

CABINET

At a meeting of Cabinet held on
10 November 2021

(Present) **Councillor Baines (Chair)**
Councillors Bell, Bond, Bowden, Burns,
Gomez-Aspron MBE, Groucutt and McCauley

(Not Present) **Councillors Charlton and Quinn**

52 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Charlton and Quinn

53 MINUTES

- * **Resolved that the minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 6 and 20 October 2021 be approved and signed.**

54 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

No declarations of interest from Members were made.

55 ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY **CABINET RESPONSE TO THE SCRUTINY SPOTLIGHT REVIEW OF** **WILDFLOWER SUSTAINABILITY AND GRASS CUTTING**

A report was submitted which presented a proposed Action Plan in response to the recommendations made by the Wildflower Sustainability and Grass Cutting Spotlight Review report which was approved by the Place Services Scrutiny Committee meeting on 20 September 2021.

In August 2021, the Place Services Scrutiny Committee established a spotlight review group to review the Council's approach to wild flowering sustainability and grass cutting. This was a short and focused review that included a workshop with a number of the Council's technical grounds maintenance officers to understand current practices. The workshop highlighted a range of opportunities and risks associated with introducing a new and different approach to grass cutting and wild flowering.

Following the workshop with officers and a comprehensive assessment of best practice across the UK, the task group developed a series of recommendations for Cabinet's consideration.

- * **Resolved that:**
 - (1) the Action Plan attached that set out the response to the recommendations from the Place Services Scrutiny Committee's Wildflower Sustainability and Grass Cutting Spotlight Review report be approved; and**

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- (2) **the response to the recommendations be provided to the meeting of the Place Services Scrutiny Committee to be held on 6 December 2021.**

56 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT – PERIOD 2 2021/22

A report was submitted which provided the forecast financial position in relation to the revenue and capital budget for 2021/22 and summarised the reserves and balances position.

The report included details on the progress and delivery of the 2021/22 budget savings and also included detail of the 2021/22 use of Covid-19 Emergency Grant Funding, Sales, Fees and Charges Compensation Funding and Other Covid Grants.

The report included the Interim Treasury Management Strategy Report.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the latest revised budget and forecast revenue position for 2021/22 as detailed in Section 2 be noted;**
- (2) **the latest position with regard to the implementation of the 2021/22 budget savings as detailed in Section 3 be noted;**
- (3) **the revised capital programme as detailed in Section 4 be approved;**
- (4) **the progress regarding the Strategic Capital Asset programme be noted;**
- (5) **the Interim Treasury Management Strategy Report be noted; and**
- (6) **the Treasury Limits and Prudential Indicators 2021/22 to 2023/24 be approved.**

57 MID-YEAR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE 2021-2024

Members were informed that at its meeting held on 3 March 2021, Council considered and approved a report that set out the following:

- the proposed Revenue Budget for the financial year 2021/22;
- the three-year capital programme and Capital Strategy for the period 2021-2024;
- the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for the financial year 2021/22; and
- the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2021-2024

This report provided Cabinet with an update on the Council's MTFS and highlighted a Series of key risks, uncertainties and pressures that continued to exist.

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The report also highlighted the ongoing cumulative funding gap during the MTFS period and the requirement for budget savings to be delivered to ensure a medium term financially balanced position that was sustainable and did not call on reserves.

* **Resolved that the report be approved.**

58 ST HELENS BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN – MAIN MODIFICATIONS

A report was submitted which updated Cabinet on the St Helens Borough Local Plan which was currently at examination stage. Some changes to the Local Plan Submission Draft, known as 'Main Modifications', had been identified by the Planning Inspectors through the Examination process as being required to make the Local Plan 'sound', in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. In line with the relevant legislation, it was proposed that the identified Main Modifications be subject to a period of public consultation. This would form the next stage of the Local Plan Examination process.

