

# FULL COUNCIL

7 JULY 2020

## REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

### 1. COUNCIL UPDATE REGARDING CABINET AND LEADER

#### 1.1 Purpose of Report

To advise Council of the main decisions taken at the Cabinet meetings on 5 March and 18 June 2020.

#### 1.2 Background

1.2.1 This report highlights some of those decisions which have been made, but not all. Members wishing to view all decisions made can find these at

<http://eservices.solihull.gov.uk/mgInternet/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

1.2.2 Attached to this report are the lists of decisions made.

#### 1.3 Decision: 5 March 2020

1.3.1 **Climate Change Prospectus** – Cabinet received and approved the refreshed Climate Change Prospectus for 2020/21. Members acknowledged the gravity of the climate change emergency and noted the key changes required for a fundamental shift. There was some discussion around the role that the Local Plan could play. Members welcomed the inclusion of youth representation and that Directorates would take ownership of the work.

#### 1.4 Decisions: 18 June 2020

1.4.1 **MTFS Update (incorporating the Financial Accounts Outturn Position for 2019/20)** - Cabinet was presented with the final accounts position on the revenue and capital budgets for 2019/20 and an outline on the impact on the latest Medium Term Financial Strategy position. That final position was approved as was a contribution of £98,000 to the Budget Strategy Reserve (BSR) to provide further resilience for future years' financial planning.

1.4.2 Members approved contributions to the Adult Social Care contingency, the existing Employment and Skills reserve in the Children, Education and Skills portfolio and to the Birmingham Airport reserve for dividends.

1.4.3 The continuation of the Budget Strategy Group for the 2021/22 Budget Framework and MTFS for 2022/23 to 2023/24 was endorsed.

1.4.4 Approval was given to the creation of a reserve to transfer funds from the dissolved North Solihull Partnership; funding allocations from the Business Rates windfall; and the transfer of management of the Disabled Funds Grant capital budget from the Stronger and Safer Communities portfolio to the Adult Social Care and Health portfolio.

1.4.5 **Financial Implications of Covid-19** - Cabinet received a report on the financial implications of the Covid-19 outbreak for the Council, giving the best assessment that could be made at this point in time. The financial position was being monitored through the Aligning Resources to Our Priorities (ARTOP) Board, to make sure that every effort was made throughout the financial year to mitigate the impact.

1.4.6 Cabinet approved the contribution of an estimated £53.560 million of Section 31 grants in relation to additional business rate reliefs to the Business Rates Timing Reserve.

- 1.4.7 Solihull had been allocated £1,040,717 to pilot the Track and Trace programme, and Members agreed to delegate authority of that funding to the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care.

## 1.5 Covid-19

- 1.5.1 Of course, most attention has been paid since March to the dreadful Covid-19 pandemic which has had to dominate the work and services delivered by the Council. Resources have needed to be applied to priorities and protecting those most at risk, ensuring the stability of Council operations in uncertain times, and applying Government schemes and support at a local level.
- 1.5.2 Solihull is, of course, just one authority amongst so many having to grapple with this exceptional situation that has confronted us, but I have been humbled by the thanks and compliments that I have received for our efforts. I thank Members across the chamber for the support that has been given.
- 1.5.3 As I write this report, the country is beginning to move out of the lockdown that has affected us since March. Let us hope that there is an end in sight to the crisis; we must mourn those we have lost and pray that there will be no second spike. There is much work still to be done, to set this Borough back on the road of recovery and we launched our Recovery Plan a few weeks ago now.
- 1.5.4 ***However, I hope all Members will join me in paying tribute to the staff and officer leadership of this Council, for their exceptional efforts and commitment to the people, communities and businesses of this Borough, especially in their work for the vulnerable and those most at risk.***
- 1.5.5 During this time, a large amount of my time, and indeed that of some other Members, has had to be spent with regional engagement, monitoring the effect of the crisis, lobbying as necessary for support for the people and businesses affected by the crisis, as well as the key economic assets within the Borough. Extensive involvement has been with the West Midlands Combined Authority, and boards such as the Strategic Economic Development Board, Environment Board, which I chair, GBSLEP and the European Structural Investment Fund Committee, which I have chaired for seven years. In respect of the latter, for example, I have met with officials to press for further flexibility in funding parameters. I have also lobbied direct to Government, or with colleague Leaders, as has been required, as well as being in regular contact with our MPs to ensure that the Solihull voice is heard in Parliament.
- 1.5.6 Lately, there has been involvement helping formulate the West Midlands Recovery support package recently submitted by the West Midlands Mayor 'Recharge the West Midlands', as well as the GBSLEP Recovery Taskforce. I have also continued my work with the WMCA portfolio that I hold for Environment, Energy and HS2, recognising that we are all seeking a Recovery that recognises that the Climate Change Emergency has not gone away.
- 1.5.7 Solihull is now involved with Warwickshire (as lead authority) and Coventry as one of the Beacon authorities in the Test and Trace efforts and with colleague Leaders from those two authorities, I sit on the CSW Test and Trace Sub-Regional Advisory Board.