

THE "CALL IN" PERIOD FOR THIS SET OF MINUTES ENDS AT 12 NOON ON WEDNESDAY, 26TH FEBRUARY 2025. MINUTES NOD. 105, 106 (1) AND 106 (4), 107, 108, 109 (2), 110 (2), AND 110 (6) – (11) ARE NOT SUBJECT TO "CALL-IN".

CABINET

MEETING HELD AT THE ASSEMBLY HALL, TOWN HALL, BOOTLE ON THURSDAY 13TH FEBRUARY, 2025

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

102. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Moncur.

103. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

104. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Decision Made:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2025 be confirmed as a correct record.

105. ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ASSET DISPOSAL POLICY 2025/26

Further to Minute No. 39 of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) held on 11 February 2025, the Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Regeneration, Economy and Assets advising that the Asset Management Strategy and Asset Disposal Policy set out the vision and aspirations for the effective management of the Council's corporate asset portfolio and the role it played in supporting and shaping the Council's agenda for the 2030 vision; that aside from its staff, the Council's next biggest resource was its land and property and therefore it was vital that this resource was managed and used effectively and efficiently to ensure that the Council derived maximum benefit from its assets in support of its strategic aims and priorities; that the Asset Management Strategy and Asset Disposal Policy would provide a framework for the planning, prioritisation, management and funding of the Council's asset base; and that this was a statutory document that the Council was required to have in place and would be reviewed on an annual basis.

The following appendices were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 - Asset Management Strategy
- Appendix 2 - Asset Disposal Policy

Decisions Made:

That the Council be recommended to approve:

- (1) the latest Asset Management Strategy; and
- (2) the latest Asset Disposal Policy.

Reasons for the Decisions:

The Asset Management Strategy and Asset Disposal Policy were key documents for Sefton Council which set out key parameters in respect of the delivery of an efficient and effective property portfolio.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

106. PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2025/26

Further to Minute No. 40 of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) held on 11 February 2025, the Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial indicating that the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities was introduced following the Local Government Act 2003. It detailed a number of measures / limits / parameters (Prudential Indicators) that were required to be set each financial year. The approval of these limits would provide a benchmark to measure actual performance against, to help ensure that the Council complied with relevant legislation, was acting prudently and that its capital expenditure proposals were affordable.

The following appendix was attached to the report:

- Appendix A – Summary of Prudential Indicators.

Decisions Made:

- (1) **that the Council be recommended to approve** the Prudential Indicators, as detailed in the report, as the basis for compliance with The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities;
- (2) note that relevant Prudential Indicators will be revised as required and that any changes will be submitted to the Cabinet and then to the Council for approval;

- (3) note that the estimates of capital expenditure may change as grant allocations are received; and
- (4) **that the Council be recommended to delegate** authority to the Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial, in consultation with the Cabinet Member – Corporate Services, to manage the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for external debt, as detailed in section 6 of the report.

Reasons for the Decisions:

To enable the Council to effectively manage its Capital Financing activities and comply with the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. The prudential indicators for the forthcoming and following years must be set before the beginning of the forthcoming year.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

107. TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY 2025/26

Further to Minute No. 41 of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) held on 11 February 2025, the Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial that set out proposed policy and strategy documents for the Treasury Management Policy; the Treasury Management Strategy; and the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement.

The following appendices were attached to the report:

- Appendix A – Treasury Management Policy 2025/26
- Appendix B – Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26
- Appendix C – Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement 2025/26

Decisions Made:

That the Council be recommended to approve:

- (1) the Treasury Management Policy Document for 2025/26;
- (2) the Treasury Management Strategy Document for 2025/26; and
- (3) the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement 2025/26.

Reasons for the Decisions:

The Council had adopted CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services. The Code required that the Council set a policy and strategy for the effective operation of the Council's Treasury Management function during the financial year. This would ensure that cash flow was adequately planned, surplus monies were invested commensurate with the Council's risk appetite whilst providing adequate portfolio liquidity, and that the borrowing needs of the Council were properly managed to ensure that the Council could meet its capital spending obligations.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

108. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2025/26

Further to Minute No. 42 of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) held on 11 February 2025, the Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial indicating that the Capital Strategy set out the long-term context in which capital expenditure, borrowing and investment decisions were made and considered the impact of these decisions on the Council's priorities, the Corporate Plan and the promises made in the 2030 Vision for Sefton. At the heart of the Capital Strategy was the Council's core objective to continue to deliver financial sustainability. As such a flexible capital investment programme was more important than ever as a method to stimulate and enable economic growth and strategic investment, ensuring best use of existing assets and of generating future income streams to pay for and deliver day to day services.

The following appendix was attached to the report:

- Appendix A – Capital Strategy 2025/26

Decision Made:

That the Council be recommended to approve the Capital Strategy, as set out at Appendix A to the report.

Reasons for the Decision:

The Capital Strategy was a key policy document for Sefton Council and followed guidance issued in the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (2021 Edition). Local authorities were required by regulation to have regard to the Prudential Code when carrying out their duties in England and Wales under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None. The CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (2021 Edition) required all Local Authorities to adopt a Capital Strategy.

