

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 25th FEBRUARY 2021

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB72 BUDGET 2021-22 - KEY DECISION

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 2021/22.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was approved at the Executive Board meeting on 19 November 2020. It was noted that there were funding gaps of around £15.2m in 2021/22, £3.9m in 2022/23 and £3m in 2023/24. The Strategy had the following objectives:

- Deliver a balanced and sustainable budget;
- Prioritise spending towards the Council's priority areas;
- Avoid excessive Council Tax rises;
- Achieve significant cashable efficiency gains;
- Protect essential front line services and vulnerable members of the community; 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 was 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.

The proposed revenue budget for 2021/22 totalled £111.446m. Appendix B outlined proposed budget savings for 2021/22, totalling £1.369m. The departmental analysis was shown in Appendix C and the major reasons for change from the current budget were shown in Appendix D.

The Board was advised the final Local Government

Finance Settlement figures were awaited, along with confirmation of some 2020/21 grant allocations including the Public Health grant. It was confirmed that the Council would continue to participate in the pilot of the 100% Business Rates Retention Scheme, as part of the Liverpool City Region (LCR).

Further information was provided on the budget outlook, Halton's Council Tax, Precepts for Parishes, Police, Fire and Liverpool City Region Mayor, the Capital Programme, Prudential Code and School Budgets.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Council be recommended to adopt the resolution set out in Appendix A, which includes setting the budget at £111.446m, the Council Tax requirement of £54.509m (before Parish, Police, Fire and LCR Combined Authority precepts) and the Band D council Tax for Halton of £1,549.34; and
- 2) Council be recommended to approve the revenue budget proposals for 2021/22 set out in Appendix B and capital programme set out in Appendix F.

EXB73 REVENUE SPENDING AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020

The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which reported the Council's overall revenue net spending position as at 31 December 2020 together with an initial forecast outturn position, and reported the financial impact of Covid-19 and the Government funding made available to the Council to date.

A summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 31 December 2020 was presented in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 provided detailed figures for each individual Department. In overall terms the outturn forecast for the year showed that net spend would be over the approved budget by £1.180m. It was noted that in comparison to the forecast overspend of £4.752m reported at the end of September 2020, this represented a significantly improved position. Appendix 3 presented the Capital Programme as at 31 December 2020.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) all spending continues to be limited to only absolutely

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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 3.18.

EXB74 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2021-22

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Finance, on the Council’s Capital Strategy for 2021/22.

It was reported that all councils were required to produce a Capital Strategy annually, the aim of which was to ensure that the Council understood the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting capital strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite.

Members were advised that the Capital Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Treasury Management Statement, included on the same agenda. It was noted that the successful delivery of the Capital Strategy would assist the Council in planning and funding its capital expenditure over the next three years.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the 2021/22 Capital Strategy, as presented in the Appendix attached to the report.

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EXB75 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2021-22

The Board considered the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, (TMSS) which incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum revenue Provision (MRP) Strategy for 2021/22.

The TMSS was appended to the report and detailed the expected activities of the treasury function in the forthcoming financial year (2021/22). Its production and submission to Council was a requirement of the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management

Code.

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 and to prepare 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. Government guidance notes stated that authorities could combine the TMSS and the AIS into one report, which the Council had done and was included in Section 4.

Members noted that the provision 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 the full policy shown in Appendix A.

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

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EXB76 PENSIONS DISCRETION STATEMENT

The Board received 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 2021/22 Statement was based on the previous Statement (2020/21) and that no new discretions had been either 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.

RESOLVED: That the Pensions Discretion Statement for 2021/22 be approved.

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EXB77 TAXI LICENSING - TEMPORARY POLICY - AMENDMENT TO THE CURRENT AGE RESTRICTIONS ON LICENSED HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

The Board considered a report from the Strategic

Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, requesting approval for a temporary amendment to the current age restrictions of licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles.

The background to the request was provided in the report and a consultation exercise was undertaken with the taxi trade, the responses of which were attached at appendix A and the findings were summarised in the report.

