

Minutes of: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 6 September 2023

Present: Councillor E O'Brien (in the Chair)
Councillors C Cummins, R Gold, C Morris, L Smith and T Tariq

Also in attendance: Councillors R Bernstein, M Smith and L McBriar

Public Attendance: No members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor A Quinn and Councillor T Rafiq

CA.41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Alan Quinn and Tahir Rafiq.

CA.42 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

CA.43 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

CA.44 MEMBER QUESTION TIME

The following question was submitted in advance of the meeting by Councillor Luis McBriar:

Could I please receive an update from the relevant cabinet member as to when the temporary traffic lights will be removed from Turton Road?

Responding, Councillor Eamonn O'Brien reported that the temporary traffic lights on Turton Road are a result of the road subsiding. Streetscene are currently in the process of commissioning a ground investigation that will determine the cause of the problem as well as recommend a solution as well as the likely costs to repair. The service aims to have the investigation completed by the end of October. Unfortunately, at this stage we are not able to say how long the lights will be in place until we have completed the ground investigations. When we have an idea of the likely cost, a budget would need to be identified together with a programme of works and timescale. From a network management perspective, the temporary lights are not causing significant traffic delays.

Councillor O'Brien advised that officers would keep Councillor McBriar informed of any updates to the works.

CA.45 MINUTES

It was agreed:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2023 be approved as a correct record.

CA.46 QUARTER 1 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

Councillor Richard Gold, Cabinet Member for Finance and Communities, presented the report which outlined the forecast financial position of the Council at Quarter One 2023/24 and provided an update on savings targets and the work to mitigate and reduce overspends throughout the remainder of the financial year.

Members discussed the report, noting a more positive position in month 4, and Councillor Gold advised that the support of a Financial Improvement Panel was a sensible and mature way to move forwards, ensuring financial prudence and getting as much support as possible for Bury. The challenge on Councils was unprecedented, with more demands, less funding, and increased costs, and Councils nationally were looking to the Government for a systemic solution.

Decision:

Cabinet:

1. Noted the delivery of savings to date of £11.021m with a forecast savings delivery of £18.103m within the challenging context of increased demand and inflationary cost increases;
2. Noted the forecast overspend of £13.266m within the revenue budgets at Quarter One and the recovery action proposed;
3. Noted the re-phasing of the capital budget;
4. Noted the deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant and the ongoing activity within the Project Safety Valve project;
5. Note the ongoing work to mitigate and reduce the overspends; and
6. Approved the establishment of a Finance Improvement Panel and the Terms of Reference which are appended to this report.

Reasons for the decision:

To update Members on the Council's budgetary position, ensure the Council's budgetary targets are achieved and set out proposals for the Financial Improvement Panel. This report is in accordance with the Council's financial procedure regulations.

Other options considered and rejected:

None.

CA.47 SUPPORT AT HOME SERVICE PROPOSAL

Councillor Tamoor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, presented the report which proposed to end the Support at Home Service in order to reduce spending in the coming years (£500,000 as stated in the Budget Cabinet papers). Members noted that Support at Home was a non-statutory service for people over the age of 60 that provides wellbeing checks and advice and support with day-to-day tasks (known as the warden service), and should not be confused with Care at Home that supports people with personal care.

Members discussed the needs and confusion of residents using the service, and Councillor Tariq offered assurances that everything possible would be done to ensure the changes were as smooth as possible, with individual concerns picked up and residents signposted to solutions.

Decision:

Cabinet:

1. Agreed to continue with the proposal to cease to provide the Support at Home service once the consultation with the current Support at Home workforce is completed;

2. Agreed the commencement of consultation with affected staff on the proposed closure of the Support at Home service, as set out within the body of the report and subject to the agreement of the recognised Trades Unions through the Local Government Services Consultation meeting; and
3. Delegated authority to the Executive Director of Health and Adult Care and the Cabinet Members for Health and Wellbeing and HR (Human Resources) and Corporate Affairs, in consultation with the Director of People and Inclusion, Monitoring Officer and S151 Officer to consider responses received from the consultation and produce a final version of the structure.

Reasons for the decision:

- Ending the Support at Home service will remove long-standing issues around duplication of service provision with Six Town Housing. Housing responsibilities will be the responsibility of Six Town Housing, and people with care needs will be referred to Adult Care Services.
- All customers will be screened by the current Support at Home service prior to it ending, and referrals/signposting will take place as appropriate for individual needs.
- Although most of the consultation feedback highlighted concerns about the proposal to end the Support at Home service, an inequitable demand for support has been created over many years which runs the risk of creating dependency, rather than maintaining independence and we must now support people in the shift towards streamlined services that promote self-help and resilience.
- We will work with partners and relevant services to ensure that information and advice on alternative provision is communicated in an inclusive manner.