The Cabinet was informed that the decision was a Key Decision and details had been published in accordance with the provisions within the Constitution.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) the proposed Main Modifications to the Local Plan Submission Draft, attached as Appendix A be approved;**
- (2) a period of public consultation on the proposed Main Modifications to the Local Plan Submission Draft be approved; and**
- (3) authority be delegated to the Executive Director Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning to:
 - a) make any further modest refinements to the proposed Main Modifications in Appendix A should the Inspectors identify a requirement for such prior to public consultation commencing; and**
 - b) to provide any necessary comments on the public consultation.****

59 THE PEOPLE'S PLAN

A report was submitted which provided Cabinet with a draft of the latest People's Plan. The plan had been updated in advance of the scheduled timeline because of the impact of the pandemic and the changing landscape of the health and care system nationally, which affected the Cheshire and Merseyside System and the Council's provision at place.

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The plan was born out of a number of partnership development sessions in late 2020 and the revised governance arrangements established in anticipation of the White Paper and subsequent Bill.

The revised plan builds on the previous version, but had a tighter vision, a mission to tackle inequalities and three priorities of:

1. Mental Wellbeing;
2. Tackling Obesity; and
3. Resilient Communities.

The plan focused on the next five years, but also featured the more immediate Operational priorities including the restoration of services and new ways of working.

It was noted that the Council would need to make progress on priorities as set out in the NHS Long Term Plan whilst recognising that people, places and organisations were in a very different space than when this was first published in 2019.

* **Resolved that the revised People's Plan be endorsed.**

The following Minute was a Key Decision but notice had not been given in the Public Notice of Key Decisions. The Cabinet was able to make a decision in relation to the item as the provisions relating to the General Exceptions in the Council's Constitution had been met.

60 ST HELENS CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSE PLAN

A report was submitted which informed Cabinet that the St Helens Climate Change response plan reinforced the Council's ambition and commitment to meet its carbon net zero target by 2040. It highlighted the early progress made since Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and identified the steps now being taken to deliver the net zero pledge.

The Climate Change response plan showed how the Council was demonstrating leadership in tackling the global climate crisis, and how residents, businesses and partners will all play their part in achieving the net zero goal.

The scale of the challenge was huge and this response plan signified just the start of the journey. It highlighted how the Council and society more generally must change how it works, behaves and acts.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the St Helens Climate Change response plan attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved;**
- (2) **the purchase of the UK's first custom built Hydrogen waste vehicle, funded from the approved vehicle replacement programme, and the Waste Management and Climate Fund**

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(previously agreed in principle at Cabinet on 24 February 2021 as part of the strategic capital investment schemes in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2021-2024) be approved and authorisation be delegated to the Executive Director Place Services and Executive Director Corporate Services to award the contract;

- (3) the purchase of nine replacement refuse collection vehicles as part of the approved Vehicle Replacement Programme be approved and authorization be delegated to the Executive Director Place Services and Executive Director Corporate Services to award the contract; and**
- (4) the allocation of additional future funding to support the delivery of the action plan that will be developed over the next 12 months be agreed in principle.**

The following Minute was a Key Decision but notice had not been given in the Public Notice of Key Decisions. The Cabinet was able to make a decision in relation to the item as the provisions relating to the General Exceptions in the Council's Constitution had been met.

61 HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND

A report was submitted which set out the principles for operating the Household Support Fund within St Helens.

On 30 September 2021, the Government announced a new £500m Household Support Fund to provide help to residents who would otherwise struggle to buy food, pay essential utility bills or meet other essential living costs this winter.

The Fund would operate between 6 October 2021 and 31 March 2022 with grant funding being provided to upper-tier local authorities. St Helens Borough Council had received an indicative funding allocation of £1,779,581.

