

EXECUTIVE

21 FEBRUARY 2024

PRESENT

Councillor T. Ross (in the Chair).

Councillors C. Hynes (Deputy Leader), S. Adshead, K.G. Carter, E. Patel, J. Slater, R. Thompson, A.J. Williams and J.A. Wright

In attendance

Paul Rogers	Governance Officer
Graeme Bentley	Director Finance and Systems
Emma Malpas	Head of Legal Governance & Deputy Monitoring Officer
Jill McGregor	Corporate Director of Children's Services
Richard Roe	Corporate Director of Place
Sara Saleh	Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources
Sara Todd	Chief Executive

Also Present

Councillors Acton, Butt, Evans, Ennis, Holden, Newgrosh, Lepori and Welton

86. ATTENDANCES

There were no apologies for absence.

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

88. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Question

Given that members Allowances were increased by around 40% at the start of the current year, 2023 - 2024, was the Mayoral Allowance increased by a similar percentage, it being little more than 50% of the lowest of any of the other GM Boroughs, and were an increase overlooked has an increase now been incorporated into the 2024 - 2025 budget and if so of what amount ?

The Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration responded as follows –

‘The review of Civic Allowances which are paid to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are undertaken separately to the general review of Members allowances. During the review of members allowances in early 2023 it was agreed by Members and Officers that once the Independent Remuneration Panel had delivered its recommendations that the Civic Allowance would also be looked to be reviewed as it had been at least 10 years since they were last reviewed.

This was subsequently done with the results reported and approved by Council in November 2023. It was agreed to increase the mayoral allowance from £6,000 to £10,000 and the deputy mayor from £2,000 to £2,500 and the increase would apply from the 2023 Municipal Year.

These amounts will be indexed each year from 2024/25.'

89. STRATEGIC LAND REVIEW LAND PROGRAMME UPDATE - PART 1

The Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration presented the Strategic Land Review Programme Update report.

The report set out a list of land and buildings that the Council intends to either sell, develop in partnership or self-develop in the forthcoming year(s) together with a summary of the previous year's outturn.

The Strategic Land Review Programme is an integral part of the Council's Estates Strategy and is the conclusion of a corporate process of identification of surplus assets linked to service planning and an options appraisal process.

Councillor Evans asked what was the grant amount for Merry House (no.21 table 1 on page 5 refers) and is the whole grant repayable when we sell it.

The Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration informed the Member that she was not aware of the grant figure but advised that the Council is not obliged to repay any of the grant. She would inform the Member of the grant figure by written response following the meeting.

Councillor Newgrosh referred to line 27, in table 1 of the report and expressed his hope that the land at Vale Road, Timperley is not Green Space.

The Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration advised that she would provide a written response to his question following the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Executive

1. Notes the outcome of the 2023/24 Land Sales Programme.
2. Approves the Disposal Programme for 2024/25 as set out in the report and note the sites that have been earmarked for disposal / development.
3. Delegates authority to the Corporate Director of Place to:
 - a. Negotiate and accept bids in consultation with the Director of Finance and Systems and the Director of Legal and Governance for all sites listed on the Disposal Programme.
 - b. Engage external resources where this will assist in implementing the programme, including a professional team where reasonably required to support a development project.

Executive (21.2.24)

- c. Commission, submit and/or authorise as appropriate:
 - i) any applications for planning permission on any properties included in the programme where this will assist in marketing and/or add value, or in any case where the Council is proposing to redevelop the site whether directly or in partnership with another party.
 - ii) any surveys/investigations where such surveys will reduce the risks associated with redevelopment, add value to the capital receipt /revenue return and/or assist with the preparation, submission and resolution of any planning permission application, or any other usual pre-development survey or investigation.
 - iii) any feasibility study or design for the site and or premises in association with either obtaining a planning consent or as part of options appraisal.
 - iv) any demolitions or physical alterations that will either reduce the risks associated with holding the premises or accelerate the sale/redevelopment and/or add value to the capital receipt/revenue return.
 - d. Offset eligible disposal costs against capital receipts in accordance with capital regulations.
 - e. Advertise the intention to dispose of a site in the event that it comprises open space as defined by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, in accordance with the relevant statutory procedure, and if any objections are received, to refer to the relevant portfolio holder for consideration in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment and Regulatory Services.
 - f. Acquire adjacent land or property where the acquisition will either add value to the overall development or de-risk the disposal/development of the Council asset.
 - g. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration and the Director of Finance and Systems, to add or substitute sites into the programme during the year including sites with a value of over £499,999.
 - h. Transfer sites from Category 1 to Category 2, and vice versa
 - i. Commission security services.
 - j. Authorise alternative methods of disposal where appropriate.
 - k. Authorise community engagement and consultations where the Corporate Director of Place deems it necessary or advantageous.
 - l. In relation to any site currently in development or any site which commences development during this programme, agree any licence or approve the grant of any easement or lease or any other disposal, including where that disposal taken in isolation would constitute a disposal at undervalue, which is designed or intended to implement or facilitate the development.
 - m. Authorise marketing, pricing and disposal strategies and authorise the sale of plots, either individually or in blocks, including where the anticipated or actual capital receipt exceeds £499,999.
4. Delegate authority to the Director of Legal and Governance in consultation with the Corporate Director of Place and, where appropriate, the Director for Finance and Systems, to finalise and enter into all legal agreements required to implement the Disposal Programme for 2024/2025.

