

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

19th January 2017

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB85 USE OF GUARDIAN SERVICE IN VACANT BUILDINGS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on the use of Guardian Services in vacant buildings.

The Board was advised that a pilot of the Guardian Scheme was approved by Executive Board Sub Committee in 2012, for two vacant properties, as an alternative method of security for Council properties which were empty or surplus to requirements.

It was reported that generally, the Guardian Scheme worked well and proved to be cost effective in most cases. The report provided details of costs associated with the former library at Egerton Street, Runcorn; the scheme had also been used successfully during the contract period within the Transporter Bridge House in West Bank and the former Caretaker's Bungalow at St John Fisher Primary School, Widnes.

However, the report also set out details of the costs associated with the former hostel, Belvedere, in Runcorn. It was recommended that the scheme be continued as an interim arrangement whilst Officers explored options for the disposal and/or demolition of the property, before reporting to the Board on the outcome, by June 2017.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the continuing use of the Guardian Scheme and the retendering of the service be approved;
- 2) the potential liability of Belvedere (Former Hostel) be noted and the continued use of the scheme as an interim arrangement be approved; and
- 3) Officers explore the options for disposal and/or demolition of the property and report back to Executive Board with recommendations by June 2017.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB86 REQUEST FOR BUSINESS RATES RELIEF

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on a request for Business Rates relief.

The Board was advised of a request for Discretionary Business Rates Relief from a Manchester based company for three units at Aston Fields, Runcorn, whilst the properties were refurbished. The report provided details of the request for Members' information.

RESOLVED: That the request from PIN Properties be refused for the reasons outlined in the report.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB87 BUSINESS RATES RELIEF PROPOSED GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on suggested guiding principles for the consideration of future requests for Business Rates Relief.

The Board was reminded that in April 2013, the Government introduced a business rates retention scheme, which sought to offer Councils a strong financial incentive to promote economic growth. It was reported that until now, the Council had considered such requests on merit on a case by case basis, and without any general criteria to help guide those decisions.

Attached at Appendix 1, were a set of proposed Guiding Principles which set out the circumstances where such request might be considered. If these were considered acceptable, Members would use them when considering future requests.

RESOLVED: That the guiding principles contained in Appendix 1 be approved.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB88 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 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

- 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 the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item 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

EXB89 DISPOSAL OF FREEHOLD INTEREST IN THE LAND TO THE REAR OF THE FORMER SOUTHBANK HOTEL, LORD STREET, RUNCORN.

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which sought approval for the proposed disposal of the Council's freehold interest in land to the rear of the former Southbank Hotel, Lord Street, Runcorn.

The report set out details of the proposed development of the site for residential use, for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the disposal of the site to Mahady Investments Limited for the amount referred to in the recommendation, subject to contract and subject to planning permission, in accordance with the Heads of Terms attached at Appendix 2 to the report, be

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

approved; and

- 2) the Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property, be authorised to arrange for all required documentation to be completed to the satisfaction of the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB90 LAND DISPOSAL FOR EMPLOYMENT LAND AT JOHNSON'S LANE, WIDNES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on the disposal of, and development on land at Johnson's Lane, Widnes.

The Board was advised of the proposals for the disposal of plots A and B on the site.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the sale of approximately 1.8 acres of land to S. Evans and Sons Limited for the amount stated in the recommendation and 1.8 acres of land to Philip Bannon Plant Hire Limited for the amount stated in the recommendation, both subject to planning permission and subject to contract, be approved; and
- 2) the Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property, be authorised to arrange for all required documentation to be completed to the satisfaction of the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

23rd February 2017

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB94 2016/17 QUARTER 3 SPENDING

The Board received a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which reported on the 2016/17 Quarter 3 Spending as at 31 December 2016.

A summary of spending against revenue budget up to 31 December 2016 was attached at Appendix 1. This provided individual statements for each department. The

Board was advised that, in overall terms, revenue expenditure was £0.764m above the budget profile, even after having released the remaining contingency budget of £0.5m. It was noted that, given the adverse variance position and continuing budget pressures, Directorates had been asked to restrict any non-essential spend over the final quarter of the year. The Strategic Director, People, had been asked to report to a future meeting as to how it was intended that spend on Children's Social Care could be brought back into line with the budget.

The report contained details of the main budget pressure within the Children and Families Department, and in particular, out of Borough residential placements and fostering. It was reported that the numbers of children in care had increased by 31% compared to the same period last year.

The report also outlined details of a continued shortfall in income in the Community and Environment Department; underspends in the Corporate and Democracy and Economy, Enterprise and Property Departments; spending on employees; staff turnover targets; expenditure on general supplies and services and the Council Tax collection rate for the third quarter for 2016/17

The Capital Spending Programme had been revised to reflect a number of changes in spending profiles as schemes developed, and these were detailed in the report.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Strategic Directors ensure that all spending continues to be limited to the absolute essential and is contained as far as possible within their operational budget by year-end;
- 2) the Strategic Director, People, present a strategy, action plan and timescales to a future meeting, detailing what steps can be taken to bring spending on Children's Social Care back into line with budgets, as far as possible; and
- 3) Council be recommended to approve the revised Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix 3, attached to the report.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB95 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT
2017/18

The Board considered a report of the Operational

Director, Finance, proposing the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) which incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Strategy for 2017/18.

