

# POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 14 June 2023

Present:

Councillor P Stuart (Chair)

|             |                |                                       |
|-------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Councillors | J Robinson     | H Cameron                             |
|             | J Williamson   | S Mountney                            |
|             | P Gilchrist    | L Rennie                              |
|             | EA Grey        | P Cleary                              |
|             | A Davies       | J Bird                                |
|             | S Powell-Wilde | K Hodson (In place<br>of JE Green)    |
|             | T Jones        | A Onwuemene (In<br>place of H Gorman) |

## 1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as those watching the webcast.

## 2 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jeff Green and Harry Gorman. Councillors Kathy Hodson and Amanda Onwuemene were in attendance as substitutes.

## 3 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest.

Councillor Jean Robinson declared a personal interest in item 8 '2022-23 Budget Monitoring For Quarter Four (The Period To 31 Mar), 2022-23 Outturn' as a Director on the Wirral Growth Company.

## 4 MINUTES

**Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 22 March 2023 and 27 April 2023 be approved as a correct record.**

## 5 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

The Chair reported that there were no public questions, statements, petitions or questions by members.

## 6 CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT 2022-23

The Director of Finance introduced the report which detailed the Capital Outturn for 2022/23 and the resources used to fund the Programme. It asked that the Committee recommended that Council agree the revised 2023/24 Capital Programme which took account of re-profiling, virements, additional funding requirements and grant variations identified since the Capital Programme was formally agreed on 28th February 2022.

Members of the Committee raised several queries regarding the delivery of different capital projects including the Enterprise Resource Planning System, Regeneration and Highway Maintenance which the Chief Executive undertook to seek responses via the relevant Director to the relevant Committees. The Director of Finance further assured the Committee that any capital virements are either decided by or reported to Policy & Resources Committee.

### **Resolved – That**

**(1) Council be recommended to approve the revised Capital Programme of £178.1 million for 2023/24, including the virements of budget referred to in Appendix D.**

**(2) Council be recommended to note the financing of the Programme for 2022/23.**

**(3) Council be recommended to note the additional year-end re-profiling of £38.2m from 2022/23 to 2023/24.**

## **7 HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND**

The Head of Revenues and Benefits introduced the report of the Director of Finance which provided a summary of the proposed spend of government's Household Support Fund (£6,098,690) for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, which was available to support those most in need with the cost of food, energy (heating, cooking, lighting), water bills (including sewerage) and other essentials. The report also provided a summary of the spend of the Household Support Fund (£3,049,356.09) for the period 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022 and sought endorsement of the final allocation. It was reported that there was a typo in recommendation 2 which should read paragraphs '3.10 to 3.26' as opposed to '3.10 and 3.26'.

Following a query, it was clarified that the reason the uptake for the financial support with fuel in the spring 2022 allocation was slower was due to the time it took for the increased bills to feed through, with higher uptake seen in the second half of the year. Members were advised further reporting of the Household Support Fund would be taken to the Health and Wellbeing Board which following a request, would include data on how it was distributed across the Borough.

## **Resolved – That**

**(1) the indicative local allocation of the Household Support Fund (April 2023 to March 2024) as outlined in the report.**

**(2) authorise the Director of Finance to distribute the local allocation of Household Support Fund having regard to indicative local allocation and taking into account the guidance provided by the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) and the outline plan referred to at paragraphs 3.10 to 3.26 of the report.**

**(3) the final local allocation of the Household Support Fund (April 2022 to September 2022) as detailed in the report be noted.**

## **8 2022-23 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER FOUR (THE PERIOD TO 31 MAR), 2022-23 OUTTURN**

The Director of Finance introduced the report which provided a summary of the year-end revenue position for the 2022/23 financial year as at the end of March 2023. The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance to enable the Committee to take ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets. The year-end revenue outturn for 2022/23, represented an adverse variance against directorate revenue budgets of £11.970m, which was a small £0.392m improvement on the quarter 3 forecast.

It was clarified that there were £8.5m of profits from the Wirral Growth Company, and that legal advice was being sought as to how the funding needed to be treated, such as being earmarked for regeneration, capital receipts or general revenue reserves. It was further reported that the Capital Programme report considered by the Committee in February 2023 suggested that it be used for Birkenhead Market if approved, but that those reserves were not committed, and further technical advice was needed before any decision could be made.