Other options considered and rejected:

Alternative options have been considered but found to be unfeasible at this time, for example, we are unable to increase customer charges to keep the service, because the wellbeing element of the service is not housing benefit eligible and largely subsidised by the Council.

CA.48

PROPOSALS TO CHANGE THE WAY IN WHICH LOCAL AUTHORITY SCHOOL GOVERNORS ARE NOMINATED AND APPOINTED

Councillor Lucy Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, presented the report which proposed moving from the political model of nomination for LA Governors to the panel model of nomination for LA Governors. In response to Member's questions, it was noted that the new system would be implemented as soon as possible, with vacancies being filled and integrating with existing Governors.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed to move to the panel model of nomination for Local Authority Governors.

Reasons for the decision:

Governor recruitment across all Governor categories remains a national concern, and within Bury the number of Local Authority Governor vacancies presents a significant challenge. In addition to this, many Local Authority Governors will reach the end of their four-year term of office before the end of September 2023. It is also recognised that the Governance Handbook states that it is inappropriate to link the nomination process to political affiliation.

Other options considered and rejected:

It would be possible to retain the current political model of nomination and appointment, but this was rejected owing to the guidance outlined in the Governance Handbook. It was also rejected as the panel model should enable the LA to support schools to fill LA Governor vacancies more quickly.

Within one LA in the North West of England, an alternative model is in place, where the nomination process is delegated to the Executive Director for Children and Young People (or their equivalent). They may then delegate the responsibility within their team. This option was rejected in order to ensure that Elected Members were able to retain a role in the nomination process.

CA.49 BURY ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Councillor Charlotte Morris, Cabinet Member for Culture, Economy and Skills, presented the report which provided an update on progress and sought approval to move to the final stages of a published Economic Development Strategy including the delivery actions plans. It was noted that this was a comprehensive strategy and, in response to Members' questions, it was noted that a delivery plan would underpin this and would be available for Scrutiny in due course.

Decision:

Cabinet:

1. Noted the progress made with the Bury Economic Development Strategy; and
2. Approved the next stage of finalising the strategy.

Reasons for the decision:

To enable the Economic Development Strategy to move to the final phase of approved content and format, complete the supporting delivery action plans, produce a formatted, published version and prepare for launch.

Other options considered and rejected:

No other options were considered/were applicable.

CA.50 RADCLIFFE REGENERATION GOVERNANCE

Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth, presented the report which sought to stand down the Radcliffe Cabinet Committee and proposed a suitable way forward for Ward Councillor involvement in Radcliffe regeneration activity while allowing officers to move forward operational business in a timely manner. Members discussed the new arrangements, agreeing that they were a positive step forward to establish closer working between Councillors and officers, and offered a good model for other projects.

Decision:

Cabinet:

1. Agreed that the Radcliffe Cabinet Committee be formally stood down; and
2. Noted an informal Radcliffe Members' Forum will be established to allow for Ward Councillor engagement.

Reasons for the decision:

To better streamline decision making processes and allow more meaningful cross-party engagement, and to facilitate the implementation of a collaborative forum with a wider, more strategic focus, based on the Radcliffe Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF).

Other options considered and rejected:

To continue current arrangements; this option has been rejected as the existing meeting schedule has proved inconvenient for decision making, with Councillors not having input until late in the decision making process and papers often coming to Cabinet before they can be considered by the Radcliffe Cabinet Committee.

CA.51 RADCLIFFE ENTERPRISE CENTRE - UKSPF PROJECT DELIVERY (E22)

Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth, presented the report regarding the bid to GM's UKSPF SME (Small and Medium Size Enterprises) Workspace Fund (E22) to turn Radcliffe Library into an enterprise centre. Members discussed the report, agreeing that this was good way to further develop Radcliffe and ensure the library building did not fall into disuse while meeting the wording and the spirit of the covenant securing public access to the site. Members noted that library provision would be temporarily relocated until the Hub was complete, and options for this were being explored.

Decision:

Cabinet:

1. Approved £367,000 match funding from Council budgets plus an agreement to meet the £78,577 shortfall bringing the total Council contribution to £445,577 in order to secure £1,270,423 of UKSPF funding towards the development of Radcliffe Enterprise Centre;
2. Noted the timescale constraints and the options being considered for the temporary relocation of the library and Radcliffe Integrated Neighbourhood Team; and
3. Noted the legal position regarding the positive covenants affecting the use of the current library building and the mitigation measures proposed.

