

Extract of Executive Board Minutes relevant to the Corporate Policy and Policy and Performance Board

15th September 2016

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB36 2016/17 QUARTER 1 SPENDING

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which summarised the overall revenue and capital spending position as at 30 June 2016.

In overall terms, revenue expenditure was £0.2m above the budget profile. However, whilst the budget profile was only a guide to expected spending, historically spend was lower in the first quarter of the year and accelerated towards the year-end. Therefore, it was reported that there was a significant risk that the Council may overspend its budget for the year. The budget pressures facing the Council continued to be within the Children and Families Directorate, with an increase in out-of-Borough residential placements and fostering, despite an additional £2.3m of additional budget resources being provided in the past two years.

It was noted that spending on employees at the quarter end was £192,000 below budget profile, mainly due to posts being held vacant and to a staff turnover savings target of 3% being achieved in most departments.

The Capital Programme had been revised to reflect a number of changes in spending profiles and funding as schemes had developed; a list of those schemes that had been revised were set out in the report. It was reported that capital spending at 30 June 2016 totalled £13.538m, which was 99% of planned spending at this stage. This represented 15% of the total Capital Programme of £88.386m.

The Council's Balance Sheet was monitored regularly in accordance with the Reserves and Balances Strategy which formed part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The key reserves and balances had been reviewed and were considered prudent and appropriate at this stage in the financial year and within the current financial climate.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) all spending continues to be limited to the absolutely essential;
- 2) Strategic Directors ensure overall spending at year-end is within their total operational budget; and
- 3) Council be recommended to approve the revised Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix 3, attached to the report.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB37 DISCRETIONARY NON DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which set out details of an application for non-domestic rate relief.

The Board was advised that, under the amended provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council was able to grant discretionary rate relief to any business ratepayer. This relief had previously only been available to organisations that were a charity, a community amateur sports club or a not-for-profit organisation.

Since 1 April 2013, the Council had been responsible for funding 49% of any award of mandatory or discretionary rate relief granted, with Government meeting the remaining 51%.

Details of the request were set out in the report for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That, under the provisions of Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the application for 15% discretionary rate relief from Loose, be granted for the period of three years commencing 1 April 2016.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB38 100% BUSINESS RATE RETENTION - CONSULTATION

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which outlined the consultations on the recently published business rates reform and the 100% business rates retention proposal.

The Board was advised that on 5 July 2016, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published a consultation paper regarding the implementation of a new system of 100% business rates retention for local government by 2020. It was noted that Halton was working with the other Liverpool City

Region (LCR) Councils, to prepare a combined LCR response to the consultation, as the implications for each of the six Councils were very similar. Alongside the consultation, the Government also announced a Fair Funding Review of Councils' relative needs and resources, the outcome of which would establish the funding baseline for each Council and the level of top-up grant that would be received.

It was reported that the LCR had already agreed to be a pilot area for 100% Business Rates Retention, as approved by the Board on 16 June 2016. Following discussions with DCLG, and as a result of being a member of the pilot area, it was noted that the Council would not be required to sign up to the four year grant settlement offer, as during this pilot period, DCLG guaranteed that no Council would be financially worse off as a result. However, since then, DCLG had published a paper titled "Calculating No Detriment", which outlined the principles of Councils within pilot areas being without detriment to the resources that would have been available to them under the current local government finance regime. The Board noted that although this guaranteed the Council would be no worse off as a result of being a pilot area, it did not provide absolute certainty of the Council being no worse off if it had signed up to the four year settlement or if it had not. It was therefore considered prudent for the Council to sign up to the four year offer and to publish an efficiency report by 14 October 2016.

The report set out the key proposals from the consultation and the Fair Funding Review for Members' information. Technical work groups, set up by Government, had considered the following themes:-

- Devolution of responsibilities;
- Operation of the system, including how growth was rewarded and risk was shared;
- Local Tax Flexibilities;
- Accountability and accounting in a reformed system; and
- Assessment of Council's needs and redistribution of resources.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Operational Director, Finance, in consultation with the Resources Portfolio holder, take the necessary steps to accept the four-year funding settlement offer by 14 October 2016; and
- 2) the Operational Director, Finance, in liaison with the Resources Portfolio holder, contribute and agree to the

Liverpool City Region response on the consultation titled “Self-Sufficient Local Government: 100% Business Rate Retention”, and the call for evidence titled “ Fair Funding Review: Call For Evidence on Needs and Distribution”.

Operational Director
- Finance

EXB40 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

whether Members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and

whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB42 INDUSTRIAL ESTATE DISPOSAL OLDGATE,
MARSHGATE, DEWAR COURT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which provided an update on the disposal of Oldgate, Marshgate and Dewar Court Industrial Estates.

The Board was advised that, during the Summer, a retesting of the market with previous bidders had taken place. Details of the revised offers were outlined in Appendix

1 attached to the report, for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the disposal of the industrial estates to the company and at the price named in the recommendation be approved; and
- 2) the Operational Director, Economy and Enterprise, together with the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services and the Resources Portfolio holder, be delegated authority to accept reasonable adjustments to the offer price following detailed surveys, provided that any adjustments to the price still exceed that as set out in the report.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources