

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 6 February 2014 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Polhill (Chairman), D. Cargill, Harris, R. Hignett, Jones, Nelson, J. Stockton, Wharton and Wright

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: Councillor Philbin

Officers present: A. Scott, M. Reaney, G. Cook, I. Leivesley, G. Meehan and E. Dawson

Also in attendance: One member of the press

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

EXB143 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2014 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB144 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STATEMENT 2014/15

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, proposing the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2014/15.

The TMSS was attached to the report and detailed the expected activities of the Treasury function in the forthcoming financial year (2014/15).

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 Appendix C.

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

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB145 DRAFT BUDGET 2014/15

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 2014/15.

It was noted that, at the time of writing the report, the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner and 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 2014/15 on 5 February 2014, which was in line with the Provisional Settlement announced on 18 December 2013, as detailed in the revised report.

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. Budget presentations had taken place at six of the Area Forums to date and details of the comments made were tabled at the meeting. One Area Forum had still to meet and any comments arising would be reported to Council on 5th March 2014. In addition, individual consultations would take place in respect of specific budget reductions and equality impact assessments would be completed where necessary.

The Board was advised that the Medium Term Financial Strategy, approved on 21 November 2013, had identified a funding gap of around £15m in 2014/15, £17m in 2015/16 and £14m in 2016/17. 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 front line services as far as possible; and
- Deliver improved procurement.

On 10 December 2013, the Council approved initial budget savings of £6.537m, and the new 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 £108.234m.

The Board was advised that the proposed budget incorporated the grant figures announced in the Final Grant Settlement, and included £673,000 for the New Homes Bonus Grant, payable to local authorities based on the net increase in the number of homes in their area. The grant was payable at this amount for six years.

It was noted that from 1 April 2013, the Local Government funding regime changed significantly with the introduction of the Business Rates Retention Scheme, as outlined in the report.

Further information was provided in respect of the budget outlook, although it was difficult to forecast resources over the following two years given the uncertainties caused by the current economic climate and the Government's continuing austerity measures. The Medium Term Financial Forecast had been updated and was attached at Appendix E. It was noted that the resultant funding gap over the next two years was forecast to be in the region of £35.9m.

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.

RESOLVED: That the Council be recommended to adopt the resolution set out in Appendix A of the report, which included setting the budget at £108.234m, the Council Tax requirement of £37.101m (before Parish, Police and Fire Precepts) and the Band D Council Tax for Halton of £1,181.56.

Operational
Director - Finance

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

EXB146 DEMOLITION OF MOOR LANE BUSINESS CENTRE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which provided an update on the closure and subsequent demolition of Moor Lane Business Centre.

The Board was advised that a decision to close the Centre was made in early 2013, as repair work needed to return the building to a reasonable state of repair was estimated to be in excess of £750,000. It was noted that unless rents were increased substantially over a five year period, funding was not available to carry out this work.

Tenants had been provided with assistance with relocation and it was noted that although the majority of the 38 businesses had relocated within the Borough, five had relocated elsewhere. It was reported that if the building was demolished and the site cleared and secured, the site offered a regeneration opportunity. It was further noted that discussions had taken place with the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group in respect of the site being used as an interim car parking facility for clients using the Moor Lane Health Centre.

RESOLVED: That the Board noted

- 1) that the final date for the closure of the building was 31 January 2014; and
- 2) the demolition of the premises would commence in late February 2014, with completion being due in early June 2014.

Strategic Director
- Children and
Enterprise

MINUTES ISSUED: 11 February 2014

CALL-IN: 18 February 2014

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 18 February 2014

Meeting ended at 2.15 p.m.