Reasons for the decision:

Given the reduced timescales it is now imperative that this project moves forward. GMCA require confirmation of match funding in order to issue the grant funding agreement. Whilst a number of key approvals for expenditure have been undertaken at risk whilst the GFA is prepared (the appointment of a Project Manager and additional consultancy resource), the agreement must be in place by September 2023 to enable the project to move into RIBA Stage 2 - Concept design.

Other options considered and rejected:

- Return the allocation of £1.4m to the GMCA to be spent elsewhere in Greater Manchester - Not recommended. The Council would be left holding the library as an empty building once the Hub is activated and would remain liable for the costs of securing the building, such as installing steel sheets to the windows and doors. The Council would also have to maintain a security regime. The costs of this, based on similar buildings, is likely to be between £30k and £50k per-annum, with escalating costs for maintaining the structure as wind and waterproof.
- Re-allocate funding to an alternative project/use - Not a viable option. The GM UKSPF E22 allocation is an SME Workspace Fund and its monies must be used for "Investing in enterprise infrastructure and employment / innovation site development projects which will support growth in places" Therefore it cannot be reallocated to an alternative project or utilised for an alternative use at Radcliffe library.

CA.52 SALE OF NEW SUMMERSEAT HOUSE, RAMSBOTTOM, BL0 9UD, BURY - PART A

Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth, presented the report which presented the results of the updated tender exercise for the sale of New Summerseat House. The sale would bring forward the restoration of this listed building, end problems caused to local residents by the empty building attracting anti-social behaviour, and remove ongoing liabilities to the Council, all while securing a capital investment.

Decision:

Cabinet:

1. Noted the results of the updated tender exercise for the sale of New Summerseat House;

2. Approved the grant of a 999-year lease to the selected purchaser; and
3. Delegated approval of the documentation required to complete the grant of the lease to the Director of Law and Democratic Services.

Reasons for the decision:

To bring forward the sale of New Summerseat House.

Other options considered and rejected:

Option 1 - Do Nothing. In this scenario the property would be left vacant, its condition would further deteriorate and the property would continue to attract anti-social behaviour. The Council would be responsible for ongoing security and maintenance. The property is within the Accelerated Land Disposal Programme and ongoing security and maintenance costs would have to be incurred if the sale did not proceed. This option would not ensure the renovation of the listed building. As such, this option has been discounted.

CA.53 MINUTES OF ASSOCIATION OF GREATER MANCHESTER AUTHORITIES / GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY

In response to Members' questions it was noted that Bury's share of the additional pothole funding would be included into financial forecasts once confirmed.

It was agreed:

That the minutes of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority meeting held on 30th June 2023 be noted.

CA.54 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Decision:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100 (A)(4), Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, for the reason that the following business involves the disclosure of exempt information as detailed against the item.

CA.55 SALE OF NEW SUMMERSEAT HOUSE, RAMSBOTTOM, BL0 9UD, BURY - PART B

Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth, presented the confidential report which set out the full financial details.

Decision:

Cabinet:

1. Noted the results of the updated tender exercise for the sale of New Summerseat House;
2. Approved the grant of a 999-year lease to the selected purchaser; and
3. Delegated approval of the documentation required to complete the grant of the lease to the Director of Law and Democratic Services.

Reasons for the decision:

As set out for the Part A report.

Other options considered and rejected:

As set out for the Part A report.

CA.56 MILLWOOD PRIMARY SPECIAL SCHOOL

Councillor Lucy Smith, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, presented the confidential report which sought for additional services costs to enable the project to expand Millwood Primary Special School to proceed to RIBA stage 3.

Decision:

Cabinet approved expenditure in the total sum of £180,000 to meet the costs of additional services in support of the planning application and associated compliance and technical advisory work.

Reasons for the decision:

Development of additional capacity at Millwood Primary Special School as set out in the Project Safety Valve agreement between the Council and the Department for Education, is a key element of the specialist place sufficiency strategy. Taken together, the Agreement and strategy set out the business case for the development of new provision and expansion of existing specialist provision to meet increasing demand within Bury and reduce the reliance on placements in Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS). The project at Millwood Primary Special School is a priority within this strategy.

Other options considered and rejected:

Whilst it is possible to re-procure the scheme, this would result in significant delay to delivery of the project with no certainty that costs will be reduced.

COUNCILLOR E O'BRIEN
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.57 pm)