

CABINET

At a meeting of Cabinet held on
7 October 2020

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

(Present as an Observer) **Councillor Maloney MBE**

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

No declarations of interest were made.

3 MINUTES

* **Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 23 September 2020 be approved and signed.**

4 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT 2 2020/21

A report was submitted which detailed the latest forecast in relation to the revenue budget for 2020/21 and detailed the latest capital programme for the period 2020/21 to 2022/23 and the latest reserves and balances position. A summary of portfolio forecast revenue outturn positions and variations against the revised budget were detailed within the report.

The report largely concentrated on the Council's 'business as usual' position, but the financial implications of COVID-19 on the Council's budget position was also noted, as the significant financial challenge the pandemic presented must be considered alongside the usual operational activities carried out by the Council in delivering services to its residents.

The Council remained committed to the regular monitoring of its financial performance, and the report provided Cabinet with an update on the position of the Council in respect of the general fund revenue budget for 2020/21 and progress in delivering the capital programme.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) the latest forecast revised budget and revenue position for 2021/21 as detailed in Section 1 be noted;**
- (2) the latest position in relation to the implementation of the 2020/21 savings proposals as detailed in Section 2 be noted;**
- (3) the revised Capital programme as detailed in Section 3 be noted;**

CABINET

- (4) **the latest reserves and balances position as provided in Section 4 be noted;**
- (5) **other Financial Monitoring Matters as detailed in section 5 be noted; and**
- (6) **the Treasury Management position Statement as detailed in Annex G be noted.**

5 BUDGET STRATEGY 2021-2022

A report was submitted which gave an update of the Council's forecast budget position, highlighting the assumptions used in arriving at the current forecast, and the uncertainties that exist in producing a financial forecast for future financial years.

In approving its 2020-2021 budget, Council agreed to a series of recommendations set out in the report.

In setting the budget it was recognised that the use of earmarked reserves and other items of one-off funding in balancing the budget was not sustainable and would need to be factored into future years' budget processes.

The financial environment within which the Council operated already presented significant financial challenges, prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Providing additional support and facing significant reductions in revenue streams as a result of the pandemic had had a significant financial impact upon all local authorities, with the impact forecast to be felt over a sustained period, impacting upon both the current and future years' budgets.

The extent to which that impact would be felt remained highly uncertain given the number of variables and factors that apply.

At its meeting held on 24 June 2020, Cabinet considered two financial reports and resolved to approve the progression of an Emergency Budget during 2020-2021 aligned with the Reset and Recovery phase of the Council's COVID-19 response, with all services included for review.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the financial position for the current financial year and the forecast budget gap for 2021-2022 be noted;**
- (2) **the progression of budget proposals to address the underlying budget shortfall for 2021-2022 be approved; and**
- (3) **emergency budget actions be approved to address the budget shortfall in the current financial year.**

6 GREEN HOMES GRANTS SCHEME

A report was submitted which identified the opportunities the Green Homes Grants (GHG) scheme provided to improve the energy efficiency of homes in the Borough

CABINET

which would contribute to reducing carbon emissions, reducing the impact of fuel poverty on low income households, delivering wider health and well-being outcomes by making homes warmer and healthier places to live and supporting the local green economy.

Cabinet were informed that in July 2020, the Government announced plans to invest £2 billion to improve home energy efficiency in England through a voucher scheme - the Green Homes Grant (GHG) Scheme. The aims of the scheme were to reduce fuel poverty by targeting grants to low income households living in the least energy efficient homes, to support the phasing out of the use of high carbon fossil fuel heating systems and contribute to the UK's commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. It was anticipated that these actions would support economic resilience and a green recovery in response to the economic impacts of COVID-19 through the installation and supply chains.

The report proposed recommendations as to how the Council could promote and deliver the scheme locally ensuring that the St Helens Borough Council maximise the opportunities available for each of the different elements of the GHG including the £5,000 & £10,000 voucher schemes and the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) competition.

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 approach to promoting the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme be approved; and**
- (2) **the proposed approach to the Green Homes Grant - Local Authority Delivery scheme using existing delivery mechanisms to maximise outputs in the second phase 2021/22 be approved.**

7 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

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

Minute	Reason (under the Local Government Act 1972)
8 & 9	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information); and
10	Information which may reveal the identity of an individual.

8 MODERNISATION OF ST HELENS CREMATORIUM

A report was submitted which detailed that the modernisation of the Crematorium was previously approved by Cabinet on 9 January 2019. During the pre-construction stage scheme costs increased and were further impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

CABINET

Approval was now sought to progress the scheme together with the additional costs as detailed in the report.

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 additional cost of £1.8m for the refurbishment of the Crematorium funded from Prudential Borrowing be approved;**
- (2) **the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Executive Director of Corporate Services (S151 Officer) be delegated authority to award the contract at such time as it is possible to implement the improvements on site; and**
- (3) **the approach to contingency to reflect the current market uncertainty and the unavoidable delay to the implementation of the contract be noted.**

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.

9 GLASS FUTURES REGENERATION PROGRAMME

A report was submitted which updated Cabinet on the progress made on the Glass Futures Project and sought approval to take the project forward to the delivery stage requiring the entering into legal contracts and funding agreements.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **it be approved to enter into a Tripartite Agreement for Lease with Network Space and Glass Futures Limited as detailed in the report;**
- (2) **a funding application to Liverpool City Region Combined Authority be supported for £9m to be considered at their November Investment Committee; and**
- (3) **a Foundation Industries Masterplan be undertaken with appointed advisors funded by St Helens Borough Council in partnership with Network Space**

10 SENIOR MANAGEMENT RE-STRUCTURE

A report was submitted which outlined the proposals to introduce a new senior management structure based on clear design principles and good practice, the aim of which was an organisational shape that would deliver greater equity and more consistent senior management roles across tiers of senior leadership and management, supporting the effective delivery of Council and Borough wider priorities.

CABINET

- * **Resolved that:**
- (1) the proposed Phase 1 senior management structure and its implementation be approved; and**
 - (2) the proposed pay structure and its implementation be approved.**

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