



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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COUNCIL MEETING

25 February 2021

7.00 pm – 9.42 pm

Remote Meeting

Minutes

3

Membership

Gary Powell (Chair)	P	Lindsey Green	P	Nigel Prenter	P
Steve Robinson (Vice-Chair)	P	Trevor Hall	P	Skeena Rathor	P
Martin Baxendale	P	Nick Hurst	P	Sue Reed	P
Dorcas Binns	P	George James	P	Mark Reeves	A
Catherine Braun	P	Julie Job	P	Mattie Ross	P
Chris Brine	P	Haydn Jones	P	Tom Skinner	A
Miranda Clifton	P	John Jones	P	Nigel Studdert-Kennedy	P
Nigel Cooper	P	Norman Kay	P	Haydn Sutton	P
Doina Cornell	P	Darren Loftus	A	Brian Tipper	P
Gordon Craig	P	Stephen Lydon	P	Jessica Tomblin	P
Rachel Curley	P	John Marjoram	A	Chas Townley	P
Stephen Davies	P	Karen McKeown	P	Ken Tucker	P
Paul Denney	P	Jenny Miles	P	Martin Whiteside	P
Jim Dewey	P	Dave Mossman	A	Tim Williams	P
Jonathan Edmunds	P	Gill Oxley	P	Tom Williams	P
Chas Fellows	P	Keith Pearson	A	Debbie Young	A
Colin Fryer	P	Simon Pickering	P		

P = Present A = Absent

Officers in Attendance

Chief Executive
Strategic Director of Place
Strategic Director of Change & Transformation
Strategic Director of Resources
Strategic Director of Communities

Monitoring Officer
Corporate Policy & Governance Manager
Accountancy Manager
Senior Democratic Services & Elections Officer

Others in Attendance

Graham Russell, Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel

CL.043

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Loftus, Marjoram, Mossman, Pearson, Reeves, Skinner and Young.

CL.044 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

CL.045 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED **That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2020 are approved as a correct record.**

CL.046 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair announced that the council leader and himself had recently met with Tom Scholes-Fogg, a serving police officer who was canvassing to erect a cenotaph in memory of those in the emergency services who had lost their lives serving the communities. They had raised over £100,000 so far but needed to find £1million.

CL.047 **INTERIM REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL (MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES) TO STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Councillor Tucker introduced the report which set out the recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to increase the the ICT allowance in order for Members to purchase and claim for specific items of equipment they may need. Councillor Tucker outlined the findings and work of the cross-party Members ICT Working Group which reviewed alternative communication software options, the provision of hardware and the ICT allowance.

Graham Russell, Chair of the IRP, advised that the full review had been deferred because of the pandemic but they had spoken to a number of Councillors and the recommendations they had put forward to Council were evidence based. One of the driving forces of the IRP was to identify the implications and barriers to being a Councillor and to ensure recommendations do not create further barriers for people looking to stand as a Councillor. The recommendation of the IRP would allow an increased IT Allowance or Members could opt to receive a Stroud District Council managed device as laid out in paragraphs 2.5 to 2.7.

Proposed by Councillor Tucker and seconded by Councillor Pearson

Councillor James asked what security provisions would be in place should a Councillor choose to use their own device. The Monitoring Officer advised that an answer would be provided for Councillor James outside of the meeting.

Councillor Hurst asked whether this recommendation was retrospective and would cover previous purchases due to the delay of the elections. The Strategic Director of Resources advised that he would speak to Councillor Hurst outside of the meeting as some Councillors have been reimbursed for certain purchases.

Councillor Braun thanked all of the Councillors and officers who had taken part in this work.

Councillor Whiteside stated that Members should be mindful to reduce their costs to their public sector however this would allow those who need to access funding for IT equipment to do so and therefore limit barriers to becoming a Councillor.

Councillor Ross advised that it was important that anyone who became a Councillor could access the IT equipment they would need.

Councillor Davies stated that he was glad that we were implementing an allowance that would allow Councillors access to IT equipment and make the role more accessible.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

- RESOLVED** To consider the Interim report of the IRP and determine whether to accept the recommendations as follows:
- a. the ICT allowance be set at a maximum of £702 per member, for those members opting not to receive a Council-managed device, with effect from May, 2021;
 - b. the allowance be based on the indicative values at para 13 relating to the purchase of a device and ancillary equipment;
 - c. those members who opt to receive a Council – managed device instead of the ICT allowance, be entitled to claim for approved ancillary equipment, up to the maximum of £177;
 - d. The Strategic Director of Resources be delegated authority to agree variations in the allocation of the allowance at his discretion to meet any special requirements of councillors; and
 - e. the Panel keeps this matter under review, as part of each fundamental review of the Members' Allowances Scheme.

