

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 7 September 2022

Present: Councillor J Williamson (Chair)

Councillors T Anderson P Stuart
P Gilchrist H Cameron
P Cleary J Bird
EA Grey M Booth
T Jones A Hodson (in place
of L Rennie)
Y Nolan K Hodson
J Robinson J Johnson

In attendance: Councillors C Davies

43 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the webcast. The Chair informed the Committee that it was the last meeting that Philip McCourt would attend before leaving his role as Director of Law and Governance to take up a role as a consultant at Bevan Brittan LLP. Following a speech from the Director of Law and Governance, Group Leaders placed on record their thanks to Mr McCourt for his work during his time at the Council.

44 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lesley Rennie.

45 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.

No declarations were made.

46 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

The Chair informed the Committee that no public questions, petitions or questions by members had been received.

47 CAPITAL MONITORING QUARTER 1 2022/23

The Director of Resources introduced the report which provided an update on the progress of the Capital Programme 2022/23 at the end of June 2022 and recommended that Committee agree the revised 2022/23 Capital Programme

of £147.6 million taking account of re-profiling, virements, additional funding requirements and grant variations identified since the Capital Programme was formally agreed on 28th February 2022.

Following the setting of the budget in February 2022, a number of schemes remained unspent and the funding had been reprofiled into the capital programme as detailed in the report. The report further detailed the new grant funded schemes including the Better Care Fund Disabled Facilities Grant, the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement and Basic and High Needs school provision. The report sought the Committee's approval of the proposed virements within the gift of Policy and Resources Committee and the recommended approval of the revised Capital Programme to Council.

Members discussed the detail of a number of the Capital Programmes including the cost for the works to the Dock Road Bridge and the liability for the increased costs for the West Kirby Flood Alleviation Scheme. Following a detailed discussion in relation to the Secretary of State's request to see the Council's plan to generate additional capital receipts, the Director of Resources undertook to report back to the Committee on the proposed phasing of repaying the capitalisation funding based on the timing of capital receipts.

Resolved – That

(1) Council be recommended to approve the revised Capital Programme of £147.6 million for 2022/23, including the addition of the new grant funding referred to in section 3.4.

(2) The virements referred to in Appendix D to the report with a value of less than £0.5m be approved.

48 2022/23 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER ONE (1 APR – 30 JUN)

The Director of Resources introduced the report which set out the financial monitoring information for the Council as at quarter 1 (1 Apr – 30 Jun) of 2022/23 and provided Members with an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2022/23 saving programme and a summary of reserves and balances, 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 impact of the Cost-of-Living Crisis on the Council's budget was outlined, with the report detailing the pressures arising from the macroeconomic pressures resulting in an adverse variance of £5.3m at Q1. This included additional cost of utilities in Council buildings, a shortfall in leisure income, a reduction in car parking income and an increase in the cost of the waste

contract. It was further reported that the national employers staff pay award presented an additional pressure of £3.4m, and that this had yet to be accepted. The report detailed the proposed mitigations against the increase budget pressures, and the Committee was advised that these would continue to be reported throughout the financial year.

In response to queries by members, it was clarified that the loss of income in car parking charges was due to both the delay in implementation of new charges, and the reduction in income on existing parking schemes. An update was also provided on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) statutory override, which presently meant Local Authorities were not liable for the DSG deficit but was due to expire 2022-23, with national lobbying of central government ongoing to extend the override. The costs associated with reprovision of Library Services was also raised, with £0.380m additional costs to be mitigated as a result of unexpected circumstances such as additional security and energy costs.

Resolved – That

- (1) the balanced forecast revenue position presented at Quarter 1 be noted.**
- (2) the progress on delivery of the 2022/23 savings programme at Quarter 1 be noted.**
- (3) the forecast level of reserves and balances at Quarter 1 be noted.**

49 **2022-23 REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER ONE (1 APR – 30 JUN) FOR RESOURCES, LAW AND GOVERNANCE AND CORPORATE OFFICE**

The Director of Resources introduced the report which set out the financial monitoring information for the Policy & Resources Committee as its function as a Policy and Services Committee for the Resources Directorate, the Law and Governance Directorate and the Corporate Office at quarter 1 (1 Apr – 30 Jun) of 2022-23. The report provided Members with an overview of revenue and capital budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2022-23 saving programme and a summary of reserves to enable the Committee to take ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets.

Resolved – That

- (1) the forecast adverse revenue position of £0.657m presented at Quarter 1 be noted.**

(2) the progress on delivery of the 2022-23 savings programme at Quarter 1 be noted.

(3) the forecast level of reserves at Quarter 1 be noted.

(4) the forecast capital position presented at Quarter 1 be noted.

50 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Director of Law and Governance introduced the report which provided the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

Members discussed the Cost of Living report due to be considered by the Committee in the future and suggested the inclusion of the financial and public health implications of keeping council buildings open during the winter to act as 'warm banks'.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Jean Robinson, it was –

Resolved – That the work programme, with the inclusion of a report on the financial and public health implications of keeping council buildings open during the winter to act as 'warm banks', be noted.

51 **EXTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT 2020-21, AUDITORS REPORT COMPANY GOVERNANCE 2020-21 AND MERSEYSIDE WASTE VALUE FOR MONEY REPORT 2020-21**

The Director of Resources introduced the report which provided for consideration the recommendations of the Audit and Risk Management Committee in respect of External Audit Annual Audit Report 2020-21, Auditors Report Company Governance 2020-21 and Merseyside Waste Value for Money Report 2020-21. It was reported that the report was submitted to Policy and Resources Committee as per best practice to provide an overarching view of the final reports prior to submission to Council for approval.

The Committee discussed the recommendation of the External Auditor in relation to a Council officer being a member of the Board of Edsential, and it was confirmed that the Assistant Director of Education was a member of the Board.

On a motion by Councillor Jean Robinson, seconded by the Chair, it was –

Resolved – That

(1) Council be recommended to approve the publication of the External Audit Annual Audit Report 2020-21, Auditors Report Company Governance 2020-21 and Merseyside Waste Value for Money Report 2020-21.

(2) a further report on the implementation of the Auditors recommendations and progress throughout the year be considered at a future meeting.

52 MINUTES OF THE SENIOR OFFICER AND APPOINTMENTS STAFFING SUB-COMMITTEE

Resolved – That the minutes of the Senior Officer and Appointments Staffing Sub-Committee meeting held on 28 July 2022 be noted.