

Rother District Council

Report to	-	Council
Date	-	31 July 2023
Report of the	-	Cabinet
Subject	-	References from Cabinet Meetings

The Council is asked to consider recommendations arising from the Cabinet meetings held on 12 June 2023 and 17 July 2023 as set out below.

CABINET – 12 JUNE 2023

CB23/04. **NET ZERO PLEDGE FOR UK100 MEMBERSHIP** (9)

UK100 was a network of local authorities that had pledged to be Net Zero by 2030 for council operations and 2045, at the latest, for area-wide emissions. Membership was free, the pledge was not legally binding, and the benefits included networking; events; communications tools; media packs; support; facilitated dialogue with national politicians; knowledge sharing including webinars / workshops; promoting best practice; research opportunities and publications; and provided connections to world-leading business and industry.

The report detailed the Net Zero Pledge that the Council would need to sign and adopt, as well as required commitments.

Cabinet was supportive of approving and adopting the Council's membership to UK100 and agreed that it would support Rother's climate emergency ambitions and provide valuable resources for both Members and officers.

RECOMMENDED: That the Net Zero Pledge be approved and adopted and the Council's membership of UK100 be confirmed.

Cabinet also **RESOLVED:** That subject to Council approval, the Director – Place and Climate Change be granted delegated authority to sign the pledge and agree the on-going requirements to ensure Rother District Council's ongoing UK100 Membership.

(Cabinet Agenda Item 9)

CABINET – 17 JULY 2023

CB23/14. **REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING DRAFT 2022/23 OUTTURN**

Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Deputy Chief Executive on the provisional outturn position for the 2022/23 financial year and the Council's finances as at 31 March 2023. Members were

advised that the information would be used to inform the production of the Council's statutory accounts which would be subject to audit review ahead of presentation to the Audit and Standards Committee. The report had also been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 July 2023; the comments and recommendation regarding the temporary accommodation budget were noted. The Revenue Budget, Capital Programme position and impact on the Council's reserves were summarised at Appendices A, B and C respectively.

There had been no reportable virements to the Revenue Budget since the last financial update. The outturn position for year ending 31 March 2023 showed that the drawdown had reduced to £1.5m which was £1.7m less compared to the budget, which represented an improvement of £1.5m since the Quarter 3 forecast. The main reasons for the variations were detailed in the report. Members were pleased to note the £96,000 surplus planning income achieved.

The draft Capital Programme outturn was £23.4m which was more than £150m lower than the revised budget and £1.3m higher than forecast expenditure at the end of Quarter 3. This was attributed to an underspend against 2022/23 budget and/or the change in spend profile. It was anticipated that where schemes were forecast to underspend, they would be completed in future years. Continued monitoring would be undertaken by the Finance department and Heads of Service.

The council tax collection rate was 97.66% of the collectable debit and 99.92% of the budgeted yield, which was 0.35% and 1.06% respectively lower than the previous year. Business Rates Collection Fund was 97.83%, which was 0.84% higher than the previous year.

The report outlined the debt amounts written off during 2022/23 which amounted to £553,455, as well as the previous four years for comparative purposes. Balances were written off when the amounts owed were deemed irrecoverable. Questions were raised regarding the written-off amounts and whether they were disproportionate from residents that were eligible for the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS). The Interim Deputy Chief Executive advised that a CTRS Member briefing was scheduled to be held in August, where Members would be able to discuss potential changes to the scheme, as well as receive an update on proposed new second homes Central Government legislation. Further information would be reported at the next meeting scheduled to be held on 4 September 2023.

The draft revenue outturn for 2022/23 showed an overall deficit of £1.5m, which was £1.7m lower than the approved planned use of reserves, due to the material variances as set out in the report. However, budget pressures were expected to continue into 2023/24. There would be an ongoing affordability review of the Capital Programme to ensure that schemes remained affordable and deliverable. Delivery of the Financial Stability Plan continued to be of paramount importance. Future budget deficits would remain a challenge, however it was anticipated that key savings, efficiencies,

and additional income could / would be achieved via the Council's ongoing service planning programme.

Cabinet thanked the Interim Deputy Chief Executive and his team for their hard work in managing the Council's finances.

RECOMMENDED: That:

- 1) provisional outturn position for the General Fund Revenue Account for 2022/23 be approved;
- 2) financing of the 2022/23 Capital Programme along with the updated Capital Programme for 2023/24 to 2027/28 and scheme financing as outlined within the report and detailed at Appendix B be approved;
- 3) existing capital budget for the purchase of temporary accommodation is used as the 60% match funding required to access the £0.8m Local Authority Housing Fund (second round) grant offer and that this amount is then added to the overall capital budget; and
- 4) final reserve transfers (Appendix C) be approved.

(Councillor Maynard declared an Other Registerable Interest as an Executive Member of East Sussex County Council, and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting for the consideration thereof).

(Councillor McCourt declared an Other Registerable Interest as an employee of East Sussex County Council (Public Health), and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting for the consideration thereof).

(Cabinet Agenda Item 6)

CB23/15.
(8)

UK SHARED PROSPERITY AND RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND

The Council had received £1,000,000 and £603,963 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) respectively to support levelling up aims in three priority themes, namely community and place, supporting local business and people and skills. The timeframe to spend all funding was set at March 2025.

