

**Extract of Executive Board Minutes relevant to the Corporate Policy and Performance Board**

**EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 19 OCTOBER 2023**

<b>EXB41</b>	<b>TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director: Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, which provided an update on the progress made within the Council's Transformation Programme. Work had continued to develop the projects set out in Appendix A of the report, as well as the associated delivery plans, which would provide a framework to assess project feasibility.

The Board noted that:

- during September there had been a focus on engaging with employees and a number of workshops had taken place; and
- the recruitment of transformation resources to support the Children's Social Care programme had been undertaken and appointments had been made.

RESOLVED: That the Board noted the contents of the update.

<b>EXB42</b>	<b>RE-TENDERING OF COUNCIL INSURANCE POLICIES</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Finance, which sought approval to commence a procurement process to re-tender the insurance policies that were due to expire. The current contracts were due to expire on 31 March 2024 and based upon current premium levels, the total cost of the services was expected to exceed £1,000,000 over the maximum contract duration of five years.

The Board noted that prior to the procurement process, a review of the Council's insurance programme would be completed, and relevant alternatives considered to establish the most appropriate programme for the Council. This would include reviewing components such as extent of cover, levels of self-insurance and indemnity limits.

It was proposed that the procurement would be undertaken by accessing a framework agreement for insurance services managed by the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation. The Council's insurance broker would support the tender evaluation process by completing a comprehensive evaluation of tender submissions on behalf of the Council and make recommendations.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) approval be given to commence a procurement exercise for the following Council insurance policies:
  - Combined Liability
  - Medical Malpractice
  - Engineering and inspection
  - Property
  - Motor
  - Computer
- 2) the Operational Director – Finance, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, be delegated to deal with any matters relating to the procurement of this contract.

<b>EXB43</b>	<b>DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF</b>
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The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which presented two applications for discretionary non-domestic rate relief, under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, for consideration.

It was noted 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 registered charity, a community amateur sports club or a not for profit organisation.

The report outlined details of the applications from Steve Morgan Foundation and Have a Heart Foundation, in relation to their respective addresses. Appended to the report was the potential annual cost to the Council of granting the discretionary rate relief.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the application for 15% discretionary rate relief from the Steve Morgan Foundation in respect of premises at Bridgemere House, with effect from 1 April 2022, be approved;
- 2) the application for 15% discretionary rate relief from Have a Heart Foundation in respect of premises at 103-104 Chadwick Road, with effect from 1 April 2022, be approved; and
- 3) the application for 15% discretionary rate relief from Have a Heart Foundation in respect of premises at 110-111 Runcorn Shopping Centre, with effect from 1 April 2022, be approved.

<b>EXB48</b>	<b>DISPOSAL OF LAND LOWLANDS ROAD, RUNCORN</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, which sought approval to the revised disposal price for the disused trumpet loop land in Runcorn.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) the reconsidered valuation figure be approved;
- 2) the disposal of the freehold interest in disused land behind Picow Engineering that was once busway/trumpet loop road in Runcorn Station Quarter be approved; and
- 3) the Executive Director for Environment and Regeneration be authorised to arrange for all required documentation for the transactions to be completed to the satisfaction of the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services.

### **EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2023**

<b>EXB50</b>	<b>MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024/25 – 2026/27 - KEY DECISION</b>
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The Board considered a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which presented the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2024/25 to 2026/27.

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 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement were expected to be released in December 2023 on a provisional basis, with a final settlement expected in January 2024.

The Board was advised that the delay and uncertainty regarding 2024/25 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 2024/25 – 2026/27 using a prudent estimate of the financial conditions over the course of the next three years. Appendix 2 presented the Reserves and Balances Strategy.

#### Reason for Decision

To seek approval for the Council's MTFS for 2024/25 to 2026/27.

### Alternative options considered and rejected

The alternative option of not maintaining a MTFS 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 MTFS 2024/25 will be implemented from 1 April 2024.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved;
- 2) the 2024/25 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 2024/25 remains at the 2023/24 level of 21.55%

<b>EXB15</b>	<b>COUNCIL WIDE SPENDING AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2023</b>
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The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, advising of the Council's overall revenue and capital net spending position as at 30 September 2023, together with a forecast outturn position.

Appendix 1 presented a summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 30 September 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 £3.572m. Appendix 3 presented the Capital Programme as at 30 September 2023, highlighting the schemes which had been revised.

It was noted that the biggest pressure on the budget continued to be within the Children & Families Department, where forecast net spend for the year had increased by £0.681m over the past three months. This was predominantly as a result of increased spend against agency staff and staffing costs. Whilst considerable work was ongoing to support recruitment and retention of permanent staff, the impact was not yet being felt of any major reduction to agency numbers. Therefore, it was essential that all Departments ensured spending continued to be restricted to only essential items throughout the remainder of the financial year.

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) progress with implementation of the three years approved budget savings outlined in Appendix 4, be noted; and
- 4) Council be requested to approve the revisions to the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 3.20.

<b>EXB52</b>	<b>TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2023-24 HALF YEAR UPDATE</b>
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The Board considered a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which presented the Treasury Management Half Year Report as at 30 September 2023.

These reports updated Members on the activities undertaken on the investment and borrowing activities undertaken during the first half of the financial year to 30 September 2023, as required by the Treasury Management Policy.

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.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

<b>EXB53</b>	<b>DETERMINATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE 2024/25</b>
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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 2024/25 gave a base figure of 36,409 for the Borough as a whole. The Council Tax Base figure for each of the Parishes was noted.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve:

- 1) setting the 2024/25 Council Tax Base at 36,409 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) setting the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes as follows:

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Tax Base</b>
Hale	667
Halebank	534
Daresbury	212
Moore	341
Preston Brook	370
Sandymoor	1,606

<b>EXB54</b>	<b>DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORTS FOR QUARTER 2 2023-2024</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive, on progress against key objectives/milestones and performance targets for the second quarter period to 30 September 2023, for the Chief Executives and Children and Young People Directorates.

