

THE "CALL IN" PERIOD FOR THIS SET OF MINUTES ENDS AT 12 NOON ON THURSDAY, 21ST NOVEMBER 2024. MINUTES NOD. 64, 65 (1) AND 69 (2) ARE NOT SUBJECT TO "CALL-IN".

CABINET

MEETING HELD AT THE BIRKDALE ROOM, TOWN HALL, SOUTHPORT ON THURSDAY 7TH NOVEMBER, 2024

PRESENT: Councillor Atkinson (in the Chair)
Councillors Dowd, Doyle, Harvey, Lappin, Moncur,
Roscoe and Veidman

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Shaw and Sir Ron Watson CBE

59. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Howard.

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interests or personal interests were received.

61. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Decision Made:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

62. HOUSING STRATEGY FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES AND/OR AUTISM

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director - Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing (Place Director) seeking approval of the Housing Strategy for people with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism. The report indicated that the strategy had been commissioned on a Cheshire and Merseyside (C&M) footprint as part of the commissioning work programme. The Strategy had been jointly produced with the Housing Learning and Improvement Network and would support a framework for all commissioners when assessing local housing need for this cohort of people and supporting new developments, alongside general housing to meet those needs. This also followed on from the work commissioned on behalf of C&M by Campbell Tickell in 2022. Over the next 10 years, it was estimated that Cheshire and Merseyside would need 1,700 additional supported housing dwellings to meet the identified housing needs of people with learning disabilities and/or Autism. It was estimated that there was also a need for 400 general needs homes, typically social housing for

rent over the same period. Sefton's requirements were for 246 units of accommodation.

The Strategy would also support:

- Sefton's Corporate Plan 2024-2027 in helping to meet some of the priority actions with the Adult Social Care section.
- Sefton's Housing Strategy 2022-2027 and the relevant themes: meeting people's housing needs, and tackling barriers to obtaining suitable housing for the most vulnerable and enabling people to live independently.

The following appendices were attached to the report:

Appendix 1 - Housing Strategy for People with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism

Appendix 2 - Easy Read Housing Strategy for People with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism

Members of the Cabinet asked questions/raised matters on the following issues:

- The level of accommodation need in Sefton compared to other neighbouring local authorities.
- How work with registered social landlords would be undertaken in addressing the Strategy.
- The importance of a smooth transition for users of Children's Services to Adult Services.
- The Easy Read Housing Strategy for People with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism was welcomed.

Decisions Made:

That

- (1) the Cheshire and Merseyside Learning Disability and Autism Housing Strategy, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;
- (2) authority be delegated to the Executive Director - Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing (Place Director), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care to approve and monitor the delivery plan; and
- (3) the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Adult Social Care and Health, to undertake any procurement exercise in relation to appointing preferred Registered Providers of Social Housing.

Reasons for the Decisions:

The Council has a duty under the Care Act 2014 in that a fundamental component of the Act is the 'suitability of accommodation' in meeting the at home care and support needs of older and vulnerable people.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

To have a single strategy for each local authority, but this would not have supported any cross boundary working, or the regional requirements on an NHS Integrated Care system region. This option was rejected to have a more efficient oversight of the housing market across the C&M region.

63. PROPERTY POOL PLUS ADMINISTRATION PROCUREMENT

The Cabinet considered the report of the Assistant Director – Economic Growth and Housing seeking authority to undertake a procurement exercise for a new service contract in connection with the administration of the Council's social housing register; and to manage the Council's social housing allocations policy and its nominations arrangements with Registered Providers of social housing. The report sought delegated authority to award a new contract following the procurement exercise.

Decisions Made:

That

- (1) the Assistant Director - Economic Growth and Housing be authorised to conduct a procurement exercise to appoint an external service provider in respect of Property Pool Plus;
- (2) authority be delegated to the Assistant Director - Economic Growth and Housing to approve the resulting post procurement contract award in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Housing and Highways, together with any extensions; and
- (3) in the event that any of the current service staff with TUPE entitlement have an entitlement to LGPS pensions, the Assistant Director - Economic Growth and Housing be authorised to enter into arrangements to ensure that the new service provider enters into an admissions agreement and bond in relation to the affected staff, in order that there is no financial risk or liability to the Council from the future arrangements.

Reasons for the Decisions:

The Council had statutory duties to have a policy for the allocation of social housing accommodation and the maintenance of a housing needs register. In addition, there was the function to manage the Council's Nomination Rights with all Registered Providers who had housing stock in Sefton, which sat alongside these duties.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

1. Explore a shared service with other LCR Councils. However, at this point in time this option was not available, as initial scoping work with other LCR Councils had been unable to prove concrete economic benefits with this option. Other LCR Councils had now made the decision to bring the administration of Property Pool Plus in-house, which had largely ruled out a shared service being entered into over the coming years.
2. Bring the service in-house and deliver it as part of the Council's Housing Options Team service offer. The costs of doing this would be well in excess of what the Council currently paid to deliver the service.

