

# Cabinet

Wednesday, 19 August 2020

**Attendees:** Councillor Mark Cory, Councillor Adam Fox, Councillor Martin Goss, Councillor Theresa Higgins, Councillor David King , Councillor Michael Lilley, Councillor Julie Young

Also in attendance: Councillors Bourne, Dundas, Lissimore and G. Oxford

## **No. Publication and Call In Information**

Date Published 20 August 2020

Date when decisions may be implemented (unless 'called in') 5pm 27 August 2020.

NB All decisions except urgent decisions, those subject to pre-scrutiny and those recommended to Council may be subject to the Call-in Procedure.

Requests for the scrutiny of relevant decisions by the Scrutiny Panel must be signed by at least ONE Councillor AND FOUR other Councillors to countersign the call-in form OR to indicate support by e-mail. All such requests must be delivered to the Proper Officer by no later than 5pm on 27 August 2020.

## **488 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

*RESOLVED* that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

## **489 Have Your Say! (Virtual Meetings)**

A written submission from Councillor Crow was read to Cabinet in accordance with the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) expressing concern about the negotiations between Newsteer and local residents on rights of access to allow the Alumno development to proceed.

Councillor Cory, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, indicated that a written response would be sent.

## **490 Final Report of the Waste Task and Finish Group**

The Assistant Director, Environment, submitted a report a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Councillor Bourne, Chair of the Waste and Recycling Task and Finish Group, attended and addressed the Cabinet and highlighted the cross party membership of the Group.

The Group had considered large amounts of information and met three times in a short period of time. It had taken its role very seriously. The Group was grateful for the support it had received from officers. A particular highlight had been hearing direct from representatives of the waste crews. The task before the Group was not easy and it needed to be recognised that the Group could not solve all the financial issues facing the Council and it was appreciated that a number of difficult decisions needed to be made. The Group had gained a real understanding of the scale of the challenge and the constraints facing the Council in addressing the budget gap. It had not been possible to reach a consensus across the Group on the issue of garden waste charges.

In terms of its proposals, the Group recognised that if garden waste charges were not introduced, other difficult choices would have to be made. It considered that the Garden Club element was superfluous, and that a start-up fee would only make any proposal more unpopular. The importance of working with ward councillors on any introduction of wheeled bins was stressed.

Councillor Lissimore attended and with the consent of the Chair addressed the Cabinet, and thanked officers, particularly those working in waste and recycling. Concern was expressed that those opposed to garden waste charges had been challenged to find alternative savings or income streams but had not been provided with sufficient detailed information to do this. The Group had heard evidence of problems within the service, such as long working hours, health and safety issues, an over reliance on agency staff and difficulties with the routing software. The service was underfunded. Cabinet should reject the introduction of garden waste charges.

Councillor G. Oxford attended and with the consent of the Chair, addressed the Cabinet. The Group had not achieved all he had expected it to. He did not consider that the level of information provided about other statutory and non-statutory services had been sufficient and was not in line with terms of the motion he had put forward in July. If more detailed information had been provided then the Group may have been able to come up with other suggestions. It was noted that there was a lower sickness rate on wheeled bin routes, but that the routes were also shorter so the statistics could be misleading.

Councillor Dundas attended and with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Cabinet. He noted the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group in respect of the Garden Club and the start up fee. There was no information within the report about the potential impact of these changes on the viability of the proposals. The Garden Club had been an integral part of the scheme in ensuring the required take up by residents. If this analysis had not been done, Cabinet should not proceed with the introduction of charges. When wheeled bins had been introduced in 2016, the administration had done so on the basis of consent. To move away from this principle would lead to considerable criticism.

Councillor Cory, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, thanked Councillor Bourne for her work chairing the Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Cory, Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Waste, Environment and

Transportation and Councillor King, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources, responded to the comments made. Garden waste collection was a non-mandatory service and 65% of Council's had introduced garden waste charges. Members of the Cabinet were not comfortable with the idea of introducing such charges, but the financial challenge facing the Council as a result of that coronavirus pandemic meant that it needed to be considered.

The waste and recycling service was a high performing service. The Council was currently recruiting both loaders and drivers, which would reduce the level of agency staff used. However, there would always be some use of agency staff as they gave flexibility to the service in dealing with periods of leave and sickness. It was also investing in additional vehicles. The 6% overspend on the budget was not an unreasonable variance, given the challenges the service had faced during the course of the pandemic.

Considerable financial information had been provided to the Scrutiny Panel and the Task and Finish Group and to members more generally. A programme of budget workshops for members was underway. In addition, where proposal impacted on staff and services, careful consideration needed to be given to how this information was released and presented.

Councillor J. Young, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Performance, stressed the importance of listening to the views of residents and ward councillors, particularly in respect of the introduction of wheeled bins. Whilst it was important to take account of individual circumstances, the Labour Group was in favour of wheeled bins on health and safety grounds, and as they were a more secure receptacle for waste. There was also a need to consider how the service might be delivered in the future, particularly with the potential move towards unitary authorities.

Councillor King highlighted the budget gap facing the Council and the need to deliver a balanced budget. Whilst reserves could be used to cover this in the current financial year, other solutions would need to be found for future years and considerable work was underway to identify solutions. The Task and Finish Group could look again at the issue next year, when there was slightly more time and less pressure. However it was recognised that in the absence of political consensus, at this stage, the proposals to introduce garden waste charges should not proceed.

Councillor Fox, Portfolio Holder for Housing, thanked Councillor Bourne for chairing the Task and Finish Group and officers for their work in supporting the Group. He stressed the need for the opposition to take recognisability for helping to find solutions to the budgetary position and expressed concern about the potential impact of other approaches to closing the budget gap.

Councillor Cory indicated that the administration would continue to look for other ways of addressing the budget gap and would continue to lobby the government for further funding for local government. In the absence of political consensus to take forward the proposals, the introduction of charges for garden waste would be withdrawn and therefore recommendations (a), (b) and (c) from the Task and Finish Group would not proceed. Work would continue with ward councillors on wheeled bins, as set out in recommendation (d). The administration had already met the requirements of

recommendation (e).

*RESOLVED* that:-

- (i) Cabinet's thanks to the Waste and Recycling Task and Finish Group be formally recorded.
- (ii) Wheeled bins for garden waste be introduced in ward areas that currently have wheeled bins for black sack waste and build a roll out programme for the rest of the borough in those areas that are suitable for wheeled bins while working with local ward councillors.
- (iii) The recommendations contained in the report submitted to Cabinet on 8 July 2020 attached at Appendix 1 to the Assistant Director's report not be proceeded with;
- (iv) Cabinet noted:
  - the considerable detail on operational matters that officers supplied to the Group to help with their deliberations;
  - the willingness of the 3 crew members who answered questions and assisted members to draw out new lines of enquiry;
  - the offer from Portfolio Holder of Business and Resources made during the first Task and Finish Group to lead two Budget Workshops for all members to attend and receive detailed information on current budget position and possibilities for closing the budget gap;
  - the offer of the Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources to work with a representation of members across the chamber to look at options for balancing the budget, while working in parallel to Cabinet decisions.

#### *REASONS*

In the absence of political consensus, Cabinet did not wish to proceed with the introduction of garden waste charges.

#### *ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS*

It was open to Cabinet to agree the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group.

## **491 Minutes (Part B)**

*RESOLVED* that the not for publication extract from the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