90. EXECUTIVE'S REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2024/25 AND MTFS 2025/26 - 2026/27

The Executive Member for Finance, Change and Governance and the Director of Finance and Systems presented a report which sets out the Executive's updated 3 year budget strategy, detailed revenue budget proposals for 2024/25 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2025/26 - 2026/27.

RESOLVED: That the Executive recommends the Council to that it

- a) Approves the 2024/25 net Revenue Budget of £217.83m.
- b) Approves the 2025/26 to 2026/27 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) including the income and savings proposals.
- c) Notes the continued arrangements in relation to an enhanced Finance and Change Programme and the role of the Finance and Change Board who will continue to work with the Executive on the development of sustainable budget plans to support the Council in meeting the financial challenges from 2025/26 onwards
- d) Approves the calculation of the Council Tax Requirement as summarised in Section 8.1 and set out in the Formal Council Tax Resolution in the updated Annex J (any update for changes in Mayoral Police and Crime Commissioner or Mayoral General (incl. Fire Services) Precepts, if any, will be tabled at the Council Meeting);
- e) Approves the proposal to increase Council Tax by 4.99% in 2024/25:
 - 2.99% general increase in the 'relevant basic amount' in 2024/25, and
 - 2.00% for the 'Adult Social Care' precept in 2024/25.
- f) Notes the assumptions in the MTFS to increase Council Tax by
 - An increase in the 'relevant basic amount' of 1.99% in 2025/26 and 2026/27, and
 - for the 'Adult Social Care' precept in 1% in 2025/26 and 2026/27.
- g) Approves the planned application of earmarked reserves as detailed in Section 6.
- h) Approves the Fees and Charges for 2024/25 and those relating to Registration of Births, Death & Marriages and Allotments also shown for 2025/26, as set out in the Fees & Charges booklet.

Executive (21.2.24)

- i) Delegates authority jointly to each Corporate Director in consultation with the Council's Director of Finance and Systems to amend fees and charges which are within their respective delegated powers during 2024/25 in the event of any change in VAT rate, as appropriate.
- j) Delegates authority jointly to each Corporate Director in consultation with the Council's Director of Finance and Systems to amend fees and charges during 2024/25 which are within their respective delegated powers where the economics of the charge levels have changed (e.g. costs have risen unexpectedly), or for commercial reasons.
- k) Approves the proposal to set the minimum level of General Reserve for 2024/25 at £10.5m (Section 6).
- l) Approves the Capital Strategy, Prudential and Local Indicators and overall level of the Capital Programme and Asset Investment Fund of £413.15m (as detailed in the Capital Strategy, Capital Programme & Prudential Indicators 2024/27) of which £152.20m relates to 2024/25 (incl an updated Appendix 2).
- m) Approves the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27, including the Debt Strategy (Section 4), the policy on Minimum Revenue Provision (Section 5) the Treasury Investment Strategy (Section 6) and the Prudential Indicators, including the Authorised Limit (as required by Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003, Operational Boundary, Minimum Revenue Provision and investment criteria as set out in Appendix 2 of the report.
- n) Approves the flexible use of capital receipts of up to £0.85m in 2024/2025 to support the cost of the Modernisation Team in developing the Council's Finance and Change Programme.
- o) Approves the proposed distribution of Dedicated Schools Grant as recommended by the School Funding Forum and Executive as summarised in Section 7 and detailed in Annex I.
- p) In the event the outcome of the secondary consultation relating to the Fair Price of Care changes the proposed budget assumptions, delegates authority to the Director of Finance and Systems, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance, Change and Governance, to vary the net Revenue Budget for 2024/25, with any shortfall being met from the Budget Support Reserve.
- q) Delegates authority to the Director of Finance and Systems, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance, Change and Governance, to vary the net Revenue Budget for 2024/25, once the Baseline Funding has been updated to reflect the changes in Public Health Grant.and confirms that in recommending approval of the above, it has taken into consideration:
 - r) The objective assessment by the Director of Finance and Systems of the robustness of budget estimates and adequacy of the financial reserves (Section 1 and 6).
 - s) The Executive's response to the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations to the budget proposals as included in a separate report on the agenda.

t) The Council's Public Sector Equality duty.

u) The results of the consultation on the budget proposals where required.

