

EXECUTIVE BOARD

*At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 17 November 2022 in the Boardroom
- Municipal Building, Widnes*

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

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: S. Young, M. Vasic, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, S. Wallace-Bonner
and G. Ferguson

Also in attendance: One member of the press.

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
EXB41 MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2022 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
LEADER'S PORTFOLIO	
EXB42 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2022-23 HALF YEAR UPDATE	
<p>The Board considered a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which presented the Treasury Management Half Year Report as at 30 September 2022.</p>	
<p>These reports updated Members on the activities undertaken on the money market, as required by the Treasury Management Policy.</p>	
<p>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.</p>	

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EXB43 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023 TO 2026 -
KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which presented the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2023/24 to 2025/26.

The MTFS sets out a three-year projection of the Council's resources and spending and was based on information that was currently available. The most recent Public Sector Spending Review was published at the end of October 2021 and covered the next three financial years. It was noted that details of the 2023/24 Local Government Finance Settlement were expected to be released in December 2022 on a provisional basis, with a final settlement expected in January 2023.

The Board was advised that the delay and uncertainty regarding 2023/24 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 2023/24 – 2025/26 using a prudent estimate of the financial conditions over the course of the next three years. Appendix 2 presented the Reserves and Balances Strategy.

The Board received an update from the Operational Director – Finance, on the Governments Autumn Budget Statement which was announced today:

- local authorities could increase Council Tax in April 2023 by 3% with an additional 2% increase - Adult Social Care precept;
- a Business Rates revaluation will take place in April 2023;
- proposed adult social care reforms would be deferred for 2 years; and
- there would be a 12 month extension of the Household Support Fund.

Reason for Decision

To seek approval for the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2023/24 to 2025/26.

Alternative options considered and rejected

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

Implementation date

The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 will be implemented from 1 April 2023.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved;
- 2) the 2022/23 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 2022/23 remains at the 2021/22 level of 21.55%

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB44 2022/23 SPENDING AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2022

The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, advising of the Council's overall revenue net spending position as at 30 September 2022, together with a forecast outturn position.

Appendix 1 presented a summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 30 September 2022 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 £7.586m. Appendix 3 presented the Capital Programme as at 30 September 2022, highlighting the schemes which had been revised.

It was noted that the increased energy costs, pay award and high inflation rates would all have a serious negative impact upon the Council's financial position. There was no expectation that any increased Government funding would be received to help meet these pressures. Therefore, to address the pressures within the Council budget there was an urgency for all Departments to reduce, cease or

defer any non-essential spending and to implement any proposed efficiencies as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the scale of the potential outturn overspend and the potential impact upon reserves, if no corrective action is taken, be noted;
- 2) all departments be requested to limit spending to only absolutely essential items;
- 3) all Departments be requested, to identify as a matter of urgency any areas where spending could be reduced or ceased for the remainder of the current financial year, or deferred until next year; and
- 4) Council be requested to approve the revisions to the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 3.18.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB45 DETERMINATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE 2023-24 - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Finance, on the requirement for the Council to determine the Council Tax Base for its area and the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes.

The Council Tax Base was the measure used for calculating Council Tax and was used by both the billing authority (the Council) and the major precepting authorities (Cheshire Fire Authority, Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority), in the calculation of their Council Tax requirements. It was arrived at in accordance with a prescribed formula which represented the estimated full year number of chargeable dwellings in the Borough expressed in terms of the equivalent Band 'D' dwellings.

Taking account of all the relevant information and applying a 97% collection rate, the calculation for 2023/24 gave a base figure of 36,241 for the Borough as a whole. The Council Tax Base figure for each of the Parishes was noted.

Reason for Decision

To seek approval for the Council Tax Base for the Borough and also the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The Council is required to determine annually the Council Tax Base and to notify the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, the Environment Agency and Parish Councils.

Implementation date

The Council Tax Base 2023/24 will be implemented from 1 April 2023.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Council set the 2022/23 Council Tax Base at 36,241 for the Borough and that the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the Environment Agency be so notified; and
- 2) Council set the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes as follows:

Parish	Tax Base
Hale	668
Halebank	528
Daresbury	186
Moore	336
Preston Brook	370
Sandymoor	1,473

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB46 TAXI LICENSING MATTER

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Legal and Democratic Services, which set out proposed amendments to the current Taxi Licensing Policy and Private Hire Operator Conditions.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) a new private hire operator licence condition on the use of passengers carrying vehicles be adopted; and
- 2) the temporary policy amendment relaxing the maximum age restriction on Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles, which is due to expire on 25 February 2023, be extended for a further period of 2 years (i.e. until 25 February 2025) subject to the

Operational
Director, Legal
and Democratic
Services

same two conditions requiring the vehicles benefiting from the extension to have 3 tests per year and on the basis that no vehicle taking advantage of the dispensation may be transferred to another proprietor.

