

**CABINET**

**MEETING HELD AT THE ASSEMBLY HALL, TOWN HALL, BOOTLE  
ON THURSDAY 6TH FEBRUARY, 2025**

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

**95. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

**96. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**97. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Decision Made:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2025 be confirmed as a correct record.

**98. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO SERVE ON THE  
ASHTON MEMORIAL FUND AND THE WALTON CENTRE NHS  
FOUNDATION TRUST - COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer seeking approval for the appointment of two additional representatives to serve on the Ashton Memorial Fund; and a change in representation on the Walton Centre NHS Foundation Trust - Council of Governors.

**Decisions Made:**

That

- (1) Councillor Chris Page and Reverend Dr Matt Davis be appointed as representatives to serve on the Ashton Memorial Fund until 31 May 2027; and
- (2) Councillor Julia Garner replace Councillor Laura Lunn-Bates as the Council's representative on the Walton Centre NHS Foundation Trust - Council of Governors until 1 September 2026.

**Reasons for the Decisions:**

1. The Cabinet had delegated powers, as set out in Chapter 5, Paragraph 40, of the Council's Constitution to appoint the Council's representatives to serve on outside bodies.
2. At its meeting held on 23 May 2024, the Cabinet considered the annual report to appoint Members to serve on outside bodies.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

None.

**99. DIGITAL STRATEGY**

Further to Minute No. 33 of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) of 20 January 2025, the Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director - Corporate Services and Commercial that presented a revised Digital Strategy for the Council. The report set out how the Strategy had been developed and sought approval for its publication.

The following appendices were attached to the report:

- Appendix A - Sefton's Digital Strategy
- Appendix B - Sefton's Digital Strategy Easy Read Version
- Appendix C - Digital Strategy, Consultation Comments and Council Responses from the Questionnaire

**Decision Made:**

That the publication of the revised Digital Strategy be approved.

**Reasons for the Decision:**

The revised Digital Strategy for Sefton over the next three years was intended to be an overarching plan which articulated the Council's ambitions and was based on key priorities identified within the Council's Corporate Plan.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

The alternative option, not to have a strategy, was rejected given that digital was a key enabler for service delivery across the Council.

**100. COUNTER FRAUD STRATEGY**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Executive Director – Corporate Services and Commercial indicating that the Council had carried out a self-assessment against the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) publication “Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption” which consisted of five principles:

- Acknowledge the responsibility of the governing body for countering fraud and corruption.
- Identify the fraud and corruption risks.
- Develop an appropriate counter fraud and corruption strategy.
- Provide resources to implement the strategy.
- Take action in response to fraud and corruption.

One of the proposed actions that the Council was recommended to undertake was the development of a Counter Fraud Strategy.

The report indicated that CIFAS, a not-for-profit organisation fighting fraud across the public and private sector, had also provided guidance on how to address fraud risks in the publication “Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally 2020 is the updated counter fraud and corruption strategy for local government”. The model outlined in the publication was based on five principles, as detailed below, and broadly aligned to the CIPFA model, and had been widely used across the Local Government sector:

- Govern
- Acknowledge
- Prevent
- Pursue
- Protecting itself and residents

The report further indicated that the proposed strategy was based on the CIFAS five pillars and included roles and responsibilities as well as key priorities for the next three years. An action plan had been developed based on the key priorities. The Council had made some progress on implementing actions to improve the Council’s counter fraud approach which would be enhanced with the actions from the proposed Counter Fraud Strategy.

The following appendix was attached to the report:

- Counter Fraud Strategy

**Decisions Made:**

That

- (1) the proposed Counter Fraud Strategy and the responsibilities detailed in the document be approved; and
- (2) the progress on implementation of proposed counter fraud actions to date be noted.

**Reasons for the Decisions:**

The Council had carried out a self-assessment against the CIPFA Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption. One of the proposed actions that the Council should undertake was the development of a Counter Fraud Strategy which was presented for approval.

The Council had made some progress on implementing actions to improve the Council's counter fraud approach which would be enhanced with the actions from the proposed Counter Fraud Strategy.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

Not having a Counter Fraud Strategy was one option considered and rejected as the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) had provided guidance to the public sector and failure to follow would likely lead to loss of reputation for the Council.

**101. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2024/25 TO 2027/28 - REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2024/25 – FEBRUARY 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 December 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.
- 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 – December 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 previously approved by the Cabinet on 7 November 2024, as outlined in section 3 of the report, be noted;
- (4) the intention to review and release Earmarked Reserves to support the additional in-year budget pressure and reduce the call on the Council's General Balances be noted;
- (5) 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;

### **Capital Programme**

- (6) the spending profiles across financial years for the approved capital programme, as set out at paragraph 8.1 of the report, be noted;
- (7) the latest capital expenditure position as at 31 December 2024 of £35.517m, as set out at paragraph 7.3 of the report; and the latest full year forecast is £73.809m, as set out at paragraph 7.4 of the report, be noted;
- (8) a supplementary capital estimate of £0.488m for the Alt Catchment Natural Flood Management Programme funded by an external grant from the Environment Agency, as set out at paragraph 7.8 of the report, be approved;
- (9) an increase of £0.724m to the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) block allocation funded by an external grant from the Better Care Fund, as set out at paragraph 7.9 of the report, be approved;
- (10) a supplementary capital estimate of £0.300m for the DFG Core Grant funded by an external grant from the Better Care Fund, as set out at paragraph 7.10 of the report, be approved;
- (11) a supplementary capital estimate of £0.046m for Community Equipment Purchases funded by an external grant from the Better Care Fund, as set out at paragraph 7.10 of the report, be approved;
- (12) a supplementary capital estimate of £0.085m for the Retail Model within Health and Wellbeing Hubs funded by an external grant from the Better Care Fund, as set out at paragraph 7.10 of the report, be approved;

- (13) it be noted that capital resources will be managed by the Executive Director - Corporate Services 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 7.12-7.14 of the report;

**Prudential Indicators**

- (14) the forecasts for the Prudential Indicators relating to capital expenditure and financing as at 31 December 2024 be noted; and

**Risk Management**

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

**Reasons for the Decisions:**

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

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

None.