

**Minutes of: CORPORATE JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

**Date of Meeting:** 11 February 2021

**Present:** Councillor T Holt (in the Chair)  
Councillors J Black, I Gartside, G Keeley, E O'Brien, A Quinn  
and T Rafiq

**Trade Union attendance:** E Entwistle, M. Fulham, C Jakeway, K Mather, S Morton, R Pakeman and J Thompson.

**Also in attendance:** S Bagley, D Ball, W Blandamer, P Braithwaite, M Cunliffe, S Durr, L Kitto, G Little, J Mulvaney, L Ridsdale, C Schofield

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillor T Pickstone

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**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were submitted by Cllr Tim Pickstone, Cllr Martin Hayes, Alan Manchester and Anthony Beesley.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

**3 THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET 2021/22 AND THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2021/22 - 2024/25**

Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, advised that the situation in terms of the budget had deteriorated since last year which had seen a tough but resilient budget, and the revenue budget required greater cuts to close the gap resulting from Covid costs of £12m. It was noted that the increase in demand had been addressed through the one-off grant from the government, but the loss of income from Council Tax etc. had been detrimental.

The Leader advised that the budget was balanced but reserves were depleted. A total of £2m had been built into the financial strategy to support the borrowing costs needed to deliver the priority projects in the Capital Programme as, despite the challenges for the revenue costs, there was a need to progress with the regeneration and growth of the borough as well as the transformation ambitions for the Council.

Unison reiterated their view that Persona and Six Town Housing should be brought back in house; the Chief Executive advised that work was ongoing to improve the cost benefit of the arrangement and the Leader advised that Persona and Six Town Housing were not excluded from the budget pressures and would be making a contribution. Unison asked for reassurance that budget projections would be adhered to and wouldn't be reversed if politically unpopular and cited past examples with regards to community assets. The Chief Executive responded that work with community groups would continue but clarity was needed to ensure joint services were run sustainably.

In response to a question regarding some of the figures, the Interim Director of Financial Transformation advised that the Local Council Tax Support Grant was a one-off but was not to be ring-fenced. With regards to Business Rates assumptions, she advised that these were best case assumptions on the information available which assumed a level of recovery year on year. It was noted that these will be revisited regularly, with the Council adapting accordingly.

With regards to the transformation programme, the Leader advised that a lot of work was needed to pin down the specifics and workstreams. It was noted that funding for this had been built into last year's budget and that the vast majority was to be invested in staff and facilities (including digital development).

In response to Unison's query about the future of CCGs and how this would affect Bury, it was noted that it was likely CCGs wouldn't exist in their current form in Greater Manchester after April 2022 but there would still be pooled budgets across health and social care. The Leader noted that this was a vote of confidence that combining roles was effective and advised that these changes would be an opportunity to reaffirm Bury's commitment to a collaborative approach.

Councillor Alan Quinn, Cabinet Member Environment and Climate Change, noted that the Operations department had a need for specialists to ensure projects were delivered to tight external timescales or to provide the Council with evidence to lobby government ministers, but that he did not want a large amount of agency staff working on the bins and that if they had been working for the Council for a year they should be employed directly.

In response to a final question from Unison, the Leader advised that the large contribution to reserves made last year had been planned with the CCG and was an opportunity of limited risk to the Council but of benefit to CCG that would enable them to contribute more.

**It was agreed:**

That the report be noted.

**4 UPDATE ON USE OF EXTERNAL EXPERTISE/CONSULTANTS AND IR35 WORKERS**

The Head of Human Resources presented the summary of external consultants and expertise across the Council. He advised that regular monitoring was carried out and shared monthly, and that new ways to control these figures and ensure the correct governance was in place was being looked at. It was noted that the figures from November 2020 to February 2021 saw a downward trend with a reduction of 39 overall.

Unison voiced their concerns over the large amount of money involved with employing consultants and agency staff, highlighting that some were paid £500 per day. Expertise was needed in certain circumstances on a short-term basis, but these figures show the Council was swamped, with the benefits uncertain.

The Executive Director, Strategy and Transformation, reported that an analysis of agency workers could be brought to a future meeting and the Chief Executive reported that the quality of data had improved, with the Council better resourced internally to control this moving forwards. The Executive Director of Operations advised that the waste modernisation programme and new fleet would bring about a review of the ways of working with a reduction in agency staff and an increase in diversity.

**It was agreed:**

That the report be noted, and an analysis of agency workers be brought to a future meeting.

**5 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021-22**

Councillor Tahir Rafiq, Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs and HR, presented the report on the Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22 which was required to be produced under Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 and would be taken to Council for decision on 24 February 2021. Councillor Rafiq drew the Committee's attention to the pay structure, new recruitment policy for chief officers, payment for the lowest paid employees, and a cap on exit payments. He also advised that the reduction from 7.55% last year to 3.73% this year in the Council's mean gender pay gap figure showed significant improvement.

Unison accepted the report, noting the positive change to the mean gender pay gap and the cap on exit payments particularly, and raised the likelihood of negative comments being made at Council about the amount officers get paid. The Chair and other Councillors supported this view, noting that officers were unable to defend themselves in meetings and many of the remuneration levels were set nationally. Councillor Jane Black, Cabinet Member for Cultural Economy, noted that there had been no funding from government for pay rises for several years and the Living Wage was welcome in what had been an exceptional year with many staff working considerable amounts of overtime.

**It was agreed:**

That the report be noted.

**6 FLOATING DAYS 2021, 2022 & 2023**

The Committee considered the report on the floating days for 2021, 2022 and 2023.

**It was agreed:**

That the proposed pattern of floating days for 2021-2023 as detailed in the report be agreed.

**7 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

**It was agreed:**

That the next Corporate Joint Consultative Committee meeting on 9 March 2021 by cancelled.

**8 URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair advised that he had received his Covid vaccination and asked the Chief Executive to pass along his and others' thanks and compliments to the team, who had been efficient and friendly.

The Chair advised that, since this was the last Corporate Joint Consultative Committee meeting for this municipal year, it would be Steve Morton's last meeting. The Chair, Councillor Quinn and the Deputy Chief Executive thanked Steve for his valuable contributions and impeccable service over the past 46 years, noting his integrity, honesty and ethos of hard work.

**COUNCILLOR T HOLT**  
**Chair**

**(Note: The meeting started at 4.00 pm and ended at 5.20 pm)**