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EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 12 September 2024 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

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

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

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

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

EXB23 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2024, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB24 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Board considered a report from the Director – Finance, which presented the Treasury Management Annual Report 2023-24

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

Information was provided on the economic outlook, interest rate forecast, borrowing and investments, budget monitoring, new long-term borrowing, policy guidelines and treasury management indicators. The Council's approved Treasury and Prudential Indicators for 2023-24 were set out in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and was attached as Appendix one.

Action

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EXB25 2024/25 SPENDING AS AT 31 JULY 2024 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL FORECAST

The Board received a report from the Director – Finance, which reported the Council’s overall revenue net spending position as of 31 July 2024, together with a 2024/25 forecast outturn position. The report also included an update on the Council’s medium term financial forecast over the four years to 2028/29 (Appendix 5).

A summary of spending against the operational revenue budget position as at 31 July 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 July 2024 was £6.561m over budget. The outturn forecast for the year estimated that net spend would be over the approved budget by £19.777m. It was noted that the forecast position is of great concern and without action the Council would not be in a position to provide a balanced budget by financial year-end.

The report detailed a review of the Council General Reserve as at 31 July 2024. The current balance of reserves is £11.581m and this was well below that required to help provide a balanced budget position.

Members were advised that Council had previously approved the capital programme for 2024/25 at its meeting on 6 March 2024. Since then, the capital programme had been revised to reflect a number of changes in spending profiles and funding as schemes had been developed. Appendix 3 presented the Capital Programme as at 31 July 2024. Appendix 4 outlined the saving measures against the budget for the two year period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2026 together with information on action to date to achieve the target saving.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) all spending continues to be limited to only absolutely essential items;
- 2) Executive Directors continue the urgent action to identify areas where spending could be reduced or suspended for the remainder of the current financial year, or additional funding secured;
- 3) Council be requested to approve the Capital

Director of
Finance

Programme as set out in paragraph 3.21; and

- 4) the updated Medium Term Financial Forecast included at Appendix 5 is noted.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

EXB26 HIGH NEEDS PROVISION CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS – PROPOSED EXPANSION OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITY PROVISION: STATUTORY CONSULTATION - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Children’s Services, which advised that in March 2024 the Council had been notified by the Department of Education that it would receive a further allocation of £2.1m High Needs Provision Capital funding over a two-year period to support the provision of new places and/or to expand existing provision for pupils and students with high needs.

The Council had previously consulted with schools on the opportunity to expand their existing Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) offer or offer new SEND provision. The report sought approval to commence a statutory consultation to expand the number of SEND places available at Ashley School in Widnes through the provision of four additional classrooms to meet need for children and young people with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), taking the total number of places available at the school site from 112 to 152.

Reason(s) for Decision

The Council is required to demonstrate appropriate identification of need against spend from the High Needs Capital Allocation Grant. To deliver and implement the High Needs Provision Capital Funding Programme.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

Implementation Date

It is intended that the additional provision, if approved, could be offered from September 2026.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) approval be given for the commencement of a

statutory consultation process for the expansion of Ashley School in Widnes for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder to become a 152 place school; and

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

- 2) a further report is brought to the Board in December 2024 detailing the outcome of the statutory consultation and next steps.

EXB27 YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2024-27

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Children’s Services, which presented the Youth Justice Plan for Cheshire for 2024-27, for recommendation to Council at its meeting on 23 October 2024. This was in compliance with the Youth Justice Board Guidance (Ministry of Justice) and Regulation 4 of the ‘Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000’.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the 2024-27 Youth Justice Plan be recommended for approval by the next full Council; and
- 2) authority be delegated to the Executive Director – Children’s Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Families, to approve and submit an annual refresh of the Youth Justice Plan in 2025 prior to formal approval by Council next year.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIOS

EXB28 HALTON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS)

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration, which sought approval of the proposed update to the Local Development Scheme (LDS) (attached as Appendix A). The LDS set out the timetable for the production of the Local Plan and also identified and described the Planning Policy documents that the Council intend to prepare and gave target dates for key stages in their production.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted;

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

- 2) the Strategy be approved;
- 3) the Halton Borough Council Local Development Scheme 2024 Revision (Appendix A) be formally adopted and shall have effect from September 2024; and
- 4) authority be delegated to the Director of Planning and Transport, in consultation with the Executive Board Members for Environment and Urban Renewal and Climate Change, to approve any minor changes to the wording and/or timelines of the production of documents in the Local Development Scheme as required.

EXB29 DRAFT NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, that provided information on the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and presented the potential implications for Halton. The Government consultation would close on 24 September.

It was noted that Halton's current Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (DALP) was adopted in 2022 and the guidance in the NPPF remained that Local Plans should be reviewed every 5 years. The resource implications for a review of the Local Plan for the Planning Team were outlined in the report.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Members consider the proposed reforms and potential implications for Halton; and
- 2) approval be given to the Director of Planning and Transportation in consultation with the portfolio holders for Climate Change and Environment and Urban Renewal, to prepare a response to government.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

EXB30 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 paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

DEPUTY LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB31 FREEPORT: PORT OF WESTON

The Board considered a report from the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which provided an update on progress relating to Halton's Freeport.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) approval is given to allow officers to continue with due diligence with a view to preparing a formal offer to purchase the Port of Weston using Freeport Seed Funding;
- 2) Officers provide update reports to Members, as appropriate, as the project progresses;
- 3) Officers work with the Combined Authority and the Freeport Board, to seek approval from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to reallocate remaining Freeport Seed Funds for the planning and construction of an access

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

road onto Port of Weston and to purchase the Port of Weston and fund remediation works, contingency and negotiate above the initial purchase offer; and

- 4) delegated authority is given to the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration and the Director Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to draw up a collaborative agreement with prospective stakeholders as outlined in section 3.12 of the report.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB32 CARPENTER ADDITIVE

The Board considered a report which sought approval for the assigning of the lease for Carpenters Inc on Dennis Road, Widnes.

RESOLVED: That the Board authorises the Executive Director - Environment and Regeneration, to arrange for all required documentation for the assignment to be completed to the satisfaction of the Director Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

EXB33 TERM MAINTENANCE AND MINOR WORKS CONTRACTS

The Board considered a report which sought approval for the award of the term maintenance and minor works contracts for mechanical, electrical and building elements for use across the Borough following a procurement exercise undertaken via the Chest.

RESOLVED: That the term maintenance and minor works contracts be awarded to the successful contractors as detailed in paragraph 3.4-3.6 of the report.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

EXB34 STAFF LEAVE

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director, Chief Executives Delivery Unit, which outlined a proposal to reintroduce the four days unpaid leave arrangement during the Christmas period.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and

Corporate
Director - Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

- 2) the Board approves the commencement of the formal process to consult with the workforce regarding the re-introduction of four days unpaid leave during Christmas period.

MINUTES ISSUED: 17 September 2024

CALL-IN: 24 September 2024 at 5.00 pm.

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 24 September 2024.

Meeting ended at 2.50 p.m.