Further information was sought on the timescale for the decision on how the funding could be allocated and members were advised that it would be as soon as the technical advice had been attained. The profit from the Wirral Growth Company was listed in the reserves for Regeneration and Place and it was queried whether this indicated that it was to be used for that purpose. The Director of Finance clarified that it was listed in Regeneration and Place as a placeholder as it had not yet been allocated within a budget whilst advice was sought, and in any case it would be reported back to Policy & Resources Committee for approval of allocation.

On a motion moved by Councillor Jo Bird, seconded by Councillor Paul Stuart, it was –

**Resolved – That**

- (1) the draft, unaudited 2022/23 outturn adverse variance of £11.970m be noted.**
- (2) the draft unaudited 2022/23 funding adverse variance of £1.078m be noted.**
- (3) Council be recommended to agree the transfer to and use of earmarked reserves, as detailed in Appendix 3.**
- (4) the progress on delivery of the 2022/23 savings programme be noted.**
- (5) Wirral Growth Company Profit be moved from Regeneration and Place reserves to Resources reserves.**

**9 2023/24 BUDGET AND BUDGET MONITORING PROCESSES**

The Director of Finance introduced the report which set out how the 2023/24 budget would be monitored through the Committee system, which would facilitate the Policy and Services Committees to take ownership of their specific budgets and present appropriate challenge and scrutiny of Officers on the management and performance of those budgets.

**Resolved – That the process for in-year monitoring of the 2023/24 budget be noted.**

**10 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23**

The Director of Finance introduced the report which fulfilled the Council's legal obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to both the CIPFA Code and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Investment Guidance, by providing the annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement on likely financing and investment activity. The CIPFA Code also recommended that Members were informed of treasury management activities at least twice a year.

There was an underspend in the 2022/23 financial year on net Treasury activities of £0.126 million, which was attributable to lower debt management costs and an increase in investment returns. This underspend was incorporated into the Revenue Outturn report.

Further information was sought by members on benchmarking the Council's risk appetite, borrowing to and from other Local Authorities and Environmental, Social and Governance investments.

**Resolved – That the Treasury Management Outturn report for 2022/23 be noted.**

## 11 **APPOINTMENT OF SUB-COMMITTEES**

The Director of Law and Governance introduced the report which enabled the Committee, in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions and the terms of the Constitution, to appoint Members to the three Sub-Committees of the Policy and Resources Committee for 2023/2024, which were Senior Officer Appointments and Staffing Sub-Committee, Finance Sub-Committee and Shareholder Board.

It was clarified that only three members had served on the Shareholder Board during 2022/23, but that 5 members was more politically inclusive as it enabled a representative of the Liberal Democrat group to be appointed.

**Resolved – That**

**(1) the Senior Officer Appointments and Staffing Sub-Committee be appointed for 2023-24 with the terms of reference as referred to in paragraph 3.1 of this report and consist of:**

- (i) the Leader (Chair of Policy & Resources Committee), or in their absence the Deputy Leader (Vice-Chair), who shall chair the Sub-Committee;**
- (ii) a member from each of the other Political Groups represented on the Policy & Resources Committee; and**
- (iii) the Chair, or in their absence the Vice-Chair, of the Policy & Services Committee with terms of reference most closely associated with the post concerned (or if that committee concerned is deemed to be the Policy & Resources Committee then the Deputy Leader (Vice-Chair).**

**(2) the Finance Sub-Committee be appointed for 2023-24 with the terms of reference identified with 5 members of the Policy and Resources Committee.**

**(3) the Shareholder Board be appointed for 2023-24 with the terms of reference identified with 5 members of the Policy and Resources**

**Committee.**

**(4) the Contain Outbreak Management Fund Working Group not be re-established, and that the Director of Public be requested to present a summary outcome report to the Health and Wellbeing Board.**

**(5) the Monitoring Officer as Proper Officer be authorised to carry out the wishes of the Group Leaders in allocating Members to membership and substitute membership of those sub-committees, listed in resolutions (1) to (4) above and to appoint those Members with effect from the date at which the Proper Officer is advised of the names of such Members.**

12 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Director of Law and Governance introduced the report which provides the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year and sought a review of the future items for consideration.

Following a discussion, it was proposed that items on Real Living Wage accreditation and climate emergency risk management be added to the work programme as briefings, and that a list of Council assets and their latest valuation be shared with members of the Policy & Resources Committee.

**Resolved – That with the inclusion of the items suggested, the work programme be noted.**