CL.048 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Recommendation from Audit and Standards Committee

- a. Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement 2021/22

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy, the Chair of Audit and Standards Committee, introduced the above report and drew the Members attention to paragraph 1.4 and advised that the report laid out the spending plans and limits, funding required to carry them out and the limits on investing funds not immediately required. Councillor Studdert-Kennedy also acknowledged the estimated internal borrowing position of £19.117m in paragraph 3.6.

Proposed by Councillor Studdert-Kennedy and seconded by Councillor Tom Williams

Councillor Lydon gave his thanks to the Audit Committee for the key role that it played and asked Councillor Studdert-Kennedy to provide assurance that Stroud District Council was not following in other local authority's footsteps who had gone bankrupt. Councillor Studdert-Kennedy advised that the Council in relative terms was in a very strong financial position and has been very well managed over a number of years.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

- RESOLVED**
1. To adopt the prudential indicators and limits for 2021/22 to 2023/24;
 2. to approve the Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22, and the treasury prudential indicators;
 3. to approve the Investment Strategy 2021/22, and the detailed criteria for specified and non-specified investments; and
 4. to approve the MRP Statement 2021/22

Recommendation from Strategy and Resources Committee

bi. The Fair Pay and Senior Pay Policy Statement 2020/21

Councillor Cornell advised that the council is required to have a pay policy statement for each financial year which must address the councils' policy remuneration of chief officers and provide a definition and rate of pay of its lowest paid employees and make it clear the relationship of pay between the lowest and highest paid employees. Councillor Cornell advised that the ratio identified in paragraph 2.2 is 1:10 and that the government's view is that the ratio in the public sector should not exceed 1:20. It was also pointed out that the authority compared with other authorities in the County and that the ratio at Stroud was slightly higher as it included the apprentices pay whilst others did not. Councillor Cornell also advised that since the report was published for the Strategy and Resources Committee the treasury has evoked the £95,000 exit cap mentioned in paragraph 5.3.

Proposed by Councillor Cornell and seconded by Councillor Whiteside.

In the absence of questions and comments the motion was put to the vote and was carried with 39 votes for, 1 against and 1 abstention.

RESOLVED That the statement is approved as recommended by Strategy and Resources Committee.

bii. Council Tax Support Scheme

Councillor Cornell introduced the above report and advised that in 2019 the Strategy and Resources Committee had requested alternative schemes to be explored and modelling to be carried out. Due to the pandemic this work had not been carried out and it was not appropriate at this time to reduce the support provided. It was confirmed that alternative schemes will be considered for future years. Councillor Cornell thanked the Revenue and Benefits team for the work they had been doing in allocating funding.

Proposed by Councillor Cornell and seconded by Councillor Fryer

Councillor Lydon asked for information on other local authority's schemes. Councillor Cornell confirmed that Stroud District Council is the only council in Gloucestershire who is still continuing to provide the scheme as it is, other councils use a banding scheme to reduce the support based on certain criteria.

Councillor Davies agreed that it was not the right time to amend the scheme especially with the pandemic and he therefore would be supporting this.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED That it adopts the current default scheme for 2021/22 keeping the scheme unchanged.

biii. Stroud District Council Capital Strategy

Councillor Cornell advised that the capital strategy sets out the Council's principles on how the Capital Programme is put together, how Capital expenditure can be financed and how the Council approaches and manages the risks related to the Capital Programme. Councillor Cornell drew the Councils attention to the only significant change in this year's update which related to an

announcement from Government in November 2020 which stated that access to the Public Works Loans Board was prohibited for any local authority with plans in their three-year capital programme for purchase of assets for yield.

Proposed by Councillor Cornell and seconded by Councillor Pickering.

Councillor Pickering stated that it was important that the capital strategy was approved as it is an important aspect of local authority's. He also stated that it is important that any money borrowed is in line with our policies and that in the future we may have the ability if needed to borrow to invest in projects that advance our carbon neutral 2030 ambitions.

In accordance with the Council Standing Orders, a recorded vote was taken, the results of which are as follows:-

FOR: 41 votes

Councillors

Martin Baxendale	Colin Fryer	Gary Powell
Dorcas Binns	Lindsey Green	Nigel Prenter
Catherine Braun	Trevor Hall	Sue Reed
Chris Brine	Nick Hurst	Steve Robinson
Miranda Clifton	George James	Mattie Ross
Nigel Cooper	Julie Job	Nigel Studdert-Kennedy
Doina Cornell	Haydn Jones	Haydn Sutton
Gordon Craig	John Jones	Brian Tipper
Rachel Curley	Norman Kay	Chas Townley
Stephen Davies	Stephen Lydon	Ken Tucker
Paul Denney	Karen McKeown	Martin Whiteside
Jim Dewey	Jenny Miles	Tim Williams
Jonathan Edmunds	Gill Oxley	Tom Williams
Chas Fellows	Simon Pickering	

