



Minutes of the meeting of the CABINET held on TUESDAY 1 September 2020
at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council).
Councillors Baume, Darlington, Middleton, Nolan, O'Neill and Townsend.

Apologies:

Councillor J Wilson-Marklew

Officers:

M Bracey (Chief Executive), T Aldworth (Deputy Chief Executive), S Bridglalsingh (Director Law and Governance), S Gonsalves (Director Policy, Insight and Communications), S Richardson (Director Finance and Resources), G Snelson (Director Strategy and Futures) P Brown (Head of Democratic Services), N Hutchin (Joint Head of Finance [Deputy Section 151 Officer]), S Lloyd (Policy Manager), M Smith (Strategic Housing Finance Manger), and L Wheaton (Budget and Financial Planning Manager).

Also Present:

Councillors M Bradburn, R Bradburn, Carr, Crooks, Ferrans, D Hopkins, Jenkins, Marlow, McLean, Lancaster, Rankine and Walker.

C12 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 2 June 2020 be approved and signed by the Leader of the Council as a correct record.

C13 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

None declared.

C14 ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader made announcements:

- (a) welcoming Councillor Townsend to the Cabinet; and
- (b) congratulating Councillors J Wilson-Marklew, the Cabinet member for Climate and Sustainability, and Councillor C Wilson-Marklew on the recent safe arrival of a baby boy.

C15 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Question from Dave Adamson to Councillor Darlington (Cabinet member for Public Realm and Housing Services).

Referring to an information note dated 13 August 2020, prepared on behalf of the residents of Oakhill, in relation to the proposal for a children's play area in Oakhill Ward, Mr Adamson asked if Councillor Darlington was able to provide any update on progress and especially in relation to the proposed funding mechanism.

Councillor Darlington referred to the work of Councillor Nolan, dating back to the beginning of 2020, but also noted that the Council's response to the Coronavirus pandemic had impacted the ability of the Environment Team to respond as promptly as it usually would, given the focus on ensuring existing play parks were secured and safe.

Councillor Darlington indicated there were likely to be a number of challenges associated with the proposal, not least the pressure on the Council's finances and the officer resource that could be allocated to the project in the short term. Notwithstanding this, other funding streams were being explored, including grant funding from Wren (FCC Communities Foundation).

As a supplementary question, Mr Adamson asked about potential capital funding from the Council's reserves.

Councillor Darlington, referencing the Council's financial position, indicated that decisions about the use of reserves would need to be carefully considered, which Councillor Middleton would set out in detail, later in the meeting. Councillor Darlington expressed confidence that Councillor Nolan would fully explore potential grant funding opportunities and had a strong track record of having secured such funding.

C16 COUNCILLORS' ITEMS

None received.

C17 COUNCILLORS QUESTIONS

(a) Question from Councillor Crooks to Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council)

Councillor Crooks explained that he was aware of areas of Brooklands and Broughton Gate that remained 'unadopted' despite housing in the affected areas having been completed and occupied. Councillor Crooks asked if it was permissible for developers not to present small areas for adoption and further, what steps the Council would take to prevent such issues in the future.

Councillor Marland confirmed that he would follow up with Councillor Crooks in relation to specific areas after the meeting, but that land generally remained the responsibility of the landowner, until such time as it was transferred to another owner. Most commonly, developed land was transferred to the local authority as part of the development control process. However, more recently, a practice of transferring the land to management or holding companies, who charged residents fees for the maintenance or upkeep of the land had developed. Councillor Marland advised that regrettably, it was the landowner's prerogative to do so, and having reviewed the position carefully, both in respect of residential areas and green spaces, confirmed that the Council could not compel landowners to transfer land to the Council.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Crooks indicated that the two specific cases his question related to, were small numbers of dwellings and confirmed that he would provide the specific details to Councillor Marland so that he could respond in writing.

(b) Question from Councillor Rankine to Councillor Darlington (Cabinet member for Public Realm and Housing Services)

Councillor Rankine, referring to the provision of new parking bays in the Saints Estate in Bletchley, and the programme of verge conversion agreed between West Bletchley Council and Milton Keynes Council, asked why there had been delays with work commencing on St Catherine's Avenue and an ongoing lack of communication from the Highways Department, despite funding having been allocated by West Bletchley Council in 2019.