In addition, the Executive recommends that Council notes the following:

v) The approval on 4 January 2024 under delegated powers by the Director of Finance and Systems of the Council Tax Base for 2024/25 at 79,362 Band D equivalents.

w) The estimated Council Tax surplus for 2023/24 has been calculated at £0.953m, sufficient to release £0.775m to support the Council's budget plans and a distribution of £0.124m and £0.055m representing the respective shares of the Mayoral Police and Crime Commissioner Precept and Mayoral General Precept (including Fire Services).

x) The base budget assumptions as set out in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as detailed in Annex A.

y) The budget gap for the two years 2025/26, £15.39m and 2026/27, £14.22m.

z) That the Capital Programme for 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27 is to be set at an indicative £152.20m, £231.48m and £29.48m respectively (indicative at this stage as a number of capital grants are not yet known).

aa) That the Council Tax figures included in the report for the Mayoral Police and Crime Commissioner Precept and Mayoral General Precept (including Fire Services) are the recommended provisional amounts pending their formal approval.

91. CAPITAL STRATEGY, ASSET INVESTMENT STRATEGY, CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND PRUDENTIAL & LOCAL INDICATORS 2024/27

The Executive Member for Finance, Change and Governance and the Director of Finance and Systems presented a report which highlights the Council's investment plans for the next three years taking into account the estimated resources to be made available from Government as well as the Council's own resources.

Resolved: That Executive approves the: -

1. Capital Programme as detailed in Section 2 and Appendix 1.
2. Schemes to be undertaken from the "block" budget allocations reported in paragraph 14 and detailed in the updated Appendix 2.

That Executive recommends the Council to approve:-

3. The Capital Strategy including Prudential and Local Indicators in Section 1.
4. The overall Capital Programme in the sum of £413.15m for the period 2024/27 comprising £154.56m in respect of the General Capital

Executive (21.2.24)

Programm (as detailed in Section 2) and an Asset Investment Strategy Gross expenditure budget of £258.59m for the period 2024/27 and continues to work within the previously approved budget envelope of £500m.

5. The continuation of the existing Asset Investment Strategy included in Appendix 3.
6. The flexible use of capital receipts as detailed in Capital Strategy (Section 2 paragraph 9).

92. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024/25 - 2026/27

The Executive Member for Finance, Change and Governance and the Director of Finance and Systems presented a report regarding the Council's Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 – 2026-27.

RESOLVED: That the Executive notes the report and recommends that Council approves:

- the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 – 2026/27 including the:
- policy on debt strategy as set out in section 4;
- the updated policy on Minimum Revenue Provision in section 5;
- Investment Strategy as set out in section 6;
- Prudential Indicators and limits including the Authorised Limit (as required by section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003), Operational Boundary, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement and Investment criteria as detailed in Appendix 2.

93. FEES CHARGES AND ALLOWANCES 2024/25

The Executive Member for Finance, Change and Governance and the Director of Finance and Systems presented a report which summarises the salient features of the annual review and pricing of the Council's main fees and charges.

RESOLVED: That the Executive recommends that Council approves the following:

- The Fees and Charges for 2024/25 and those relating to Registration of Births, Death & Marriages and Allotments also shown for 2025/26, as set out in the booklet available on the Council's web site;
- The joint delegation of authority to each Corporate Director and the Director of Finance and Systems to amend fees and charges which are within their respective delegated powers during 2024/25 in the event of any change in the rate of VAT, as appropriate;

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- The joint delegation of authority to each Corporate Director and the Director of Finance and Systems to amend fees and charges during 2024/25 which are within their respective delegated powers where the economics of the charge levels have changed (e.g., costs have risen unexpectedly), or for commercial reasons.

94. EXECUTIVE'S RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2024/25

The Executive Member for Finance, Change and Governance presented a report which contains a detailed response to each of the points raised by the Scrutiny Committee in their report to the Executive of 29 January 2023.

The Leader placed on record his thanks to the Scrutiny Committee for the work engagement over the last few months around the budget process and the suggestions put forward in the report.

RESOLVED: That the Executive's response to the Scrutiny Committee be approved.

95. URGENT BUSINESS (IF ANY)

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and finished at 6.12 pm