

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 23 February 2017 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Polhill (Chair), D. Cargill, R. Hignett, S. Hill, Jones, T. McInerney, Nelson, Wharton and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Harris

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Scott, G. Cook, D. Parr, I. Leivesley, E. Dawson and S. Wallace-Bonner

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

EXB91 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2017 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING PORTFOLIO

EXB92 VOLUNTARY SECTOR CONTRACTS - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, People, which sought approval to award Voluntary Sector Contracts.

The Board was advised that contracts were due to expire on 31 March 2017 in a number of services, namely Halton Healthwatch, MIND Halton and Halton Carers Centre. The report set out details of each service and the period for which an extension was sought.

Reason(s) for Decision

Executive Board approval was required to award these contracts.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Retendering the contracts, which would result in the Council foregoing a clear financial benefit.

Implementation Date

1 April 2017.

RESOLVED: That Executive Board agree the following:-

- 1) the use of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.3 (d), where compliance with Standing Orders would result in the Council having to forego a clear commercial benefit; and
- 2) the award of a contract to Healthwatch Halton and MIND Halton for a one year period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 and to Halton Carers Centre for a period of four months from 1 April 2017 to 31 July 2017.

Strategic Director
- People

EXB93 ADULT SOCIAL CARE UPLIFT FOR PROVIDERS 2017/18 - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, People, on the proposed annual uplift for domiciliary and residential care providers within Halton for 2017/18.

The Board was advised that the care sector was critical to the sustainability of the health and social care economy and ensured that the Council was able to support adults to live as independently as possible in their own homes.

It was reported that one of the main challenges for the sector had been the introduction of the new mandatory National Living Wage (NLW) for workers aged 25 and above from 1 April 2016. Both residential and domiciliary care rates in Halton were considered competitive compared to other councils in the North West. Appendix 1 provided data on Halton's average domiciliary and residential rate for 2016/17 against other North West Local Authorities for Members' information.

Reason(s) for Decision

The Executive Board are required to approve the uplift in the

rate paid to providers to ensure the Authority meets its statutory duties under the Care Act.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None identified.

Implementation Date

1 April 2017.

RESOLVED: That Board approval be given to actively enter into discussions with Care Providers with a view to offer a 3% uplift for 2017/18.

Strategic Director
- People

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB94 2016/17 QUARTER 3 SPENDING

The Board received a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which reported on the 2016/17 Quarter 3 Spending as at 31 December 2016.

A summary of spending against revenue budget up to 31 December 2016 was attached at Appendix 1. This provided individual statements for each department. The Board was advised that, in overall terms, revenue expenditure was £0.764m above the budget profile, even after having released the remaining contingency budget of £0.5m. It was noted that, given the adverse variance position and continuing budget pressures, Directorates had been asked to restrict any non-essential spend over the final quarter of the year. The Strategic Director, People, had been asked to report to a future meeting as to how it was intended that spend on Children's Social Care could be brought back into line with the budget.

The report contained details of the main budget pressure within the Children and Families Department, and in particular, out of Borough residential placements and fostering. It was reported that the numbers of children in care had increased by 31% compared to the same period last year.

The report also outlined details of a continued shortfall in income in the Community and Environment Department; underspends in the Corporate and Democracy and Economy, Enterprise and Property Departments; spending on employees; staff turnover targets; expenditure on general supplies and services and the Council Tax

collection rate for the third quarter for 2016/17

The Capital Spending Programme had been revised to reflect a number of changes in spending profiles as schemes developed, and these were detailed in the report.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Strategic Directors ensure that all spending continues to be limited to the absolute essential and is contained as far as possible within their operational budget by year-end;
- 2) the Strategic Director, People, present a strategy, action plan and timescales to a future meeting, detailing what steps can be taken to bring spending on Children's Social Care back into line with budgets, as far as possible; and
- 3) Council be recommended to approve the revised Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix 3, attached to the report.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB95 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2017/18

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, proposing the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) which incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Strategy for 2017/18.

The TMSS was attached to the report and detailed the expected activities of the Treasury function in the forthcoming financial year (2017/18).

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 the report at paragraph 2.3, with Appendix A detailing the full policy.

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

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB96 BUDGET 2017/18

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 2017/18.

It was noted that at the time of writing, the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, 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 2017/18, which was in line with the Provisional Settlement announced on 15 December 2016. The Council, as part of the Liverpool City Region (LCR), will pilot a new scheme of 99% business rates retention. A 'no detriment' policy would apply to the pilot scheme, whereby the Council would be no worse off as a result of being part of the pilot. It was reported that, from 2019/20, the Business Rates Retention Scheme would be rolled out on a national basis in conjunction with a Government review of the needs and resources of Local Government, where the business rate baselines for each Council would be reconsidered.

The Board was advised that the Medium Term Financial Strategy, approved on 17 November 2016, had identified a funding gap of around £11m in 2017/18, £11.7m in 2018/19 and £9.2m in 2019/20. 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 essential frontline services; 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 as 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.

On 7 December 2016, Council approved initial budget savings totalling £7.9m for 2017/18, and further 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 £102.700m.

The Board was advised that the proposed budget incorporated the grant figures announced in the provisional Grant Settlement and included £2.414m for the New Homes Bonus and £0.548m of Improved Better Care Funding, paid to Councils for the first time in 2017/18.