Councillor Darlington paid tribute to Councillor Wales work in the West Bletchley Parking Forum and that of West Bletchley Council in this area, advising that she was aware of the issue at St Catherine's Avenue, indicating that officers from both West Bletchley Council and Milton Keynes Council had been on site in the previous week. Acknowledging that there had been some delay caused in part by the Coronavirus pandemic, Councillor Darlington explained that the process was more complicated than perceived, because of utility and other services running below verges and difficulty securing consensus about the location of bays, but that she was confident that the project was now back on track and that the Chair of West Bletchley Council was entirely satisfied with the position.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Rankine, referring the communication issues and the requests to him from a number of West Bletchley Town Councillors to escalate the issue, asked if Councillor Darlington would investigate.

Councillor Darlington committed to investigate the issue but indicated that she did not understand such a view to be held by the Chair, or Clerk of West Bletchley Council, who were understanding of the reasons for the delay and felt the relationship between West Bletchley Council and Milton Keynes Council was effective.

- (c) Question from Councillor Marlow to Councillor Darlington (Cabinet member for Public Realm and Housing Services)

Councillor Marlow, referring to the Council's portfolio of over 11,000 Council homes and acknowledging a reduction in the proportion of homes failing to meet the decent homes standard from 35% to 13% since 2018, noted that the Council's performance was still falling desperately short of the national minimum standard, which was 4%.

Councillor Marlow attributed the improvement to the previous regeneration programme and noted the planned cut of component replacement and planned maintenance budget of £32 million as part of the revised regeneration and renewal strategy, questioning such a heavy focus on renewal, and responsive repairs and maintenance.

Councillor Darlington referred to the HRA business plan which would be considered later in the meeting, suggesting that Councillor Marlow had misunderstood some of the figures.

Councillor Darlington attributed the poor performance in the decent homes standard performance to the lack of planned maintenance undertaken by previous administrations, noting that Councillor Long as her predecessor as portfolio holder, had invested an unprecedented £165 million, five year planned maintenance programme and efforts would continue to deliver decent homes to some of the most vulnerable residents in the Borough.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Marlow asked Councillor Darlington why stakeholders, tenants and leaseholders were only afforded a six-week consultation period to comment on the business plan, suggesting that a longer period would be more appropriate.

Councillor Darlington indicated that as a matter of policy, the standard consultation period at Milton Keynes Council was six weeks, and that this was also reflected in the Council's agreement with Parishes. This was an appropriate amount of time and the consultation would be supplemented by outreach and engagement to ensure those tenants and stakeholders could respond to the consultation, should they wish to.

Councillor Marland added that the original regeneration scheme was brought forward in 2012/13 further to a prevailing view from the previous Conservative administration that many homes that did not meet the decent homes standard were simply not repairable and should be demolished, something which was heavily reflected in the approach to regeneration at the time.

However, upon further inspection it had become clear that the majority of homes could be refurbished and deserved investment. Reflecting on consultation with communities, Councillor Marland indicated that many communities wanted to see community led regeneration as opposed to demolition and commercially driven, privately owned housing.

- (d) Question from Councillor R Bradburn to Councillor Middleton (Cabinet member for Resources)

Councillor Bradburn asked Councillor Middleton for his views on the suggestion from some Councillors that a two-hour free parking scheme for shoppers to Centre:MK be introduced, and what the effect would be on the car parking revenue budget and the Council's broader financial position.

Councillor Middleton, responding to the particular question about the financial impact, noted an existing and very substantial deficit in the parking revenue account, which amounted to £3.5 million less than originally forecasted in the Council's budget.

Councillor Middleton's understanding was that the effect of two hours free parking scheme for shoppers would increase the deficit by around £1 million pounds, which would have to be made up from elsewhere and would simply add to the shortfall and potential cuts to highways and public transport budgets later in the year. Further that no explanation had been forthcoming from the Councillors suggesting where the shortfall caused by such a scheme would be met from.

C18-21 REFERENCES FROM OTHER BODIES

- (a) Referral from Council – 17 June 2020: Social Mobility Pledge

Councillor Marland, updating Cabinet on the progress with the commitment made in a previous resolution of Council, made reference to a written response which had been published on the CMIS pages of the Council's website. Councillor Marland indicated that the Social Mobility Pledge was predominantly for business and academic institutions and that no other Councils had signed the pledge to Councillor Marland's knowledge. Notwithstanding this, Councillor Marland gave a commitment to the associated actions, referring to an example in procurement processes where employers would be encouraged to sign the Social Mobility Pledge as part of tendering processes.

RESOLVED:

That the written response provided by Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council) be noted.