AGAINST: 1 vote

Councillors

Skeena Rathor

ABSENTIONS: 0 votes

RESOLVED To approve the Capital Strategy as recommended by the Strategy and Resources Committee.

biv. The General Fund Budget 2021/22, Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Plan and Council Tax Charges

Councillor Cornell advised that the final settlement had now been agreed by government and therefore some certainty on funding could be provided for the coming year. The fair funding review had been delayed into 2022/23 and was expected to remove business rates growth which would be worth approximately £1.4million. Councillor Cornell confirmed the following points:

- The expected impact of the pandemic was £1.54m
- A small reduction in business rates had been budgeted for next year
- The New Homes Bonus funding had declined but less sharply than anticipated
- Appendix C laid out additions to the budget
- An increase of £5 a year on Council Tax was proposed for Band D properties

- In the MTFP an increase of 1% had been included for pay rises
- A small underspend was expected on the UBICO contract
- Funding had been allocated for one officer for the Kickstart programme however due to a change in timescales the application was not submitted, work is still ongoing to look at how the Council can be part of the scheme. This will be reviewed at Strategy and Resources Committee.

Councillor Cornell thanked all the Officers who were working under very difficult circumstances during this pandemic for being able to put together the budget.

Councillor Davies asked how much money was within the budget to address the climate emergency. Councillor Cornell advised that she did not have a total figure. However, items had been included across the budget such as the funding for the green homes grant for insulation, investment in water source heat pumps, investment in additional officers to enable retrofitting of properties, investment in cycling and the natural environment. She advised that over the years the Council had invested millions across the spectrum of climate issues.

Proposed by Councillor Cornell and seconded by Councillor Kay.

Councillor Davies thanked the Officers for putting the budget together under incredibly difficult circumstances, however stated that the budget was unambitious and therefore would be abstaining from the vote. He advised that the Council finances are in good shape and over the last 5 years nearly £3m had been put into reserves. He also stated that a larger amount should have been included to address climate change or alternatively an amount allocated to each committee to put towards tackling climate issues. Councillor Davies contended that all fees had been increased in line with inflation however we weren't doing enough to save money or avoid increasing fees for residents of the District.

Councillor Hurst advised that he would be abstaining, he stated that in Appendix C £60,000 had been included for a canal strategy which he claimed was too premature and an example of the work we should not be doing at this time in order to reduce the pressures on our rate payers.

Councillor Lydon and Hall stated their surprise at Councillor Davies comments regarding the budget being unambitious. Councillor Lydon stated that as a small District Council we do a lot of work and that it is important to have good reserves.

Councillor Kay advised that he was proud to be a Councillor at Stroud District Council as we still build houses and it remains one of the Councils key priorities as laid out in paragraph 5.10, he stated that it was a good budget and deserved everyone's support.

Councillor Rathor advised that not enough imagination had been used with the budget to ensure climate resilience and that Councillors should start thinking about how to reach out to communities to create citizen led power to help address the climate emergency.

Councillor Cornell commended the budget and advised that it contains the input of Members as it had been through Committee's. Attention was brought towards the work of the Council in particular the connections that were being built with community groups. Councillor Cornell also reminded members of the Carbon Neutral 2030 Strategy which would be coming to the next Council Meeting for discussion.

In accordance with the Council Standing Orders, a recorded vote was taken, the results of which are as follows:-

FOR: 26 votesCouncillors

Martin Baxendale
 Catherine Braun
 Chris Brine
 Miranda Clifton
 Doina Cornell
 Rachel Curley
 Paul Denney
 Jim Dewey
 Jonathan Edmunds
 Colin Fryer

Trevor Hall
 George James
 Norman Kay
 Stephen Lydon
 Karen McKeown
 Jenny Miles
 Simon Pickering
 Gary Powell
 Nigel Prenter
 Sue Reed

Steve Robinson
 Mattie Ross
 Chas Townley
 Ken Tucker
 Martin Whiteside
 Tom Williams

AGAINST: 1 voteCouncillors

Chas Fellows

ABSENTIONS: 15 votesCouncillors

Dorcas Binns
 Nigel Cooper
 Gordon Craig
 Stephen Davies
 Lindsey Green

Nick Hurst
 Julie Job
 Haydn Jones
 John Jones
 Gill Oxley

Skeena Rathor
 Nigel Studdert-Kennedy
 Haydn Sutton
 Brian Tipper
 Tim Williams

RESOLVED

- a. To approve the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan as set out in Appendices A-E
- b. to increase the council tax by £5 to £217.52 at Band D, an increase of less than 10p per week for the services provided by Stroud District Council;
- c. to note the uncertainty around the impact of changes to future local government funding
- d. to approve the Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix F
- e. to approve the planned changes to the reserves as set out in Section 4 of the report and Appendix G
- f. to approve the fees and charges policy and list of Council fees and charges as set out in Appendices H and I
- g. to approve the Council Tax Charges for the District as set out in Appendix J

bv. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Estimates – Revised 2020/21 and Original 2021/22 and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25

Councillor Ross presented the above report which had been to Housing Committee and was a recommendation from Strategy and Resources Committee. It was stated that the budget addresses the continuing needs of residents and that it was ambitious. They were working with partners across the county to secure funds so that the Council could be an exemplar organisation when it comes to innovation in the renewable and retrofit environment. In September 2021 a fully costed list of retrofit options would be presented to Committee.

