

REPORT OF CABINET

(Meeting held on 2 August 2017)

1. STRATEGY FOR BUSINESS - "HELPING LOCAL BUSINESS GROW" (MINUTE 16)

The Cabinet has approved a draft strategy to guide the Council's activities to meet the corporate priority of "Helping Local Business Grow". It is opportune to review the Strategy as organisations such as the EM3 Local Enterprise Partnership are also reviewing their strategies, and preparation of the Council's own local plan, setting the background for achieving prosperity over the next 20 years, is progressing. The draft Strategy was attached as Appendix 1 to Report Item 5 to the Cabinet.

It is important that the Council has a clear strategy in place to be able to take advantage of the opportunities that are available for promoting economic and business success and to ensure that the right policy responses are in place for planning, transport, housing and skills.

Consultations on the draft Strategy will be held with the New Forest Business Partnership and other relevant partners; prior to it being reviewed by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel in the light of the responses received.

In addition to the objectives set out in the draft Strategy, Members consider that the improvement of business productivity should be widened to include the maximisation of export opportunities; and that there should be an additional objective of improving the earnings of those people at the lower end of the pay scales.

Access to high speed broadband is also considered essential for the growth of small businesses and this is an issue that could usefully be addressed in the developing review of the Local Plan.

Members asked that a progress report should be submitted to the Cabinet in about 6 months' time.

2. A31 IMPROVEMENTS – RINGWOOD (MINUTE 17)

The Cabinet has agreed the response to be made with respect to Highways England's consultation on proposals to improve the A31 at Ringwood between the A338/B3347 (Ringwood) and the B3081 (Verwood) junctions.

The proposal contains a number of elements including the addition of a third lane along the A31 westbound and the closure of the West Street access to the A31.

While there are some concerns about the limited scale of the measures on offer and that some more fundamental causative issues are being left unaddressed, Members concluded that, in a time of financial constraint, it is important to be realistic about the scope of what can be achieved within the budget available, in order to achieve some improvement. This Council should support proposals that will improve traffic flows in this area and encourage Highways England to work closely with local communities, in particular Ringwood Town Council, to achieve the best possible scheme. At present congestion levels are growing, with a detrimental effect on businesses throughout the District, because of the importance of this strategic route to the West Country and the regional airports. In addition, local people are increasingly diverting their journeys onto

smaller forest roads, affecting the environment and increasing the risk of animal accidents.

The Cabinet is also encouraging the public and interested parties to respond to Highways England's consultation.

The letter of support that has gone to Highways England can be seen at Appendix 2 to Report Item 5 considered by the Cabinet.

3. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT - BASED ON PERFORMANCE TO JULY 2017 (MINUTE 18)

The Cabinet has been updated on performance on the Council's budgets to July 2017.

A number of changes have been identified with respect to the General Fund with savings and additional income of £499,000 offset by new requirements of £567,000, of which £150,000 will be funded from an earmarked reserve. Rephasings from 2016/17 into the current year, to the value of £1.146 million, will also be funded from earmarked reserves. The General Fund budget, as a consequence, has been reduced to £16.505 million. Further details of the changes are set out in section 3 of Report Item 6 considered by the Cabinet. This includes a new budget requirement that had not been identified previously, for the replacement of the boilers at Lymington Town Hall.

Capital expenditure has increased to £23.002 million to reflect net budget reductions of £156,000 and the rephasing of schemes from 2016/17. Further details are set out in section 4 of the report.

No adjustments have been identified on the Housing Revenue Account budget, which continues to be managed on a break-even basis.

RECOMMENDED:

That the new budget requirement of £80,000 for the replacement of the boilers at Lymington Town Hall, as set out in paragraph 3.4 to Report Item 6 to the Cabinet, be approved.

4. "SERVING HAMPSHIRE - BALANCING THE BUDGET" - RESPONSE TO HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S CONSULTATION (MINUTE 19)

The Cabinet has agreed the following response to the County Council's high level consultation on options for balancing their budgets:

- (i) This Council acknowledges the difficult financial position faced by the County Council and others in local government at this time;
- (ii) It is noted that this stage of the County Council's budget consultation is very high level. It is not therefore possible to comment on the likely impact on specific areas of our community as they are not known. However, when the County Council is proposing to make specific changes to services it is requested that the views and knowledge of local people, including the district council, are sought prior to any formal decisions being taken.

- (iii) From an operational perspective this Council is keen to explore the opportunities to work in partnership with the County Council in order to explore where tangible benefits to both local authorities can be delivered, including in areas that may generate new sources of income.

5. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL (MINUTE 20)

A Panel of 3 members has been appointed to review, on an independent basis, the allowances paid to Members. Members will be advised of arrangements for the Panel's meetings and will be invited to contribute to their deliberations.

**COUNCILLOR B RICKMAN
CHAIRMAN**