

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 13 June 2024 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chair), Ball, Dennett, Harris, M. Lloyd Jones, T. McInerney, Nelson, Thompson and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillor P. Nolan

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, S. Young, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, S. Wallace-Bonner and G. Ferguson

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

EXB1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2024, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB2 2023/24 SPENDING AS AT 31 MARCH 2024

The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which reported the Council's overall revenue net spending position for the 2023/24 financial year.

A summary of spending against the Council's revenue and capital net spending position for 2023/24 was presented in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 and these provided detailed figures for each individual Department. In overall terms net spending as at 31 March 2024 was £5.633m over budget. This was an improvement from the forecast outturn position of £7.144m reported at the end of December 2023, which showed that the actions being taken by Directorates were having a positive effect. Whilst an improved position, it was still a detrimental impact upon the Council's finances and further reduced the Council's limited reserves.

Action

The report also detailed a review of the Council General Reserve as at 31 March 2024. The current balance of reserve totalled £5.149m which was considered to be a minimum level which the Council should hold.

In addition, it was noted that Capital Spending at 31 March 2024 totalled £43.939m, which was 71.4% of the planned spending £61.528m (which assumed a 20% slippage between years). Appendix 2 presented details of spending against all capital schemes. Appendix 3 presented the Capital Programme as at 31 March 2024.

It was noted that the 2024/25 budget had been increased to reflect the increased spending against all the high-pressure areas. It did not provide a budget for the excess cost of agency staff (the assumption being that departments provided for this by reducing spending elsewhere) and the budget also included Transformation Programme savings target of £4m.

A report on the 2024/25 budget monitoring position as at 31 May 2024 along with an initial outturn forecast, would be presented at the earliest opportunity to allow for any urgent corrective action to be taken.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Council's 2023/24 outturn position as presented in the report be noted;
- 2) Directorates take all possible steps to manage spending in line with budget during 2024/25; and
- 3) priority is given to the acceleration of the Council's Transformation Programme, to ensure it is sufficiently developed to deliver the savings required to meet the medium-term financial gap and help the Council replenish its reserves.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB3 DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORTS FOR QUARTER 4 2023 - 24

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director – Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, on progress against key objectives/milestones and performance targets for the fourth quarter period to 31 March 2024, for the People Directorate (Social Care Health); and the Enterprise, Community and Resources Directorate.

The Board was advised that the Directorate

Performance Overview Report provided a strategic summary of key issues arising from the relevant quarter for each Directorate and was aligned to Council priorities or functional areas. The Board noted that such information was key to the Council's performance management arrangements and Executive Board had a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability. Performance Management would continue to be important in the demonstration of value for money and strengthening accountability.

RESOLVED: That the report, progress and performance information be noted.

EXB4 DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which presented five applications for discretionary non-domestic rate relief, under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, for consideration.

It was noted 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 registered charity, a community amateur sports club or a not for profit organisation.

The report outlined details of the five applications, in relation to their respective addresses. Appended to the report was the potential annual cost to the Council of granting the discretionary rate relief.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the application for 15% discretionary top up relief from Change, Grow, Live for premises at 75 High Street, Runcorn, be rejected on the basis that they are a charity who operate nationally;
- 2) the application for 15% discretionary top up relief from Care UK Charity for premises at 3-5 Runcorn Shopping Centre, Runcorn, be rejected on the basis that they are a charity who operate nationally;
- 3) the application for 15% discretionary top up relief from Staffordshire Winter Sports Club Ltd for premises at Silver Blades Ice Rink, Earle Road, Widnes, be rejected on the basis that they are a charity who operate nationally;

Operational
Director - Finance

- 4) the application for discretionary relief from Gateway Community Ltd for premises at Hallmark House, Constance Industrial Estate, Waterloo Road, Widnes, be approved at 90% with effect from 1 April 2023; and
- 5) the application for discretionary rate relief from English Table Tennis Association Ltd for premises at Units 17-18, Greenoaks Way, Widnes, Cheshire, be rejected on the basis that they are an organisation who operate nationally.

EXB5 CORPORATE SECURITY CONTRACT

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, which notified members of the intention to go out to tender with regard to procuring a new corporate security contract in line with the Council's procurement strategy. The new contract would commence on 1 April 2025 and would be for a three year period, with the option for a 12 month extension subject to satisfactory performance.

