

Decision Schedule



Cabinet

TO ALL MEMBERS OF NEWPORT CITY COUNCIL

Decision Schedule published on 21 February 2022

The Chair of Cabinet Member took the following decision on 18 February 2022. The decision will become effective at Noon on 28 February 2022, 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 25 February 2022.

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 11/22

2022/23 Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy

Options Considered/Reasons for Decision

As set out within the Corporate Plan, the Council had ambitious plans for the city, with the Capital Programme a key enabler in delivering this ambition. The current programme was entering its last year, with a number of key programmes and projects having been completed to date and a number of others nearing completion.

The 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 Council's borrowing and investing activities, as part of the Treasury Management Strategy.

The Capital Strategy set out the long-term context (10 years) in which capital decisions were made. It demonstrated that the Council's approach to taking capital and investment decisions was in line with service objectives, whilst giving consideration to risk, reward and impact. It also demonstrated that these decisions were taken whilst having proper regard to stewardship of public funds, 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 this report below and are also appended.

Decision

That Cabinet recommend to Council for approval:

- i) 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 programme.
- ii) The Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Indicators, the Investment Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) for 2022/23. (Appendix 3)
- iii) As part of the above, Cabinet:
 - a. Noted 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 with regard to affordability, prudence and sustainability.
 - b. Noted the Head of Finance recommendation to Council that borrowing needs to be limited to that included in the current Capital Programme, and the recommended prudential indicators on borrowing limits to achieve this.
 - c. Noted the requirement to limit and manage debt funded expenditure beyond the existing programme period, for sustainability purposes, with particular regard to the development of the new Capital Programme.
 - d. Noted the changes to the Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code, and the impact of those changes on the Council's approach to capital investment and treasury management.
 - e. Noted comments made by Audit Committee on 27th January 2022 (paragraph 6).

Consultation

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

Implemented by: Head of Finance

Implementation Timetable: Immediate

Leader 12/22

2022/23 Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

Options Considered/Reasons for Decision

The draft budget proposals for 2022/23 agreed in the January Cabinet meeting were subject to detailed consultation, and the results were set out within this report and its appendices.

Whilst the draft funding settlement was reported to Cabinet back in January; at the time of writing and making public this report, the Council was not yet in receipt of the final funding settlement from Welsh Government; which was due on 1 March. Apart from any late transfers of specific grants into/ out of the final settlement, which would be neutral in their impact, no other changes are anticipated. Therefore, Cabinet were finalising their 2022/23 budget based on a funding position made up of the draft Aggregated External Finance (more commonly referred to as the "Revenue Support Grant – RSG"), 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 a 10.2% uplift which was the fourth greatest increase of the overall 9.4% net funding increase for Local Government across Wales, and much higher than that included within planning assumptions. A 'balance in hand' was reported to January Cabinet and this report summarised the investments being proposed to support the key priorities along with detailed feedback on the consultation. Cabinet considered the results of the consultation at the meeting, along with other key contextual matters, before setting out the position on the 2022/23 budget.

Section:

- 1 Financial summary
- 2 Finalising the budget
- 3 Financial planning assumptions
- 4 Public consultation
- 5 Medium term financial plan (MTFP)
- 6 Risk, reserves, financial resilience, and performance
- 7 2022/23 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 budget proposals
- 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 Fairness and Equalities Impact Assessment (FEIA)
- 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

That Cabinet agreed to the following:

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

- To note the formal consultation on the budget as outlined in section 4 and the feedback received, shown in appendices 1 to 4.
- To note the Fairness and Equalities Impact Assessment (FEIA) on the budget proposals, shown in appendix 9.
- To review and confirm budget proposals (appendix 5 - 6), as currently summarised within the medium term financial plan (appendix 7) and allocate the financial flexibility shown in table 4.
- In doing so, to provide a minimum of £500k from the current financial flexibility for on-going Covid / no Hardship Fund risk and agree to temporarily re-classify the budgets outlined in para. 6.8 and the reserves for the same, noting that the risk will need on-going monitoring as the year progresses.
- To agree the 2022/23 fees and charges of the council shown in appendix 11.
- To note the budget investment in schools of up to £8,003k is based on an assumed teachers/ NJC pay increase of 4% from September 2022 in addition to the cost of new/ expanding school provision as noted in paragraph 3.8 – 3.13.
- Cabinet are asked to approve that the pay provision is retained in ‘contingency’ within the overall ISB and distributed to individual school budgets from there once the agreed pay award is known, with the intention of fully funding the agreed pay award up to the budget provision available.

Overall revenue budget and resulting council tax 22/23 (section 6 and 7)

- To note 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 £1.4million.
- To note the current level of council tax for Newport City Council and the monetary value of various percentage increases and how this compares to levels of council tax at other councils as shown in table 5.
- To recommend 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 will be presented to Council on 1 March.
- To recommend an overall net budget and resulting council tax increase of 2.4% to full Council, noting that a formal resolution including the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent and Community Councils' precepts will be presented to Council on 1 March.
- To approve expenditure and use of reserves in line with the summary shown in appendix 10b, noting they are based on detailed proposals reviewed by Cabinet in their January 2022 meeting.

Consultation

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

Implemented by: Head of Finance
Implementation Timetable: Immediate

Leader 13/22

Verified KS4 and KS5 Pupil Outcomes 2021

Options Considered/Reasons for Decision

Welsh Government suspended the calculation and publication of Key Stage 4 and 5 and legacy sixth form performance measures for 2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022 academic years.

Furthermore, Welsh Government confirmed that qualification awards data would not be used to report on attainment outcomes at a school, local authority or regional consortium level and must not be used to hold schools to account for their learners' outcomes.

Changes to the accountability framework would impact on the information that both Local Authorities and regional consortia have access to during the academic year, 2021-2022.

Decision

That Cabinet:

1. Acknowledged the position regarding pupil performance.
2. Considered any issues arising that the Cabinet may wish to draw to the attention of the Chief Education Officer.

Consultation

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

Implemented by: Chief Education Officer
Implementation Timetable: Immediate

Leader 14/22

Welsh Language Strategy 2022/27

Options Considered/Reasons for Decision

In accordance with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 the Council was required to produce, and publish on our website, a 5-year strategy that sets out proposals to promote the Welsh language and to facilitate the use of the Welsh language more widely in the area.

One of the main ways we could measure an increase in the number of Welsh speakers across Newport was through monitoring numbers of children being educated through the medium of Welsh. Therefore the Council's five year targets required by our Welsh Language Standards reflected those tangible measures set out in our Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).

The draft strategy for the period 2022-2027 is attached at Appendix 1.

Decision

That Cabinet approved the draft Strategy prior to submission to Full Council in March.

Consultation

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

Implemented by: Head of People, Policy and Transformation
Implementation Timetable: Immediate

Leader 15/22

Western Gateway Partnership - Update

Options Considered/Reasons for Decision

The Western Gateway was a strategic partnership that aimed to deliver an economic powerhouse, driving growth on both sides of the Severn. The partnership comprised of Local, County and Combined Authorities in England and Wales, Local Economic Partnerships, City Deals, University and business representatives. As one of the five cities in the partnership, Newport was a key player in the success of the Western Gateway and sought to capitalise on the benefits of greater collaboration. A report on the Western Gateway partnership was last presented to Cabinet in July 2020 and this report provided an update on the work and activity of the partnership.

Decision

That Cabinet noted the content of the report and supported Newport's continuing involvement with the Western Gateway.

Consultation

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

Implemented by: Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Implementation Timetable: Immediate

Leader 16/22

Covid 19 – Response and Recovery Update

Options Considered/Reasons for Decision

Since the last report in January, Wales was now seeing the community spread of the Omicron variant. Since the festive period, the case rate had fallen and the Welsh Government set out a programme to ease the restrictions taking Wales back to Level 0 by the end of the month.

Newport Council's Gold team has continued to monitor the situation across the City and in Council. Some Council services saw disruption due to staff absences and also increasing demand and services are taking necessary action to manage the situation.

The report also included a summary of activity across Council services in January 2022.

Decision

Cabinet considered and noted the contents of the report and for Cabinet / Cabinet Members to receive updates from officers as part of their portfolio.

Consultation

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

Implemented by: Chief Executive and Head of People, Policy and Transformation
Implementation Timetable: Immediate

Leader 17/22

Post EU Transition (Brexit) Update for Newport City Council

Options Considered/Reasons for Decision

Since the UK left the European Union in December 2020 the UK and Wales was adjusting to the trade arrangements and reacting to the wider global economic impacts and Covid restrictions. For businesses and households across Newport and Wales the last year has been very challenging as it saw the overall cost of living increase. These impacts were affecting low-income households with the cost of living due to increases in the cost of food, goods, and energy prices. In response the Council's Cabinet has committed £100k to support food banks in Newport. The Welsh Government also announced a £51.7m Winter package that would give households on certain benefits a contribution to mitigate some of these costs.

Newport Council continued to face ongoing pressures on the cost of goods and services as increases in costs are being passed onto the consumer. The Council alongside other sectors were also facing pressures on staffing and recruiting staff into key roles especially in Social Services, housing & support, and City Services.

Since the deadline passed for EU and EEA citizens to apply for EU Settled Status, the Home Office (31 October 2021) has received 6.2m applications and have concluded 5.9m applications. 52% of applications have been granted Settled status with 42% granted Pre-settled Status. The

remaining 7% have either been refused, withdrawn or invalid claims. There was no data available for the current status of claims in Newport.

Decision

Cabinet considered and noted the contents of the report and for Cabinet / Cabinet Members to receive updates from officers as part of their portfolio.

Consultation

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

Implemented by: Chief Executive and Head of People, Policy and Transformation
Implementation Timetable: Immediate

Leader 18/22

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

21 February 2022

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