

CABINET

Monday, 22 July 2019

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	P Hackett (Chair)	Leader of the Council
	Councillors	E Grey	Environment and Climate Change
		C Jones	Adult Care Health and Wellbeing
		T Jones	Regeneration and Growth
		A Leech	The Local Plan
		J McManus	Community Services
		T Usher	Children Families and Education
		S Whittingham	Housing and Planning
		J Williamson	Finance and Resources
<u>Apologies:</u>	Councillor	C Spriggs	

15 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Cabinet were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary and/or any other relevant interest, in connection with any item(s) on the agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

No such declarations were made.

16 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 24 June and 8 July, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

17 EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

The Cabinet noted that no key decisions had been taken under delegated powers during the period 14 June, 2019 to date.

18 NEW FERRY £200K ALLOCATION DECISION

Councillor Janette Williamson introduced a report which outlined the proposed allocation of a hardship fund to help and support the residents and business of New Ferry. On 18 February, 2019 Budget Cabinet had agreed to allocate £200,000 and it was requested that, “officers report to Cabinet early in the new municipal year with a proposed methodology for allocating this funding” (minute 54 refers).

The report outlined the requested proposal for allocation, offering a clear criterion for selecting recipients of financial support and a pragmatic approach to ensuring the distribution could occur as swiftly as possible, following a decision.

Councillor Janette Williamson referred to the lack of response from the Government despite persistent lobbying since the devastating explosion. The Council had itself invested £1.3m so far to help with the rebuilding programme. The allocation of £200,000 was a small token in recognition of the suffering residents and businesses had gone through, and was not compensation.

Cabinet Members expressed support for the proposals and thanks were also offered for everything the officers had done and were continuing to do. The people of New Ferry were also thanked for the way in which their community had come together to support each other with new community groups formed and support networks established.

Councillor Pat Hackett referred to a number of initiatives which were being undertaken to help with the regeneration of New Ferry. The area had been shortlisted for the Future High Streets Fund, with Wirral being the only area in the country to have two bids accepted. Bids were also in for Liverpool City Region Strategic Investment Funds.

On a motion by Councillor Tony Jones, seconded by Councillor Janette Williamson, it was -

Resolved – That the proposal for the allocation of £200,000 to help and support the residents and businesses of New Ferry and Port Sunlight affected by the explosion in March 2017 as outlined in paragraph 3.3 of the report, be approved.

Reasons for decision: As the Cabinet agreed to the allocation of £200,000 in February 2019 it is imperative that the distribution of said funding takes place as quickly and efficiently as possible.

19 **AMENDMENT TO EXISTING AND CREATION OF NEW POLICIES RELATING TO PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING**

Councillor Stuart Whittingham introduced a report on the proposed revisions to the Council's Housing Standards Enforcement Policy Statement (referred to as the policy statement) and proposed new policies and procedures on:

- The use of Civil Penalties
- Rent Repayment Orders
- Banning Orders
- Rogue Landlord Database
- Determining a fit and proper person and management arrangements at licensable properties

- Enforced Sales

The report sought to agree the implementation of both the revisions to the policy statement and the new policies as listed above. The policies would help in protecting Wirral's most vulnerable residents and low income families.

These proposed changes would also assist the Council in meeting the objectives of the Wirral Plan pledges through the provision of "Good quality housing which meets the needs of residents" and the aim of improving 2,250 private sector properties by 2020.

On a motion by Councillor Stuart Whittingham, seconded by Councillor Anita Leech, it was -

Resolved - That:

- (1) The proposed revisions to the policy statement and new policies and procedures on the use of Civil Penalties, Rent Repayment Orders, Banning Orders, the Rogue Landlord Database, determining a fit and proper person and management arrangements at licensable properties and Enforced Sales, be approved.**
- (2) Delegated authority be given, for periodic review and any minor amendments to these documents, to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning.**
- (3) It be agreed that additional financial income generated from civil penalties and rent repayment orders is used to support further enforcement activity involving sub-standard private rented sector properties.**

Reasons for decision: Both updating the policy statement and introducing new policies and procedures relating to specific legislative powers is considered to be good practice and follows both statutory and non-statutory guidance. Such action is essential to support the successful use of relevant statutory powers in relation to substandard housing conditions.

20

APPROVAL OF BUSINESS CASE AND CONSULTATION APPROACH FOR PROPOSED SELECTIVE LICENSING

Councillor Stuart Whittingham introduced a report which set out a proposal to continue Wirral's Selective Licensing Scheme through re-designating the four areas that had been in place since 2015 and were due to end on 30 June, 2020 and extending the scheme into two further areas, all in East Wirral. Selective Licensing was a scheme to improve private rented sector homes within specific designated neighbourhoods by requiring private landlords to obtain a licence and comply with certain agreed conditions. A Business Case which supported the

extension of the scheme and relevant appendices was attached to the report. Members were asked to agree that the evidence was the subject of a statutory consultation exercise to seek wider views on this proposal.

The Scheme contributed to the Wirral Plan 2020 Pledge on good quality housing to meet the needs of residents, by improving the quality of Wirral's housing offer for Wirral's residents, which was a key component of Wirral's Housing Strategy and aimed to improve 2250 private sector properties by 2020.

