

CABINET MEETING

Meeting: 10 December 2024

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 November 2024 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.

The following interest was declared:-

Personal Interest

Councillor

Interest

Grace Baynham

Agenda Item 6 – ‘Green Street Bridge’ as her husband was an employee of Network Rail.

3. URGENT DECISIONS

No urgent decisions were reported.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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 questioner 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RESOLVED – That in order to prevent the disclosure of information which was not for publication relating to the financial or business affairs of the any particular person (including the authority), the disclosure of which would not be in the public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 agenda item 17 – ‘Land Transaction at Booth Street’.

Key Decisions

6. GREEK STREET BRIDGE (PH&T11)

The Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways & Transport Services submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing an update on the works required, and schedule associated with, the Network Rail led Greek Street bridge renewal project including providing an overview of the potential subsequent disruption and the responding mitigation works.

Councillor Baynham further reported that the Council was working with Transport for Greater Manchester and other partner agencies in relation to the motion that was agreed by the Council Meeting regarding ‘Delivering the remainder of the Edgeley > Stockport MCF scheme before the Armoury Roundabout civil engineering works commence’ with specific regard to the delivery of a public realm improvement scheme on Castle Street and to provide road safety and pedestrian improvements in the Edgeley District Centre.

The following further comments were made/ issues raised:-

- The passive provision within the scheme for future Metrolink services through Stockport was welcomed.
- Pedestrian and cycle access would be maintained via the bridge from the armoury car park to Edgeley.
- An all-member briefing would be held in relation to the proposed scheme in the light of the impact that the scheme would have on traffic movements across the borough.

RESOLVED - (1) That approval be given to enter into the Bridgeguard 3 agreement and make any payments to Network Rail necessary under this agreement.

(2) That authority be delegated to the Director of Place Management in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways & Transport Services in conjunction with officers, to agree any necessary diversion routes following engagement with members.

(3) That authority be delegated to the Director of Place Management in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Parks, Highways & Transport Services to agree the final highway layout on the new structure following consultation with the Member Working Group.

(4) That the work undertaken to improve flood resilience in Stockport and support the continued partnership working and investment in these areas be noted.

7. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY MID-YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2024/25 (F&R39)

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 2024/25 approved

by council on 22 February 2024 which had been prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services.

The report provided an economic update for the first six months of 2024/25 and detailed how this impacted upon the interest rate predictions and outlook provided in the initial strategy.

RESOLVED – That the Council Meeting be recommended to:-

- (1) Note the report and the treasury activity in the first half of the financial year.
- (2) Approve and note the Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2024/25 approved in February 2024, will continue to be followed considering the forecasts and conclusions set out in the report.
- (3) 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.

8. STOCKPORT BILLING AREA - 2025/26 COUNCIL TAX TAXBASE AND NON-DOMESTIC RATES FORECAST (F&R38)

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 2024/25, the setting of the Council Tax Taxbase for 2025/26, and a forecast for Business Rates income for 2025/26.

- RESOLVED - (1) That a provisional forecast outturn Collection Fund surplus of £0.461m in 2024/25 relating to a Council Tax deficit of £0.531m and Business Rates surplus of £0.992m 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 2025/26 of £0.535m relating to a Council Tax deficit of £0.447m and Business Rates surplus of £0.982m be declared, subject to the delegations below;
 - (3) That approval be given to the use of the declared surplus to support the Council's 2025/26 Budget and MTFP.
 - (4) That the proposal for the Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Fund as set out in the Council Tax and Business Rates Discounts Annual Review report as per paragraph 3.4, be noted.
 - (5) That the 2025/26 Council Tax Taxbase for budget setting purposes of 99,339.6 Band D equivalent dwellings be noted.
 - (6) That it be noted that the Council's final 2025/26 Council Tax Taxbase will be presented for approval to the Council meeting on 16 January 2025.

(7) That it be noted that the 2025/26 Business Rates budget forecast subject to the completion of the NNDR1 (Business Rates budget) is to be submitted to Government by 31 January 2025.

(8) 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.

(9) 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 2024/25 Collection Fund forecast outturn position prior to declaring the position on 31 January 2025 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.

9. BUSINESS RATES AND COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS ANNUAL REVIEW (F&R40)

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources (Councillor Jilly Julian) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing proposed changes to the scheme of local discounts and exemptions against liability for Business Rates and Council Tax.

RESOLVED - (1) That it be agreed that private schools should not be eligible for discretionary rate relief as a non-profit organisation, due to the potential cost to the council which is currently estimated at £0.651m.

(2) That the Business Rates Discretionary Relief Policy for 2025-26 at Appendix 1 be endorsed.

(3) That it be agreed that discretionary Business Rates relief under Section 47 of the LGFA 1988 will normally be awarded from the start of the financial year in which the application is made or the date the business became liable for rates, if later. Consideration will be given to backdating relief from the start of the previous financial year where valid reasons are provided for not applying earlier. Awards given under Section 44a on partly occupied premises or Section 49 on the grounds of hardship, will be determined on a case-by-case basis as appropriate.

(4) That it be agreed that discretionary Business Rates relief will normally expire at the end of the financial year in which the award is made or cease from the date liability ends (whichever is the earliest), except where it is granted based on the status of an organisation which is unlikely to change.

(5) That it be agreed that where a business has a change in circumstances, two months' notice will be given to reduce or revoke a discretionary rates relief award, effective from the date the change occurs.