The Board was advised that the Directorate Performance Overview Report provided a strategic summary of key issues arising from the relevant quarter for each Directorate and was aligned to Council priorities or functional areas. The Board noted that such information was key to the Council's performance management arrangements and Executive Board had a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability. Performance Management would continue to be important in the demonstration of value for money and strengthening accountability.

RESOLVED: That the report, progress and performance information be noted.

<b>EXB55</b>	<b>TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director: Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, which provided an update on the progress made within the Council's Transformation Programme. Appendix A to the report set out the Transformation projects for each of the Directorates, as well as the associated delivery plans, which would provide a framework to assess project feasibility.

The Board noted that engagement with employees continued to be a focus in the programme ensuring staff views and ideas were heard in the planning stage of the project. Project themed 'chats about change' sessions had begun in October with Adult Social Care and Customer Journey focused sessions.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board noted the contents of the update; and
- 2) individual project delivery plans are to be submitted to the relevant Policy and Performance Boards for their consideration and monitoring.

#### **EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 7 DECEMBER 2023**

<b>EXB62</b>	<b>DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF</b>
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The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which presented two applications for discretionary non-domestic rate relief, under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, for consideration.

It was noted 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 registered charity, a community amateur sports club or a not for profit organisation.

The report outlined details of the applications from Hazlehurst Craft Studios CIC, in relation to their respective addresses. Appended to the report was the potential annual cost to the Council of granting the discretionary rate relief. Currently, where discretionary rate relief was granted to registered charities and non-profit organisations, it was provided until March 2025 in order to provide the organisations with some degree of certainty.

RESOLVED: That

- 4) the application for 90% discretionary rate relief from Hazlehurst Craft Studios CIC in respect of premises at 71 High Street, Runcorn, with effect from 1 April 2023, be approved; and
- 5) the application for 90% discretionary rate relief from Hazlehurst Craft Studios CIC in respect of premises at 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 73 High Street, Runcorn, with effect from 16 February 2024, be approved.

<b>EXB63</b>	<b>GAS &amp; ELECTRICITY SUPPLY CONTRACTS</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which advised that the Council purchased energy supplies via the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) framework. CCS were an executive agency sponsored by the Cabinet Office and are the biggest provider of public sector frameworks in the UK thus can provide excellent value due to their bulk buying power. CCS went through a tender process earlier this year and the result being that Total

Energies, previously Total Gas and Power, were appointed as their gas provider and EDF were appointed as their electricity provider.

The Board was advised that the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration had approved the award of the corporate gas supply contract to Total Energies. The report also sought approval for the award of the corporate electricity supply contract to EDF. The new arrangements commenced on 2 October 2023 and both frameworks were until 20 February 2027. Full details of the cost of the contract and the arrangements were outlined in the report.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the award of the corporate electricity supply contract to EDF be approved.

<b>EXB64</b>	<b>DEMOLITION OF THE FORMER WATERLOO CENTRE, RUNCORN</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which provided information on the decision of the Chief Executive to approve a waiver of Standing Orders under section 1.14.2 Emergency Powers, to appoint a contractor to undertake the demolition of the former Waterloo Centre, Runcorn. The former Waterloo Centre had been closed since 2004 and had been surplus to Council requirements. No viable alternative use had been found for the building and without investment the building had started to fall into disrepair.

The Board noted that the intention was to demolish the building in 2019, however concerns were raised by Planning that the building adjoined Edgerton Street Library, which was a listed building. Over the last couple of years, the building had deteriorated and the latest report from a structural engineer stated that it was not feasible to shore the building up and that it needed to be demolished in a controlled manner. As a result, and following legal advice, the Operational Director – Policy, Planning and Transportation, had made the decision that the building should be demolished as soon as possible.

A tender exercise was previously carried out in 2019 and although the work had been put on hold due to the concerns raised, to expediate matters and avoid a lengthy tender exercise, negotiations had taken place with the original proposed contractor Excavation and Contracting to carry out the work. They had submitted a revised price of £110,000. In order to avoid any unnecessary delay, a waiver of Procurement Standing Orders via the Chief Executive under Emergency Powers was obtained.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

<b>EXB65</b>	<b>AGENCY WORKER CONTRACT EXTENSION</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Head of HR Operations, which sought approval to extend the current contract for the supply of agency workers. In compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.15.3, acceptance of pre-determined contract extension, approval by the Board was required as the estimated value was likely to exceed £5,000,000 per annum.

The current contract was awarded to Matrix SCM in May 2022 and had a pre-determined option to extend for 2 x 12 month periods, the first extension period was from 1 May 2024 to 30 April 2025.

The report proposed that the current contract be extended to ensure opportunity remained to resource agency staff through a neutral vendor and to avoid costs and resource commitment of a tendering procedure, whilst other options were being explored.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the Board approve that the contract arrangement with Matrix SCM be extended for a further 12 month period from 1 May 2024 to 30 April 2025.

<b>EXB66</b>	<b>TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director: Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, which provided an update on the progress made within the Council's Transformation Programme. Appendix A to the report set out the Transformation projects for each of the Directorates, as well as the associated delivery plans, which would provide a framework to assess project feasibility.

The Board noted that the development of delivery plans and associated trajectories against priority delivery actions was underway. The development of trajectory data would be used to monitor progress against both financial and non-financial outcomes. This work would continue throughout December.

RESOLVED: That the Board noted the contents of the update.