

# BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

## NOTICE OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET ON 21 OCTOBER 2020

DATE OF PUBLICATION: FRIDAY, 23 OCTOBER 2020

DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: FRIDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2020

### NOTES:

MINUTES 100 AND 102 BEING STARRED MINUTES, WILL BE REFERRED TO THE MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL ON 23 NOVEMBER 2020.

A COPY OF THE CABINET AGENDA HAS BEEN PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL. IF YOU REQUIRE ANY FURTHER INFORMATION ON ANY ISSUE PLEASE CONTACT, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER OR OFFICER NAMED IN THE RIGHT HAND COLUMN.

### MEETING OF THE CABINET

21 October 2020

#### Present:

Councillor Paul Skinner, in the Chair

Councillors Tracey Abbott, Richard Austin BEM, Nigel Welton, Martin Griggs, Jonathan Noble and Yvonne Stevens

#### Officers –

Joint Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive (Place) & Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services Manager, Council Tax and Benefits Manager, Assistant Director – Organisation and Corporate Services, Assistant Director - Support Services & Partnership and Section 151 Officer

### 95 MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 9 September 2020 were received and signed by the Chairman.

### 96 APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

### 97 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Martin Griggs declared an interest in the PE21 Update Report on the grounds of his employment with Boston College. However, this would have no bearing on his consideration and decision on the matter.

### 98 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No questions had been received from members of the public.

**99 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (STANDING ITEM)\***

The Council Tax Support Scheme and Workforce Development Strategy had been considered by the Corporate and Community Committee on 15 October 2020, and a verbal update would be provided.

**100\* COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2021/22**

<b>DECISION</b>  <b>That full Council be recommended to adopt option 2 as set out in the report, a continuation of the current Council Tax Support Scheme uprating in line with the Department of Work and Pensions uprating's for working age social security benefits and non- dependant deductions, but assess working age applicants who are working and in receipt of universal credit every 3 months.</b>	<b>Portfolio Holders and Officer</b>  <b>JN / GC</b>
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**REASON FOR DECISION**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced a report by the Council Tax and Benefits Manager on the operation of the Council Tax Support scheme to date and the outcome of the consultation process for the 2020/21 scheme.

The report set out the background to the Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme which had been in operation since 2013/14 under the provisions of the Welfare Reform Act.

It was accepted that the outturn performance of the adopted schemes from 2013/14 onwards were broadly in line with original assumptions. The full service for Universal Credit was rolled out for the Boston area on 12 September 2018, although this was currently only for new claims. The migration of existing claims was not due for completion until 2023.

Since the introduction of universal credit it had become apparent that those people in receipt, together with earnings and council tax support could have their claims reassessed every month. If the earnings increased or decreased over that month, the assessment for universal credit would change, consequently creating a reassessment for council tax support. If council tax instalments changed some applicants may not receive a council tax reminder for 12 months. There were currently 900 cases where the situation could apply.

Whilst the new regulations provided councils with flexibility to set up their own local arrangements, the Government expressed clear intentions in relation to certain aspects of a local scheme, including:-

- For pensioners there should be no change in the level of awards as a result of the reform. This included both existing and new claimants.
- Councils were required to also consider ensuring support for other vulnerable groups.
- Local schemes should support work incentives and in particular avoid disincentives to move into work.

The 2021/22 council tax support scheme was consulted on the following options:-

### **Option 1**

Continuation of the current scheme, as it was, with a 'no change' approach, uprating the amounts used in the calculation of Council Tax Support for working age claimants in line with Department for Work and Pensions uprating for working age social security benefits and non-dependent deductions.

This option would maintain a consistent approach to Boston's CTS scheme since its introduction in 2013/14. It would continue to recognise the additional needs of the vulnerable through the approach to its calculation.

Any further reduction in grant funding or increase in CTS awards would need to be found from other budgets areas or service cuts. Any consultation process would include this as an option with views on how or what services would be affected.

### **Option 2**

Uprate in line with the Department of Work and Pensions uprating's for working age social security benefits and non- dependant deductions, but assess working age applicants who are working and in receipt of universal credit every 3 months.

