

CABINET

Monday, 25 November 2019

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

Apologies: Councillor A Leech

56 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.

Councillor Chris Jones declared a personal interest in agenda item 4, 'Wirral Health and Care Commissioning Peer Review on Integrated Social Work (Adult Social Care)' by virtue of her employment with the Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

57 MINUTES

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 4 November, 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

58 EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

Resolved – That the following key decision taken under delegated authority for the period, 25 October, 2019 to date, be noted:

- **Sale of Freehold Reversion of Marine Point, New Brighton. Leader of the Council. Decision date, 12 November, 2019, effective from 20 November, 2019.**

59 **WIRRAL HEALTH AND CARE COMMISSIONING PEER REVIEW ON INTEGRATED SOCIAL WORK (ADULT SOCIAL CARE)**

The Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Health and Wellbeing introduced a report on the Peer Review which took place in May, 2019 in Wirral focusing on the quality of front-line Adult Social Work practice. The review was led by a regional team of directors and senior leaders in Adult Social Care and was supported by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) in the North West, and the Local Government Association (LGA). The review had made several recommendations in relation to future development and direction and was positive about what had been achieved to date.

The key findings were as follows:

- “Integration is the right thing to do”.
- Integrating social care and health is having a positive impact on the frontline and people who use services.
- Co-location of teams is having a positive impact on innovation and opportunities to share good practice.
- More positive joint working at neighbourhood level, particularly complex cases with the ability to share information resulting in improved co-ordination and oversight of cases.
- Problem solving across health and social care is much easier.

On a motion by Councillor Chris Jones, duly seconded, it was -

Resolved - That the report and its recommendations be noted.

60 **COUNCIL TAX 2020/21 (TAX BASE, DISCOUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS AND LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME)**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources introduced a report which brought together issues regarding the proposed Council Tax Base for 2020/21 upon which the annual billing and Council Tax levels would be set; the proposed Council Tax Discounts including Local Discounts, exemptions for 2020/21 and the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme to be used during 2020/21. These needed to be approved by Council by 31 January, 2019.

Members of the Cabinet expressed their support for the proposals which were an example of the Council using its powers progressively to alleviate hardship and protect the most vulnerable.

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

Resolved - That Cabinet recommends to Council:

- (1) The figure of 93,965.9 be approved as the Council Tax Base for 2020/21 subject to the items below being approved;
- (2) The level and award of each local discount for 2020/21 be:

Wirral Women's & Children's Aid

To continue to award Wirral Women's & Children's Aid 100% discount.

Care Leaver's Discount

To award Care Leavers the requisite discount to reduce their Council Tax liability to zero until they are 25, from the 1 April 2020. This remained unchanged from 2019/20.

Empty Property Discounts

Discount category D = 0%. Full charge on properties undergoing renovations.

Discount category C = 0%. Full charge on empty properties from date they become unoccupied.

Both remain unchanged.

Empty Property Premium = 100% (200% Council Tax) for unfurnished properties empty for more than two years. 200% (300% Council Tax) for unfurnished properties empty more than five years. This is allowed by the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018. This had previously been reported to Cabinet on 4 November, 2019.

Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Relief Scheme

The Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Relief Scheme, approved by Cabinet in October 2013, continues in its current format for 2020/2021. The Scheme offers help and assistance in exceptional cases of hardship.

(3) **Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS)**

The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, previously reported to Cabinet on 4 November, 2019, be the approved Scheme for 2020/2021.

Reasons for decision:

1. The Council had to agree the Council Tax Base for 2020/21 by 31 January, 2020.
2. The Council had to decide on the level of Local Discounts and Exemptions by 31 January, 2020.
3. The Council had to determine annually the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

QUARTER 2 2019/20 REVENUE FINANCIAL MONITORING

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources introduced a report which provided a summary of the projected year-end revenue position as at Quarter 2, Month 6 (September 2019).

The year-end forecast recorded as part of September's financial monitoring activity represented an adverse variance to the budget of £7.155m. The Council was encountering significant cost pressures, which were being managed, but known total budget pressures of £12.955m existed. Due to the Council's financial position, an adverse budget variance was not viable and the Council was obliged to deliver a balanced budget.

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

Resolved - That:

- (1) the Year-end forecast position at Quarter 1 of £7.115 million adverse, be noted;**
- (2) the level of achievement of savings proposed for 2019-20, be noted;**
- (3) the revisions to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2020-2025, be noted.**

Reasons for decision: Regular monitoring and reporting of the Revenue Budgets, savings achievements and MTFS position enables decisions to be taken faster which might produce revenue benefits and would improve financial control in Wirral Council.

QUARTER 2 2019/20 CAPITAL FINANCIAL MONITORING

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources introduced a report which provided an update on the progress of the Capital Programme 2019/20 at the end of September 2019. It requested Cabinet to recommend to Council the 2019/20 Capital Programme of £52.889 million which took account of re-profiling, additional funding requirements and grant variations identified since June.

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

Resolved - That:

- (1) Cabinet recommends to Council the approval of additional funding for the schemes referred to in paragraph 3.3 of the report.**

(2) Cabinet recommends to Council the approval of the revised Capital Programme of £55.889 million for 2019-20.

