

# **ECONOMY REGENERATION & HOUSING COMMITTEE**

Monday, 18 September 2023

Present:

Councillor T Jones (Chair)

Councillors	GJ Davies	J Bird
	R Pitt	E Lamb
	M Skillicorn	E Tomeny
	G Wood	Raymond
	A Hodson	K Hodson (for A Gardner)

23 **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 for two years.

24 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Andrew Gardener. Councillor Kathy Hodson was in attendance as substitute.

25 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Jo Bird queried whether members of the Labour Party should declare an interest, due to the fact that the Labour MP for Birkenhead rented office space from the Chamber of Commerce. The Lead Principal Lawyer for Regeneration advised Members that it was a matter for the Labour Group members to decide whether or not to make a declaration. He indicated that he did not consider that there was any interest for such members to declare.

26 **MINUTES**

Councillor Jo Bird queried the Regeneration Delivery Plan and why it was not on the agenda for this Committee. Members were informed that the plan had gone to the Policy and Resources Committee in September 2023 and would also be considered by a Committee workshop.

**Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2023 be approved as a correct record.**

27 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

No questions, statements or petitions from the public or Councillors had been received.

28 **IN-YEAR BUDGET POSITION**

The Director of Regeneration and Place presented a report which provided an update on the budgets in respect of the in-year position and the anticipated pressures for future years which were being considered within the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Members were informed that the Medium-Term Financial Plan considered the future pressures and savings options that had been put forward as part of a balanced budget position. The Council faced a challenging financial outlook due to inflationary and demand pressures alongside the previous significant reductions in Government funding and uncertainty around the future financial settlements. At the end of Quarter 1, there was a forecast adverse variance of £0.5m against the Committee's revised net revenue budget of £13.21m, which is equivalent to a variance of 4% from the annual budget.

Members queried the £0.5m adverse variance, future budget pressures and £200k mitigation. Assurance was given regarding containment of spend. Also queried was the implementation of the Enterprise Resource Planning software, costs associated with Birkenhead Commercial District, future options for Wallasey Town Hall and a recent contract for commercial property advice.

It was moved by Councillor Tony Jones and seconded by Councillor George Davies that the report be noted and endorsed.

Councillor Jo Bird moved a procedural motion that the two proposed resolutions be voted on separately. This procedural motion was voted on and lost (3:7).

The Original motion was then put to the vote and carried (7:3) It was therefore,

**Resolved – that the report be noted and endorsed.**

29 **ADOPTION OF WIRRAL INTERIM APPROACH TO AVOID AND MITIGATE RECREATIONAL PRESSURE**

The Director of Regeneration and Place introduced a report which sought approval for the Council to adopt the Wirral Interim Approach to Avoid and

Mitigate Recreational Disturbance as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

The approach provided a mechanism to fund measures, through a tariff on new housing development of 10 or more units, to avoid and mitigate disturbance to birds from human activity on the internationally designated foreshores around the Wirral coast arising from additional visits to the coast generated by new housing development. The Wirral Interim approach formed part of a wider Liverpool City Region Recreational Management Strategy (LCR RMS) initiative to tackle this issue. The Wirral Interim approach had been produced as an interim measure due to delays in implementing the LCR RMS, which is expected to come into force in 2024.

The Wirral Interim approach document was published in draft alongside the Submission Draft Wirral Local Plan 2021-2037 in July 2022 and was in the Local Plan Examination Library as document reference ECC27.

The LCR RMS was implemented through a joint Supplementary Planning Document, and the draft scoping document (currently out to consultation) was appended to this report for noting.

Members sought assurance that measures were not being implemented to discourage people from visiting the local coastline and were informed that the focus of the RMS would be more educational, citing volunteer schemes around Hilbre Island and more signage on foreshores.

A further discussion was had about feasibility studies, potential revenue and queried if a Section 106 Agreement could be used to ensure compliance. Members were assured that this could be utilised as a planning obligation between developers and the Council.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Kathy Hodson it was,

**Resolved – That**

- 1. the adoption of the Wirral Interim Approach to Avoid and Mitigate Recreational Pressure Document as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications be approved.**
- 2. periodic updates be received by this Committee on the Interim Approach to Avoid and Mitigate Recreational Pressures and its implementation be reviewed on an annual basis in consultation with the Chair and Spokespersons of the Committee**

The Director of Regeneration and Place introduced a report which provided details of the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Place Based Business Support (PBBS) grant funding allocation of £952,320 from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA).

The report set out recommendations for how the Council should utilise the grant to deliver the required outputs and activities. The grant funding presents the opportunity to achieve savings against the Council's revenue budget. The Council has commissioned Wirral Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WCC) under contract to deliver the Business Support Service (BSS) until 31 December 2023, with the option to extend delivery to 31 December 2025.

It was proposed that the BSS Contract is varied to incorporate PBBS outputs and be part-funded from the Council's UKSPF PBBS allocation. The PBBS allocation also enabled the commissioning of additional specialist interventions to support growth in key sectors and clusters and the funding of two full-time equivalent council staff posts during the UKSPF grant funding period.

Members queried if a Chamber of Commerce Value report would come to committee, with officers requesting clarification on what the report should contain. It was noted that the exempt appendix referenced the service level support and that there had been capital grant which was subject to a relevant officer decision report. Members were informed that the performance value of the contract had been tested and was included in the exempt appendices.

**Resolved – that,**

**1. the expenditure of the UKSPF allocation to deliver Place Based Business Support as outlined in paragraphs 4.1 to 4.7 of this report be authorised; and**

**2. the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to enter into an extension of the Business Support Service contract with Wirral Chamber of Commerce and Industry for an additional two years from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2025.**

## 31 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Lead Principal Lawyer presented the work programme update. Members were informed that, the work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee.

Members discussed the regeneration working group and progress made on projects with Members requesting tangible dates to inform residents.

Members also requested that the Birkenhead Design Guide be added to the work programme.

**Resolved – that the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year be agreed with the inclusion of the above items.**

**32 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 I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.**

**33 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND - EXEMPT APPENDICES**

**Resolved – that the exempt appendices be noted.**