

GENERAL REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 SEPTEMBER 2021

ITEMS CALLED-IN BY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - ACCELERATED LAND AND PROPERTY DISPOSALS PROGRAMME - PHASE 2:

1. Councillor Russell Bernstein introduced the minutes and recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 29 July 2021 which considered the call-in of the Accelerated Land and Property Disposals Programme – Phase 2. He thanked Cabinet for their co-operation, advising that it had been a healthy debate at the meeting with a focus on community asset transfers and ensuring resources would be made available for residents and community groups.
2. In response, Councillor Eamonn O’Brien, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, reported that Cabinet welcomed this recommendation. He advised that the council was committed to support residents through the community asset transfer procedure.
3. Cabinet agreed that the following recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be accepted: “The Overview and Scrutiny Committee strongly support Community Asset Transfers and recommend to Cabinet that policies are reviewed and strengthened to incorporate earlier communication with residents.”

THE COUNCIL’S FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT JUNE 30 2021

4. Councillor Eamonn O’Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which outlined the forecast financial position of the Council at the end of 2021/22 based on the information known at the end of the first quarter, 30 June 2021. The report set out the position for both revenue and capital and provided an analysis of the variances, both under and overspending. In response to Members’ questions, it was noted that the issues with waste collections, including the redesign, staff absences, and HGV driver shortages, were not accounted for in this period. Spend would be affected but savings would still be achieved in the long-term. In terms of the transformation plan, the realisation of those savings was delayed as changes couldn’t be made as quickly as expected, but progress was being made with a report later in the agenda.
5. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2020/21

6. Councillor Eamonn O’Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which outlined the financial position and provided an update on the Council’s capital expenditure and financing, the treasury position as 31st March 2021, the investment and borrowing strategy, and borrowing and investment Outturn throughout 2020/21. In response to Members’ questions, it was noted that no new loans to the airport were proposed and dividend pay-out from existing loans had been affected from Covid and were expected to not return to normal until after air travel picked up again.
7. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

ESTATES TRANSFORMATION: BURY HUB PROPOSALS - PHASE 1 HUMPHREY HOUSE - PART A

8. Councillor Eamonn O’Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which proposed to close and sell Humphrey House, moving existing tenants to 3 Knowsley Place, and make adjustments to those facilities accordingly. In response to Member’s questions, it was noted that the £500k investment in agile working was sufficient and was supported by wider pieces of work. Members welcomed the

Brownfield suitability of the site and were hopeful it could be utilised for town centre housing.

9. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

LUF PROJECTS - PROCUREMENT UPDATE - PART A

10. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report regarding the procurement of the main contractors for the Radcliffe Civic Hub and Bury Market Flexi Hall projects, having now been subject to a competitive tendering process which culminated in the receipt of multiple submissions, the details of which were set out in the Part B paper later in the agenda.
11. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

BURY CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY REPORT QUARTER ONE 2021-22 DELIVERY UPDATE

12. Councillor Tahir Rafiq, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs and HR, presented the report which provided a summary of key performance and delivery in each department during quarter 1 2021-22. In response to Members' questions, it was noted that sickness rates had decreased but were still high owing to the impact of Covid related issues. Staff turnover was above target and was being looked into via exit interviews. Figures could be provided regarding where rates were highest and it was noted that initiatives like the Real Living Wage later on in the agenda would help improve staff morale and hopefully reduce staff turnover. With regards to collection rates of Council Tax and Business Rates, these were expected to improve over the course of the year, though would continue to be impacted from the effects of Covid.
13. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

ESTABLISHING THE BUSINESS AND EXECUTIVE SUPPORT SERVICE

14. Councillor Tahir Rafiq, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs and HR, presented the report which detailed proposals to establish a single Business and Executive Support Service as part of the Corporate Core Department. This would be a fundamental change to how administrative services are provided in Bury, seeking to achieve consistency and improved performance, through a review of resources across the Council and a modernisation of processes and ways of working.
15. In response to Members' questions, it was noted that although making changes to people's jobs was always difficult, vacancies were being deleted and the use of agency workers reduced to secure savings without impacting permanent staff. Holding clear, consistent roles within the Council would secure good quality employment with clear prospects and longevity, serving both the organisation and its staff. With regards to sickness absence, it was noted that sicknesses were being reported but holding figures in a centralised system would be a more efficient reporting method.
16. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

REAL LIVING WAGE IMPLEMENTATION

17. Councillor Tahir Rafiq, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs and HR, presented the report which sought Cabinet's approval to implement the necessary steps to pay the living wage and progress formal accreditation via the Living Wage Foundation. It included a

detailed analysis of projected costs over future years and set-out the proposed approach to meeting these costs.

18. Members were supportive of the report, noting in particular the uplift this would give to carers and their families, giving them the recognition, support and thanks they deserve. In response to Members' questions, it was noted that when contracts were being procured or renewed this would be part of those discussions. The Council was setting a standard it would hold to during commissioning negotiations, it would take an appropriate view dependent on the individual circumstances.
19. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

GENERAL REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2021

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY REFRESH 2022/23 - 2025/26:

20. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report regarding the refresh of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), a 4 year plan which aligns the Council's spending decisions and priorities with its corporate plan and those identified through the Boroughs Let's Do It! Strategy.
21. In response to Members' questions it was noted the transformation and reform agendas maintained a system of checks and balances to monitor and measure cost pressures and ensure early signs of non-delivery or additional pressures were picked up and addressed. In most cases these would be absorbed internally, with directorates tasked with tackling emerging pressures in existing budget envelopes. With regards to Council Tax growth, an assumption had been made in the figures that this would increase by 0.5% each year which was based on the pipeline of work coming through planning. With regards to the Real Living Wage, these were set out in the report but included an assumed national increase year on year.
22. In response to a question about use of reserves, it was noted that there was an assumption that reserves would not be used as a long term solution but using them now would allow space for the reform and transformation savings to be realised. This strategic use allowed for reserves to be built back in later. Finally, it was noted that the terminology of Labour/Council amendments in the report were all the same and should all read 'Council'.
23. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

DISPOSAL OF LAND AT WHEATFIELDS IN WHITEFIELD TO ENABLE AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - PART A:

24. Councillor Clare Cummins, the Cabinet Member for Housing Services, presented the report which sought approval to dispose of Wheatfields, a Council owned brownfield site in Whitefield, to Onward Homes, a registered provider, for the delivery of a 100% affordable housing scheme on Council owned brownfield land. This would enable the construction of 30 new affordable homes, generate a capital receipt and also take over liability for the grant repayment. Councillor Cummins advised that the Regenda / STH supported living accommodation would not be affected by the proposed land disposal and that the Council had worked with Onward to develop the plans which included bungalows to be designed to meet the needs of those with mobility issues. It was noted that full details of the commercial terms were set out in the Part B paper later in the agenda.
25. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

PRESTWICH REGENERATION – JOINT VENTURE - PART A:

26. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report regarding the proposed 50:50 Joint Venture vehicle between Bury Council and Muse Developments in the regeneration programme in Prestwich. It was noted that full financial and legal details were set out in the Part B paper later in the agenda.
27. In response to Members' questions it was noted that liaison with existing tenants had taken place early on to inform them of the changes and how it would affect them. Relationships were being developed so tenants knew who to contact and were kept informed and the management office in Prestwich would ensure face-to-face contact was available. With regards to site being left empty, details and phasing were still to be developed but efforts would be made to minimise the inevitable disruption.
28. In terms of environmental standards, it was noted that anything the Council built would be as modern and eco-friendly as was reasonable. The Council's involvement would ensure this type of added value above the market itself, costing more at the outset but driving high standards and securing lower running costs long-term.
29. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

ACCELERATED LAND AND PROPERTY DISPOSALS PROGRAMME - PHASE 3 LIST OF ASSETS:

30. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which identified the Phase 3 list of sites surplus to the requirements of the Council and sought approval for their disposal to help meet urgent savings targets and rationalise the estate. It also set out how the recommendation accepted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be taken forward in relation to Community Asset Transfers (CATs).
31. In response to Members' questions, it was noted that phases 1 and 2 would be revisited to develop deadlines for community groups to engage with the Council with regards to CATs, and members of the public were encouraged to speak with local Councillors and engage with officers. With regards to the projected c£8m to be generated in capital receipts, this was based on market testing but needed further monitoring and updating to be a reliable estimate. It was further noted that some investment was sometimes needed up-front to get sites ready for development and achieve a higher value.
32. It was noted that engagement with communities would be carried out before any transfer, but also support would be provided afterwards to mitigate issues of capacity and access to funding. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

RADCLIFFE STRATEGIC REGENERATION FRAMEWORK – DISPOSAL OF LAND FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT SCHOOL STREET AND GREEN STREET - PART A:

33. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which outlined proposals to dispose of Council owned land at School Street and Green Street. This would allow the construction of 225 new homes (of which 125 will be of affordable tenures) and would generate a significant capital receipt along with unlocking in excess of £30million of private investment and driving economic growth. It was noted that this report had been received and endorsed by the Radcliffe Cabinet Committee, and that full details of the proposal commercial terms were set out in the Part B report later in the agenda.
34. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

REQUEST FROM TELECOMS OPERATORS TO SITE TELECOMMUNICATIONS ON COUNCIL OWNED LAND (PUBLIC OPEN SPACE) AT PEEL BROW, RAMSBOTTOM:

35. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report regarding a request from WHP Telecom Ltd that an area of land next to the temporary mast on an area of open space on Peel Brow, Ramsbottom be considered as a permanent location for the telecommunications equipment.
36. Councillor Clare Cummins advised that she was sympathetic to the Council's position but owing to the concerns in her community she would not be voting in favour of this report.
37. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

FUNDING BURY ART MUSEUM ROOF:

38. Councillor Charlotte Morris, the Cabinet Member for Culture and the Economy, presented the report advised that a funding application had been made to the Museum Estate and Development (MEND) fund to support the work on the gallery roof in order to preserve the building and the collections within, and sought approval for the release of funds to match-fund the cost of the required works. In response to Members' questions it was noted that a breakdown of how many people used the building each year could be provided after the meeting, and that if the application was not successful a Council decision would be needed to fund the works.
39. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE FEEDBACK:

40. Councillor Tahir Rafiq, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs and HR, presented the report which summarised feedback received from the LGA team's Corporate Peer Challenge Revisit received in summer 2021, and the Council's proposed action plan in response. In response to Members' questions it was noted that there was a focus on developing and upskilling existing staff and ensuring core systems, such as member casework and complaints, and processes like corporate planning were working efficiently.
41. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

CLIMATE ACTION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN:

42. Councillor Alan Quinn, the Cabinet Member for Environment, Climate Change and Operations, presented the report which outlined the proposed arrangements to oversee the implementation and governance of the Climate Action Strategy and Action Plan developed in response to the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019.
43. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.