Councillor Davies asked for confirmation of how much money was included in the budget to reduce the carbon impact of the councils housing stock. The Strategic Director of Resources advised that

the energy works would be coming back to Committee in September 2021 and had not yet been fully costed.

The Strategic Director of Resources brought Members attention to paragraph 14.3 which stated that the budget included £2.263m to improve the energy efficiency of dwellings. For the remainder of the retrofit project once the costed programme is in place Housing Committee could recommend to Council to amend the Capital Budget.

Councillor Lydon asked for clarification as to the work that had been carried out so far to improve properties in terms of carbon impact. Councillor Ross advised that works had been ongoing for many years including installing double glazing, PV Panels, air source heat pumps and insulation etc.

Councillor Townley advised that there is a lot of pro-active work going on in terms of retrofitting and asked whether the budget report could include a list of planned capital works and major repair works to show the practical improvements being carried out on tenants' homes. Councillor Ross confirmed that this was a good suggestion and would be fed back.

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy questioned what financial saving had been made in terms of outgoings for heating against what it had been before any work had been conducted. Councillor Ross advised that she would speak with Tenants Services and see if an answer could be provided at a later date.

Proposed by Councillor Ross and seconded by Councillor Braun.

Councillor Braun stated that it was an excellent budget as it allowed the Council to continue to develop and improve the service provided to tenants. The Major works programme was continuing to allow energy efficiency improvements to help reduce heating costs, the planned retrofit for all properties would be costed later in the year and is a very ambitious project. New homes were being built at a higher thermal efficiency standard with a SAP rating of 86/100 and good progress was being made on the sheltered housing modernisation programme.

Councillor Miles stated that she was supporting the budget which officers had worked very hard on. Attention was also brought to the fabric first approach to retrofit and advised it was important to spend time considering the options available before going forward.

Councillor Davies confirmed that he would be voting against the budget for the following reasons; there was no medium term savings identified in the budget for bringing the repairs service in house, the failure for the Council to build new homes despite a budget being allocated and that there was not any budget allocated to reduce the amount of carbon emitted from the housing stock.

Councillor Denney advised that good work had been carried out to upgrade our existing housing stock. Solar panels had been installed at some properties however the government did not allow the Council to recoup any of the costs for this work when the property was sold under right to buy, this acted as a disincentive.

In accordance with the Council Standing Orders, a recorded vote was taken, the results of which are as follows:-

FOR: 26 votesCouncillors

Martin Baxendale
 Catherine Braun
 Chris Brine
 Miranda Clifton
 Doina Cornell
 Rachel Curley
 Paul Denney
 Jim Dewey
 Jonathan Edmunds

Colin Fryer
 Trevor Hall
 George James
 Norman Kay
 Stephen Lydon
 Karen McKeown
 Jenny Miles
 Simon Pickering
 Gary Powell

Nigel Prenter
 Skeena Rathor
 Sue Reed
 Steve Robinson
 Mattie Ross
 Chas Townley
 Martin Whiteside
 Tom Williams

AGAINST: 8 votesCouncillors

Dorcas Binns
 Nigel Cooper
 Gordon Craig

Stephen Davies
 Lindsey Green
 Haydn Jones

Brian Tipper
 Jessica Tomblin

ABSENTIONS: 6 votesCouncillors

Nick Hurst
 Julie Job

John Jones
 Gill Oxley

Nigel Studdert-Kennedy
 Haydn Sutton

RESOLVED

- a. **The revised HRA revenue budget for 2020/21 and original budget 2021/22 are approved**
- b. **The movement to and from HRA balances and earmarked reserves as detailed in Appendix B and section 9 are approved**
- c. **That from 1 April 2021:**
 - i. **Social rents and affordable rents are increased by 1.5%, in line with national rent guidance**
 - ii. **Garage rents are increased by 1.5%**
 - iii. **Landlord service charges are increased by 1.5%, except sheltered housing charges which are individually set****As detailed in Appendix A**
- d. **That the HRA Capital Programme for 2020/21 to 2024/25, as detailed in Appendix C, be included in the Council's Capital Programme.**

The meeting closed at 9:42 pm.

Chair