

**CABINET**

**MEETING HELD AT THE BIRKDALE ROOM, TOWN HALL,  
SOUTHPORT  
ON THURSDAY 9TH JANUARY, 2020**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Maher (in the Chair)  
Councillors Atkinson, Hardy, Lappin, Moncur and  
Veidman

**85. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cummins, Fairclough and J.J. Kelly.

**86. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**87. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Decision Made:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2019 be approved as a correct record.

**88. THE SEFTON HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY 2020-2025**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Public Health in relation to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020 – 2025 for Sefton, entitled "Living Well in Sefton 2020-2025". The report set out how the Strategy had been developed, the governance steps taken and how the impact of the Strategy would be measured.

**Decision Made:**

That the report be commended to the Council for approval.

**Reasons for the Decision:**

- The Strategy and the ambition for the wider system have been developed through a full consultation process and with oversight of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy Steering Group. The Strategy uses the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and both local and national evidence to identify key ambition for the system that will

improve the health and wellbeing of people in Sefton and will help to reduce health inequalities.

- It is a statutory obligation for the Health and Wellbeing Board to produce a Health Well Being Strategy based on the most recent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

Not applicable.

**89. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES PLAN 2020 - 2025**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Interim Director of Children's Social Care and Education in relation to the Children and Young People's Plan 2020 – 2025 and accompanying Commissioning Strategy. The report detailed the steps taken to produce the Plan, the governance and oversight applied to previous draft and sought approval prior to the Plan becoming operational on 1 April 2020.

**Decision Made:**

That the Children and Young People's Plan 2020 – 2025 and accompanying Commissioning Strategy be approved.

**Reasons for the Decision:**

The report seeks to offer assurance of the prior governance, oversight and consultation that has developed the final version of the Children and Young People's Plan. This information should enable the Cabinet to confidentially approve the Plan for Sefton's Children and Young People.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

Not having a Children and Young People's Plan – This would leave a strategic risk in the delivery of co-ordinated services focused on improving the identified priority outcomes for our children and young people in Sefton.

**90. EARLY HELP STRATEGY**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Communities in relation to the progress made towards the establishment of a Sefton Early Help Strategy. The report requested the Cabinet to note and approve the final version of the Strategy.

**Decision Made:**

That the Early Help Strategy be approved.

**Reasons for the Decision:**

To ensure the Cabinet is fully informed of the progress towards finalising the Early Help Strategy.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

None identified.

**91. PURCHASE OF WINTER SERVICE FACILITY**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Highways and Public Protection that sought approval for the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer, in consultation with the Head of Highways and Public Protection, to:

- (a) enter into an agreement to purchase the depot currently used to deliver the winter gritting service (winter service facility), located at Heysham Road, Netherton from the existing term maintenance contractor; and
- (b) agree an extension to the existing contract.

The report highlighted that the facility had replaced the previous Council owned facility which was no longer fit for purpose as it did not meet the requirements of the Council's statutory duty and could now be disposed of.

**Decision Made:** That

- (1) the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer, in consultation with the Head of Highways and Public Protection, be authorised to enter into an agreement to purchase the winter service facility located at Heysham Road, Netherton from the existing term maintenance contractor, Graysons H&E Services, as detailed within the report;
- (2) the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer, in consultation with the Head of Highways and Public Protection, be authorised to vary the existing contract to include a 20% reduction in tendered rates, as agreed with the existing contractor and extended the existing winter service contract for a period of 4 years. Provision for this extension was included within the existing contract; and
- (3) the Head of Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Head of Highways and Public Protection, be authorised to dispose of the Council owned site of the former winter facility on Damfield Lane, Maghull, in accordance with the Council's Asset disposal policy.

**Reasons for the Decision:**

The purchase of the facility will save revenue funding over the remaining 9 years of the existing contract and allow the Council to consider alternative methods of procuring or providing the statutory winter service after that point, including bringing the service in-house.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

The alternative is not to purchase the facility and therefore not take advantage of the revenue rate reductions offered by the contractor. Furthermore, at the completion of the existing contract, the Council will have to re-procure the contract to include the provision of a winter facility, thus potentially paying for the facility twice.

Based on the above and the financial analysis contained within the report, the “do nothing” option would place the Council in an adverse financial position due to the need to contract its own facility and fail to take advantage of the 20% revenue savings.

A further option would be for the Council to build its own facility at the end of the contract which would be excessively expensive in comparison to the proposed recommendation in this report.