(b) Referral from Health & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee – 24 June 2020: Re-opening of Day Centres

The referral was introduced by Councillor Jenkins, the Chair of the Committee, who thanked the Cabinet member for the written response, and reaffirmed the importance of day care services and day centres to those with a variety of different needs, noting the effect of such services having been closed during the initial Covid-19 outbreak, on service users and their carers, who relied on them. Councillor Jenkins asked that these vital services be re-instigated as soon as possible.

Councillor O'Neill (Cabinet member for Health and Wellbeing) referring to the published response, agreed that day care centres provided a vitally important service to the most vulnerable communities, but additionally reflected on the disproportionate effect of Covid-19 on those with learning difficulties, indicating that 70% of deaths in those at risk groups were attributable to Covid-19, compared to 40% in the general population. Councillor O'Neill reminded the Cabinet that the Council's primary responsibility was to protect life and this needed to be balanced against the benefit of centres reopening.

RESOLVED:

That the written response provided by Councillor O'Neill (Cabinet member for Health and Wellbeing) be noted.

(c) Referral from Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee – 14 July 2020: Funding for Child Poverty Commission recommendations.

Councillor Carr, the Chair of the Committee, introduced the referral, requesting clarification of the funding that would be allocated to support the interim recommendations of the Child Poverty Commission. Reflecting on the high priority of the work and its inclusion in the Council plan, assurances were sought that funding would be available to implement the recommendations.

Councillor Nolan (Cabinet member for Children and Families) referred to the written response, emphasizing that the area was a priority for the administration and additionally thanking Councillor Carr for her work to support the establishment of the Commission. Councillor Nolan advised that there would not be a ringfenced budget because of the cross-cutting nature of the work required, but that the final report would be received by Cabinet in December and where the necessary, actions would be considered.

RESOLVED:

That the written response provided by Councillor Nolan (Cabinet member for Children and Families) be noted.

(d) Referral from Regeneration Scrutiny Committee – 25 June 2020

Councillor Crooks, the Chair of the Committee, introduced the referral, thanking Councillor O'Neill and Derys Pragnell (Head of Public Health Programmes) for their excellent presentations at the meeting and further emphasised the Committee's commitment to estate renewal, and the avoidance of demolition, unless absolutely necessary.

Councillor Crooks referred to the emphasis on reducing obesity and the poor state of maintenance of some Redways on very established settlements, which were not conducive to improved usage or levels of physical activity. Secondly that the health and social outcomes for individuals were significantly impacted by early years development and highlighted the need for effective intervention programmes.

Councillor Crooks also referenced the HRA business plan papers and suggested the importance of contemporaneous data, particularly the social deprivation index, so that the focus of work could be adapted as new areas of deprivation arose and could be promptly addressed via regeneration work. Additionally, Councillor Crooks suggested that given the focus on health and other issues, alongside bricks and mortar regeneration, there would be a need for regeneration work to be supplemented with funds from the General Account as well as the Housing Revenue Account.

As the Cabinet member for Health and Wellbeing, Councillor O'Neill responded, referring to the written response and thanking the committee for highlighting the issue of health inequality. Noting that well paid jobs were helpful to improve health and that a focus on attracting employers was understandable, Councillor O'Neill indicated the need to focus on educational attainment and skills in order to support residents to secure better paid employment.

As the Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Housing Services, Councillor Darlington advised that she and Councillor Baume were committed to working together to deliver a revised Regeneration Strategy in line with the HRA business plan and that the indices of multiple of deprivation would be used to prioritise areas for renewal. Councillor Darlington also reminded the Cabinet of the additional £500,000 investment in Annex W of the 2020/21 budget, which was in addition to base funding for Redway improvements and reflective of ambitious plans to extend the network to Newport Pagnell, the Lakes Estate and other areas.

RESOLVED:

That the written response provided by Councillor O'Neill (Cabinet member for Health and Wellbeing) be noted.

C22 COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

The Cabinet considered the Covid-19 economic recovery plan. Councillor Baume (Cabinet member for Economy and Culture) introduced the item, recognising that residents and businesses in Milton Keynes had been badly affected by the pandemic and were entering the worse recession in modern history, adding that businesses were also having to plan for Brexit and the potential of a 'no deal' scenario.

The Cabinet heard that the Council had already done much work to support the recovery, noting section 2.2 of the report, a list of urgent actions already taken, which had benefited one in three local businesses.

Councillor Baume reflected that whilst the Council was facing significant challenges, the extraordinary circumstances and the disproportionate effect of a recession and rising unemployment on young people and women, required an extraordinary response, and that a package of support worth over 2.25 million would support a green recovery and the most vulnerable.