If an applicant had a significant change in their income within the 3 month period the case should be reassessed, this will allow the applicant more consistency with their entitlement and allow the council tax to become due and if the need should arise place the account into the standard recovery cycle.

This option would maintain a consistent approach to Boston's CTS scheme since its introduction in 2013/14, however it would alleviate the challenges received by the introduction of universal credit. It continues to recognise the additional needs of the vulnerable through the approach to its calculation.

Any further reduction in the grant funding or increase in CTS awards would need to be found from other budget areas or service cuts. It would reduce the need for monthly recalculations which could offer administration savings. Any consultation process should include this as an option with views on how or what services should be affected.

### **Option 3**

Continuation of the 2020/21 scheme, but not apply any up-ratings. This would result in the up-rating adjustments not aligning with those used nationally.

The Council was required to consult with major preceptors and the public in terms of any scheme changes and the responses were made available as part of the decision making process. The consultation exercise with major preceptors and other interested parties had run between 4<sup>th</sup> September and 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020.

The consultation focused on whether the Council should continue with its current scheme for 2021/22, and asked respondents if they felt this was a fair scheme. Thirty seven public

replies had been received with 72% of those in agreement with the proposal to continue with the current scheme. The responses from major preceptors also confirmed their agreement to support a scheme that did not increase the financial burden and continued to help balance budgets.

The report had been considered by the Corporate and Community Committee on 15 October 2020. The Committee recommended that option two, a continuation of the current scheme, but with 3 monthly assessments for applicants who were working and in receipt of universal credit, should be referred to Cabinet and Council for final approval.

Members commended Option 2 to Full Council as it protected vulnerable people and was a positive way forward to give claimants the ability to better budget their finances.

#### OTHER OPTIONS OR ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

As set out in the report.

#### RECORD OF ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

#### RECORD OF ANY DISPENSATION GRANTED

None.

### **101 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

#### **DECISION**

**That the Workforce Development Strategy 2020-2024 be approved, subject to the following wording being added to the section Attract and Retain Talented Employees; ‘what will success look like’:-**

**‘High performing teams who have built trust, aligned skills, enhanced collaboration and brought together diverse talents to achieve a shared goal.’**

**Portfolio Holder and Officer  
PS / JG**

#### REASON FOR DECISION

The Leader presented a report by the Assistant Director – Organisation and Corporate Services, setting out the approach the Council would take between 2020-2024 to develop its culture, working practices and people, by means of a Workforce Development Strategy.

The proposed Strategy, attached as an appendix to the report, had been developed in response to a key recommendation from the LGA Peer Review in 2019 and in consultation with the Leadership Team, Managers across the alliance, the Employee Reference Group and Union representatives.

The themes identified in the Strategy were:-

- Attract and retain talented employees
- A flexible approach to service delivery
- A healthy and active workforce
- Shape the organisational culture and maximise staff engagement
- Be efficient and effective in all we do
- Celebrate our success and reward excellence

The enable the delivery of the Strategy and ensure it was well embedded across the workforce, a Workforce Development Board would be formed of relevant officers. External representatives could be invited to join the Board for specific themes and to add value. The success of the Strategy would be measured using the indicators included in the document and reported via the Performance Framework.

The Strategy was relevant to the workforce across the strategic alliance and would shortly be considered by the East Lindsey District Council Executive Board.

The Workforce Development Strategy had been considered by the Corporate and Community Committee on 15 October 2020, and comments from that meeting had been circulated. The Committee commended the Strategy to Cabinet for adoption, subject to a reference to 'Team Achievement' being added to the bullet points of success in the Strategic Theme 'Attract and Retain Talented Employees.'

Members welcomed the development of the Strategy which provided a framework for career development and the associated benefit of staff retention, which would consequently support the local economy.

#### OTHER OPTIONS OR ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Not to have a Workforce Development Strategy. This had been discounted as the Strategy was an important framework for the Council given its journey of change and was a key recommendation in the Peer Review.

#### RECORD OF ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

#### RECORD OF ANY DISPENSATION GRANTED

None.