**92. PROCUREMENT OF PAYROLL SYSTEM**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Corporate Resources that set out the background to the Council’s current arrangements for the Payroll Software System. It also sought authority to commence a procurement exercise for the provision of a new contract for a replacement Payroll Software System.

**Decision Made:** That

- (1) the Head of Corporate Resources be authorised to conduct either an OJEU compliant procurement process or a mini competition using an OJEU advertised Framework Agreement, e.g. Crown Commercial Services Framework RM3821, for a Payroll Software System. If an OJEU Compliant Procurement Process is used, then the proposal would be to enter into a contract for a maximum of 7 years of an initial 5-year period with an option to extend for up to 2 periods of 12 months. If a mini competition is used, then the proposal would be to enter into a contract for a period of four years; and
- (2) the Head of Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services, be granted delegated authority to award the contract resulting from the procurement exercise and to award any extension thereof.

**Reasons for the Decision:**

1. The current contract relative to Payroll Software Solution is due to end on 30 September 2021.
2. To have appropriate and best value contractual arrangements in place for the Payroll function by 1 October 2021.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

There is no provision within the existing contract to extend beyond 30 September 2021. Consequently, a procurement exercise is required.

**93. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION (CTR) SCHEME 2020/21, COUNCIL TAX BASE 2020/21 AND CHANGES TO COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS FOR EMPTY HOMES**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Corporate Resources that provided details of the review of the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2019/20 and recommended that there be no change to the scheme for 2020/21 for working age claimants.

The report requested the Cabinet to recommend to the Council changes to discretionary Council Tax Empty Homes discounts following the outcome of a public consultation, and an additional increase to the Council Tax long-term Empty Homes Premium, following a consultation exercise that took place in 2018.

The report also requested the Cabinet to recommend to the Council an increase in the Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF) budget from £150,000 to £170,000 from 2020/21 onwards.

The report provided an updated Council Tax Base for Sefton Council and each Parish area for 2020/21.

**Decisions Made:** That

- (1) the contents of the review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2019/20 be noted;
- (2) the Council be recommended to make no changes to the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21 for working age claimants;
- (3) the outcome of the recent consultation and equality impact assessment on the proposed changes to Council Tax Empty Homes discounts, as set out in Annex B, to the report be noted;
- (4) the Council be recommended to approve changes to discretionary Council Tax Empty Homes discounts from 1 April 2020, to reduce the discount on uninhabitable properties from 50% to 0%, and to reduce the discount for the first month that a property is empty from 100% to 50%;
- (5) the Council be recommended to approve a change to the long-term Empty Homes Premium from 1 April 2020, to increase the premium charged on properties that have been empty for 5 years or more from 100% to 200%;

- (6) the Council be recommended to approve the relevant 2020/21 Council Tax Base for Sefton Council and each Parish Area as set out in Annex A to the report; and
- (7) the Council be recommended to approve an increase in the Exceptional Hardship Fund budget from £150,000 to £170,000 from 2020/21 onwards.

**Reasons for the Decision:**

**Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

Each financial year the Council must consider whether to revise or replace its local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The Council must approve and adopt the 2020/21 Council Tax Reduction scheme by 11 March 2020, as set out in the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2017.

This report comments on the impact of various changes made to the scheme in recent years together with the impact of the Government's Welfare Reform changes. After consideration of the factors outlined later in the report, it is proposed that the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21 remains unchanged for working age claimants.

**Council Tax Empty Homes Discounts**

Reducing the level of support offered by the current discretionary local empty homes' discounts may encourage owners of empty homes to bring them into use more quickly. It would remove the current favourable treatment of empty homes, encourage better use of local housing stock, bring the Council's policy more into line with other local Councils in the Liverpool City Region that do not offer discretionary empty homes discounts and provide a much-needed increase in council tax income.

**Long-term Empty Homes Premium**

Increasing the long-term empty homes premium is intended to encourage owners to bring them back into use. Recent legislation allows the Council to increase the premium on properties that have been empty for longer than 5 years to 200% from 1st April 2020. Any additional income raised from the premium will help support the provisions of Council services.

**Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF)**

The Council set the current budget of £150,000 in 2013/14. Since then the average Band D council tax charge in Sefton has increased by 25.6%. To keep pace with the increases in council tax the fund would have had to be increased by £38,500 in 2019/20. The fund has also been utilised to meet the cost of discretionary discounts awarded to care leavers since 2018/19. These discounts are costing approximately £19,000 in 2019/20. The suggested increase of £20,000 would offset the cost of the care leavers

discounts in 2020/21 and restore some of the capacity of the EHF to alleviate the burden of council tax charges on CTRS claimants who are suffering exceptional hardship.