EXB47 BUSINESS RATES ACTION AREAS

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director Economy, Enterprise and Property that provided information on the Business Rates Action Areas Scheme. The Scheme had been previously approved by the Executive Board at its meeting in July 2018 and the first five year pilot commenced on Astmoor in 2019. Other locations would follow when local circumstances were considered favourable.

It was noted that conditions were now favourable for access to the Business Rates Action Areas Scheme at 3MG at two sites occupied by Warburtons.

RESOLVED: That Business Rates Relief to Warburtons be agreed.

Operational Director Economy, Enterprise & Property -

ADULT SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB48 PRELIMINARY PROCUREMENT NOTIFICATION – PROPOSED TENDER OF HALTON HEALTHWATCH & ADVOCACY HUB SERVICE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – People, which sought approval to commence a new procurement process for the supply of a combined Halton Healthwatch and Advocacy Hub Service. The proposed contract would be for three years (plus a 2 year extension), commencing 1 April 2023 until 31 March 2026, in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.3.4. The estimated value of the contract was £1,467,930 over five years.

It was noted that both of the services covered by the contractual agreement were statutory Adult Social Care services which the Council had a duty to commission.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the contents of the report be noted; and
- 2) the Preliminary Estimates report in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.3.4 be approved.

Strategic Director - People

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

EXB49 CHILDREN SOCIAL WORK WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PACKAGE - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – People, which set out a series of proposals to support the permanent recruitment and retention of staff in qualified social worker posts in Children’s Social Care.

The report set out the national and local context for the Children’s Social Care workforce, options for consideration and developing the right organisational offer to create the right environment in which staff can thrive in Halton.

Reason for Decision

To improve the recruitment and retention of Qualified Children Social Workers and reduce the reliance and cost of agency staff.

Alternative options considered and rejected

A review of schemes of a similar nature across the region have been considered and the proposal is set within similar parameters found regionally.

Implementation date

1 December 2022.

RESOLVED: The Board endorsed the following recommendations set out in the report:

- 1) proposals to support the conversion of agency social workers to becoming permanent (set out in para 3.8), including payment of a conversion allowance of £4,000 paid over a two year period;
- 2) agreement to fund Social Work England registration for permanent staff employed in a qualified social work role (up to Principal Manager level) for a two year period (set out in para 3.9b);
- 3) a recognition and performance allowance is paid to existing permanent staff employed in a qualified social work role. This would be a £2,000 payment paid over a two year period and would support the

Strategic Director
- People

retention of existing staff (set out in para 3.9c);

- 4) a form of 'golden hellos' is offered to new recruits employed in permanent social work roles (set out in paras 3.10a, c); and
- 5) an annual allowance of £2,000 is paid to social work staff employed in case management child protection teams, reflecting these are considered hard to fill posts.

EXB50 CHILDREN SERVICES IMPROVEMENT UPDATE

The Board considered an update report on the progress of Children Services as part of the improvement programme. Following on from the Ofsted ILAC Focused Visit in October 2021, a Notice to Improve was issued and an independently chaired Improvement Board was established. The Improvement Board oversaw the delivery of the Improvement Plan which had four overarching themes: Workforce, Quality of Practice, Partnerships and Future Model of Practice. The report provided an update on the work within each of these themes.

The Board was advised on the next steps which included a refresh of the Improvement Plan and an updated self-assessment alongside audit and staff development activity. In order to accelerate improvement additional investment of resource and capacity as part of the Corporate Transformation programme had been added providing capacity and opportunity to develop a sustainable improvement programme.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the content of the report be noted; and
- 2) the refreshed Improvement Plan be presented to the next meeting of the Executive Board.

MINUTES ISSUED: 22 November 2022

CALL- IN: 29 November 2022 at 5.00 pm

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 29 November 2022.

Strategic Director
- People

Meeting ended at 2.35 p.m.