

COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Council on Wednesday, 5 March 2025 in the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors Abbott, Ball, Baker, Begg, Bevan, Carlin, Connolly, Dennett, Davidson, Dourley, Fry, Garner, Gilligan, Harris, S. Hill, V. Hill, Hughes, Hutchinson, Jones, Leck, M. Lloyd Jones, P. Lloyd Jones, C. Loftus, K. Loftus, Logan, McDermott, McDonough, A. McInerney, T. McInerney, Nelson, P. Nolan, Polhill, C. Plumptre Walsh, N. Plumptre Walsh, Ratcliffe, Ryan, Teeling, Thompson, Thornton, Wainwright, Wall, Wallace, Wharton, Woolfall and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Bramwell, Goodall, A. Lowe, L. Nolan, Philbin, Rowe, Stockton, Stretch and Skinner

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney, S. Young, E. Dawson, G. Ferguson and W. Rourke

Also in attendance: None

Action

At the commencement of the meeting the Mayor asked everyone to stand for a minute silence as a mark of respect as part of the COVID-19 day of remembrance, which will be held on Sunday 9 March.

COU64 COUNCIL MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2025, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

COU65 THE MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor made the following announcements:

- i. a picture had been donated to the Council for display from Runcorn Sea Cadets; and
- ii. the following events had been arranged in aid of the Mayor's Charity – the Halton Foundation, all are welcome to attend:
 - St Patrick's Night Fundraiser – 14 March
 - Mother's Day Afternoon Tea – 6 April
 - Easter Bingo – 2 April

COU66 LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader made the following announcements:

- he acknowledged that this had been a tough task for everyone bringing this budget to Council and confirmed that following an application made in December 2024, Halton had received provisional approval of Exceptional Financial Support;
- he provided an update on work which had been undertaken since the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services in May 2024;
- the Care Quality Commission had given notice of their intention to inspect the quality of adult care provision. The team were due to commence their on-site inspection process on 17 March 2025;
- earlier in the year the Government had launched its White Paper about the next stage of devolution for local government. Cheshire West, Cheshire East and Warrington Councils were now working towards setting up their first Combined Authority and he wished them well with their work. Halton remained committed to Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and our connection to Cheshire blue light services; and
- Saturday 8 March is International Women's Day. The Mersey Gateway Bridge would be lit to mark this important day.

COU67 URGENT DECISIONS

Council considered a report of the Chief Executive, on the urgent decisions taken since the last meeting of the Council.

RESOLVED: That Council note the report.

COU68 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Council considered the minutes of the Executive Board meetings on 12 December 2024 and 16 January 2025.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.

COU69 MINUTES OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Council considered the minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting on 15 January 2025.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.

COU70 QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 8

It was noted that no questions had been submitted under Standing Order No. 8.

COU71 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2025-2026

Council considered a report of the Chief Executive, on a calendar of meetings for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED: That the calendar of meetings for the 2025/26 Municipal Year, as appended to the report, be approved.

Chief Executive

COU72 BUDGET 2025/26 - KEY DECISION

The Executive Board had considered a report setting out a recommendation to Council in respect of the revenue budget, capital programme and council tax for 2025/26.

The Executive Board had recommended that Council adopt the resolution set out in Appendix A of the report, which included setting the budget at £183.052m, the Council Tax requirement of £68.208m (before Parish, Police, Fire and LCR Combined Authority precepts) and the Band D Council Tax for Halton of £1,846.66.

In accordance with Standing Order 16 (3), a recorded vote was taken.

The following Members voted FOR the motion:

Councillors Abbott, Ball, Baker, Begg, Bevan, Carlin, Connolly, Dennett, Dourley, Fry, Garner, Gilligan, Harris, S. Hill, V. Hill, Hughes, Hutchinson, Jones, Leck, M. Lloyd Jones, P. Lloyd Jones, K. Loftus, C. Loftus, Logan, McDermott, McDonough, A. McInerney, T. McInerney, Nelson, P. Nolan, N. Plumpton Walsh, Polhill, Ratcliffe, Ryan, Teeling, Thompson, Thornton, Wainwright, Wall, Wallace, Wharton, Woolfall, and Wright.

Councillor Davidson voted AGAINST the motion.

There were no abstentions.

