

CABINET MEETING

Meeting: 5 December 2023

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Mark Hunter (Leader of the Council) (Chair) in the chair; Councillor Mark Roberts (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Environment) (Vice-Chair); Councillors Grace Baynham (Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways & Transport Services), Keith Holloway (Cabinet Member for Health & Adult Social Care), Jilly Julian (Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources), Colin MacAlister (Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration & Housing), Wendy Meikle (Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education) and Frankie Singleton (Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture & Sport).

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 5 December 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interests they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations of interest were made.

3. URGENT DECISIONS

No urgent decisions were reported.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Members of the public were invited to submit questions to the Cabinet on any matters within its powers and duties, subject to the exclusions set out in the Code of Practice.

One public question was submitted where the questioner was not in attendance at the meeting and in accordance with the Code of Practice, the Chief Executive was requested to respond to the questioners in writing.

5. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST

RESOLVED – That in order to prevent the disclosure of information which was not for publication relating to the financial or business affairs of the any particular person (including the authority), the disclosure of which would not be in the public interest, would not be fair and would be in breach of Data Protection principles, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the ‘not for publication’ appendix to agenda item 15 (Cheadle Eco Business Park and Adswood Depot).

Key Decisions

6. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY MID-YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2023/24 (F&R23)

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources (Councillor Jilly Julian) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing a mid-year review of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2023/24 that had been approved by Council on 23 February 2023 and had been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Council Meeting be recommended to note the report and the treasury activity in the first half of the financial year.

(2) That the Council Meeting be recommended to note the revised interest rate forecasts for Bank Rate and PWLB rates over the short and medium-term, which will drive the Council's long-term borrowing strategies going forward.

7. STOCKPORT BILLING AREA - 2024/25 COUNCIL TAX BASE AND BUSINESS RATES (NON-DOMESTIC RATES) FORECAST (F&R25)

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources (Councillor Jilly Julian) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the forecast Collection Fund outturn position for 2023/24, the setting of the Council Tax Taxbase for 2024/25, and a forecast for Business Rates income for 2024/25.

It was commented that Stockport's collection rates were amongst the best in the north west of England, and members expressed their thanks and gratitude to officers for their ongoing work in ensuring the council's financial position remained robust.

RESOLVED - (1) That a provisional forecast outturn Collection Fund surplus of £4.669m in 2023/24 relating to a Council Tax surplus of £0.902m and Business Rates surplus of £3.767m be declared, subject to the delegations below.

(2) That a provisional forecast outturn Collection Fund surplus to be appropriated to the Council's General Fund in 2024/25 of £4.489m relating to a Council Tax surplus of £0.760m and Business Rates surplus of £3.729m be declared, subject to the delegations below.

(3) That approval be given to the use of the declared surplus to support the Council's 2024/25 Budget, MTFP and Collection Fund Reserve in the context of increasing budget pressures linked to price inflation, pay inflation particularly relating to recent Real Living Wage increase, high interest rates impacting the Council's borrowing costs and increasing demand for services.

(4) That the proposal for the Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Fund be noted as set out in the Council Tax and Business Rates Discounts Annual Review report as per paragraph 2.3.

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- (4) That the 2024/25 Council Tax Taxbase for budget setting purposes of 98,396.6 Band D equivalent dwellings be noted.
- (5) That the 2024/25 Business Rates budget forecast be noted subject to the completion of the NNDR1 (Business Rates budget) to be submitted to Government by 31 January 2024.
- (6) That it be noted that the indicative Collection Fund resources identified are to be reviewed through the MTFP and 2024/25 budget setting processes following the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement in December.
- (7) That the following decisions be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources:
- (i) The decision to change the provisional 2023/24 Collection Fund forecast outturn position prior to declaring the position on 31 January 2024 as required by legislation;
 - (ii) The decision to continue in the Greater Manchester Business Rates pooling arrangement; and
 - (iii) The decision to vary the Business Rates forecast presented in Table 7 linked to the submission of the NNDR1 (Business Rates budget) to Government.