109. ROBUSTNESS OF THE 2025/26 BUDGET ESTIMATES AND THE ADEQUACY OF RESERVES – LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2003 - SECTION 25

Further to Minute No. 43 of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) held on 11 February 2025, the Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial indicating that, to comply with statute, the Chief Financial Officer was required to report to Council prior to the approval of the budget and the setting of the Council Tax, to give assurance that the budget was robust and that there were adequate reserves and balances. The report was based on the proposals presented.

Cabinet Members asked questions/commented on the following issues:

- The adequacy of the proposed financial reserves; and
- The new government's commitment to a fundamental review of local government funding that will inform the next three-year settlement from 2026/27.

Decisions Made:

That

- (1) it be noted that the Local Government Act 2003, (Section 25 as amended) requires the Chief Financial Officer to report formally the issues of an opinion as to the robustness of the estimates made and the tax setting calculations; and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves; and
- (2) **the Council be recommended to have regard to** the matters raised in the report during the final stages of determining the budget for 2025/26.

Reasons for the Decisions:

The Local Government Act 2003, (section 25 as amended) required the Chief Financial Officer to report formally on the issues contained within the report.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

It was a statutory requirement to complete the report, therefore there were no alternative options available.

110. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PLAN 2025/26 – 2027/28 AND COUNCIL TAX 2025/26

CABINET - THURSDAY 13TH FEBRUARY, 2025

Further to Minute No. 44 of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) held on 11 February 2025, the Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial that set out:

- An assessment of the Council's current financial position and approach to the 2025/26 Budget Plan and preparation for the additional two-year budget period 2026/27 to 2027/28.
- An update on the Government's announcement of resources that were available to the Council for 2025/26.
- The Council's current financial position and the assumptions built into the Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- The proposed Budget for 2025/26; and,
- The proposed Capital Programme for 2025/26 to 2027/28.

The report also set out the financial strategy of the Council and the national and local financial context within which it was operating. The Council had a statutory requirement to remain financially sustainable and to balance its budget every year.

The following appendices were attached to the report:

- Individual School Budgets 2025/26
- Budget Saving Proposals / Mitigations 2025/26 – 2027/28
- Draft Council Budget Summary 2025/26
- Capital Programme 2025/26 – 2027/28

Cabinet Members asked questions/commented on the following issues:

- Budget challenges due to increasing costs;
- The new government's commitment to a fundamental review of local government funding that will inform the next three-year settlement from 2026/27; and
- Thanks to officers for their work on the budget, particularly to the Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial, as it was his last Sefton budget prior to taking up a new role in another local authority.

Decisions Made:

That

- (1) the update of the Medium-Term Financial Plan for the period 2025/26 to 2027/28 be noted;
- (2) **the Council be recommended to approve** the Budget Plan for 2025/26, including the Revenue Budget, allocation of specific grants, as set out at section 13 of the report, and the Capital Programme, as set out at Appendix D to the report, and authorise

officers to undertake the necessary actions to implement the recommendations;

- (3) the Schools' Forum decisions on the Dedicated Schools Grant and Individual School Budgets, as set out at section 12 of the report, be noted
- (4) the application of the 2025/26 Dedicated Schools Grant funding for Schools; Early Years; High Needs and Central Schools Support agreed by the Schools' Forum, as set out at section 12 of the report, be approved;
- (5) authority be delegated to the Head of Health and Wellbeing / Director of Public Health, in consultation with Cabinet Member - Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion, to formalise the agreement relating to the Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Improvement Grant, and to issue a contract variation to uplift the service contract in line with the Grant funding as per existing arrangements, as set out at section 13 of the report;
- (6) **the Council be recommended to approve** a supplementary capital estimate of £1.500m for the demolition of Vine House funded by prudential borrowing, as set out at section 17 of the report;
- (7) **the Council be recommended to approve** a supplementary capital estimate of £0.500m for Food Waste Management funded by prudential borrowing, as set out at section 17 of the report;
- (8) **the Council be recommended to approve** a supplementary capital estimate of £0.219m for Hawthorne Road Wash Bay and Additional Works funded by prudential borrowing, as set out at section 17 of the report;
- (9) **the Council be recommended to approve** a supplementary capital estimate of £4.277m for the Fleet Renewal Programme funded by prudential borrowing, as set out at section 17 of the report;
- (10) **the Council be recommended to approve** a supplementary capital estimate of £1.000m for Temporary Accommodation funded by prudential borrowing, as set out at section 17 of the report; and
- (11) **the Council be recommended to approve** a supplementary capital estimate of £4.200m for Disabled Facilities Grants funded by an external grant from the Better Care Fund, as set out at section 17 of the report.

Reasons for the Decisions:

The recommendations in the report provided the basis on which the Budget Plan would be balanced for the financial year 2025/26 and would

ensure that the Council's statutory obligations were met. In addition, it began the planning for the financial strategy for the following two years to give the Council sufficient time to identify specific proposals to deliver financial sustainability over that period.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The Council was legally required to set a balanced budget each year and the report had taken due consideration of all financial issues in its development. No additional options were available for inclusion.