The TMSS was attached to the report and detailed the expected activities of the Treasury function in the forthcoming financial year (2017/18).

The Local Government Act 2003 required the Council to “have regard to” the Prudential Code and to set Prudential Indicators for the next three years to ensure that the Council’s capital investment plans were affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Act therefore required the Council to set out its treasury strategy for borrowing as well as an Annual Investment Strategy, which set out the Council’s policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. However, Government guidance stated that authorities could combine the statement and the strategy into one report, and the Council had adopted this approach.

Members noted that the production of a Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement was required and a formal statement for approval was contained within the report at paragraph 2.3, with Appendix A detailing the full policy.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to adopt the policies, strategies, statements and prudential and treasury indicators outlined in the report.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB96 BUDGET 2017/18

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which outlined a recommendation to Council in respect of the Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax for 2017/18.

It was noted that at the time of writing, the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, the Cheshire Fire Authority had not set their budgets and Council Tax Precepts. However, final figures would be reported to Council when the information was available.

The Government announced the Final Local Government Finance Settlement figure for 2017/18, which was in line with the Provisional Settlement announced on 15 December 2016. The Council, as part of the Liverpool City Region (LCR), will pilot a new scheme of 99% business

rates retention. A 'no detriment' policy would apply to the pilot scheme, whereby the Council would be no worse off as a result of being part of the pilot. It was reported that, from 2019/20, the Business Rates Retention Scheme would be rolled out on a national basis in conjunction with a Government review of the needs and resources of Local Government, where the business rate baselines for each Council would be reconsidered.

The Board was advised that the Medium Term Financial Strategy, approved on 17 November 2016, had identified a funding gap of around £11m in 2017/18, £11.7m in 2018/19 and £9.2m in 2019/20. The Strategy had the following objectives:

- Deliver a balanced and sustainable budget;
- Prioritise spending towards the Council's five priority areas;
- Avoid excessive Council Tax rises;
- Achieve significant cashable efficiency gains;
- Protect essential frontline services; and
- Deliver improved procurement.

In terms of consultation, it was noted that the Council used various methods to listen to the views of the public and Members' own experiences through their Ward work as an important part of that process. Individual consultations had taken place in respect of specific budget proposals and equality impact assessments would be completed where necessary.

On 7 December 2016, Council approved initial budget savings totalling £7.9m for 2017/18, and further proposed savings were shown at Appendix B. The departmental analysis of the budget was shown in Appendix C, and the major reasons for change from the current budget were outlined for Members' information in Appendix D. It was noted that the proposed budget total was £102.700m.

The Board was advised that the proposed budget incorporated the grant figures announced in the provisional Grant Settlement and included £2.414m for the New Homes Bonus and £0.548m of Improved Better Care Funding, paid to Councils for the first time in 2017/18.

Further information was provided on the budget outlook. As part of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2016/17, the Government had published indicative Settlement Funding Allocations for the three years

up to 2019/20. Local authorities had been asked to produce and publish an efficiency plan setting out their forecast budget position through to 2019/20 along with their proposed efficiency measures to achieve annual balanced budget positions. The Council's efficiency plan was published on 14 October 2016. The Medium Term Financial Strategy had been updated to take account of the 2017/18 finance settlement, multi-year allocations and saving measures already agreed or proposed.

Further information was provided in respect of Halton's Council Tax, Parish Precepts, Capital Programme, the Prudential Code and School Budgets.

Members wished to place on record their thanks to all members of the Budget Working Group, Policy and Performance Board Chairs and staff for their hard work in producing this year's budget.

Reason(s) for Decision

To seek approval for the Council's revenue budget, capital programme and council tax for 2017/18.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

In arriving at the budget saving proposals set out in Appendix B, numerous proposals had been considered, some of which had been deferred pending further information or rejected.

Implementation Date

8 March 2017.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to adopt the resolution as set out in Appendix A of the report, which includes setting the budget at £102.700m, the Council Tax requirement of £44.378m (before Parish, Police and Fire Precepts) and the Band D Council Tax for Halton of £1,312.27.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB97 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2017/18

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which set out the proposed Calendar of Meetings for the 2017/18 Municipal Year, which was appended to the report for information.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the Calendar of Meetings for the 2017/18 Municipal

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &

Year, as appended to the report.

Resources

EXB98 DISCRETIONARY NON DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which detailed two applications for discretionary 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 requests were set out in the report for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the request for 15% discretionary rate relief from Halton Farnworth Hornets A.R.L.F.C for the period 12 September 2016 to 31 March 2019 be approved; and
- 2) the request for 15% discretionary rate relief from Halton Christmas Toy Appeal for the two week period of their occupation, be approved.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB99 SUPPORT TO SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, on the adoption of a scheme to provide financial support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

The Board was advised that the Council had a proven track record and significant expertise in supporting SMEs to access grant and other funding opportunities, which assist with the development of their businesses. One of the aims in providing such assistance was to promote investment in the Borough where the market had limited capacity or appetite to invest.

