

ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL

18 TO HEAR AND RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 9

The Mayor reported that there were no questions submitted in accordance with this Procedure Rule.

19 TO HEAR AND RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10

The Mayor reported that there were no questions submitted in accordance with this Procedure Rule.

20 TO HEAR ANY DEPUTATIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 11

The Mayor reported that no requests to hear a deputation had been received in accordance with this Council Procedure Rule.

21 BUDGET STRATEGY 2021-2022

A report was submitted which informed Council that the Cabinet, at its meeting held on 7 October 2020, considered a report detailing the forecast budget position for the current and future financial years and sought to note Cabinet's recommendation for the progression of budget proposals to address the underlying financial pressures.

* **Resolved that:**

(1) **the resolutions of Cabinet be noted, including:**

- i) **the financial position for the current financial year and the forecast budget gap for 2021-2022;**
- ii) **the progression of budget proposals to address the underlying budget shortfall for 2021-2022; and**
- iii) **emergency budget actions to address the budget shortfall in the current financial year.**

22 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT PERIOD 2 2020/21

A report was submitted which detailed the latest forecast in relation to the revenue budget for 2020/21 and 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 presents must be considered alongside the usual operational activities carried out by the Council in delivering services to its residents.

The structure of the report attached as Appendix 1 was as follows:

<u>Section</u>	<u>Content</u>
1	Summary Revenue Budget
2	Implementation of 2020/21 Savings Proposals

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3	Capital Programme 2020/21 to 2022/23
4	Reserves and Balances
5	Other Financial Monitoring Matters
6	Treasury Management Position Statement

* **Resolved that the resolutions of Cabinet be noted as follows:**

- (1) the latest forecast revised budget and revenue position for 2020/21 as detailed in Section 1;**
- (2) the latest position in relation to the implementation of the 2020/21 savings proposals as detailed in Section 2;**
- (3) the revised Capital programme as detailed in Section 3;**
- (4) the latest reserves and balances position as provided in Section 4;**
- (5) other Financial Monitoring Matters as detailed in section 5; and**
- (6) the Treasury Management position Statement as detailed in section 6.**

23 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME – INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS & APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR OF AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

A report was submitted which informed Council of the Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendations in relation to the Members' Allowances Scheme and appoint a Chair of Audit & Governance Committee.

At its Annual Council meeting held on 30 September 2020, Council approved new Terms of Reference for the Audit & Governance Committee. The Committee membership now comprised non-executive members, with the exception of the interim Chair. For continuity purposes, Councillor Bond was appointed at Annual Council as interim Chair. The report on constitutional issues considered at Annual Council indicated it was intended for a non-executive member to be nominated for appointment as Chair of the Committee at the November meeting of Council.

The Council was required to consult its Independent Remuneration Panel ("IRP") before it adopted or amended a scheme of allowances for elected members.

It was necessary to seek the views of the IRP following the proposal agreed at Annual Council in relation to a new special responsibility allowance for the Chair of Audit & Governance Committee, along with a number of issues which had arisen since the IRP last reported to Council in June 2014.

The specific matters and the outcome of the consultation with the IRP were set out in the IRP's report, which was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The IRP had also undertaken a general review of the scheme, including the indexation rate, and makes various recommendations in their report for consideration.

The proposed amendments to the Members' Allowance Scheme were attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

With regard to indexation, each local authority may determine that allowances should be increased in accordance with a specified index and can identify the index and set the

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number of years (not exceeding four) for which it should apply. The Council's index was tied to the General Rate that the majority of Joint National Council (NJC) for Local Government Services members receive.

The IRP recommend the current indexation criterion, equivalent to the NJC officers pay award, should apply from 1 April 2020 for a period of four years or until such time as any new Members' Allowances Scheme be approved by the Council, unless the Council agrees for any year that such uprating shall not take place.