64. SOUTHPORT EASTERN ACCESS SCHEME - RECEIPT OF CAPITAL FUNDING

Further to Minute No. 10 of 23 May 2024, the Cabinet considered the report of the Assistant Director - Highways and Public Protection advising that schemes over £1m in value required approval by the Council and the necessary funding needed to be included within the Council's Capital Programme. The Southport Eastern Access scheme was expected to cost approximately £16.3m. Subject to approval from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, a Grant Funding Agreement would be received for this amount.

Cabinet Members welcomed the Grant Funding Agreement.

Decision Made:

That the Council be recommended to approve a supplementary capital estimate for £16.3m externally funded using the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement from the LCRCA for the delivery of the Southport Eastern Access scheme, pending receipt and signing of a Grant Funding Agreement from the LCRCA.

Reasons for the Decision:

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) had received a City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement allocation from the Department for Transport to deliver highway improvement and maintenance projects throughout the City Region by March 2027. Within the recently completed re-baselining exercise an allocation of funding for £16.8m had been identified to fund the Southport Eastern Access projects. It was recognised that careful planning and co-ordination of all the elements of work would be critical to ensure the works were delivered within the window and that disruption was minimised as far as possible.

In order to meet the LUF Funding deadline, the target programme identified that the works contract needed to be signed in Autumn 2024. The report sought to ensure that the necessary funding allocation was within the Capital Programme before the Contract was signed for the first Phase of works.

Whilst the Cabinet Member - Housing and Highways had previously approved the Transport Capital Programme which included the Southport Eastern Access scheme, the financial regulations required the Cabinet to approve schemes over £1m.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

No alternative options had been considered.

65. LOCAL ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE - RECEIPT OF CAPITAL FUNDING

The Cabinet considered the report of the Assistant Director - Highways and Public Protection advising that allocations of additional funding over £1m in value required Council approval. The report sought a Cabinet recommendation to the Council to add £1.067m of Local Electric Vehicle Charging (LEVI) funding to the Council's Capital Programme. Subject to confirmation from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, a Grant Funding Agreement would be received for this amount.

Cabinet Members welcomed the Grant Funding Agreement.

Decisions Made:

That

- (1) **the Council be recommended to approve** a supplementary capital estimate for £1.067m, externally funded using Local Electric Vehicle Charging (LEVI) funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) for the delivery of Electric Vehicle Infrastructure across the Borough;
- (2) the progress of the development work in support of a submission to the LCRCA to identify the programme of roll out of new infrastructure be noted; and
- (3) the progress of the development of an Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy for the Borough be noted.

Reasons for the Decisions:

The report sought approval to accept the allocated LEVI Funding into the Council's Capital Programme. This would facilitate the remaining steps of the process and help avoid delays in using the funding. Further report(s) would confirm the Council's EV Strategy, final details of the priority list for the roll out of EV infrastructure and the details of the contractual relationship with a charge point operator, when all those matters had been determined.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The Council could decide not to participate in the LEVI delivery scheme, but this would limit the ability to provide EV infrastructure for those residents without off-street parking.

66. CORPORATE MOBILE TELEPHONE CONTRACT RE-TENDER

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial that sought authority to go out to the market for the provision of mobile telephony SIM cards to support the mobile data and telephony provision across the Authority. The report set out the background to the Council's current contract with EE, which was due to expire on 31 March 2026 and recommended a route to market, in line with Public Procurement legislation.

Cabinet Members commented on the use of local businesses, as part of the procurement process.

Decisions Made:

That

- (1) the use of Crown Commercial Services Framework (RM6261) Mobile Voice and Data Services to run a further competition for the provision of a new corporate mobile telephone contract, with a proposed term of an initial 3-years with the option of 2 further 12-month extension periods, be authorised;
- (2) the Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial, in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Corporate Services, be granted delegated authority to award a contract resulting from the above procurement, and to award any extension thereof.

Reasons for the Decisions:

On approval of the recommendations within the report, the next steps would be to complete the procurement process to ensure that Sefton had a new contract in place before the current contract ends, thereby allowing for an implementation/transition period should the contract be awarded to a new provider.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The other option available to the Council would be to consider a direct award to the incumbent provider (EE Ltd). This was rejected on the basis that the Council had been with the incumbent provider for a number of years and by going out competitively to the market, could realise savings for the Council but at minimum confirm value for money had been achieved. Unlike some other ICT services, the incumbent provider's services were not embedded or intrinsically linked enough to bring into consideration a large cost of change.

Resource within both ICT and Procurement had been identified and reserved to conduct the procurement exercise.