Councillor Carol Plumpton Walsh was not present when the recorded vote was taken.

RESOLVED: That Council

Director
Finance

of

- 1) adopt the resolution set out in Appendix A, which includes setting the budget at £183.052m, the Council Tax requirement of £68.208m (before Parish, Police, Fire and LCR Combined Authority precepts) and the Band D Council Tax for Halton of £1,846.66;
- 2) approve the capital programme set out in Appendix E;
- 3) approve the Use of Capital Receipts Strategy set out in Appendix H;
- 4) approve the budget savings set out in Appendix G;
- 5) approve 100% Council Tax premium being applied to properties which have been unoccupied and unfurnished for a minimum period of 12 months; and
- 6) note that Government have given provisional approval to the Council's application for Exceptional Financial Support, as outlined in section 3.7.

COU73 2024/25 SPENDING AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 2024

Council was asked to approve the Capital Programme as outlined in the attached report.

RESOLVED: That

Director
Finance

of

- 1) all spending continues to be limited to essential items only;
- 2) Executive Directors continue to identify areas where they can further reduce their directorate's spending or generate income, in order to reduce the councilwide forecast outturn overspend position;
- 3) Executive Directors continue to implement the approved savings proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26 as detailed in Appendix 4;
- 4) the updated forecast outturn position be shared with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government in support of the Council's application for Exceptional Financial Support;
- 5) Council be asked to approve the revisions to the capital programme set-out in paragraph 3.22 and incorporated within Appendix 3; and

- 6) this report be shared with each Policy and Performance Board, in order to ensure they have a full appreciation of the councilwide financial position, in addition to their specific areas of responsibility.

COU74 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2025/26

Council considered a report of the Director, Finance, on the Treasury Management Statement, which incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy for 2025/26.

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

Director of Finance

COU75 CAPITAL STRATEGY

Council considered a report of the Director, Finance, on the Council's Capital Strategy for 2025/26.

Members noted that the Capital Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Treasury Management Statement, also considered at this meeting. The successful delivery of the Capital Strategy would assist the Council in planning and funding its capital expenditure over the next three years.

RESOLVED: That Council approve the 2025/26 Capital Strategy, as presented in the Appendix attached to the report.

Director of Finance

COU76 ABSENCE OF A MEMBER

This item was withdrawn.

COU77 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME - REVIEW

The Council considered a report of the Independent Remuneration Panel following the Triannual Review of the Scheme of Members' Allowances.

Under the Local Authority (Members' Allowances) Regulations 2003, the Scheme of Members' Allowances must be reviewed tri-annually. Three independent private sector representatives were invited to sit as an Independent Panel to review the Council's Scheme of Members' Allowances and to make recommendations to the Council.

The Panel were provided with, and appraised of, the Council's current Scheme of Allowances, as set out in the report. The Panel met once and corresponded on several occasions, considered papers supplied in advance of their meeting and received a briefing by the Chief Executive. In addition, the Panel invited comments from all Elected Members. The Panel's conclusions and recommendations were set out in the report for information.

RESOLVED: That Council

Chief Executive

- 1) note and agree the recommendations of the Independent Members' Allowances Panel as set out in Paragraph 6 of the report; and
- 2) having regard to the Panel's recommendation, approve the Members' Allowance Scheme as submitted to be effective from April 2025 for a 3 year period.

COU78 MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARDS AND THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE BOARD

The Council considered the reports of the following Boards in the period since the meeting of Council on 4 December 2025:-

- Children, Young People and Families;
- Health;
- Safer;
- Environment and Urban Renewal;
- Corporate Services; and
- Audit and Governance.

COU79 COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Council considered the reports of the following Committee in the period since the meeting of Council on 4 December 2025:-

- Development Management;
- Regulatory Sub Committee;
- Taxi Licensing Sub Committee; and
- Appointments.

COU80 RECOMMENDATION FROM MAYORAL COMMITTEE

The Mayoral Committee had considered a Part II item which made recommendations for the appointment of Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

Formal confirmation would be sought at the Annual meeting of Council.

RESOLVED: That Council note that

- 1) Councillor Martha Lloyd Jones be appointed as Mayor; and
- 2) Councillor Pamela Wallace be appointed as Deputy Mayor.

Meeting ended at 7.30 p.m.