Cabinet Members expressed support for the proposals and on a motion by Councillor Anita Leech, seconded by Councillor Stuart Whittingham, it was -

Resolved: That –

- (1) **The draft proposal for Selective Licensing in the following six areas from July 2020 until June 2025 in the Borough based on the robust evidence base, be approved:**
 - **Birkenhead South (LSOA E01007129);**
 - **Egerton North (LSOA E01007179);**
 - **Egremont Promenade South (LSOA E01007215);**
 - **Egremont South (LSOA E01007275);**
 - **Seacombe Library (LSOA E01007278); and**
 - **Tranmere Lairds (LSOA E01007291);**
- (2) **The consultation plan and draft Business Case as attached to the report as the basis for public consultation on Selective Licensing, be approved; and**
- (3) **Delegated authority be given to the relevant Director and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning to undertake minor amendments to the Business Case should further evidence be made available which should be included in the consultation.**

Reasons for decision: There is clear evidence within the Business Case on the rationale for commencing with a ten week consultation process on the proposed continuation of Selective Licensing in the four existing designated areas in the borough which commenced in 2015 and the introduction of Selective Licensing in two further areas. There is a requirement to undertake a consultation exercise with those stakeholders affected. The consultation will obtain the views of tenants, residents, landlords and stakeholders and is a requirement of the approval process required by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

21 **FINANCIAL MONITORING OUT-TURN 2018-19**

Councillor Janette Williamson introduced a report which detailed the out-turn for 2018/19 and concluded the reporting to Cabinet for the 2018/19 financial year.

Attached to the report were separate appendices for Revenue (including details of the reserves), Capital (including resources used to fund the Programme) and the Collection Summary (including Council Tax, Business Rates and Sundry Debts).

Although a net underspend of £0.6m had been achieved, she outlined the continuing pressures in the various directorates where overspends had occurred, which in 2018/19 had been mitigated by various measures. However, in 2019/20, these measures would not be available to address any potential overspends.

Cabinet Members thanked everyone involved for maintaining services and balancing the budget whilst also achieving savings under increased pressure on Council budgets.

Councillor Tony Jones expressed the view that the government should pause the cessation of the Revenue Support Grant to local authorities, due to come into effect in 2020, whilst undertaking a full spending review.

Councillor Tom Usher commented upon the government's refusal to fund the crisis in social care head on and that it was left to the council to fund these costs, whilst maintaining financial responsibility.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor it was -

Resolved – That

(1) Revenue

- (a) the revenue out-turn indicated a variance of £0.6 million of expenditure less than budget in 2018/19;**
- (b) the General Fund Balances at 31 March 2019 of £10.7 million, be noted; and**
- (c) the Earmarked Reserves totalling £59.5 million (£85.5 million subject to External Audit) be confirmed.**

(2) Capital

- (a) The additional re-profiling of £5.0 million from 2018/19 to 2019/20 be noted;**
- (b) The financing of the Programme for 2018/19 be noted; and**
- (c) The Programme for 2019/20 and beyond be kept under review to ensure it is realistic and deliverable.**

(3) Collection Summary

- (a) The decrease in Council Tax in-year collection rate from 95.5% in 2017/18 to 94.8% in 2018/19 be noted;**
- (b) Increase in cash collected for Council Tax 2018/19 of £9.4m;**

- (c) **The Business Rates collection rate for 2018/19 of 97.9%; the same collection rate of 97.9% as attained in 2017/18;**
- (d) **The Sundry Debt arrears figure as at 31 March 2019 decreased by £3 million to £26 million; and**
- (e) **That the sundry debts for Adults Social Services and Other Directorates detailed in the report be written-off against the Provision for Bad Debts.**

Reasons for decision: Local authorities have to produce an Annual Statement of Accounts which demonstrates the financial performance of the Council for the year and the financial position at the end of the period. The full Statement is approved by Audit & Risk Management Committee on behalf of the Council. This report informs Cabinet of the key elements.

The Collection Summary provides details on income collection performance and any sums which are deemed irrecoverable need to be written off in accordance with the authorisation processes set out in the Council Constitution.

22 **TREASURY ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19**

Councillor Janette Williamson introduced a report which fulfilled the Authority's legal obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to both the CIPFA Code and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Investment Guidance which required the Authority to approve treasury management semi-annual and annual reports.

Proactive Treasury Management activity had resulted in savings of £2.1 million. This was £1 million more than the estimated £1.1 million reported in the Treasury mid-year review. These savings were on top of the £3.8 million worth of Treasury Management savings already built into the 2018/19 budget. The additional savings resulted due to a combination of increased investment income and securing lower cost loans. This meant that the £2m saving in 2019/20 budget for increased income from Treasury Management had already been achieved.

The level of Capital Financing debt, including the Merseyside Residuary Body debt managed by the Council on behalf of the constituent authorities, was £174 million at 31 March 2018. This was a reduction of £90 million since 1 April 2012.

The Council had complied with the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators as set out in the agreed Treasury Management Strategy for 2018/19.

During the year there had been a change in the minimum revenue provision, the amount set aside for the repayment of future debts and this was still subject to future audit. If agreed this would result in further savings for the Council and be reported as part of the final accounts to the Audit and Risk Management Committee, once signed off by the Council's auditors, Grant Thornton.

Cabinet Members expressed their thanks to all the finance team for all their work in achieving these savings which helped to support the delivery of vital Council services.

Councillor Pat Hackett remarked upon this brilliant result with the huge challenges ahead the need to maximise every commercial opportunity. He thanked all the officers who had delivered this.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Tony Jones, it was –

Resolved – That,

- (1) The Treasury Management Annual Report for 2018/19, be agreed;**
- (2) The savings of £2.1m from treasury and capital financing activities in 2018/19, be noted.**

Reasons for the decision: Wirral has adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (“the Code”), which includes regular update reports to Members of treasury activity. This report is the annual review for 2018/19. Under the Council’s Financial Regulations any surplus resources, including any additional income, are returned to General Fund Balances and so used to support the delivery of other Council services.