8. BUSINESS RATES AND COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS ANNUAL REVIEW (F&R26)

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources (Councillor Jilly Julian) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the annual review the local scheme of discounts and exemptions which are available in respect of Business Rates and Council Tax.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- The approach to applying premium charges for those properties that had been empty for over two years was welcomed as a means of bringing dwellings back into use.
- The proposed reduction in Council Tax liability for care leavers up to the age of 25 was highlighted as part of the wider package of measures to support Stockport's care leavers.

RESOLVED - (1) That the CASC top-up scheme be continued for the financial year 2024-25, enabling CASCs to achieve 100% relief from non-domestic rates, provided they meet the qualifying criteria at Appendix 2.

(2) That charity relief remains limited to the 80% mandatory relief for the financial year 2024-25.

(3) That rural rate relief continues to be limited to 50% mandatory relief for the financial year 2024-25 and should any village shops be established in the future then additional discretionary relief should be awarded up to 100%.

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- (4) That the 50% discount and qualifying criteria for not-for-profit organisations be maintained for the financial year 2024-25.
- (5) That the local scheme for large businesses which are new to the Borough or those undergoing significant expansion in the Borough be continued for 2024-25.
- (6) That the continuation of a case-by-case approach for business rates discounts where exceptional circumstances exist be continued for 2024-25. It is unlikely that exceptional circumstances relief would be awarded to an organisation which was in receipt of support from the council, either grant funded or commissioned.
- (7) That the current rules for backdating or making a variation to discretionary rate relief awards as described at paras 3.10.4 and 3.10.5 will continue for 2024-25.
- (8) That the council continues to no longer offer a Council Tax discount in respect of unoccupied properties for 2024-25, except for class E & F dwellings where 100% relief is awarded.
- (9) That the maximum Council Tax premium charges continue to be applied in respect of class A, C & D dwellings (empty and unfurnished properties) at the rates shown at para 4.1.8 for 2024-25.
- (10) That the timeframe for which a premium should be charged on long-term empty properties, is reduced from two years to one year, from 1 April 2024.
- (11) That a premium charge of 100% is applied on class B dwellings (empty and furnished properties, which include second homes) from 1 April 2025.
- (12) That any Council Tax liability for care leavers up to the age of 25 be reduced to zero for 2024-25.
- (13) That Stockport's Council Tax Support scheme is maintained for the financial year 2024-25 as detailed at Appendix 5.
- (14) That the Council Tax discretionary fund is set at £0.385m for 2024-25, supporting customers facing financial difficulty, with no alternative means.
- (15) That delegation is given to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources to review and adjust the Council Tax discretionary fund during 2024-25 capped at a total fund of £0.500m if required, to support the council's cost-of-living response.
- (16) That the council's discretionary support policy for help with rent and Council Tax costs at Appendix 6 is endorsed for 2024-25.
- (17) That delegation is given to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources to consider any subsequent government announcements that impact on Business Rates and Council Tax reductions for 2024-25, and to decide what changes should be made aligned to legislation.

9. REFERENDUM AND ADOPTION OF MARPLE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (ER&H6)

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration & Housing (Councillor Colin MacAlister) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the key progress on the Marple Neighbourhood Plan and the next stages in the process before it formally became part of the development plan for Stockport, including a proposal for the Marple Neighbourhood Plan to be put to a public referendum.

RESOLVED – That the Council Meeting be recommended to give approval to the Marple Neighbourhood Plan to go to referendum and for that plan to form part of the development plan for Stockport in the event that it receives majority support at that subsequent referendum.

10. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2023-24 (CF&E4)

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education (Councillor Wendy Meikle) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing the Youth Justice Plan 2023/2024 which outlined achievements against last years' plan, priorities for the future and opportunities/challenges for the forthcoming year.

RESOLVED – That the Youth Justice Plan 2023/2024 be endorsed and that the Council Meeting be recommended to adopt the plan.

General Items

11. CABINET RESPONSE TO THE GROWTH IN FREE SCHOOLS MEALS SCRUTINY REVIEW (NON-KEY)

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education (Councillor Wendy Meikle) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) inviting the Cabinet to agree its response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review with regard to the 'Growth in Free Schools Meals'.

RESOLVED – (1) That the response to the recommendations contained in the 'Growth in Free Schools Meals' scrutiny review carried out by the Children & Families Scrutiny Committee be approved.

(2) That the Cabinet's gratitude and appreciation be recorded for the excellent work undertaken by the Scrutiny Review Panel and its contributors.