It was reported that in the current economic climate, it

had proven difficult for SMEs to obtain finance from the usual financial institutions, which hampered their ability to grow, expand and develop their businesses for the benefit of the Borough. The proposed scheme provided an opportunity for the Council to support SMEs in order to assist with sustaining and growing economic development and job creation in the Borough, whilst generating much needed business rates and interest revenue to support the delivery of Council services.

The report set out a number of criteria that would be used to evaluate proposals for the provision of financial support. The mechanism for assessing and evaluating proposals would include rigorous financial and legal due diligence; the interest rates applied would reflect the level of risk to the Council and be considered on a case by case basis; any additional costs incurred by the Council to be charged to the business submitting the application; and where an application was successful, a formal legal agreement be prepared and signed in advance of any funds being provided to ensure that the Council's rights and funding were protected as far as possible.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Council be recommended to approve the introduction of a scheme of Support for SMEs, in accordance with the circumstances and criteria outlined in the report;
- 2) Subject to the approval of the scheme, the award of business loans up to £1m for successful applicants, be delegated to the Operational Director, Finance, in liaison with the Executive Board Portfolio Holder for Resources and the Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property;
- 3) Subject to the approval of the scheme, the award of business loans of between £1m and £5m for successful applicants, be delegated to the Chief Executive in liaison with the Leader of the Council, the Executive Board Portfolio Holder for Resources, the Operational Director, Finance and the Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property; and
- 4) Subject to the approval of the scheme, the award of business loans over £5m for successful applicants, be a matter for decision by the

Operational
Director - Finance

Executive Board.

16th March 2017

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB115 ANNUAL REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION 2017

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which sought the approval of the Council to a number of changes to the Constitution.

Members were advised that the revised version picked up the changes to the Council's working arrangements that had taken place during the year, as well as other changes which were intended to assist the Council to operate more effectively.

The proposals for change had been considered by the Chief Executive and the Executive Board Member for Resources in accordance with Article 16.02. It was reported that, apart from the purely technical changes, the proposed amendments that were considered to be of particular significance were listed as an appendix to the report.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the revised Constitution, including the matters set out in Appendix 1 attached to the report.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB116 PENSIONS DISCRETIONS STATEMENT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on the annual publication of the Pensions Discretion Statement.

The Board was advised that the 2016/17 Pensions Discretion Statement (the Statement) had been approved at its meeting in March 2016. The Statement for 2017/18 was based upon the previous Statement, and it was reported that no new discretions had been added or removed. In addition, there had been no material changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013, that would result in a change in the Statement. It was noted that minor drafting changes had been made to incorporate revised amounts for Shared Cost Additional Pension Contributions, which was increased annually in line with the cost of living.

RESOLVED: That the Pensions Discretion Statement for 2017/18 be approved.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB117 REVIEW OF COUNCIL WIDE FEES AND CHARGES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on the proposed fees and charges for Council services for 2017/18.

The Board was advised that as part of the budget preparations for 2017/18, a review of fees and charges had been carried out. It was proposed that generally fees and charges be increased in line with inflation, although some had been reviewed with consideration given to the impact of the price change.

Attached at Appendix A was a schedule of statutory fees which may increase during the coming financial year. Chargeable rates for The Brindley and the Registrar's Service were attached at Appendix B.

RESOLVED: That the proposed fees and charges for 2017/18 as set out in Appendix A and for 2018/19 as set out in Appendices B and C, attached to the report, be approved.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB118 DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORTS FOR QUARTER 3 2016/17

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on progress against key objectives/milestones and performance targets for the third quarter to 31 December 2016.

The Board was advised that the Directorate Performance Overview Report provided a strategic summary of key issues arising from performance in the relevant quarter for each Directorate. The Board noted that such information was key to the Council's performance management arrangements and the 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 outward accountability.

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

EXB120 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 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, 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

EXB121 DISPOSAL OF FORMER CARETAKERS HOUSE AT SIMMS CROSS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on the disposal of the former caretaker's house at Simms Cross School, Widnes.

The report set out details of the current condition of the property, which was surplus to requirements, since being vacated in 2016.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the proposal to bring the former caretaker's house to the market as soon as possible by auction, placing a reserve price as stated in the

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

- recommendation, be approved; and
- 2) the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services and the Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property, be authorised to send their nominees to attend auction to commit the Council to a sale in excess of the reserve price.

20th April 2017

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB128 DISCRETIONARY NON DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which set out details of two applications for discretionary 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 both requests were set out in the report for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the request for 15% discretionary rate relief from Age Concern Mid Mersey for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2019, be approved; and
- 2) the request for 15% discretionary rate relief from Halton Autistic Family Support Group Ltd, for the period 1 June 2016 to 31 March 2019, be approved.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources