

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

*At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 19 November 2020 held remotely*

Present: Councillors Polhill (Chair), D. Cargill, Harris, R. Hignett, S. Hill, Jones, T. McInerney, Nelson, Wharton and Wright

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: D. Parr, I. Leivesley, M. Vasic, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, S. Wallace-Bonner and A. Jones

Also in attendance: L. Howarth, N. McGrath and C. Deadman from Halton Housing Trust, one member of the press and two members of the public

### ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

*Action*

*The Board took part in a minute's silence in honour of Councillor Morley, who sadly passed away last week.*

#### EXB35 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2020 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

#### LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

#### EXB36 URGENT DECISIONS

The Executive Board received a report from the Chief Executive, which provided the urgent decisions taken since the last meeting of the Board and during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

It was noted that the Council's constitution gave authority to the Chief Executive to take urgent decisions, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Operational Director Finance and/or the Operational Director Legal and Democratic Services, where necessary.

A list of these decisions were provided to Members in the report and full details were published on the Council's website.

RESOLVED: That the urgent decisions taken since the last meeting of the Executive Board be noted.

## **HEALTH AND WELLBEING PORTFOLIO**

### **EXB37 HALTON HOSPITAL AND WELLBEING CAMPUS STRATEGIC OUTLINE CASE**

The Board considered a report which provided an overview of progress to date of the plans for new hospital developments in Warrington and Halton, and sought support to continue to progress the plans for Halton Hospital site redevelopment.

The Board was advised that following the Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHSFT's publication of its Estate and Facilities Strategy 2019-2024, the need for modernisation and reconfiguration on both the Warrington and Halton sites was reiterated. This included the provision of a new hospital for Warrington and the completion of the development of a hospital and wellbeing campus on the Halton site.

It was reported that the Strategic Outline Cases (SOCs) had been developed for both and reviewed by NHSE with positive feedback received. Further, the SOC had been approved by the Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHSFT's Board and by Warrington and Halton CCGs. In order to further progress the planning for the new hospitals to the next stage, Executive Board was asked to give their support to the programme and support in progressing to the next state of business case development.

RESOLVED: That the Board supports the development of a business case for a new hospital and wellbeing campus for Halton.

## **TRANSPORTATION PORTFOLIO**

### **EXB38 MERSEY GATEWAY**

The Board considered a report presenting the outcome of a consultation held in relation to the updating of the *Road User Charging Scheme Order* for the Mersey Gateway Bridge and the Silver Jubilee Bridge (the 'Bridges').

The public consultation took place from 23 September 2020 to 14 October 2020 and a summary of the responses received were outlined in the report. Appended to the report was the updated *Road User Charging Scheme*

Order 2020 (RUCSO) and the consultation response analysis.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) confirms that no further consultation is required in respect of the updated RUCSO;
- 2) confirms that no public inquiry is required to be held into the making of the updated RUCSO;
- 3) agrees to the making of the updated RUCSO in the form (or substantially the same form) as that in Appendix 1 and delegate to the Operational Director – Legal and Democratic Services, the authority to make any non-material or consequential amendments as necessary to enable the updated RUCSO to be made;
- 4) agrees to the toll charges being unchanged – as specified in the updated RUCSO; and
- 5) agrees to the administration fees in relation to registering with Mersey Gateway / Merseyflow being unchanged.

Strategic Director  
- Enterprise,  
Community and  
Resources

#### EXB39 DISABLED PARKING SPACES POLICY

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, which presented the revised Disabled Parking Spaces Policy.

It was reported that the current Policy required updating to bring Halton's approach in line with those of neighbouring authorities within the Liverpool City Region. Further, the current process required review due to changes to how mobility allowances were defined and awarded, increasing levels of on-street parking congestion, and the need to update explicit guidance and qualifying criteria in the existing Policy.

For Members information, the current application form was available at appendix A, and appendix B presented the proposed new application form, which also included the updated list of guidelines.

RESOLVED: That the Board approves the revised Disabled Parking Spaces Policy.

Strategic Director  
- Enterprise,  
Community and  
Resources

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

### EXB40 HALTON HOUSING TRUST PROGRESS REPORT

The Board considered a report on the progress of Halton Housing Trust, since the last report to the Board on 17 January 2019.

Members welcomed Neil McGrath, Liz Haworth and Clive Deadman, from Halton Housing Trust who presented the report – *Annual Report to HBC Executive Board, October 2020*, which outlined some of the key organisational achievements over the past 18 months. Highlights included the completion of an additional 134 new homes to bring the total stock since transfer to almost 1,300; the appointment of five new apprentices; and the achievement of the highest possible regulatory rating of V1 G1.

The guests' responded to Members' questions on the report and Members congratulated the Trust on its achievements, recognising the challenges they faced generally, as well as in more recent times with the onset of the Pandemic and the need to support more vulnerable customers.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the progress made as set out in the report.

### EXB41 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR THE COUNCIL'S HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Board considered a report describing changes to the eligibility criteria for accessing housing and homelessness support that were made as a result of delegated powers to the Chief Executive, during the Coronavirus Pandemic.

The report explained the impact and implications of the changes in eligibility and discussed the arrangements going forward. Members agreed, taking into account the placement of Halton into Tier 3 and the subsequent national lockdown, and with the onset of winter, that Halton should adopt a similar approach as the LCR and continue with the wider eligibility of access to homelessness support, thus protecting the most vulnerable from the illness.

A review of the eligibility criteria would take place at the end of the financial year.

RESOLVED: That the Board

Strategic Director  
- People

- 1) notes the contents of the report; and
- 2) agrees to continue with the current approach to determining homelessness eligibility, subject to a review towards the end of the financial year.

EXB42 UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DRAFT  
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS (SDPS)

The Executive Board received a report that requested the removal of the Draft Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) from the Halton Local Development Scheme (LDS).

It was noted that the following documents had not progressed and were now unlikely to be progressed in their current form due to the expiration of the Unitary Development Plan:

- Draft Runcorn Old Town SPD;
- Halton Lea SPD;
- West Bank SPD; and
- Halebank Regeneration Area SPD

The reasons why each SPD was not progressed were outlined in the report.

RESOLVED: That the Board approves the removal of the draft Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) from the Halton Local Development Scheme (LDS), in accordance with the relevant legislation.

Strategic Director  
- Enterprise,  
Community and  
Resources

EXB43 LOCAL PLAN - ADDENDUM TO STATEMENT OF  
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI)

The Board received a report that explained the requirement for an addendum to the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) within the Local Plan and sought a resolution from the Board for formal implementation of this.

Members were advised that due to national legislative change, an addendum was required to be temporarily added to the adopted SCI, which formed part of the Halton Local Plan Framework. This was presented in Appendix A – *Addendum (Covid-19) to the adopted SCI 2019*.

RESOLVED: That the Board approves the addition of

Strategic Director  
- Enterprise,

the addendum (Appendix A) to the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for Local Plan making.

Community and Resources

## RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

### EXB44 2020/21 REVENUE SPENDING AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, advising of the Council's overall revenue net spending position as at 30 September 2020, together with a forecast outturn position.

Appendix 1 presented a summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 30 September 2020 and Appendix 2 provided detailed figures for each individual Department. It was reported that in overall terms the outturn forecast for the year showed that net spend would be over the approved budget by £4.752m. In comparison to the forecasted overspend of £6.951m reported at the end of June 2020, this represented a significantly improved position, but was still of great concern. Appendix 3 presented the Capital Programme as at 30 September 2020, with a number of revisions, as listed in the report.

The report also provided the Board with details of the financial impacts of Covid-19 and the Government funding made available to the Council to date. It was reported that there was a forecast shortfall in Government funding of £10.924m, this was summarised in Table A, paragraph 3.16 of the report.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) all spending continues to be limited to only absolutely essential items;
- 2) departments seek to implement those approved budget savings proposals which currently remain to be actioned;
- 3) Strategic Directors take urgent action to identify areas where spending could be reduced or suspended for the remainder of the current financial year; and
- 4) Council be requested to approve the revisions to the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 3.19.

Operational Director - Finance

## EXB45 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which presented the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2021/22 to 2023/24, which took into account the potential impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances.

The MTFS sets out a three year projection of the Council's resources and spending and was based on information that was currently available. It was noted that the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic had resulted in delays to planned changes to Local Government finance in 2021/22. Further, there was limited financial information available for 2021/22, with the Public Sector Spending Review being the first indicator of funding resources – this would be published at the end of November 2020, covering the one financial year only.

The Board was advised that the delay and uncertainty regarding 2021/2022 financial resources meant the financial information included within the MTFS was based on a large number of assumptions and best estimates. The financial forecast would be updated as and when further information was known. Appendix 1 therefore detailed the MTFS from 2021/22 – 2023/24 using a prudent estimate of the financial conditions over the course of the next three years. Appendix 2 presented the Reserves and Balances Strategy.

### Reason for the Decision

To seek approval for the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2021/22 to 2023/24.

### Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

The alternative option of not maintaining a Medium Term Financial Strategy had been considered. However, this would not follow good financial management practice, as the Medium Term Financial Strategy was a key element in informing the Council's financial planning and budget setting process.

### Implementation Date

The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 will be implemented from 1 April 2021.

RESOLVED: That

Operational  
Director - Finance

- 1) the Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved;
- 2) the 2021/22 base budget be prepared on the basis of the underlying assumptions set out in the Strategy;
- 3) the Reserves and Balances Strategy be approved;  
and
- 4) the award of Council Tax Support for 2021/22 remains at the 2020/21 level of 21.55%.

EXB46 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20  
AND HALF YEAR REPORT 2020-21

The Board considered a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which presented the Treasury Management Annual Report 2019/20 and Half Year Report 2020/21.

These reports updated Members on the activities undertaken on the money market, as required by the Treasury Management Policy.

The report provided supporting information on the economic outlook, interest rate forecast, short term borrowing rates, longer term borrowing rates, borrowing and investments, budget monitoring, new long term borrowing, policy guidelines and treasury management indicators. It was noted that no debt rescheduling had been undertaken during the quarter.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EXB47 COUNCIL TAX SECTION 13A DISCOUNT POLICY  
STATEMENT

The Board considered a report from the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, which requested approval to amend the Council Tax Section 13A Discount Policy Statement, to reduce to nil the Empty Homes Premium levied on certain residential dwellings which were being renovated to bring back in to use.

This would apply to properties that had been unoccupied and unfurnished for over two years and required significant works to render them habitable.



RESOLVED: That the amendment to the Council Tax Section 13A Discount Policy Statement to reduce to nil the amount of Empty Homes Premium payable on certain residential dwellings which are being renovated to being back in to use, be approved as follows:

Strategic Director  
- Enterprise,  
Community and  
Resources

- 1) From 1 April 2020, reduce to nil the amount of Empty Homes Premium payable on a residential dwelling which has recently been purchased or inherited and where the property was previously unoccupied and unfurnished between two and five years, for a period of three months; and
- 2) From 1 April 2020, reduce to nil the amount of Empty Homes Premium payable on a residential dwelling which has recently been purchased or inherited and where the property was previously unoccupied and unfurnished for over five years, for a period of six months.

EXB48 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 paragraphs 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **RESOURCES PORTFOLIO**

**EXB49 REPORT TO EXECUTIVE BOARD AND RESOLUTION TO USE COMPULSORY PURCHASE (CPO) POWERS. PROPOSED LEISURE SITE, MOOR LANE, WIDNES**

The Executive Board considered a report from the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, which sought approval to exercise the Council's powers of compulsory purchase to enable delivery of the proposed Leisure Site, Moor Lane, Widnes with vacant possession.

The report outlined the steps required for this process in legal terms and the status of negotiations with third party interests.

**RESOLVED:** That the recommendations set out in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.5.3 of the report be approved.

Strategic Director  
- Enterprise,  
Community and  
Resources

**MINUTES ISSUED: 24 November 2020**

**CALL-IN: 1 December 2020 at 5.00 pm**

**Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 1 December 2020.**

*Meeting ended at 3.10 p.m.*