67. Q1 & Q2 (2024) CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The agenda item was withdrawn.

68. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2024/25 TO 2027/28 - REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2024/25 – NOVEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial informing the Cabinet of:

- 1) The current position relating to the 2024/25 revenue budget.
- 2) The current forecast on Council Tax and Business Rates collection for 2024/25.
- 3) The monitoring position of the Council's capital programme to the end of September 2024:
 - The forecast expenditure to year end.
 - Variations against the approved budgets and an explanation of those variations for consideration by Members.
 - Updates to spending profiles and proposed amendments to capital budgets necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of capital projects; and
- 4) The latest prudential indicator information for 2024/25 and the current Corporate Risk Register.

The following appendices were attached to the report:

- Appendix A – Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27
- Appendix B – Corporate Risk Register – September 2024

Decisions Made:

That

Revenue Outturn

- (1) the current position relating to the 2024/25 revenue budget be noted;
- (2) the actions being taken to refine forecasts and identify mitigating efficiencies to ensure each service achieves a balanced position, be noted;
- (3) the remedial action plan measures outlined in section 3 of the report be approved;

- (4) the financial risks associated with the delivery of the 2024/25 revenue budget be recognised and it be acknowledged that the forecast outturn position will continue to be reviewed, and remedial actions put in place, to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position and financial sustainability can be achieved;

Sefton Climate & Retrofit Action Project (SCRAP)

- (5) a supplementary revenue estimate of £834,548 for the Sefton Climate and Retrofit Action Project (SCRAP) fully funded from the National Lottery Climate Action Fund, be approved;
- (6) a supplementary capital estimate of £32,000 for the Sefton Climate & Retrofit Action Project (SCRAP) fully funded from the National Lottery Climate Action Fund, be approved;
- (7) authority to accept the grant and to sign the associated documentation be delegated to the Executive Director - Corporate Services and Commercial;

Capital Programme

- (8) the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme, as set out at paragraph 8.1 of the report, be noted;
- (9) the latest capital expenditure position as at 30 September 2024 of £23.651m, as set out at paragraph 8.6 of the report; and the latest full year forecast is £81.007m, as set out at paragraph 8.7 of the report, be noted;
- (10) the programme outputs and progress to September, as set out at paragraphs 8.10 – 8.28 of the report, be noted;
- (11) it be noted that capital resources will be managed by the Executive Director - Corporate Service and Commercial to ensure the capital programme remains fully funded and that capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council, as set out at paragraphs 8.29-8.31 of the report;

Prudential Indicators

- (12) the forecasts for the Prudential Indicators relating to capital expenditure and financing as at 30th September 2024 be noted; and

Risk Management

- (13) the latest position relating to key risk management areas be noted.

Reasons for the Decisions:

To ensure that the Cabinet was informed of the current position in relation to the 2024/25 revenue budget.

To provide an updated forecast of the outturn position with regard to the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates.

To keep Members informed of the progress of the Capital Programme against the profiled budget for 2024/25 and agreed allocations for future years.

To progress any changes that were required in order to maintain a relevant and accurate budget profile necessary for effective monitoring of the Capital Programme.

To approve any updates to funding resources so that they can be applied to capital schemes in the delivery of the Council's overall capital strategy.

To ensure that the Cabinet was informed of prudential indicators and key risk management areas.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

69. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2024/25 TO 2027/28 – MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26 TO 2027/28

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial informing the Cabinet and Council of the update to the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 to 2027/28 taking account of all currently available information; and providing an update on other areas that inform financial decision making including the Council's reserves position, its growth programme, its position on its wholly owned Council companies and the High Needs budget, as these were all interlinked with the MTFP.

Cabinet Members thanked officers for their hard work on the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Decisions Made:

That

- (1) the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2025/26 to 2027/28 and any assumptions made be noted; and
- (2) **the Council be recommended to** approve the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2025/26 to 2027/28 and any assumptions made.

Reasons for the Decisions:

In February 2024, the Council approved a one-year budget plan for 2024/25. As part of the report, an indicative budget gap of £19.2m for 2025/26 to 2026/27 was reported, before any decisions on the level of Council Tax. The MTFP for this period had subsequently been updated to reflect the latest information available and to reflect the ongoing service pressures the Council was facing. The MTFP period has also been extended by a further year to 2027/28. In approving the recommendation in the report, the Council would continue to ensure resources were well managed and reflect the key priorities of the residents of Sefton.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

70. TREASURY MANAGEMENT POSITION TO SEPTEMBER 2024

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial that provided Members with a review of the Treasury Management activities undertaken to 30 September 2024. The report would be submitted to the meeting of the Council on 14 November 2024.

Decision Made:

That the Treasury Management update to 30 September 2024, be noted, together with the review the effects of decisions taken in pursuit of the Treasury Management Strategy, and consideration of the implications of changes resulting from regulatory, economic and market factors affecting the Council's treasury management activities.

Reasons for the Decision:

To ensure that Members were fully appraised of the treasury activity undertaken to 30 September 2024 and to meet the reporting requirements set out in Sefton's Treasury Management Practices and those recommended by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) code.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.