

Decision Schedule



Cabinet

TO ALL MEMBERS OF NEWPORT CITY COUNCIL Decision Schedule published on 24 February 2021

The Chair of Cabinet Member took the following decision on 22 February 2021. The decision will become effective at Noon on 2 March 2021 with the exception of any particular decision, which is the subject of a valid "call-in".

The deadline for submission of a 'Call-in' request form is 4.00 pm on 1 March 2021.

Reports relating to staffing issues/Confidential reports are not circulated to all members of the Council as part of the consultation/call-in processes.

Leader 09/21

2021/22 Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy

Options Considered/Reasons for Decision

The Council had ambitious plans for the city as set out in its Corporate Plan and the promises set out within it. A key enabler to deliver on this ambition was the capital programme. This report included both the Capital and Treasury Management Strategies which, at their core (i) confirmed the capital programme, as part of the Capital Strategy and (ii) the various borrowing limits and other indicators which governed the management of the Councils borrowing and investing activities; as part of the Treasury Management Strategy.

The 'Capital Strategy' also set out the long-term context (10 years) in which capital decisions were made and demonstrated how/that the Local Authority took capital and investment decisions in line with service objectives, gave consideration to both risk/reward and impact; as well as properly taking account of stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and affordability.

The capital plans of the Authority were inherently linked with the treasury management activities it undertook, and therefore the 'Treasury Management Strategy' was included alongside the 'Capital Strategy'.

The main recommendations arising from the two strategies were summarised in the report and were also appended.

Decision

That Cabinet recommended to Council for approval:

- The Capital Strategy (Appendix 2), including the current capital programme within it (shown separately in Appendix 1) and the borrowing requirements/limits needed to deliver the current capital programme.
- The Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Indicators, the Investment Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) for 2021/22. (Appendix 3).

As part of the above:

- To note the increased debt and corresponding revenue cost of this in delivering the current capital programme, and the implications of this over both the short and medium-long term in terms of affordability, prudence and sustainability.
- To note the Head of Finance's recommendation to Council, that borrowing needed to be limited to that included in the current capital programme and the recommended prudential indicators on borrowing limits do this.
- Beyond the current capital programme period, there were potential financial challenges around on-going affordability and sustainability but these would be reviewed closer to the start of the new programme within the context of funding levels and the Council's budget position.
- Note comments were made by Audit Committee on 28 January 2021 (paragraph 5 & 6).

Consultation

Monitoring Officer, Head of Finance, Head of People and Business Change

Implemented by: Head of Finance
Implementation Timetable: Immediate

Leader 10/21

Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTPF): Final Proposals

Options Considered/Reasons for Decision

The draft budget proposals for 2021/22 agreed in the January Cabinet meeting had been subject to detailed consultation, and the results were set out within the report and its appendices.

Whilst the results of the draft settlement were reported to Cabinet in January; at the time of writing and making public this report, the Council were not yet in receipt of the final settlement from Welsh Government, which was due on 2 March. With the exception of any late transfers of specific grants into/ out of the final settlement, which were neutral in their impact, no other changes were anticipated.

Cabinet were therefore finalising their 2021/22 budget based on the funding position made up of the draft Revenue Support Grant, the confirmed increase in the Council's tax-base and Council Tax income at the rate that would be recommended at this meeting.

The draft settlement confirmed that Newport received the greatest share of the 3.8% net funding increase for Local Government across Wales, and much higher than that included within planning assumptions. This report summarised the draft budget key areas, feedback on the consultation on those and other key contextual matters before setting out the current position on the 2020/21 budget which Cabinet would consider. The final proposals would be announced at the meeting, following consideration of these.

Section:

1. Financial summary
2. Finalising the budget
3. Financial planning assumptions
4. Public consultation
5. Medium term financial plan (MFTP)
6. Risk, reserves, financial resilience and performance
7. 2021/22 proposed council tax

Appendix:

Appendix 1	Minutes from the Employee Partnership Forum
Appendix 2	Extracts from Scrutiny Committees
Appendix 3	Extracts from Schools Forum minutes
Appendix 4	Public budget consultation responses and feedback
Appendix 4a	Fairness Commission review
Appendix 4b	Specific responses to consultation
Appendix 5	Budget investments
Appendix 6	Budget savings
Appendix 7	Medium term financial plan (MTFP)
Appendix 8	Reconciliation of movements since budget consultation
Appendix 9	Equalities issues
Appendix 10	Financial resilience snapshot, earmarked reserves & invest to save
Appendix 10a	Projected earmarked reserves
Appendix 10b	Summary of invest to save spend and forecast
Appendix 11	Fees and charges