Introducing a short video, which included some of the businesses and stakeholders who helped to develop the action plan, Councillor Baume thanked all those who had contributed to the recovery plan and to Councillor Darlington who had led the work whilst Councillor Baume was recovering from illness, Councillors Middleton and J Wilson-Marklew alongside Councillor McCall, whose Group had contributed time and ideas.

The Cabinet heard that the Economy Team had been strengthened with the creation of a new post of Strategic Lead for Economy and Policy, to ensure there were the resources to ensure the recovery plan would be fully implemented.

The Cabinet heard from Councillors Rankine, Ferrans and Walker, in consideration of the item.

In response Councillor Darlington:

- welcomed any ideas from councillors to strengthen the local recovery;
- advised that whilst one post had been lost from the Economy Team, more had been added, resulting in a net increase in posts, and that demonstrable cross sector engagement work with the business community had been achieved during the pandemic;
- £200,000 was set aside to support Centre:MK's recovery, which would be utilised in conjunction with the Business Improvement District;
- agreed the importance of a 'future focus' with a need for new businesses and employment to stimulate the economy;
- the Covid Recovery Framework had addressed the issue of the need to support BAME communities as part of the recovery, but that this would be at the centre of the Council's thinking throughout the recovery; and

- £2 billion pounds worth of shovel ready schemes were being identified as part of the Covid Recovery Framework, agreed by Councillor Marland, some of which were already being assessed by government.

Councillor Marland thanked officers for their work to develop the plan, highlighting the £500,000 for a green recovery, the need for innovation and technologies that would be in place for generations and that that would power the recovery, as opposed to investing in traditional, conventional technology.

Noting the economic impact of Covid-19 on the hospitality sector and process driven jobs and the disproportionate effect on young people and women Councillor Marland emphasised the importance of retraining and re-skilling to enable those groups to access new and different jobs.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Covid19 Economic Recovery Action Plan be agreed.
2. That funding of £2,162,880 be allocated to the projects listed in Annex B subject to further development, where required, and final sign-off by the S151 officer.
3. That within 6 months:
 - (a) any budget released from schemes in this current round be allocated once they have been subjected to the final sign-off process;
 - (a) a process for schemes to bid for the £500,000 green business recovery fund allocated in Annex B through this decision, be run; and
 - (b) the £87,120 balance remaining of the budget be allocated to further business support schemes.

C23 REFRESH OF THE HRA BUSINESS PLAN AND HRA CAPITAL FINANCING INVESTMENT PLAN

The Cabinet considered the HRA business plan and HRA capital financing investment plan. The item was introduced by Councillor Darlington (Cabinet member for Public Realm and Housing Services), who thanked Council staff for their work to bring the refreshed business plan forward.

Councillor Darlington outlined that the plan was now out to consultation, would be scrutinised by the Community & Housing and Budget & Resources Scrutiny Committees and that the Cabinet were very keen to hear people's views and ideas. Thanking Councillor Middleton for his assistance with the work to prepare the business plan, Councillor Darlington indicated that the plan was fully financed and deliverable.

Noting the ambitious targets, Councillor Darlington referenced the recent dissolution of Your:MK because of its failure of delivery and highlighted key points from the business plan:

- a reconfirmed commitment to 500 new council homes by 2022 and a further 700 homes by 2030;
- an acquisitions programme and regeneration programme, which alongside new build, would increase the Council's total stock from around 11,000 to 13,195 over the ten-year period of the plan; and
- £165 million investment in current council stock of which £50 million would be green investment.

The Cabinet heard from Councillor Ferrans and two members of the public in consideration of the item. In response, Councillor Darlington:

- reminded Cabinet that in addition to the HRA business plan which was a financial plan, the Regeneration Strategy was also out to consultation, which would set out policy positions and would utilise correct data points to inform its delivery;
- advised that the seven original estates would not be forgotten as part of the business plan and that the Council would be led by indices of multiple deprivation data to focus regeneration work, which required more than just bricks and mortar, but also areas such as health and wellbeing, or jobs and skills; and
- emphasised that social value was increasingly important and that there would be a procurement focus on local providers and supply chains wherever possible.

