

## COUNCIL – 23 JANUARY 2020

### QUESTIONS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

1. **Question submitted by Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Maher)**

#### **The Strand**

- (a) “May I ask what further information is now available to include specifics of the organisations and the funding mechanism for any capital alterations that might be necessary and for any revenue implications on the Strand as a whole;
- (b) The financial report presented to the Audit & Governance Committee for the last financial year showed a surplus on the Strand of £1m for the year.

Would the Leader of the Council please advise the current figure based on the same criteria and could that be projected forward to give an anticipated figure for the end of the financial year in April”.

#### **Response**

- (a) “At this stage no further capital alterations are planned”.
- (b) “As previously advised the £1m was generated in 2017/18 and has been used to fund front line services in 2018/19 and 2019/20 due to the government’s cuts to council services. At this time the forecast for this financial year is being developed based on Q3 financial information (end of December), with the year end position being reported to Audit and Governance committee as part of the closure of accounts process as with previous years”.

2. **Question submitted by Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Maher)**

#### **Item 13 - Revenue and Capital Budget Update: Asset Maximisation**

“Cabinet decided to exclude the press and public during consideration of this item.

Would the Leader of the Council please explain how it is possible for those who are not Cabinet Members from all Parties, including his own, to determine the validity of any decisions made under the important category particularly as they affect the budget for 2020/2021 when Members have been prevented from seeing the report which outlines the issues involved.”

#### **Response**

“As I have said in answer to similar questions at previous Full Council meetings, the Council adheres at all times to the relevant legislation and its own constitution with regards to the conduct of its meetings and the publication of agendas and reports and will continue to do so”.

3. **Question submitted by Councillor Pugh to the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Safeguarding (Councillor Kelly)**

**Children's Services - Out of Area Placements**

- 1) How many looked after Sefton children are currently in out of area placements (fostering excluded) and how many of these children are (a) from the Bootle constituency (b) from Sefton Central (c) from Southport?
- 2) How many looked after Sefton children currently in out of area placements are physically disabled?

**Response**

- 1) "For this question I have focussed on all children not in a fostering or family situation.

The measure we use is from home address to placement (i.e. not miles outside of Sefton)

Sefton

There are 52 children who are in placements outside of Sefton. 65% are male and 35% are female. 60% are aged 16 or 17, the youngest child is 0 and the oldest is 17. 43% are placed within 10 miles of home and 27% are placed between 10 & 20 miles, 30% are more than 20 miles from home. The furthest placement from home is 204 miles and this is one young person in a specialist placement who remains supported by their family, the next furthest distance is 55 miles. Only one other child is placed outside the Northwest and all children remain supported by their Sefton Social Worker and independent reviewing officer in the same way they would be supported if they were placed in Sefton.

We regularly undertake audits of children placed at a distance and reports on the experience of Looked after children are regularly received by the Corporate Parenting Board.

The average distance from home is 25.7 miles.

Bootle	=	31 placed outside Sefton
Central	=	4 placed outside of Sefton
Southport	=	17 placed outside of Sefton"

- 2) "Two have a disability nature of "mobility" recorded".

4. **Question submitted by Councillor Dawson to the Cabinet Member for Locality Services (Councillor Fairclough)**

"What representations has the Borough of Sefton (or, to his knowledge, Merseytravel) made to (a) Northern Rail and/or (b) Network Rail in respect of the appalling irregular and unreliable rail service between Southport and Wigan/Manchester"?

## **Response**

“The Council has indeed written to the Secretary of State requesting him, as a matter of urgency, to remove the franchise from Northern Rail and bring it into public sector control.

Councillor Dawson, the Labour Party are well ahead of you as we moved a motion at Full Council on 15 November 2018 instructing the Chief Executive to write on behalf of the council to the Secretary of State as above.”

### **5. Question submitted by Councillor Dawson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Maher)**

“In the light of the Council's recently-adopted policy concerning 'Climate Emergency' will the Council become urgently engaged in reviewing the Sefton MBC Local Plan to see whether significant amendments are necessary to ensure that the Plan complies with the policy in terms of minimising overall carbon dioxide usage/production”?

## **Response**

“The council has outlined its approach to the climate emergency in the recent Overview and Scrutiny meetings, including how it will establish its baseline position and when the strategy will be presented to cabinet and then council later this year. Following that approval detailed 3-year implementation plans will be developed that will deliver this strategy.

With regard to the Local Plan, this was adopted in 2017 had sustainability at its core and was subject to a full Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Appraisal. It therefore already addresses many of the issues that are key to tackling climate change. This includes, the provision of open space and trees as part of development, measures to tackling the risk from flooding, a requirement to provide electric vehicle charging points, prioritising walking and cycling and meeting housing and employments as close as possible to where they arise. We consider that the Local Plan is compatible with the climate change agenda.