Decision

Cabinet noted/agreed the following:

Budget proposals and medium term projections (section 3-5)

1. Noted formal consultation on the budget as outlined in section 4 and the feedback received, shown in appendices 1 to 4b.
2. Noted equalities impact assessment summary on the budget proposals, shown in appendix 9.
3. Reviewed and confirmed budget proposals (appendix 5 - 6), as currently summarised within the medium term financial plan (appendix 7) and allocate the financial flexibility shown in table 5. In doing so, agreed the implementation of the full medium term savings programme and the use of invest to save as noted in paragraph 6.4 to implement savings as part of the medium term savings requirement.
4. Agreed the 2021/22 fees and charges of the council shown in appendix 11.
5. Noted the budget investment in schools of up to £4,937k, was based on an assumed teachers/ NJC pay increase and provided for a fully funded increase in funding requirement in addition to the cost of new/ expanding school provision as noted in paragraph 3.7 – 3.12. Specifically, Cabinet agreed to confirm and finalise this when there was certainty on Teacher's pay from September 2021 with the intention of at least retaining the objective described above, within the funding provision available.

Overall revenue budget and resulting council tax 21/22 (section 6 and 7)

6. Noted the Head of Finance's recommendations that minimum General Fund balances be maintained at a level of at least £6.5million, the confirmation of the robustness of the overall budget underlying the proposals, and the adequacy of the general reserves in the context of other earmarked reserves and a revenue budget contingency of £1.5million.
7. Noted the current level of council tax for Newport City Council and the monetary value of various percentage increase and how this compared to levels of council tax at other councils as shown in table 6.
8. Recommended an overall net budget and resulting council tax to full Council, noting that a formal resolution including the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent and Community Councils' precepts would be presented to Council on the 3 March.
9. Approved expenditure and use of reserves in line with summary shown in appendix 10b, noting they were based on detailed proposals reviewed by Cabinet in their January 2021 meeting.

Consultation

Monitoring Officer, Head of Finance, Head of People and Business Change

Implemented by: Head of Finance

Implementation Timetable: Immediate

Leader 11/21

City Centre Leisure and Learning Consultation Response

Options Considered/Reasons for Decision

On 16 December 2020, the cabinet agreed to consult with the public on proposals to build a new environmentally sustainable and energy efficient leisure and wellbeing facility on a brownfield site overlooking the River Usk and allocate the existing Newport Centre land to Coleg Gwent for the purpose of relocation of their further education campus into the city centre.

This report provided information on the consultation responses and requested permission to proceed with the plans.

Decision

Cabinet agreed to the following:

- To proceed with the design and construction of a new leisure and wellbeing facility on the expansion land site, subject to obtaining all necessary consents.
- To approve the capital envelope and proposed funding of £19.7 million to deliver the scheme.
- To the re-appropriation of the Newport Centre site from Leisure provision to regeneration purposes and agree to the disposal of the site to Coleg Gwent by way of a 250-year development lease at net market value, taking account of all demolition and other allowable costs, and on such other terms and conditions to be agreed by the Head of Law and Regulation and Newport Norse, subject to all necessary consents.
- To authorise officers to agree and complete all necessary documentation in relation to the scheme and the disposal.

Consultation

Monitoring Officer, Head of Finance, Head of People and Business Change

Implemented by: Head of City Services, Acting Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing and Head of Law and Regulation

Implementation Timetable: Immediate

Leader 12/21

Transporter Bridge Heritage Fund Application

Options Considered/Reasons for Decision

The National Lottery Heritage Fund approved the Council's application for funding to repair and restore the Transporter Bridge as well as provide a new visitor centre in December. The Council now needed to formally accept the award and fulfil a number of obligations before the Heritage Fund grants 'permission to start'

The application's project budget included an element of unconfirmed funding. Fundraising would continue throughout the life of the project and beyond. The application therefore included an indicative figure of the level of matched funding that was likely to be raised over the life of the project. It was necessary for the Council to underwrite this figure before permission to start was granted. Additionally, Welsh Government had formally yet to offer a Tourism Investment Support Scheme grant of £1.5 million towards the project, and this needed to be in place before the Council could accept the award.