RESOLVED:

1. That the draft Housing Revenue Account Business Plan be approved for consultation with council tenants and leaseholders.
2. That consultation lasts for six weeks starting on 14 September with the final version of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan being considered by Cabinet at its 15 December 2020 meeting.
3. That the proposed Prudential Indicators set out in Annex D of the report are approved. The financial limits will be presented to Cabinet at its 15 December 2020 meeting as part of the draft budget proposals.
4. That Cabinet note the current draft Business Plan Model at Annex B of the report (which sets out the projected 30 year forecast based on achieving Decent Homes Standard and delivery of the approved new build, acquisition and regeneration capital programme) and at Annex C of the report, which outlines a forecast of the potential cost of future investment based on the ambitions in the HRA Business Plan.

C24 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY OF PHASE A OF THE REGENERATION OF THE LAKES ESTATE

The Cabinet considered the Procurement Strategy for Phase A of the Regeneration of the Lakes Estate. Councillor Darlington introduced the item, noting the many promises of investment that had been made to residents over time and expressing pleasure that progress was now being made.

Referencing the reports' formality in setting out the procurement approach, Councillor Darlington again highlighted the social value, in promoting local providers and employment.

The Cabinet heard from Councillor Rankine in consideration of the item. Referencing Councillor Rankine's concerns about the affordability and effectiveness of proposals for a district heating centre scheme on the estate, Councillor Darlington indicated that reduction in carbon and tackling fuel poverty were critically important to residents, that the technology was not new and that she did not share any of Councillor Rankine's concerns.

RESOLVED:

1. That, subject to planning, approval be given to prepare an open tender to procure contractors to deliver Phase A of the Lakes Estate.
2. That the scheme be packaged and tendered in Lots.

C25 UPDATE ON UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS

The Cabinet considered an update in respect of unauthorised encampments, which was introduced by Councillor Townsend (Cabinet member for Community Safety). Referring to the Council's Unauthorised Encampment Plan, which had been agreed at Cabinet in July 2108, Councillor Townsend updated Cabinet on progress to date, reflecting on the need to strike a balance between the statutory requirement to meet the accommodation needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling show people and the need to ensure that communities felt safe and listened to.

Noting the importance of effective communication, Councillor Townsend outlined work undertaken in this area and in particular, highlighted joint communications prepared by the Council and Thames Valley Police, which set out the relevant steps required in response to unauthorised encampments. Updating the Cabinet, Councillor Townsend advised that:

- there were presently three reported unauthorised encampments in the Borough;
- there was a continuing reduction in the numbers of encampments;
- the environmental crime team deserved recognition for their responsive and collaborative approach to tackling unauthorised encampments;
- physical security had been improved at sensitive sites;

- a clear procedure had been developed to deal with threats or safety issues that encampments might present, alongside welfare and safeguarding issues; and
- further work was required in relation to long terms solutions.

The Cabinet heard from Councillor Lancaster, Bradburn and Ferrans in consideration of the item.

Responding to points raised, Councillor Townsend advised that the number and incidents of unauthorised encampments had decreased since 2018, but acknowledged that this was in part due to the effects of Covid-19.

Noting that of the funds allocated to defences, around £60,000, remained unspent, Councillor Townsend indicated that not all sites could be protected comprehensively because of cost, or the effect on access and enjoyment of the public to open space, but that the funds remained available for new sites as they emerged.

Additionally, Councillor Townend committed to continue to review communication channels and timeliness with a view to improve the position further and further that a community safety need assessment would need to be undertaken at the transit site.

Councillor Marland advised Cabinet that whilst the matter was indeed an emotive and sensitive one, the Council would work hard to balance protecting settled communities from issues associated with unauthorised encampments, and respecting everyone's rights in law. Councillor Marland also informed Cabinet that the Council had a responsibility under the Equalities Act, reminding all Councillors of the need to be mindful of their responsibilities in this regard.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet note the update on the agreed action plan on unauthorised encampments.

C26 FORECAST OUTTURN FOR QUARTER 1, 2020/21: GENERAL FUND REVENUE, HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT, DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME & COVID-19 FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Cabinet considered the forecast outturn for quarter 1, 2020/21: general fund revenue, housing revenue account, dedicated schools grant and capital programme & covid-19 financial update, which was introduced by Councillor Middleton (Cabinet member for Resources). Referring to the detailed nature of the report, Councillor Middleton thanked the s.151 officer and the finance team for their work to compile the information.

Reflecting on the context to the report and in particular the impact of a global pandemic, Councillor Middleton noted the very modest forecast overspend of £150,000 on day to day operational costs, which excluded direct costs of the pandemic and thanked staff for their financial diligence and management.

Councillor Middleton highlighted particular areas of the report, including:

- the cost of temporary accommodation;
- severe pressures in children's social care;
- pressures in the home to school transport budget; and
- management restructures creating savings of around £500,000.