### **Council Tax Base**

In accordance with Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended, the Council is required to set a tax base for both Sefton Council and for each Parish Area for 2020/21 before 31 January 2020.

### **Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

#### **Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

The Council last revised its local Council Tax Reduction Scheme in 2018/19 following a public consultation process. The changes introduced in April 2018 continue to address the Council's priorities to minimise the impact on vulnerable residents, by striking a balance between dealing with Council priorities whilst supporting those experiencing financial hardship. As a result, the changes made in 2018 continue to be fully monitored and evaluated. No alternative options for change have been considered for 2020/21.

#### **Council Tax Empty Homes Discounts**

The Council could choose not to make changes to discretionary Council Tax Empty Homes discounts. This approach would not provide an additional incentive for owners of empty homes to bring them back into use more quickly. A lower level of Council Tax income would be generated, and a higher level of savings would need to be achieved in 2020/21.

#### **Long-term Empty Homes Premium**

The Council could choose not to increase the long-term empty homes premium; however, this would not provide any further incentive for owners of long-term empty homes to bring them back into use.

#### **Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF)**

The Council could choose not to increase the EHF budget. However, this would restrict the Council's capacity to alleviate the burden of council tax payments on those CTRS claimants experiencing exceptional hardship in 2020/21 and in future years.

## **94. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE - ADDITIONAL CAPITAL ESTIMATES**

The Cabinet considered the joint report of the Executive Director and the Head of Corporate Resources that detailed additional Capital Estimates.

The report highlighted that the Council's Capital Investment Programme had been developed to enable the Council to continue to deliver financial sustainability, to stimulate economic growth and strategic investment. Key to the development of the investment programme was to ensure the best use of existing assets and the generation of Council resources to finance upfront capital expenditure.

**Decision Made:** That

- (1) the following supplementary capital estimates in relation to the Investment Programme be approved:
  - (a) Strategic Acquisitions – Land at Bootle, funded by an external contribution of £0.998m from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority;
  - (b) Town Centre Commission work funded by an external contribution of £0.750m from the Combined Authority;
- (2) the Council be recommended to approve the redevelopment of the Cambridge Road Centre funded by an external contribution of £1.145m from the Combined Authority;
- (3) the Council be recommended to approve the Crosby Lakeside Redevelopment Project to be funded by an external contribution of £3.100m from the Combined Authority, as outlined within the standalone report submitted to the Cabinet on 7 November 2019; and
- (4) the report and recommendations be commended to the Council for approval.

**Reasons for the Decision:**

The Investment Programme is an important mechanism within the Council's major change programme – the Framework for Change – through which the aims and objectives contained within the Vision for 2030 and Core Purpose, will be delivered.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

None.

**95. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE 2019/20 - JANUARY**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Corporate Resources in relation to:

1. the current forecast revenue outturn position for the Council for 2019/20;



2. the current forecast on Council Tax and Business Rates collection for 2019/20; and,
3. the monitoring position of the Council's capital programme to the end of October 2019; the forecast expenditure to year end; and 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 were also presented for approval.

**Decision Made:** That

- (1) in relation to the Revenue Budget:
  - (a) the current forecast revenue outturn position for 2019/20 and the current position relating to delivery of savings included in the 2019/20 revenue budget, be noted;
  - (b) the mitigating measures being used to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position, as detailed in paragraph 2.2 to the report, excluding a forecast for deficit on Housing Benefits which will be considered at the end of the financial year should it materialise, be noted;
  - (c) it be acknowledged that a comprehensive review of all forecast outturn estimates and potential remedial measures is required as part of the end of December monitoring, in order to inform decisions that may be required to ensure a balanced forecast outturn position can be achieved or to understand a potential call of General Fund Balances;
- (2) in relation to the Capital Programme:
  - (a) updates to spending profiles across financial years, as detailed in paragraph 5.1.1 to the report, be reviewed;
  - (b) the new schemes added to the Capital Programme under delegated authority for 2019/20, as detailed in paragraph 5.1.3 to the report, be reviewed;
  - (c) the latest capital expenditure position as at 30 November 2019 to date of £10.695m, as detailed in paragraph 5.2.2 to the report, with the latest full year forecast being £24.734m, as detailed in paragraph 5.3.1 to the report, be noted;
  - (d) the explanations of variances to project budgets, as detailed in paragraph 5.3.2 to the report, be noted; and
  - (e) it be acknowledged that capital resources will be managed by the Head of Corporate Resources to ensure the capital programme remains fully funded and that capital funding

arrangements secure the maximum financial benefit to the Council, as detailed in paragraph 5.5 to the report.