RESOLVED: That Members note the intention to go out to tender via the Chest in respect of procuring a new corporate security contract.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

EXB6 FOSTERING & SGO CARERS UPLIFT FROM 22/23 & 23/24

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Children's, which advised on an uplift in payments to Foster Carers and Special Guardianship Order (SGO) Carers for 2022/23 and 2023/24. The request is for:

- all SGO Carers to be paid an uplift of 1% from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023; and
- all Foster Carers and SGO Carers to be provided with an uplift of 2% to be backdated to 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

RESOLVED: That the uplift in payments to Foster Carers and Special Guardianship Order (SGO) Carers for 2022/23 and 2023/24, as outlined in the report be approved.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

EXB7 SERVICES FOR MISSING FROM HOME AND CARE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS CHESHIRE FOR HALTON, CHESHIRE WEST & CHESTER AND WARRINGTON: REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STANDING ORDERS

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Children's, which sought approval for a waiver in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 iv of part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders to allow the continuation of a contract with We are With You to deliver on behalf of the Council, the Tri-Party Missing from Home and Care Service, for a period of one year from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

We are With You have been commissioned to deliver the PAN Cheshire Missing from Home and Care Service, since July 2018. The Service operated across Halton, Warrington and Cheshire West and Chester, and the contract was due to end on 30 June 2024. The reasons for the proposed one year contract extension to 30 June 2025 were set out in the report and the three local authorities have agreed to continue with a joint commissioning approach with Halton acting as the lead.

RESOLVED: That approval be given for a waiver in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 iv of part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders to allow the continuation of a contract with We are With You to deliver on behalf of the Council, the Tri-Party Missing from Home and Care Service, for a period of one year from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

EXB8 LONG TERM PLAN FOR TOWNS, FUNDING FOR RUNCORN

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, which set out details to date about the Long-Term Plan for Towns funding which was allocated to Runcorn in the Spring Budget 2024.

In the Spring Budget 2024, the Government announced Phase 2 of their Long-Term Plan for Towns programme which identified Runcorn as one of 20 additional towns across the country which would benefit from £19.5m endowment style funding to invest over a 10 year period in local priorities.

In order to access the funding Halton would need to produce a Long-Term Plan for Runcorn. The Government had issued guidance on 1 October 2023 which required each town to establish a Town Board to oversee the development of the Long-Term Plan. Halton proposed to repurpose its existing Town Fund Board, in line with

Government guidance to ensure compliance with this guidance and to avoid duplication.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) had released £50k of capacity funding to the Council to establish a Town Deal Board. A further £220k capacity funding would be issued to develop the plan which was to be submitted by 1 November 2024.

Appendix 1 to the report detailed the Government list of interventions which had already been assessed a having a strong case for investment, value for money and benefit to cost ratio.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board accepts external grant funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) of £19.5m in relation to the Long-Term Plan for Towns (LTPT);
- 2) agree that the Council will act as Accountable Body for the LTPT Programme;
- 3) the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, be authorised to amend the Towns Fund Board terms of reference and membership to reflect the criteria of the Long-Term Funding for Towns criteria;
- 4) in consultation with the Town Deal Board, the Deputy Leader and Member of Parliament for Runcorn and Helsby, authority be delegated to the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, to spend the £200,000 capacity funding to develop a ten-year Vision and three-year Investment Plan to submit to Government by 1 November 2024; and
- 5) delegate authority to the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration and the Section 151 Officer, to agree and complete Funding Agreements with partners that will deliver the LTPT for Runcorn projects on behalf of the Council, as the Accountable Body for the Programme.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

EXB9 EAST RUNCORN CONNECTIVITY (ERC) PROJECT A56
CONSTRUCTION GATEWAY

The Board received a report of the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, which sought

approval to enter into a delivery agreement and commence Stage 5 of the SCAPE Framework process awarding a contract to deliver the A56 major maintenance works to Balfour Beatty. The contract would commence in July subject to approval and was programmed to complete in September 2025.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) approval be given to awarding a contract to Balfour Beatty via the SCAPE framework to complete the A56 Major Maintenance Scheme;
- 2) the Director Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Environment and Urban Renewal, be delegated to accept the Grant Funding Agreement and enable timely delivery of the contract; and
- 3) the Director Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Environment and Urban Renewal, be delegated to deal with any matters relating to procurement and operation of this contract.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

EXB10 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

- 1) whether Members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Section 100A (4) 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
- 2) 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 that 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 Section 100A (4) 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.

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL AND DEPUTY LEADER'S PORTFOLIO'S

EXB11 DELIVERING THE FREEPORT UPDATE - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director Environment & Regeneration, which provided an update on the progress relating to Halton's Freeport. The report sought approval to carry out due diligence investigations with a view to acquiring the 44-acre (of which 15 acres were water) Port of Weston site for the regeneration of West Runcorn.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) the Board supports the approval to carry out due diligence investigations with a view to acquiring the Port of Weston Site (using Freeport funding) for the regeneration of West Runcorn;
- 3) delegated authority be given to the Executive Director for Environment & Regeneration, in consultation with the Deputy Leader to take the necessary steps to progress further the Freeport in Halton as outlined in this report;
- 4) following appropriate due diligence, the Board authorises the Director Finance to put in place systems to support the acquisition of land to support the regeneration of West Runcorn; and
- 5) approval be sought from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLHUC) via the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Freeport Board to reallocate Freeport Seed Funds for the planning and construction of an access road onto Port of Weston and to purchase the Port of Weston.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

MINUTES ISSUED: 18 June 2024

CALL-IN: 25 June 2024 at 5.00 pm.

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 18 June 2024.

Meeting ended at 2.35 p.m.