**102\* CORPORATE STRATEGY / PRIORITIES**

<b>DECISION</b>  That the Corporate Strategy 2020-2024 be referred to full Council for approval.	<b>Portfolio Holder and Officer</b>  NW / JG
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REASON FOR DECISION

Councillor Nigel Welton introduced a report by the Assistant Director – Organisation and Corporate Services, on a proposed Corporate Strategy for the period 2020 – 2024.

The report stated that, at its meeting held on 9 September, Cabinet had approved the draft Corporate Strategy to be published for consultation purposes, focusing on the four priorities of:

- People
- Future prosperity and growth
- Environmental awareness and accountability
- Delivering high quality services and maximising the use of technology to support residents.

The public consultation had been undertaken between 10 and 30 September by means of a survey published on the Council’s website, distribution to local community groups, partner agencies, and shared via social media. A total of 57 responses had been received and the results were set out in appendix C of the report. The document had also been considered by the One Voice Forum (Staff Forum) and comments included in appendix C.

The Corporate and Community Committee had considered the draft Strategy at its meeting on 27 August and comments were attached at Appendix B.

Responses from the consultation exercise had helped shape the final version of the Strategy presented at appendix A to the report.

Members expressed their support for the Corporate Strategy and particularly priority 3 of Environmental Awareness and Accountability, recognising the importance of the climate change agenda.

OTHER OPTIONS OR ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

None.

RECORD OF ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

RECORD OF ANY DISPENSATION GRANTED

None.

**103 PE21 UPDATE REPORT**

**DECISION**

**That the procurement of Messrs Heta Architects and Alliance Leisure be ratified.**

**Portfolio  
Holder  
and  
Officer**

**NW / TL**

REASON FOR DECISION

Councillor Nigel Welton introduced a report by the Deputy Chief Executive (Strategy) providing an update on the PE21 Project, following discussion at the Cabinet meeting held on 9 September 2020.

At that meeting the Deputy Chief Executive (Strategy) had been tasked with providing a briefing on the steps taken to ensure the PE21 initiative was ready for submission as part of the Council's Town Fund Bid. The report updated on the procurement of studies to demonstrate how certain outline concepts identified in the masterplan, prepared by AR Regeneration in 2019, could be translated into firm deliverable proposals, and to develop the proposal for the wellbeing and health living centre.

The Boston Town Fund Board met on 16 October 2020 and approved the Town Investment Plan, which would then be considered by full Council on 26 October 2020 and programmed to be submitted to the Secretary of State on 30 October. In view of the restricted timeframe the Deputy Chief Executive (Strategy) had authorised the procuring of the contracts using Rule 3.1 (1) and (2) of the Contract Procedure Rules (unforeseen event involving the risk of significant disruption to Council services). Therefore Cabinet was asked to ratify the contracts, which were at a significantly less cost than the proposed charge for comparable work previously received.

Following debate at the meeting of the Corporate and Community Committee on 1 October (Call In), the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) had begun to explore the potential to incorporate certain elements of the Geoff Moulder Leisure Centre, principally the swimming pool, into Boston College's proposal for the Mayflower Centre. Other leisure uses could be part of the Wellbeing and Healthy Living Centre. This approach would help to guarantee the continued provision of the existing range of leisure facilities in the town centre. It was anticipated that the option would be developed in more detail after the TIP had been submitted to Government.

The work described in the report would enable the Council to bid for Towns Fund monies to deliver PE21. However, in view of the high level of support for the idea of regenerating the prominent town centre site, it was proposed to continue with site acquisition and further feasibility and viability work to ensure improvement took place irrespective of whether the PE21 component of the TIP was successful. A site acquisition strategy would be presented to a future meeting of the Cabinet which would show the areas of land needed to be acquired to deliver the scheme and the likely cost of each site.

Members thanked Officers for the work undertaken so far and expressed their pleasure at the progressed being made.

OTHER OPTIONS OR ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

None.

RECORD OF ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

RECORD OF ANY DISPENSATION GRANTED

None.

The Meeting ended at 6.55 pm

Signed by the Chief Executive



**FRIDAY, 23 OCTOBER 2020**

**These decisions will come into force (and may then be implemented) on the expiry of five clear working days after the date of this notice UNLESS the decisions are subjected to the Call-In procedure or are starred minutes requiring Full Council approval.**