

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 7 December 2023 in the Halton Stadium, Widnes

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chair), Dennett, Harris, J. Lowe, T. McInerney, Nelson, P. Nolan, Thompson and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillor M. Lloyd Jones

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: S. Young, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, G. Ferguson, Z. Fearon and D. Nolan

Also in attendance: One member of the press

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

EXB60 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

DEPUTY LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB61 WIDNES TOWN CENTRE VISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director - Environment and Regeneration, which provided an update on the development of a vision and delivery strategy for Widnes Town Centre and outlined the next steps in progressing this work. The Council had commissioned consultants Aecom and the BE Group, to develop a high-level Vision and Delivery Strategy for Widnes Town Centre. The aim of the Widnes Town Centre Vision was to guide the regeneration of the town centre and to identify opportunities and priorities for development.

The report highlighted the market analysis which had been undertaken, consultation which had taken place and the consultants conclusions. In order to address the issues detailed by the consultants and to proactively progress

Action

opportunities in the town, a vision and a set of accompanying objectives had been identified and these were set out in the report.

The Board was advised that the next step to progress the work was as follows:

- the consultants had identified potential mechanisms for delivery ranging from purely private sector schemes to public sector involvement and each would be assessed;
- a brief would be prepared to commission consultants to undertake master planning work;
- an assessment and cost benefit analysis would be undertaken; and
- a Town Centre Panel would be established comprising: Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holder Environment and Renewal, Portfolio Holder Climate Change and one representative from each Widnes Ward.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the vision and objectives outlined in the report be supported;
- 2) the next steps outlined in section 4.1 of the report be agreed; and
- 3) the establishment of a Town Centre Panel be agreed.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB62 DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

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

- 1) 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
- 2) the application for 90% discretionary rate relief from Hazlehurst Craft Studios CIC in respect of premises at 1st Floor, 73 High Street, Runcorn, with effect from 16 February 2024, be approved.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB63 GAS & ELECTRICITY SUPPLY CONTRACTS

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.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

EXB64 DEMOLITION OF THE FORMER WATERLOO CENTRE, RUNCORN

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.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

EXB65 AGENCY WORKER CONTRACT EXTENSION

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.

Corporate
Director - Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

EXB66 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

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.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB67 ADULT SOCIAL CARE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Adult Services, which provided a copy of the Adult Social Care Annual Report for 2022/23.

The theme of this year's report was 'making a difference' and as well as providing context as to what the local provision of ASC looked like and the direction of ASC during the report period. The report also looked at how ASC had made a difference to people through the services

delivered. The report provided examples of where services, staff and innovation had positively impacted on people who used the services and contained feedback from people and staff as to how this had made a difference.

The Board thanked Officers within the Adult Services Directorate for all their work.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report be noted.

Executive Director
Adult Services

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

EXB68 HALTON FREEPORT RETAINED RATES FUND

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, that sought approval for the Council to implement the Halton Freeport Retained Business Rates Fund. In 2021, the Council supported the development of a Freeport application in support of the Liverpool City Region's economic aspirations. The Freeport had two major elements: to provide connectivity to Port of Weston and to raise project funding to deliver the Council's economic aspirations in the form of Tax Incremental Financing (TIF). TIF is a method of raising revenue to pay for regeneration.

The report provided an update on how the Council intended to establish the Retained Business Fund on a similar basis to the TIF Fund established for the local Enterprise Zone using a prescribed number of projects as outlined in the Full Business Case and Retained Rates Strategy. A list of the initial nominated projects were detailed in the report.

It was noted that projects confirmed as 'in scope' would be managed by the billing authority. Projects would be invited to prepare a business case, proportional to the scale of the project, in line with the requirements of the billing authority. Each billing authority would set out its own governance process for the approval of funds allocated from retained rates.

The Board was advised that initial estimates suggested that the 25 years (2046 to the lifetime end point) Halton Retained Business Rates Fund rates retention period could support the delivery of the masterplan through approximately £40m of Tax Increment Financing.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) the Board supports the progress made on the Freeport and specifically the retained business rates fund to deliver local regeneration priorities;
- 3) delegated authority be given to the Executive Director for Environment and Regeneration, Operational Director - Finance, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to take the necessary steps to develop a Halton Freeport Retained Business Rates Fund; and
- 4) the Operational Director Finance, be authorised to enter into and manage the processes required to facilitate the Business Rates Retention and Tax Increment Financing processes.

EXB69 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 paragraph 3 of

Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

N.B. Councillor J. Lowe declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business as she has a family member employed at St Lukes Care Home.

ADULT AND SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB70 CARE PROVIDER CONTRACT UPLIFT 2024/25

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Adult Services, which provided information on the proposed annual uplift for domiciliary care, direct payments, supported living and care home providers within Halton for 2024/25.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the contents of the report be noted; and
- 2) approval be given to actively enter into consultation with Care Providers in relation to the annual uplift for 2024/25

MINUTES ISSUED: 12 December 2023

CALL-IN: 19 December 2023 at 5.00 pm.

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 19 December 2023.

Executive Director
of Adult Services

Meeting ended at 1.25 p.m.