The Council was requested to consider nominations for appointment of Chair of Audit & Governance Committee. Councillor Lynn Clarke had been nominated by the Labour Group for the position of Chair.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the recommendations by the Independent Remuneration Panel to create a new Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chair of Audit & Governance Committee and other amendments to the Members' Allowances Scheme including the current indexation criterion, equivalent to the NJC officers pay award, should apply from 1 April 2020 for a period of four years or until such time as any new Members' Allowances Scheme is approved by the Council be approved;**
- (2) **the role and responsibilities of the Chair of Audit & Governance Committee be approved and added to the list of Roles and Responsibilities in Appendix 2 to the Members' Allowances Scheme;**
- (3) **Councillor Lynn Clarke be appointed as Chair of Audit & Governance Committee with effect from 4 January 2021; and**
- (4) **the Monitoring Officer be authorised to amend the Members' Allowances Scheme in Part 6 of the Constitution to make the necessary amendments.**

24 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

A report was submitted which informed Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2019/20. The report was approved by Overview and Scrutiny Commission at its meeting held on 20 July 2020 and covered work undertaken by the scrutiny function between June 2019 and July 2020 including activity at Panel meetings and Task Groups.

- * **Resolved that the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20 be approved.**

25 NOTICES OF MOTION SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12

Councillor Jones left the meeting during discussion on the following Motion.

The following Notice of Motion was moved by Councillor Grunewald and seconded by Councillor Bell:

A recent report by The Royal College of Nursing UK (RCN) states that Nitrous Oxide is predominantly being used by 16 to 24 year olds and that it is now the second most

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popular drug of this age group after cannabis.

This Council recognises the serious dangers posed by Nitrous Oxide, (laughing gas) which affects the lives of people in the UK every year. Nitrous Oxide is also known as hippy crack - it is an ever-increasing issue on the streets across the borough. As well as the risk of harm to the health of people using this substance, residents report a growing issue of litter from the cannisters left behind in our parks and open spaces.

Over the Summer this year, the Nothing to Laugh About campaign highlighted this issue – providing parents and carers with advice, highlighting the risks to young people and informing residents of how to report cannisters if they are found. Whilst this was a positive step forward, there is a need to continue to do more.

In 2016 the government introduced Psychoactive Substances Act – making it illegal to sell this substance but this did not deal with issue at hand.

This motion is not about criminalising young people but education must be at heart of the response. It is important that the serious health risks of the use of Nitrous Oxide are highlighted.

Over the coming weeks, the Council will commence consultation on the development of the use and content of future Public Space Protection Orders. This is an opportunity to ask local residents for their views on the use of Nitrous Oxide in our parks and open spaces.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- (1) Develop further Public Awareness Campaigns for young people warning of the dangers of Nitrous Oxide; and
- (2) Include the issue of Nitrous Oxide within the future consultation on Public Space Protection Orders to understand the views of residents on this issue.

* **Resolved that the Motion be approved.**

Due to internet issues it was agreed to bring the Motion at item 12c forward.

The following Notice of Motion was moved by Councillor Hattersley and seconded by Councillor Uddin:

St Helens Borough Council values the importance of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that address the global challenges we face. Many of these global challenges addressed in the UNs SDGs affect our council directly including poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. Therefore, the Council recognises that we have a decade of action if we are to deliver the Goals by 2030.

The Council realises that to meet the borough priorities, that are to:

- Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life
- Promote good health, independence and care across our communities
- Create safe and strong communities for our residents
- Support a strong, diverse and well-connected local economy
- Create a green, thriving and vibrant place to be proud of

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- Be a modern, efficient and effective Council

We must engage thoroughly with the UN SDGs as they lay the foundations for a more sustainable way to positively develop the borough.

It is vital that all levels of government work together and the Council believes that local government is a key component to successful implementation of the SDGs.

Council notes that in 2019 the cross-party Local Government Association unanimously adopted a motion recognising the vital role that councils could play in planning, implementation and monitoring the UK's progress on meeting the ambitions of the Agenda 2030.

Therefore, this council resolves to:

- (1) create a tracking document wherein the Council can monitor progress on the SDGs and map the targets that are relevant to the borough's priorities, using the LGA and UKSSD Sustainable Development Guide;
- (2) formalise our commitment to the SDGs by following and adhering to the tracking document in subsequent policy making;
- (3) ensure that all council reports and policy papers include an SDG assessment, indicating which goals will be met by the adoption of the recommendations within the reports; and
- (4) lobby central government for them to recognise the vital role local government must play in terms of the planning, implementation and monitoring in local areas, and fully resource councils to do that work, to deliver the UK's progress on meeting the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda.

* **Resolved that the Motion be approved.**

During discussion on the following Motion, Councillor Fulham declared a personal and prejudicial interest and left the meeting.

Councillor Hattersley left the meeting during discussion on the following Motion.