It was noted that the revenue and capital UKSPF allocation could be spent anywhere within the district. The capital REPF allocation could only be spent on local businesses within the rural areas with populations under 10,000, this excluded Bexhill (including Little Common and Sidley).

In June 2022, the Council established a Rother Shared Prosperity Fund Local Partnership Group (RSPFLPG) consisting of community partners, local businesses, and local authority leaders, to manage the UKSPF fund and develop an Investment Plan. Funding would be allocated via East Sussex County Council (ESCC) for East-Sussex wide projects and Rother District Council for projects within the district.

Funding in the Investment Plan had been allocated through the submission of projects by external organisations and partners, and through consultation with local authority colleagues and community organisations. Projects were prioritised against the three themes stipulated above and assessed against the Council's Corporate Plan, Anti-Poverty Strategy, Economic Recovery Action Plan and Environment Strategy. The Investment Plan, including its deliverables were developed and submitted to the Government in Autumn 2022 and approved in January 2023. Appendix A, B and C to the report identified the list of deliverables against the interventions, UKSPF and REPF funding allocations respectively.

Funding would be awarded following an open application process to procure services or award grant, as appropriate. Officers were working with the Procurement Hub and Legal Services to develop these processes. Grants and services would be monitored and administered either via the Council's existing systems or ESCC. Assessment would be completed by the RSPFLPG and a newly formed Grant Advisory Panel.

To oversee implementation of the Investment Plan, the Council had recruited a dedicated officer to monitor and report on performance, as there was a risk that funding could be clawed back if projects were not successfully delivered.

Cabinet was fully supportive of the Council's budgets being amended to incorporate the funding allocations and agreed that delegated authority be granted to the Director – Place and Climate Change in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Regeneration and Economic Development and Planning and Member Training Champion to agree the finalised awards, based upon the recommendations of the Partnership Panel, as required, as well as distribution of the remaining funding.

RECOMMENDED: That:

- 1) the Rural England Prosperity Fund with a value of £603,963 be added to the Capital Programme;
- 2) the Revenue Budget be updated to include the 2023/24 allocation of £232,490 UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and the 2024/25 allocation of £514,572 to be noted for next year. An additional £40,000 per annum for 2023 – 2025 from the Homelessness Prevention Grant will be added to the People and Skills Budget;
- 3) the principles of the Investment Plan and the approach to distribution as described be noted;

- 4) delegated authority be granted to the Director – Place and Climate Change, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Member Training Champion, to agree the final rural business grant awards, based upon the recommendations of the Partnership Panel;
- 5) delegated authority be granted to the Director – Place and Climate Change, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development and Portfolio Holder for Planning and Member Training Champion, to agree the final community grant awards; and
- 6) delegated authority be granted to the Director – Place and Climate Change, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economic Development and Portfolio Holder for Planning and Member Training Champion, to enter into the necessary agreements for the procurement of services and the distribution of all remaining funding.

(Cabinet Agenda Item 8)

CB23/16. **1066 COUNTRY MARKETING**

1066 Country Marketing was a partnership Destination Management Organisation managed by an Executive Board consisting of representatives from local authorities, local and attractions' representatives, and English Heritage. The annual budget was made up of contributions and member subscriptions totalling £25,000. Hastings Borough Council (HBC) and Rother District Council (RDC) both contributed £50,000 and Wealden District Council £2,000, as the Partnership only served the Pevensey and Herstmonceux areas.

Over the last 30 years, RDC had been working with and supporting its tourism offer through the 1066 Country Marketing Partnership. Appendix A to the report detailed examples of the range of press and promotional activity undertaken in December 2022 and January 2023.

A review in 2016, resulted in the development of a new logo and the 'Country of Origin' badge which was used on products and promotions and £25,000 was invested to create a new website. In 2022, data collated indicated that the website had received over two million views. It was estimated that approximately 14,000 people (full, part-time or casual) were employed in the industry within Rother.

HBC had decided to withdraw their membership and funding from the Partnership. At present, HBC was the accountable body and employed two officers (one full and one part-time) to oversee Partnership activity. A 2023 marketing campaign was established and was scheduled to be rolled-out over the summer. It was proposed that RDC became the accountable body to the Partnership and took over the contract, the website and the copywrite of the intellectual property (IP), as well as staffing resources. In the short-term priority focus would be to increase

membership subscriptions to offset funding loss. The report outlined the key risks should the Partnership dissolve.

After deliberation, Cabinet was fully supportive of the Council taking ownership of the 1066 Country Marketing Revenue Budget, website and IP to March 2024 and beyond; and that the transfer be delegated to the Director – Place and Climate Change in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, Tourism and Joint Waste Contract.

Cabinet agreed that tourism was one of the main employers and contributed significantly to the district's economy, as well as quality of life of the local communities.

Cabinet thanked the Head of Housing and Regeneration and the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, Tourism and Joint Waste Contract for their hard work ensuring that the Partnership continued and for supporting the district's marketing development.

RECOMMENDED: That the:

- 1) Council become the accountable body for 1066 Country Marketing, to include its Revenue Budget, intellectual property and website;
- 2) Council's Revenue Budget be updated to include the financial contributions to 1066 Country Marketing from Wealden District Council and Member Subscriptions, at an anticipated value of £35,000; and
- 3) final terms of transfer be delegated to the Director – Place and Climate Change in consultation with the Council Section 151 Officer and Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, Tourism and Joint Waste Contract.

(Cabinet Agenda Item 9)

Councillor D.B. Oliver
Leader of the Council