

# **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, 1 September 2021

Present: Councillor J Williamson (Chair)

Councillors T Anderson J Robinson  
P Gilchrist P Stuart  
P Cleary H Cameron  
S Hayes W Clements  
EA Grey L Rennie  
J McManus B Kenny  
Y Nolan A Hodson

## 45 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair opened the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast and a copy is retained on the Council's website.

## 46 **APOLOGIES**

The Chair confirmed the apologies of Councillors Jeff Green and Tony Jones, with Councillors Andrew Hodson and Brian Kenny deputising for them respectively.

## 47 **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. There were no declarations.

## 48 **MINUTES**

**Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2021 be approved and adopted as a correct record.**

## 49 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

There were no questions, statements or petitions from the public or Members.

## 50 **BUDGET MONITORING 2021/22 QUARTER 1**

Shaer Halewood, Director of Resources, presented this report which set out the financial monitoring information for the Council as at quarter 1 (Apr-Jun) of the 2021-22 financial year. There was a potential overspend of just over £1 million, mainly due to the underachievement of car parking income. Options to

mitigate the reduction in car parking income would be taken to Environment Committee.

The budget had to be balanced at the end of the year so mitigation measures would be brought to the next meeting. Variances were described, which included not filling vacancies, funding for elections, review of capital programme and limited opening of leisure facilities. The Committee was aware that the Ministry for Housing, Local Government and Communities had provided a conditional offer of exceptional financial support (capitalisation directive) for 2021/22 of up to £10.7m. One of the conditions of that offer was that the Council needed to provide evidence from the assurance review of the authority's financial position and its ability to meet any or all the identified budget gap without any additional borrowing. The review had concluded and the report was awaited.

New financial system due to go live in 2022. There are some virements suggested to ensure funds are in the correct place in case of problems with the new system.

Members asked a range of questions on the budget positions and the detail behind it including voluntary redundancies, Wirral Evolutions, car parking, garden waste and the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service.

**Resolved - That**

- (1) the adverse forecast position presented at Quarter 1 be noted.**
- (2) the budget virement proposals detailed within each Directorate Area of the report be approved.**

**51 CAPITAL MONITORING QUARTER 1 2021/22**

Shaer Halewood, Director of Resources, presented this report which provided an update on the progress of the Capital Programme 2021/22 at the end of June 2021. All schemes had been reviewed and the report listed those which could be achieved within the financial year. This had required some virements to allow for the reprofiling.

Members queried several points and it was clarified that:

- For the extra care housing scheme, funds were provided in advance so that planning permission could be gained to enable the development to take place. The development should lead to savings on adult's care services by enabling people to live longer independently.
- There was key route network funding provided at short notice which was gained after the budget was drawn up.
- The Community Bank had not yet launched although the process continued to be followed and is being led by the CSBA. No expenditure had been incurred in relation to this.

**Resolved: That**

- (1) the on-going review and reprofiling of the Capital Programme be reported to members in the next quarterly capital monitoring report.**
- (2) Council be recommended to approve:**
  - 1. additional funding for the schemes referred to in section 3.5 in this report.**
  - 2. the revised Capital Programme of £79.7 million for 2021-22, including the virements referred to in Appendix 3 in this report.**

52 **WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Policy and Resources Committee was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme was to align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee.

It was pointed out that an item on asset disposals requested at the last meeting had not been added to the programme.

The Chair raised the issue of Afghan that were coming to the Borough as a result of the evacuation of Afghans who had assisted the British forces following the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban. Many Councils around the country had offered to take a share of the refugees. Paul Satoor, Chief Executive Officer, explained that he would circulate a note to Members which would include a drop off point for donations and explaining the funding from the Home Office. 12 refugees had been accepted so far.

**Resolved: That the work programme for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year be agreed subject to the addition of a report on Asset Disposals.**

53 **REFERRAL FROM ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - WIRRAL GROWTH COMPANY - GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

Vicky Shaw, Head of Legal Services, introduced this report which detailed the arrangements by which the Council was represented on the Board of the Wirral Growth Company Limited Liability Partnership and the means by which the relationship between those representatives and the Council were governed. The Council had four places on the Board. Two of these were filled by specified positions within the Council and two had been filled by Members. The arrangement for scrutinising the work of the Board was also to be determined and options were suggested in the report.

Members were aware that membership of the Board would prevent a Member from participating in Council debates about the company or project because of the conflict of interests.

Members debated the potential options and proportionalities of any Sub-Committee or other meeting. They were also aware that there were urgent matters requiring attention, including the accounts of the Partnership.

Councillor Phil Gilchrist proposed expanding the membership of any scrutinising Sub-Committee to 7 to allow membership from all parties who were on Policy and Resources Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Pat Cleary and was put to the vote but lost (2 for, 12 against and 1 abstention)

The meeting adjourned for 10 minutes.

Councillor Jeanette Williamson proposed that Policy and Resources Committee in its entirety acted as the scrutiny body for matters regarding the Wirral Growth Company. This was seconded by Councillor Yvonne Nolan.

Councillor Paul Stuart proposed that the two places which had been taken by the Assistant Director Finance and the Director of Children's Services be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to appoint two suitable senior officers. This was agreed by assent.

**Resolved: That**

- (1) the Chief Executive Officer be given delegated powers to appoint two appropriate officers to the Board of the Wirral Growth Company Limited Liability Partnership;**
- (2) the remaining 2 vacancies on the Board of the Wirral Growth Company Limited Liability Partnership be filled by two Councillors (one Labour, one Conservative) with names to be provided to the Director of Law and Governance by the political groups;**
- (3) the full Policy and Resources Committee consider all reports relating to the Wirral Growth Company Limited Liability Partnership with a report about the accounts being brought to the next meeting.**