12. ADLINGTON WALK FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND (STOCKROOM) (NON-KEY)

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration & Housing (Councillor Colin MacAlister) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the progress with the construction of Stockroom and detailing how the Council is preparing to deliver the project, along with the benefits that that it will bring.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

13. GMCA DECISIONS

The Leader of the Council (Councillor Mark Hunter) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out decisions taken by the GMCA at its meeting on 27 October 2023.

RESOLVED – That the decisions be noted.

14. TO CONSIDER RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no recommendations to consider.

Item containing information 'Not for Publication'

15. CHEADLE ECO PARK AND ADSWOOD DEPOT (ER&H8)

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration & Housing (Councillor Colin MacAlister) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing progress with the proposed redevelopment of Bird Hall Lane Industrial Estate into Cheadle Eco Business Park.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was noted that local residents had been keen to see the detail of the proposals for the scheme, and that the report was now able to provide some of that information.
- The proposals for the development of an eco business park were welcomed from a climate change perspective.
- The proposal would deliver an exemplar level of sustainability and environmental credentials.

(NOTE: The report contained 'not for publication' appendices that had been circulated to the Cabinet only).

RESOLVED - (1) That the contents of the report and progress on the Cheadle Eco Business Park and Adswood Redevelopment be noted, and that approval be given to the approach to the development of the projects and to enter into agreements to achieve this, as required.

(2) That authority be delegated to the Director of Development and Regeneration (Place) and the Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate and Support Services), in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Finance and Resources and Economy, Regeneration and Housing, to approve the undertaking of any required procurement activities to allow the appointment of any professional services consultants or construction contractors in relation to both projects.

(3) That authority be delegated to the Director of Development and Regeneration (Place) and the Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate and Support Services), in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Finance and Resources and Economy, Regeneration and Housing, to approve the entering of any contracts required for the appointment of any professional services consultants or Construction Contractors and bring forth any necessary planning

applications related to the delivery of Cheadle Eco Business Park and the Adswold Depot Redevelopment.

(4) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director (Legal & Democratic Governance), to take such steps and complete such agreements as are necessary to implement the resolutions recommended in this report and any decisions properly made under authority delegated by these resolutions.

(5) That approval be given for the release of funds, as detailed in the 'not for publication' Appendix 5 to allow both schemes to progress from the current position, through planning and construction to practical completion.

Item of Urgent Business

16. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES MID-YEAR (QUARTER 2) REPORT 2023/24

(NOTE: The Chair was of the opinion that this item, although not included on the agenda, should be considered as a matter of urgency in accordance with section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the Cabinet could give the required approvals to resourcing of the capital programme and the 2023/24 prudential indicators to ensure the efficient conduct of the Council's business).

The Leader of the Council (Councillor Mark Hunter) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing a summary of progress in delivering the Council's priority outcomes and budget in the first half of the financial year, with a particular focus on the second quarter of 2023/24 (July – September).

It was commented that notwithstanding the financial pressures facing the entirety of the local government sector, there remained a lot to be positive about in Stockport with specific reference to the creativity, energy and practical approach of the Council.

RESOLVED - (1) That the key delivery and performance issues from the councils seven portfolios set out in sections 1.3 and 1.4 be noted.

(2) That progress against delivering council priorities and capital schemes alongside budget outturns contained within the report be noted.

(3) That the Cash Limit and Non-Cash Limit forecast outturn positions for 2023/24 as set out in section 2.3 be noted.

(4) That the update to the council's positive investments as set out in section 2.4 be noted.

(5) That the Dedicated Schools Grant, Housing Revenue Account and Collection Fund forecast positions as set out in sections 2.5, 2.6, and 2.7 be noted.

(6) That the appropriations to/from reserves and balances during the period as set out in section 2.8 and the resulting reserves and balances position as of 30 September 2023 be noted.

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- (7) That the position for the 2023/24 Capital Programme as set out in section 3.1 be noted.
- (8) That the adjustments of capital schemes during the quarter as set out in section 3.2 be noted.
- (9) That approval be given to the resourcing of the capital programme as set out in section 3.3.
- (10) That approval be given to the 2023/24 prudential indicators as set out in section 3.4.

The meeting closed at 6.39 pm