

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 22 February 2024 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

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

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney, E. Dawson, G. Ferguson, Z. Fearon and J. Gallagher

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
EXB83 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2024, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
LEADER'S PORTFOLIO	
EXB84 THE CORPORATE PLAN	
The Board considered a report from the Corporate Director Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, which provided an overview of the new Council Corporate Plan and outlined the next steps for the Plan to come into effect from April 2024. The Corporate Plan would be the Council's key strategic document and it would set out the main vision, themes and values of the Council for the next 5 years. A copy of the Plan document was attached to the report.	
RESOLVED: That	
1) the report be noted and the Board recommends to Council that the new Corporate Plan be approved; and	Corporate Director - Chief Executive's Delivery Unit
2) the Scrutiny Chairs' Group be requested to consider	

changing the titles of the Policy and Performance Boards to bring them in line with the new Corporate Plan 6 key priorities.

EXB85 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2024-2025

The Board received a report of the Chief Executive, which set out the proposed Calendar of Meetings for the 2024/25 Municipal Year, which was appended to the report for information.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the Calendar of Meetings for the 2024/25 Municipal Year, as appended to the report.

Chief Executive

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB86 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2024/25

The Board received the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, (TMSS) which incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Strategy for 2024/25.

The TMSS was appended to the report and detailed the expected activities of the treasury function in the forthcoming financial year (2024/25). 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 (AIS), 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 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 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.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB87 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/25

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Finance, on the Council’s Capital Strategy for 2024/25.

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 Strategy Statement, included on the same agenda; this detailed the expected activities of the treasury management function and incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy for 2024/25. 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 2024/25 Capital Strategy, as presented in the Appendix attached to the report.

Operational
Director - Finance

N.B. Councillors Thompson and Wharton declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the following item of business as they are both members of the Mersey Gateway Crossing Board.

EXB88 2023/24 SPENDING AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, advising of the Council’s overall revenue and capital net spending position as at 31 December 2023, together with a forecast outturn position.

Appendix 1 presented a summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 31 December 2023 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 £7.144m. Appendix 3 presented the Capital Programme as at 31 December 2023, highlighting the schemes which had been revised.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) all spending continue to be limited to only absolutely essential items;
- 2) Executive Directors continue to take urgent action to reduce or defer spending for the remainder of the current financial year, or secure additional funding;
- 3) Council be requested to approve the revisions to the Capital Programme as set out in paragraph 3.24; and
- 4) a review of outstanding sundry debts is undertaken as outlined in paragraph 3.31, particularly within Adults and Community and Greenspaces, to facilitate debt collection, reduce the level of outstanding debt, and avoid increasing bad debt provision.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB89 BUDGET 2024/25

The Board considered a report from the Operational Director, Finance, which outlined a recommendation to Council in respect of the Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax for 2024/25.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), approved at the Executive Board meeting on 16 November 2023, had identified a funding gap of around £3.743m in 2024/25, £0.495m in 2025/26 and £1.347m in 2026/27. 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 were taking place in respect of specific budget proposals and equality impact assessments would be

completed where necessary.

The Board received regular reports summarising spending in the current year against the budget. The latest report indicated that spending was forecast to be over budget in the current year by approximately £7.144m against a net budget of £140.880m.

The proposed revenue budget for 2024/25 totalled £149.496m; the departmental analysis of this was shown in Appendix B and the major reasons for change from the current budget were shown in Appendix C. A total of £2.702m of savings were approved by Council on 1 February 2023.

The Board was advised that the proposed budget incorporated the grant figures announced in the Local Government Finance Settlement. It included £0.124m for the New Homes Bonus grant, an increase of £0.115m from 2023/24. The budget also included Better Care Funding of £6.982m which was unchanged from 2023/24.

Further information was also provided on the budget outlook, Halton's Council Tax, Parish precepts, Police, Fire and Liverpool City Region (LCR) Mayor precepts, the Capital Programme, Prudential Code and School Budgets.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended

- 1) to adopt the resolution set out in Appendix A, which includes setting the budget at £149.496m, the Council Tax requirement of £64.039m (before Parish, Police, Fire and LCR Combined Authority precepts) and the Band D Council Tax for Halton of £1,758.89;
- 2) to approve the capital programme set out in Appendix F;
- 3) to approve the introduction of a Council Tax Premium of 100% to properties where there is no resident and which are substantially furnished (typically referred to as second homes) from 1 April 2025, subject to legislation being enacted; and
- 4) to approve the use of Capital Receipts Strategy as set out in Appendix H.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB90 PENSIONS DISCRETIONS STATEMENT 2024/25

The Board received the annual Pensions Discretions

Statement for 2024-25 for Halton Borough Council.

The Council was required to publish a Pension Discretion Statement annually, to advise the discretions it intended to exercise under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) – this was appended to the report.

It was reported that the Pensions Discretion Statement for 2024-25 was based upon the statement for 2023-24, which was approved by Executive Board in March 2023. It was noted that no new discretions had been added.

RESOLVED: That the Board approve the Pensions Discretions Statement for 2024-25.

Corporate
Director - Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

EXB91 FAMILY HUBS DIGITAL SOLUTION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Children, which provided an update on the progress of the Halton Family Hubs Programme in meeting the Department of Education's ambition to implement a Digital / Virtual Family Hub by March 2025. Family Hubs were a system wide model of providing high quality, joined up, whole family support services. Hubs delivered these services from conception, through a child's early years until they reached the age of 19 (or 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities).

It was noted that Beebot Family Hubs Support had conducted a successful proof of concept exercise with families, residents and professionals, with the aim to gain feedback and opinion from a range of demographics and job roles across Halton. Following on from the exercise, that included positive stakeholder workshop feedback and support, Beebot had been asked to provide a fully costed proposal. The estimated cost of a 3-year licence was £194,000, funded through the Department for Education Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme, and a waiver of Procurement Standing Order 1.14. (iv) and 1.14 (v) was requested for the purchase of the Family Hub Digital Solution.

RESOLVED: That approval be given for a Waiver request in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14. (iv) and 1.14 (v) for the purchase of the Family Hub Digital Solution.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

EXB92 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.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB93 FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE ARRANGEMENTS - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director, Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, that outlined new arrangements for the management of flexible workforce from 1 September 2024 onwards.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Corporate
Director - Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

MINUTES ISSUED: 27 February 2024

CALL-IN: 5 March 2024 at 5.00 pm.

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 5 March 2024.

Meeting ended at 2.35 p.m.