Further information was provided on the budget outlook. As part of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2016/17, the Government had published indicative Settlement Funding Allocations for the three years up to 2019/20. Local authorities had been asked to produce and publish an efficiency plan setting out their forecast budget position through to 2019/20 along with their proposed efficiency measures to achieve annual balanced budget positions. The Council's efficiency plan was published on 14 October 2016. The Medium Term Financial Strategy had been updated to take account of the 2017/18 finance settlement, multi-year allocations and saving measures already agreed or proposed.

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.

Reason(s) for Decision

To seek approval for the Council's revenue budget, capital programme and council tax for 2017/18.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

In arriving at the budget saving proposals set out in Appendix B, numerous proposals had been considered, some of which had been deferred pending further information or rejected.

Implementation Date

8 March 2017.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to adopt the resolution as set out in Appendix A of the report, which includes setting the budget at £102.700m, the Council Tax requirement of £44.378m (before Parish, Police and Fire Precepts) and the Band D Council Tax for Halton of £1,312.27.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB97 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2017/18

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which set out the proposed Calendar of Meetings for the 2017/18 Municipal Year, which was appended to the report for information.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the Calendar of Meetings for the 2017/18 Municipal Year, as appended to the report.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB98 DISCRETIONARY NON DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which detailed two applications for discretionary non-domestic rate relief.

The Board was advised that, under the amended provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council was able to grant discretionary rate relief to any business ratepayer. This relief had previously only been available to organisations that were a charity, a community amateur sports club or a not-for-profit organisation.

Since 1 April 2013, the Council had been responsible for funding 49% of any award of mandatory or discretionary

rate relief granted, with Government meeting the remaining 51%.

Details of the requests were set out in the report for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the request for 15% discretionary rate relief from Halton Farnworth Hornets A.R.L.F.C for the period 12 September 2016 to 31 March 2019 be approved; and
- 2) the request for 15% discretionary rate relief from Halton Christmas Toy Appeal for the two week period of their occupation, be approved.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB99 SUPPORT TO SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, on the adoption of a scheme to provide financial support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

The Board was advised that the Council had a proven track record and significant expertise in supporting SMEs to access grant and other funding opportunities, which assist with the development of their businesses. One of the aims in providing such assistance was to promote investment in the Borough where the market had limited capacity or appetite to invest.

It was reported that in the current economic climate, it had proven difficult for SMEs to obtain finance from the usual financial institutions, which hampered their ability to grow, expand and develop their businesses for the benefit of the Borough. The proposed scheme provided an opportunity for the Council to support SMEs in order to assist with sustaining and growing economic development and job creation in the Borough, whilst generating much needed business rates and interest revenue to support the delivery of Council services.

The report set out a number of criteria that would be used to evaluate proposals for the provision of financial support. The mechanism for assessing and evaluating proposals would include rigorous financial and legal due diligence; the interest rates applied would reflect the level of risk to the Council and be considered on a case by case basis; any additional costs incurred by the Council to be charged to the business submitting the application; and

where an application was successful, a formal legal agreement be prepared and signed in advance of any funds being provided to ensure that the Council's rights and funding were protected as far as possible.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Council be recommended to approve the introduction of a scheme of Support for SMEs, in accordance with the circumstances and criteria outlined in the report;
- 2) Subject to the approval of the scheme, the award of business loans up to £1m for successful applicants, be delegated to the Operational Director, Finance, in liaison with the Executive Board Portfolio Holder for Resources and the Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property;
- 3) Subject to the approval of the scheme, the award of business loans of between £1m and £5m for successful applicants, be delegated to the Chief Executive in liaison with the Leader of the Council, the Executive Board Portfolio Holder for Resources, the Operational Director, Finance and the Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property; and
- 4) Subject to the approval of the scheme, the award of business loans over £5m for successful applicants, be a matter for decision by the Executive Board.

Operational
Director - Finance

TRANSPORTATION PORTFOLIO

EXB100 M56 NEW JUNCTION 11A PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on the proposed new Junction 11a on the M56, and on the Council's response to Highways England.

The Board was advised that the in Autumn 2014, the Government had announced the creation of a new road junction between Junctions 11 and 12 on the M56, to create an improved link to the new Mersey Gateway Bridge from the south. This would provide a number of local and regional

benefits, as set out in the report.

The consultation process, which ended on 27 February 2017, set out two 'Eastern' options, both of which would provide a significant improvement to regional and local journey times. It was reported that currently, Junction 12 of the M56 suffered from capacity problems. The implementation of a new Junction 11a would offer significant benefits in alleviating existing congestion issues, and would be seen as a positive and integral step towards the implementation of an improved and successful transport network.

RESOLVED: That the Council respond to the Highways England consultation, expressing support for Junction 11a, with a preference for Option B (signalised junction), giving reasons for these views.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

EXB101 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 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.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

EXB102 UPDATE ON THE MURDISHAW AVENUE DEVELOPMENT SITE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which provided an update on the proposals for the disposal of the development site at Murdishaw Avenue, Runcorn.

It was reported that the sale of the land would generate investment in the area with enhanced leisure and recreational facilities.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the sale of approximately 4 acres of land to the company and for the value named in the recommendation, with a contribution towards highways improvements and a new clubhouse and improvements to Halton Sports facilities, subject to contract, be approved; and
- 2) the Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property, be authorised to arrange for all required documentation to be completed to the satisfaction of the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community &
Resources

MINUTES ISSUED: Monday 27 February 2017

CALL-IN: 6 March 2017

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on Monday 6 March 2017

Meeting ended at 2.27 p.m.