(6) That it be agreed that any new applications for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief should be backdated to April 2023 where eligibility exists from that date, in line with para 3.3.3.

(7) That it be agreed that the council continues with its existing empty property discount and premium scheme for 2025-26, as shown at paragraph 4.2.1.

(8) That it be noted that the decision to charge a Council Tax premium on second homes from April 2025 was agreed at the council meeting of 11 January 2024 and therefore a new decision is not required on this aspect of the scheme for 2025-26.

(10) That it be agreed that exceptions to both the long-term empty and second home premiums are applied in line with published statutory guidance and that a localised policy will be developed during 2025-26 based on learning throughout the year.

(11) That it be agreed that any Council Tax liability for care leavers up to the age of 25 be reduced to zero for 2025-26.

(12) That it be agreed that Stockport's Council Tax Support scheme is maintained for the financial year 2025-26 as detailed at Appendix 3.

(13) That it be agreed that the Council Tax discretionary fund is set at £0.2m for 2025-26, supporting customers facing financial difficulty, with no alternative means.

(14) That delegation is given to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources to review and adjust the fund during 2025-26, capped at a total fund of £0.385m if required, to support the council's ongoing cost-of-living response.

(15) That delegation is given to the Director of Finance 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 2025-26, and to decide what changes should be made aligned to legislation.

General Items

10. 2024/25 MID-YEAR (QUARTER 2) CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES REPORT (NON-KEY)

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources (Councillor Jilly Julian) 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.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- The report identified a large number of accesses amongst the challenges being faced by the Council including the Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation and with the Council's workforce.

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- There remained pressures within children's services with indirect as well as direct costs being reflected in the outturn position.
- Notwithstanding the requirement to make significant savings within adult social care, progress was being made in relation to changing and developing the way that services were being provided with a greater emphasis on early prevention to ensure that vulnerable members of the community could remain in their own home for as long as possible.
- The Council benefited from having a committed and dedicated workforce who did their best to serve the public of Stockport.

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

(2) That the proposed approach set out in section 1.5 to 'light-touch' reviews of the 2024-27 Council Plan at the end of 2024/25 and 2025/26 be noted.

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

(4) That the Cash Limit and Non-Cash Limit forecast outturn positions for 2024/25 as set out in section 2.3 be noted.

(5) That the Dedicated Schools Grant, Housing Revenue Account and Collection Fund forecast positions as set out in sections 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6 be noted.

(6) That the appropriations to/from reserves and balances during the period as set out in section 2.7 and note the resulting reserves and balances position as at 30 September 2024 be noted.

(7) That the position for the 2024/25 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.

(10) That approval be given to the resourcing of the capital programme as set out in section 3.3.

(11) That approval be given to the 2024/25 prudential indicators as set out in section 3.4.

11. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS (NON-KEY)

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources (Councillor Jilly Julian) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) detailing proposed polling arrangements for Stockport in order to inform the Council Meeting's determination of polling districts, polling places and polling stations for forthcoming elections.

It was noted that an extensive consultation had taken place with both the public and elected members. The comments and views expressed through those consultations were reflected in the report that had been presented to Cabinet.

RESOLVED – That the Council Meeting be recommended to give approval to the proposed polling arrangements for Stockport as detailed in the report.

12. PROPOSED COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER THE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL OF STOCKPORT (LAND AT HIGHER HILLGATE/HIGHER BARLOW ROW) (NON-KEY)

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration & Housing (Councillor Colin MacAlister) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out a request to use compulsory purchase powers to acquire land at Higher Hillgate/ Higher Barlow Row, Stockport, to enable the development of 24 affordable homes by Stockport Homes Group within the Housing Revenue Account.

RESOLVED – That approval be given to the approach set out in the report for the use of the legal mechanism of a Compulsory Purchase Order to acquire/ assemble the development land and achieve satisfactory title to deliver an affordable housing scheme.

13. COLLECTION OF WATER CHARGES ON BEHALF OF UNITED UTILITIES (NON-KEY)

The Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration & Housing (Councillor Colin MacAlister) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the current arrangement for the collection of water charges on behalf of United Utilities and recommending that approval be given to the entering into of a five-year contract extension.

RESOLVED - That approval be given to the extension of the water charge collection agreement between the Council and United Utilities until 31 March 2030 on the terms and basis identified in the report.

14. NOMINATIONS FOR THE MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR 2025/26

The Leader of the Council (Councillor Mark Hunter) invited the Cabinet to consider nominations for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the 2025/26 Civic Year.

RESOLVED – That the Leader of the Council be authorised to nominate Councillor Kerry Waters for the position of Mayor for the 2025/26 municipal year and to nominate a further member for the position of Deputy Mayor at the Council Meeting on 16 January 2025.

15. 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 29 November 2024.

RESOLVED – That the decisions be noted.

16. TO CONSIDER RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no recommendations to consider.

Item 'Not for Publication'

17. LAND TRANSACTION AT BOOTH STREET

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources (Councillor Jilly Julian) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) a proposal for the disposal of a parcel of land located at the junction of Booth Street and Mercian Way.

(NOTE: This report was marked 'not for publication' and was circulated to members of the Cabinet only).

RESOLVED – That approval be given to the proposed transaction for the disposal of the parcel of land located at the junction of Booth Street and Mercian Way on the terms and basis detailed in the 'not for publication' report.

The meeting closed at 6.36 pm