The following Notice of Motion was submitted by Councillor Gomez-Aspron and seconded by Councillor Groucutt:

This Council recognises Coronavirus COVID-19 is and has been the biggest threat to our residents and our economy in modern times. It recognises that many local people have lost their lives. It sends its profound sympathies to all their loved ones.

This Council thanks all the residents in the Borough of St Helens, community groups, charities, and businesses for coming together to look out for and support others across our borough. The Council thanks with sincere gratitude:

- Our residents for sticking to the lockdown rules and practicing safety measures that have saved lives and kept people safe
- Care workers, our NHS, our council and school staff, and all key workers for their long hours and commitment to keeping people safe
- Over 1,000 people who volunteered through schemes such as the St Helens Together approach coordinated by this Council and our local VCA, and the community aid networks which produced the biggest volunteering operation in the borough since the end of World War II

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- All the people and organisations who gave money, food, and other resources and donated premises which are still being put to good use by the Council and its partners.

However, this pandemic is far from over, and at the time of this meeting, the UK has the second worst death rate per 1,000,000 people in Europe, and a death rate worse than the catastrophe which has been the United States of America. Those most vulnerable have been abandoned by Government and the public are questioning a lack of evidence behind restrictions.

In the week ending 11 October 2020, the Government announced in the media that a new tiered system would be introduced. The Government then put Merseyside in Tier 3, the highest level of this new system, without any choice from local Council Leaders and the Metro Mayor for Liverpool City Region. Within two days of bringing the tiered system in, Lancashire was placed in the same tier with a different set of restrictions.

This leaves disparity between areas in the same tier, with no local consultation on what these differences might be. At one stage, it was the case that gyms could open in Lancashire, but not Merseyside. Soft play areas could open in Merseyside but not Lancashire. This means the public rightly question the logic and evidence behind this.

Considering this, and the way that the Government are acting in an inconsistent manner, this Council resolves to request that the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council write to the Government to request the following:

- (1) all scientific evidence is published and shared with local organisations to justify the restrictions put in place;
- (2) that any new restrictions going forward be based on published scientific evidence and come with adequate funding for enforcement. And any unevicenced restrictions be scrapped;
- (3) an adequate financial support scheme be put in place that properly compensates businesses that are forced to close;
- (4) a plan for jobs to prevent unemployment destroying the lives of millions: including a continued furlough scheme for key sectors (at 80% as previously, not 67% which will force many of our borough's residents into poverty) and a fully-funded youth guarantee of a job, training or education;
- (5) that the privatised SERCO Track and Trace system be renationalised and devolved to local authorities with sufficient funding to enable it to function properly. Local track and trace systems function at over 90% effectiveness compared to the worst week recently for SERCO tracking only 60% of contacts;
- (6) that our public health services have their funding restored to pre-2010 levels with inflationary adjustments made to negate 10 years of Conservative, enabled by the Liberal Democrats between 2010-2015, austerity hindering our health service. This allows our key workers to be paid the wage they deserve, and our NHS to be funded properly;
- (7) that the Government honours the promise by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak MP, that Councils will be given "everything it takes" to cover the costs of responding to the Coronavirus pandemic, which currently leaves a £20,000,000 black hole in this Council's finances;
- (8) that the criteria be published to allow local authorities placed in Tier 3 areas to understand how they can progress back down through the tiers;

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- (9) provide additional COVID funding for schools and early years settings to continue to stay open and provide effective remote and catch-up learning. This should be proportionate to infection rates, recognising that children in the North West are missing more time in the classroom than their peers nationally, so will not get the grades they deserve in exams in 2021; and
- (10) progress be made on the long-awaited Green Paper on Funding Care, to properly fund the overstretched and underfunded adult social care system, which is currently in operation via one off, short term grant scheme which does not allow long term sustainable planning.

Councillor O'Keefe proposed the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor van der Burg:

- (5) ~~"That the privatised SERCO Track and Trace system be renationalised and devolved to local authorities with sufficient funding to enable it to function properly."~~

Replace with:

- (5) ~~That all monies going to private companies for track and trace cease immediately and that funding goes to local Public Health teams and NHS Laboratories.~~

The amendment to the Motion was put to the vote and the amendment was unanimously approved.

The amended Motion became the substantive Motion and was put to the vote.

* **Resolved that on a division the Motion be approved.**

Councillor O'Keefe here withdrew his Motion at item 12d.

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