The Government recently published a National Design Guide, which included detailed guidance on how design of buildings and places can help reduce and address the impacts of climate change. The Planning Department are reviewing this guide and will be publishing a Design Supplementary Guidance Document to set how locally we will expect new developments, amongst other things, to address the climate change challenge. The Council will also take account of the emerging Environment Bill to see how, through Planning and elsewhere, we can address the requirements it will contain”.

### **6. Question submitted by Councillor Dawson to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Skills (Councillor Atkinson)**

“How much has so far been spent this financial year on the most recent phase of 'renewal' of the Southport Indoor Market - and which democratic/constitutional devolved expenditure process of the Council has approved the nature of this expenditure as well as the amount”?

## **Response**

“The current spend this financial year on the Southport Market project is £83,900, approval for this budget is through the Councils Growth Programme. The Growth budget is approved within the MTFP; the MTFP has been approved by full Council. The accountability of the budget rests with the Chief Executive who delegated day to day management responsibility to the Executive Director responsible for the Growth and Strategic Investment Programme. The management of the budget is governed by the Council’s Financial Regulations and Procurement Policy procedures”.

### **7. Question submitted by Councillor Dawson to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Maher)**

“In light of the clear expanding threat to the basis of the retail economy of the town of Southport, should the Council not now commit itself to the seeking creation of a development corporation-like entity to mobilise the capital resources in and around the Southport town centre to move the town towards an attractive and sustainable future”??

## **Response**

“Government announced in Autumn last year that Southport has been selected (as part of a discreet number of towns), to be the recipient of **up to?** £25m funding. As part of this announcement (which has been widely publicised and reported), the Council must convene a Town Deal Board, populated by a wide mix of community representation, and whose main role is to establish an investment plan for submission to Government. The inaugural meeting of the Board took place in January, and alongside Board membership, business leaders are already being engaged on this and wider investment, connectivity and master planning”.

“The emphasis of the above, is to mobilise resources, skills, people and place to provide a new future for Southport. It builds upon the Southport Investment Framework, and a number of significant investments that the Council and partners have been working on for many months. A number of key announcements are anticipated over the coming months”.

### **8. Question submitted by Councillor Dawson to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care (Councillor Cummins)**

“In the light of recent revelations made by the CQC in Birkenhead, is the Council satisfied that, for the hundreds of local residents, often receiving no active input from relatives, whose care is being funded in nursing and residential homes, there are no policies being operated of non-consensual 'do not resuscitate' and no policies of covert long term non-consensual medication operating”?

## **Response**

“Firstly Cllr Dawson, it would be helpful if you could spell my surname correctly.

Secondly, we are not aware, nor would we approve, of such practices within residential or nursing homes within Sefton.”

9. **Question submitted by Councillor Sir Ron Watson to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing (Councillor Hardy)**

**Ward Budgets**

“The decision of the Cabinet Member on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020 to remove an element of Ward funding currently at the discretion of Councillors indicates what consultations have taken place on the proposals and when.

Would the Cabinet Member confirm that there were no consultations with Ward Councillors and could she explain the reasons for this as this is one of the very few areas where they have discretion to assist their local areas.

Would she also confirm that where potential projects are being investigated but where the final information is not yet available there will be no attempt to reduce the budget along the lines indicated.

Would she also concede that the abolition of the Southport Area Committee against the clear wishes of much of the population of Southport has hindered the decision-making process and that the SAC provided a forum for the public in which they could raise matters of concern and where it was sometimes possible for Ward Councillors to indicate the extent to which they might be able to help through the Ward budget process and as a consequence would she undertake to urge her colleagues to reinstate this successful democratic process that had a great deal of local accountability as soon as possible”.

**Response**

“Due to a current exacerbation of my disability Meniere's disease, I am unable to attend full council this evening. The report published on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020 does not cut ward budgets. The report was generated to clarify the Ward fund procedure and introduced only 2 key changes to the existing process that has been in place for several years.

The changes highlighted in my report are: -

1. An update of the criteria for ward funds which had not been undertaken for some time.
2. When a proposed project does not have unanimous approval of the 3 ward members a resolution process is introduced for members to instigate an option for review in consultation with the neighbourhood officer when there is deadlock, by formally referring a spending option to the cabinet member. I have no desire to become involved in ward-based discussions for area funds outside of my own ward. However, I do note that there have been occasions where ward members have not been able to agree and at times these issues have been raised at full council. Currently there is no resolution process for disagreements.

The decision to transfer unspent levels of ward funding of over £10k to the Community Transition Fund (CTF) was agreed as part of the review of area committees and as part of that review consultation was undertaken at that time. Despite having agreed this there were no transfers of funding to the CTF at the end of the last financial year as ward budgets were appropriately spent.

Our neighbourhoods team actively work to advise local ward members of the budget projections for the year and work with you to support the allocation of said funds. I am whole heartedly supportive of the ward fund model and recognise the important role that ward funds play in helping Sefton's 66 councillors assist with locally identified projects.

If councillors are unhappy, they have an option to call the decision for review by 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020 as is the democratic process of this Council."