Referring to Councillor Bradburn's earlier question, Councillor Middleton set out the position in respect of the Council's reduced parking income, noting a 60-75% reduction compared to pre pandemic forecasts and indicating that the position was unlikely to recover in the near future. This represented a £3 million shortfall in the parking revenue account, which would impact on important areas, such as subsidised bus routes and investment in the highway network.

Councillor Middleton drew the Cabinet's attention to Annex M of the report, which set out the effect of the pandemic on the Council's finances over the previous six months, explaining additional funds had been allocated to support the Council's response to the pandemic, particularly and additional £2 million in adult social care, which had included additional payments to care homes, PPE funding and payment guarantees to affected providers.

The Cabinet heard from Councillor Rankine in consideration of the item. Responding Councillor Middleton advised that:

- the £16 million of general support funds provided by government was welcome and had been completely allocated and spent to offset Covid-19 related costs, but was insufficient given the steepest recession in over 300 years;
- the s.151 officer would respond separately and in writing in relation to questions and suggestions related to risk forecasting models and which band applied to the Council; and
- that the biggest threat to local government finances was not a local lockdown scenario, rather the severity of the recession and the levels of support that would be provide by government and the Bank of England.

RESOLVED

1. That the GFRA forecast outturn of £0.153m overspend before the impact of covid-19 be noted, together with the management actions set out at annex a of the report.

2. GFRA planned savings of £0.728m have been achieved (17% of the annual savings target). By the 31 March it is forecast that £3.330m savings will be achieved (77%), leaving a shortfall of £0.997m (23%) which is set out in annex b of the report.
3. That the forecast outturn on the HRA is break even, after an increase in the transfer to reserves be noted, together with the management actions set out at annex c of the report.

C27 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL OUTLOOK [2021/22 TO 2024/25]

The Cabinet considered the medium term financial outlook [2021/22 to 2024/25], which was introduced by Councillor Middleton (Cabinet member for Resources). The Cabinet heard that the report forecasted the position in the coming four years, noting the difficulty of doing so given the current recession and financial uncertainty.

Councillor Middleton, referring to an earlier statement from Councillor Walker, offering assistance to relay local financial difficulties to government via the Members of Parliament for Milton Keynes, accepted the offer and made clear that the forthcoming budget round would be extremely challenging, given the likely effect of unemployment and falls to Gross Domestic Product. Councillor Middleton suggested that unless central funding assurances were provided, the Council would need to start considering cuts to subsidised bus services and leisure services.

Councillor Middleton noted some immediate local financial impacts of the pandemic, including:

- a 7% increase in the draw on the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme (equivalent to £2 million);
- a 1% drop in Council Tax collection rates (equivalent to £1.5 million); and
- a 3.5% drop on Business Rates collection rates (equivalent to £4 million).

The Cabinet heard that the local government settlement would not be received until December which presented very real difficulties in agreeing a draft budget and consulting, before Council could agree it in time for the new financial year.

The Cabinet heard from Councillor Bradburn in consideration of the item.

RESOLVED:

1. That the budget scenarios out in Table 2 of the report, be noted.
2. That the approach to addressing the Council's MTFP gap, as set out in paras 3.34 to 3.41, be noted.
3. That the Cabinet and Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) continue to develop detailed proposals to facilitate the delivery of a robust and sustainable Medium-Term Financial Plan.

C28 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2021/22

The Cabinet considered the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021/22, which was introduced by Councillor Middleton (Cabinet member for Resources).

Councillor Middleton advised that a decision was required to amend the scheme 'in year' to adjust notification requirements, meaning that less correspondence would therefore need to be sent to individuals where there were very small changes to their bills.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed change to the Local Council Tax Reduction scheme, introducing a £0.50 a week tolerance rule, to go forward for 8 weeks public consultation.

C29 MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL PLAN

The Cabinet considered and update to progress with the Council Plan which was introduced by Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council), who reminded Cabinet that the Council Plan was agreed in June.

Councillor Marland reflected that the plan had a reduced number of priorities in order to respond to the pandemic and focus on recovery noting that in addition to responding to the pandemic, the Council had continued to deliver day to day operational services, notwithstanding the various challenges presented.

The Cabinet heard from Councillor Rankine in consideration of the item and in response Councillor Marland committed to providing accompanying performance indicators to the Council Plan objectives.

RESOLVED:

That the progress being made on the Council Plan 2016-2022 be noted.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 8.40 PM.