Reasons for decision: Regular monitoring and reporting of the Capital Programme enables decisions to be taken faster which might produce revenue benefits and would improve financial control in Wirral Council.

63 **MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION RE-PROFILING**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources introduced a report which, following work in conjunction with external advisors, outlined a proposal to change the way that the Council calculated its Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).

The proposal to change the method of calculation resulted in a re-profiling of MRP charges, rather than a permanent reduction in MRP charges, and flowed from the inclusion of long-term debtors and deferred charges in the calculation for the first time, as now permitted under statutory guidance.

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

Resolved - That the proposal to re-profile MRP charges resulting in a reduction of MRP charges by over £2m p.a. over the next ten years, recouped via higher charges in subsequent years, be endorsed and recommended to Council for approval.

Reasons for decision:

1. Under statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State under section 21(1A) of the Local Government Act 2003, a Local Authority might change the method(s) that it used for calculating part or all of its MRP at any time.
2. Where a Council changed the method used to calculate MRP, this should be explained in an Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, submitted to full Council for approval at the start of the financial year, explaining why the change would better allow it to make prudent provision.
3. The proposal included in this paper, to effectively re-profile MRP charges, was only finalised in October 2019 due to the timing of external advice received on this matter and the need for discussion with Grant Thornton, the Council's auditors during the 2018/19 audit process. As such, this report was in addition to the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Statement presented at the start of the financial year.

64 **TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2019/20**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources introduced a report on the latest treasury management activities. The report 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.

Proactive Treasury Management activity had resulted in:

- A projected balanced outturn despite the £2 million reduction in budget that had been applied to Treasury Management in 2019/20. This was due to reduced 2019/20 interest payments and management of the Authority's Capital Financing.

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

Resolved - That the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report for 2019/20 be agreed.

Reasons for decision:

1. Wirral had adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management ("the Code"), which included regular update reports to Members of treasury activity. This report was the mid-year review for 2019/20.
2. Under the Council's financial regulations any surplus resources were returned to balances and so used to support the delivery of other Council services.

65 **APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (1)**

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth introduced a report which sought approval to provide a grant to enable the company named in Appendix 1 of the report to expand and create jobs, in line with the objectives of the Council's Business Investment Fund and Wirral Growth Plan.

Appendix 1 of the report contained commercially sensitive project and company information. Accordingly, Appendix 1 was deemed to be exempt from disclosure under paragraph 3, Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). (Minute 68 refers).

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

Resolved - That:

- (1) a grant in the sum of £100,000 be paid from the date of the signing of the legal agreement, subject to the conditions outlined in the report, towards the business growth project being undertaken by the company named within Appendix 1 to the report;**
- (2) a loan in the sum of £320,000 be paid from the date of the signing of the legal agreement, subject to the conditions outlined in the report, towards**

the business growth project being undertaken by the company named within Appendix 1 to the report;

- (3) the Director of Governance and Assurance be authorised to draw up and sign a legal agreement between the Council and the business subject to the conditions outlined in the report.**

Reasons for decision:

1. To enable the company named in Appendix 1 to expand and create jobs, in line with the objectives of the Council's Business Investment Fund and Wirral Growth Plan.
2. The Council's Capital Programme included an allocation for funding for business growth grants via the Business Investment Fund. The aim of the scheme was to provide support to businesses for viable projects that would support employment growth and business expansion within the Borough, which would not proceed without public sector intervention and which were not able to access any other external funding.

66 APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (2)

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth introduced a report which sought approval to provide a grant to enable the company named in Appendix 1 of the report to relocate to Wirral, expand and create jobs, in line with the objectives of the Council's Business Investment Fund and Wirral Growth Plan.

Appendix 1 of the report contained commercially sensitive project and company information. Accordingly, Appendix 1 was deemed to be exempt from disclosure under paragraph 3, Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). (Minute 69 refers).

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

Resolved - That:

- (1) a grant in the sum of £275,000 be paid from the date of the signing of the legal agreement, subject to the conditions outlined in the report, towards the business growth project being undertaken by the company named within Appendix 1 to the report.**
- (2) the Director of Governance and Assurance be authorised to draw up and sign a legal agreement between the Council and the business subject to the conditions outlined in the report.**

Reasons for decision:

1. To enable the company named in Appendix 1 to relocate to Wirral, expand and create jobs, in line with the objectives of the Council's Business Investment Fund and Wirral Growth Plan.
2. The Council's Capital Programme included an allocation for funding for business growth grants via the Business Investment Fund. The aim of the scheme was to provide support to businesses for viable projects that would support employment growth and business expansion within the Borough, which would not proceed without public sector intervention and which were not able to access any other external funding.

67 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved - That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test had been applied and favoured exclusion.

68 APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (1) - EXEMPT APPENDIX

Resolved - That further to Minute 65 above, the content of the exempt appendices circulated with the agenda, be noted.

69 APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (2) - EXEMPT APPENDIX

Resolved - That further to Minute 66 above, the content of the exempt appendices circulated with the agenda, be noted.