The Regulatory Committee considered the matter at its meeting on 13 January 2021 and after considering the consultation responses and the current economic situation resulting from the Coronavirus Pandemic, recommended that Executive Board approve a temporary amendment to the current restrictions of licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Board approves the temporary amendment of the maximum age restriction on Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles by two years, for a two-year period, with the following conditions:

- 1) Any vehicle taking advantage of the relaxation of the restriction be subject to 3 tests per year; and
- 2) No vehicle taking advantage of the relaxation of the restriction may be transferred to another proprietor.

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EXB78 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR 2021-22

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which set out the proposed Calendar of Meetings for the 2021/22 Municipal Year, which was appended to the report for information.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the Calendar of meetings for the 2021/22 Municipal Year, as appended to the report.

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EXB81 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.

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EXB82 ACQUISITION OF ELITE HOUSE, SHAW STREET, RUNCORN

The Board considered a report from the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, which sought approval for the acquisition of the freehold interest in Elite House, Shaw Street, Runcorn.

The report provided Members with details of the proposals and financial implications for their consideration.

RESOLVED: That Executive Board

- 1) approves the acquisition and of the freehold interest in Elite House, Shaw Street, Runcorn, on the terms reported in paragraph 3.4; and
- 2) authorises the Operational Director – Economy,

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Enterprise and Property, to arrange for all required documentation for the transactions to be completed to the satisfaction of the Operational Director – Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 18TH MARCH 2021

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB86 REVIEW OF COUNCIL WIDE FEES AND CHARGES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, on the review of the Council wide fees and charges for 2021/22 for services provided by both of the Council's Directorates.

The Board was advised that, as part of the budget preparations for 2021/22, a review of fees and charges had been carried out. The aim in setting fees and charges was to ensure that the Council fully recovered the cost incurred in providing the service, although this was dependent on a number of factors outside of the agreed charge. These were detailed in the report and noted as including demand, which could change year on year and be affected by weather, economy and demographics; competition, where there may be a strong competitive market; and a statutory element, where some charges were outside the control of the Council and there was no discretion to what could be charged.

Attached at Appendix A was the proposed schedule of statutory fees for 2021/22 and the chargeable rates for The Brindley Theatre and the Registrar's Service were attached at Appendix B and C respectively, for 2022/23.

RESOLVED: That the proposed fees and charges for 2021/22 as set out in Appendix A attached to the report and for 2022/23 as set out in Appendices B and C attached to the report, be approved.

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EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 15TH APRIL 2021

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB91 COVID 19 EXCEPTIONAL HARDSHIP FUND

The Board received a report from the Strategic

Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, which recommended the introduction of a Covid-19 Exceptional Hardship Scheme.

It was reported that as part of its response to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Council had provided a range of financial and non-financial support measures to support residents since March 2020. The Shielded Individuals Hub, the Self Isolation Support Scheme, Discretionary Housing Payments, the Discretionary Support Scheme, as well as the Welfare Rights and Money Advice Service were all provided, as described in the report.

A proposal was made to introduce a Covid-19 Exceptional Hardship Scheme, in order to assist residents who suffered hardship due to having to self-isolate without meeting the criteria for other forms of Covid-19 or other financial support.

The Scheme’s Statement of Objectives, application process and eligibility criteria were presented for consideration by the Board. Members were also referred to the Appendix, which contained an extract from the Council’s Local Outbreak Management Plan (LOMP) regarding contract tracing and self-isolation.

RESOLVED: That the establishment of a Covid-19 Exceptional Hardship Scheme, as outlined in the report, be approved.

Councillor Wharton declared a discloseable other interest in the following item as he was Treasurer for Hale Youth Centre, so the report was presented by the Operational Director – Finance.

EXB92 NON DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Board considered a report from the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, which requested consideration of the renewal of discretionary business rate relief for existing registered charities, not-for-profit organisations and Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASC), who continue to satisfy the appropriate criteria.

Appended to the report was the list of charities, not-for-profit organisations and CASC’s currently in receipt of discretionary rate relief and the costs for each one.

RESOLVED: That

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| 1) discretionary business rate relief of 15% be granted for those registered charities and CASC organisations currently in receipt of such relief, for the period of three years commencing 1 April 2022; and | Community and Resources |
| 2) discretionary business rate relief of 90% be granted for the not-for-profit organisations currently in receipt of such relief (with lower amounts for two as indicated in the Appendix), for the period of three years commencing 1 April 2022. | |