Local authorities were expected to develop their own local schemes and to define how residents could access the fund. The Department of Work and Pensions had issued draft guidance and had stipulated that at least 50% of support should be provided to households with children or young adults.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) the distribution of the grant to eligible households be approved; and**
- (2) the Chief Executive and the Executive Director of Corporate Services be delegated authority to amend the scheme, as required, to ensure that the grant is fully spent to support households in need.**

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62 REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE CHARGES

A report was submitted which sought permission to vary the existing fees for chargeable rates and sought authorisation for the commencement of the legal process to vary the fees charged by Hackney Carriages.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the proposed variation of the fees charged by Hackney Carriages in the borough be noted;**
- (2) **it be authorised that the publication of the proposed table of fares for a consultation period of 14 days from the first publication of the notice during which objections may be made;**
- (3) **it be agreed that should no objections be received, or all objections be withdrawn, then the table of fares take immediate effect; and**
- (4) **if an objection is duly made as stated and is not withdrawn, the council shall set a further date, not later than two months after the first specified date, on which the table of fares shall come into force with or without modifications as decided by them after consideration of the objections.**

63 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

* **Resolved that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items for the reason stated:**

<u>Minute</u>	<u>Reason (under Local Government Act 1972)</u>
64 & 65	Information relating to an individual in accordance with Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12(a).

The following Minute was a Key Decision but notice had not been given in the Public Notice of Key Decisions. The Cabinet was able to make a decision in relation to the item as the provisions relating to the General Exceptions in the Council's Constitution had been met.

64 NEW EDUCATIONAL PREMISES FOR ASHURST PRIMARY SCHOOL

A report was submitted which requested that the revised cost for the construction of new education premises on the existing site of Ashurst Primary School be approved and that additional funding be allocated within the Education, Skills & Business portfolio capital programme in respect of the cost increase.

In September 2019, Cabinet approved that new educational premises should be constructed on the existing site of Ashurst Primary School. In July 2020,

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due to an increase in the estimated cost of the scheme, Cabinet approved a revised total scheme cost.

The scheme costs had been further revised by the Council's appointed design partner. This report provided details of the latest cost increases and sought approval for the revised scheme cost. In addition, approval was sought to award a contract for the planned construction works.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the revised total cost £8.611m for the construction of new educational premises on the existing site of Ashurst Primary School be approved and increase budgetary provision in the Education, Skills & Business portfolio capital programme by £1.434m. In addition, it is proposed that a contingency of £140k is earmarked against the possibility of further inflationary increases; and**
- (2) **an award of contract to Kier Construction, following a competitive tender process via the SCAPE public sector construction framework, be approved, to deliver the required construction works associated with the new primary school.**

Councillor Bond declared a personal interest in the following item and here left the meeting.

Councillor Bell declared a personal interest in the following item and in accordance with the Member Code of Conduct remained in the meeting, took part in discussion and voted thereon.

65 IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH AUTISM

A report was submitted which set out, further to the Cabinet Report of 14 July 2021, recommendations to expand the current position of Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision for pupils with autism.

Recommendations represent the outcomes of discussion with schools following notification of an allocation of £649,444 from the Department for Education High Needs Provision Capital Allocation to invest in expanding the offer for pupils with SEND.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **it be approved in principle, the establishment of resourced provisions for pupils with autism at Wargrave and Grange Valley Primary School Partnership for up to 20 pupils with autism, subject to the outcome of formal consultation processes;**
- (2) **it be approved in principle, the development of the resourced provisions, at Wargrave and Grange Valley School Partnership**

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to be funded from the confirmed 2021/22 High Needs Provision Capital Allocation of £649k;

- (3) the Director of Children's Services, be delegated authority, in consultation with the Executive Director of Corporate Services, to award a contract to undertake the scheme of works in accordance with the Council's decision-making processes, following a competitive tender exercise, including any necessary revisions to the required budget provision with the Council's capital programme; and
- (4) that a formal consultation process be undertaken in line with The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 in relation to the proposal to establish the resourced provisions. The outcome of the consultation to be approved by Delegated Executive Decision.

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