluding his comments, Councillor Farrington moved that the recommendations as set out in Paragraph 2 of the report be approved.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor R M Smith.

At the conclusion of the debate there were no dissenters to the recommendations as set out in the report, which were therefore declared to be carried.

- RESOLVED:- that
- (a) to make a scheme of allowances for the period from 1 April 2021 having regard to the Panel's recommendations set out in the appendix and annex 1 of the report;
 - (b) to make a Scheme of Members Allowances for use by Parish Councils having regard to the Panel's recommendations set out in the appendix and annex 2 of the report;
 - (c) that the scheme of allowances be adjusted annually in line with pay awards to Council Officers until 31 March 2025, unless the scheme is reviewed at an earlier date.

MAYOR