Details of the project budget were included in the report. The maximum underwrite figure for the unconfirmed funding was 365k. This figure however, was the maximum potential cost and would only be realised if not a penny more was raised.

Decision

Cabinet therefore:

- i) Accepted the award of £8.7 million, subject to Welsh Government confirming the Tourism Investment Support Grant as matched funding; and
- ii) Provided National Lottery Heritage Fund with an agreed underwrite for the unconfirmed matched funding.

Consultation

Monitoring Officer, Head of Finance, Head of People and Business Change

Implemented by: Acting Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing
Implementation Timetable: Immediate

Leader 13/21

Socio-Economic Duty

Options Considered/Reasons for Decision

The Socio-economic Duty (the Duty) was set out in Part 1, Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010. It required specified public bodies, when making strategic decisions, to pay due regard to the need to reduce the inequalities of outcome that resulted from socio-economic disadvantage.

The devolved Government had the powers to enact this part of the Act, and intend to do so on the 31 March 2021. Failure to demonstrate due regard to the Duty when a body made a strategic decision was grounds for judicial review. There was no reporting duty attached to this piece of legislation, however, it was a statutory requirement, and relevant bodies should be able to demonstrate how they had fulfilled the Duty. The report outlined the steps the Council should take to ensure compliance with the Duty in the short and medium term, including changes to decision making supported by relevant training.

Decision

Cabinet approved the suggested recommendations included in this report.

Consultation

Monitoring Officer, Head of Finance, Head of People and Business Change

Implemented by: Head of People and Business Change
Implementation Timetable: Immediate

Leader 14/21

Covid-19 Response and Recovery Update

Options Considered/Reasons for Decision

The Covid-19 health emergency was ongoing since March 2020 and impacted all communities and businesses across Newport as the City had continued to adapt and respond to the necessary restrictions to minimise the spread of the virus. Newport Council's response was to ensure continuity of services with our strategic partners, support vulnerable residents across communities, support businesses and ensure the safety of staff. The report provided an overview of what action the Council had taken to date and the progress against the Strategic Recovery Aims.

Since the last Cabinet Report in January, the Council and its partners continued to monitor vigilantly the Covid-19 cases in the City through its role at the multi-agency Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG), the Council's Emergency Response Team (Covid Gold) and liaison with Welsh Government (WG) and Public Health Wales partners. The Newport area was currently at the highest alert level.

Decision

Cabinet considered the contents of the report and noted the progress being made to date and the risks that were still faced by the Council.

Consultation

Monitoring Officer, Head of Finance, Head of People and Business Change

Implemented by: Chief Executive and Head of People and Business Change
Implementation Timetable: Immediate

Leader 15/21

Post Brexit Transition – Newport City Council

Options Considered/Reasons for Decision

Since the last report to Cabinet on 8 January 2021, the UK had left the European Union (EU), the Single Market and was now trading with the EU under a new trade arrangement. This had also meant the end to freedom of movement of citizens between the EU and UK and also other governance and regulatory changes.

The full impact of these changes would not be fully known in the short term and it may be several years before the UK / Wales understood and saw any actual outcomes from leaving the EU. As anticipated, there were reports of disruptions at the UK borders with Hauliers and other businesses reporting increased bureaucracy and stocks failing to be exported / imported into the UK. At the time of the report there had not been any reports of these issues for businesses in Newport.

For EU citizens living in Newport there were now less than five months for people to apply for EU Settled Status before the 30 June 2021 deadline. The Council and its partners were continuing to promote and encourage people to apply before the deadline. In addition to this there were also changes to the Migration laws and a new points based system that was now in place. From the end of January, Hong Kong residents would be eligible to apply for a VISA to live in the UK.

Decision

Cabinet considered the contents of the report and noted the Council's Brexit preparations.

Consultation

Monitoring Officer, Head of Finance, Head of People and Business Change

Implemented by: Chief Executive and Head of People and Business Change

Implementation Timetable: Immediate

Leader 16/21

Cabinet Work Programme

Options Considered/Reasons for Decision

The Leader presented the Cabinet Work Programme.

Decision

Cabinet agreed the Cabinet Work Programme.

Consultation

Senior Officers, Monitoring Officer, Head of Finance, Head of People and Business Change.

Implemented by: Governance Team Leader

Implementation Timetable: Immediate

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR J MUDD

24 February 2021

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