**Reasons for the Decision:**

To ensure the Cabinet is informed of the forecast outturn position for the 2019/2020 Revenue Budget as at the end of November 2019, including delivery of agreed savings, and 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 2019/20 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.

In March 2017 the Council approved a three-year budget plan to March 2020. The final year of this plan was revised in February 2019 as part of the process of setting the 2019/20 budget. The Council is in the final year of the budget plan and remains confident its strategic approach to budget planning alongside good financial management and extensive community engagement means that the plan continues to develop on solid foundations; it remains flexible and will secure the future sustainability to 2020 and beyond. However, in year demand for social care services is currently resulting in the costs for these services significantly exceeding the budget. If further budget pressures are identified between now and the end of the year, additional remedial action will be required to bring the overall budget into balance.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

None.

**96. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Decision Made:**

That, under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the ground that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. The Public Interest Test has been applied and favours exclusion of the information from the Press and Public.

**97. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE : ASSET  
MAXIMISATION -DISPOSALS STRATEGY - PHASE 1**

The Cabinet considered the Joint Report of the Executive Director and Head of Corporate Resources in relation to Phase 1 of the Council's Asset Maximisation Disposal Strategy.

**Decision Made:**

That the exempt information be considered as part of the public report in relation to this matter, reference Minute No. 99 refers.

**Reason for the Decision:**

The exempt information is required to be considered with the information in the public report in order that an informed decision may be made.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

None.

**98. RE-ADMIT PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Decision Made:**

That the press and public be re-admitted to the meeting.

**99. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET UPDATE : ASSET  
MAXIMISATION -DISPOSALS STRATEGY - PHASE 1**

The Cabinet considered the Joint Report of the Executive Director and the Head of Corporate Resources in relation to a phased approach of a review of the Council's asset base. The report detailed those assets that had been identified as being available for disposal and the proposed approach to phase 1 of the programme. The report indicated that the disposal programme would support the Council's objectives, such as delivery of the Local Plan and maximise the capital sums available in order to contribute to both the Framework for Change, "Cost of Change Budget" and the first phase of projects within the Growth and Investment programme.

**Decision Made:** That

- (1) the disposal of the assets detailed within the report be approved, with a view to generating capital receipts to support the Growth and Investment Programme and the Council's Framework for Change Programme, with the exception 25 Crosby Road North, Crosby; 255/257 Knowsley Road, Bootle; and 18 Great Georges Road, Waterloo, which will not be progressed at this juncture;

- (2) delegated authority be provided to the relevant Officers to negotiate terms and conditions for each disposal in line with normal delegations set out in the Council's Asset Disposal Policy; and
- (3) the fact that a progress report on the matter will be submitted to the Cabinet during April 2020, be noted.

**Reasons for the Decision:**

- (i) Disposals will provide capital funding in support of the Growth and Investment Programme, which forms an ambitious strand of the Council's Framework for Change programme. It will also support the Cost of Change budget that was agreed by Council in March 2017 to support the delivery of the three-year budget package.
- (ii) Assets have been identified for disposal where they adhere to two criteria: that each capital receipt forecasted represents financial "best consideration" and where the loss of other opportunities is quantifiable and does not undermine wider service delivery and economic development/ regeneration priorities.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

- (i) In the event that the Council does not progress the disposals as set out in this report, the Growth and Investment Programme would either need to be reduced in scale and ambition, or the timing of project delivery is delayed. Alternatively, the Council would need to borrow capital funding from the Public Works Loans Board, and this will increase the financial pressure on the revenue budget. Some of the projects in the Growth and Investment Programme will deliver new financial revenue streams to the Council which might not otherwise be realised.
- (iii) Similarly, Council approved a Cost of Change Budget as part of the three-year budget approved in March 2017. This included details of capital expenditure that would be required to support the delivery of the Framework for Change programme with approval that this would be funded by asset disposals. If these recommendations are not approved, the Council will need to borrow funding from the Public Works Loan Board, and this will amount to a revenue cost of approximately £0.700m over five years.