

CABINET

**MEETING HELD AT THE BALLROOM, TOWN HALL, BOOTLE
ON THURSDAY 4TH NOVEMBER, 2021**

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Maher (in the Chair)
Councillors Atkinson, Cummins, Doyle, Hardy,
Lappin, Roscoe, Moncur and Veidman

60. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Fairclough.

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

62. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Decision Made:

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 October 2021 be approved as correct record.

63. ST TERESA'S CATHOLIC INFANT SCHOOL

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Education Excellence in relation to St. Teresa's Catholic Infant School and the request from the Governing Body to begin formal consultation to close St Teresa's Catholic Infant School.

The report set out that the Cabinet, at its meeting held on 5 March 2020 agreed to give further time to St Teresa's Governors to provide an alternative financial proposal based on a half form entry from Reception to Year 2. The proposal was presented to Cabinet on 30 July 2020 by the Governing Body who appealed to Cabinet to agree that the school remain open and to operate under a Licensed Deficit Budget Agreement.

The Cabinet agreed to allow the Governing Body more time to provide a financial plan that provided assurance that the school was viable going forward.

The Local Authority has held termly monitoring meetings to review the financial plan submitted to Members with the Governors and Leadership Team of the school.

The Governing Body, after having exhausted all options to address the pupil numbers and financial situation, requested that the Council consider beginning formal consultation to close St Teresa's Catholic Infant School.

Decision Made:

That the formal consultation process in relation to the closure of St. Teresa's Catholic Infant School within the timescales identified in paragraph 4, to the report be initiated and approved.

Reasons for the Decision:

The Local Authority has the power to consider all options and to agree to the request made by the Governing Body.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Alternative options have been explored by the Governing Body with support from Officers prior to the Governing Body making their request.

64. ADOPTION IN MERSEYSIDE (AIM) EXTENSION OF CONTRACT

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education seeking approval to the extension of the partnership agreement for AIM (Adoption in Merseyside) until 31 March 2022 and to note that the partnership arrangements will be subject to a full review before any new arrangements are put in place.

Decision Made: That the Cabinet:

- (1) approve the extension of the current partnership agreement for AIM (Adoption in Merseyside) to the 31 March 2022; and
- (2) note that the partnership arrangements going forward would be the subject of a review and that a further report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

Reasons for the Decision:

The current partnership agreement expired on 31 March 2021 and arrangements to extend the agreement were not implemented due to the impact of Covid-19.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None

**65. BOOTLE STRAND SHOPPING CENTRE – BUSINESS PLAN
2021/22 TO 2023/24 – INTERIM UPDATE**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director for Place that provided an interim update in relation to the Bootle Strand Shopping Centre.

The report detailed that currently there wasn't any change to the Business Plan that was approved by Cabinet on 24 June 2021, Minute No 21 refers. The report outlined that the forecast relied on assumptions about the levels of collection of rent, rates and service charge, which were based on the current market conditions. The report did set out that those could change if the very dynamic trading environment changes again, because of further government restrictions around COVID-19 for example.

Decision Made:

That the Cabinet note the contents of the report and the Business Plan, including the factors that could influence and impact upon the financial returns to the Council from The Strand, and the ongoing work on strategy and action plans proposed to manage and mitigate those.

Reasons for the Decisions:

The Council's objectives for the acquisition of The Strand in 2017 were to ensure that it was supported to continue its role in the local community, as a key asset at the heart of Bootle critical to the town's physical, economic and social regeneration.

Since the start of the spread of COVID-19 in the UK in March 2020, the regular weekly and monthly monitoring of the operations of The Strand have indicated increasingly severe impacts of the pandemic and associated government restrictions on the operations of and financial returns from The Strand. Despite continued uncertainty, this report and Business Plan provide an update on forecasts for the coming years, as well as short- to medium-term mitigants and actions.

However, operational decision-making must be made within the context of an approved Business Plan.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not to provide any update – despite the fact that there is no change at this time to the previously published Business Plan, it was deemed appropriate to confirm that this was the case given continued uncertainty on the economic and regulatory impacts of the pandemic, and governmental and sectoral response, and continued impacts on The Strand. The expectation remains for continuation of uncertainty for the economy and for the sector for a significant period to come.

66. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2021/22

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services in relation to the Treasury Management activities undertaken to 30 September 2021. The report set out that it was the second of the ongoing quarterly monitoring reports provided to the Audit and Governance Committee and the mid-year report to the Cabinet and Council, in order that the treasury management policies and practices maybe scrutinised.

Decision Made:

That the Treasury Management update to 30 September 2021 be noted along with the effects of decisions taken in pursuit of the Treasury Management Strategy and 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 are fully appraised of the treasury activity undertaken to 30 September 2021 and to meet the reporting requirements set out in Sefton's Treasury Management Practices and those recommended by the CIPFA code.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

67. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2021/22 TO 2024/25 AND FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE 2020 - REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2021/22 INCLUDING THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE 2021/22 BUDGET - NOVEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services informing the Cabinet of:

1. The current financial implications of COVID-19 on the 2021/22 Budget;
2. The current position relating to the 2021/22 revenue budget;
3. The current forecast on Council Tax and Business Rates collection for 2021/22;
4. The monitoring position of the Council's capital programme to the end of September 2021:
 - The forecast expenditure to year end;
 - Variations against the approved budgets and an explanation of those variations for consideration by Members; and

- Updates to spending profiles and proposed amendments to capital budgets necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of capital projects are also presented for approval.

Decisions Made: That

Revenue Budget

- (1) the current financial implications of COVID-19 on the 2021/22 Budget together with the key issues that will influence the final position, be noted;
- (2) the use of 2020/21 emergency funding to fund Collection Fund losses in 2021/22 instead of utilising the Council's General Balances (£1.000m from the 2020/21 underspend) and implementing a vacancy target across the Council that would require posts to be held vacant (£0.500m), be approved;
- (3) the current position relating to the 2021/22 revenue budget be noted;
- (4) the financial risks associated with the delivery of the 2021/22 revenue budget be recognised and it be acknowledged that the forecast outturn position will continue to be reviewed to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position and financial sustainability can be achieved;

Capital Programme

- (5) the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme, as outlined within paragraph 7.1 of the report, be noted;
- (6) the latest capital expenditure position as at 30 September 2021 of £13.613m (paragraph 7.4); and that the latest full year forecast is £50.568m (paragraph 7.6), be noted;
- (7) the programme outputs and progress to September (paragraph 7.5), be noted; and
- (8) it be noted that capital resources will be managed by the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services, to ensure the capital programme remains fully funded and that capital funding arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council, as outlined within paragraph 7.11 of the report.

Reasons for the Decisions:

To ensure Cabinet are informed of the current position in relation to the 2021/22 revenue budget, including COVID19 pressures and additional funding being made available to the Council.

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 2021/22 and agreed allocations for future years.

To progress any changes that are 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.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

68. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2021/22 TO 2024/25 AND FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE 2020 - MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2022/23 TO 2024/25

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services that detailed:

1. The latest position with regard to Government's Comprehensive Spending Review and the potential impact that this could have on the Council's funding for 2022/23 to 2024/25.
2. The update to the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2022/23 to 2024/25 taking account of all currently available information.
3. The position in respect of the Council's High Needs Budget and the need to establish a remedial action plan in respect of the deficit within the High Needs Block, which will be shared with the external auditor in order to support financial sustainability.

The Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services, Councillor Lappin thanked all Officers for their continued support and hard work during the Year.

Decision Made:

That the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2022/23 to 2024/25 and any assumptions made, be noted.

Reasons for the Decision:

In March 2021 Council approved a one-year budget plan for 2021/22. As part of this report, an indicative budget gap of £27m for 2022/23 to 2024/25 was reported. The MTFP for this period has subsequently been updated to reflect the latest information available and to reflect the ongoing service pressures the Council is facing. In approving the recommendation

laid out in this report, the Council will continue to ensure resources are well managed and reflect the key priorities of the residents of Sefton.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.