

GENERAL REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 JANUARY 2022

COUNCIL TAX ON EMPTY PROPERTIES AND SECOND HOMES

1. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report regarding the consultation on the proposal to remove the Council Tax discount applied to empty properties and second homes. Members discussed the report, noting the majority of responses had been against the proposal but this had to be weighed against the financial context the Council was in. With regards to alternative savings, it was noted that the property portfolio brought in revenue funds and that one off savings was not a sustainable way to address revenue pressures.
2. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

BURY COMMUNITY STADIUM, GIGG LANE

3. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which sought approval for the Council to engage in negotiations with the Bury Football Supporters Society in relation to a proposed financial contribution in the Gigg Lane Stadium site. Councillor O'Brien and all those present thanked supporters and community groups for their work, as well as James Daly MP for Bury North, local Councillors, and Council officers.
4. Members discussed the report, praising the work and response from the people of Bury, and confirmed their cross-party support for the proposal. It was noted that this was just the beginning, with more work required to ensure the stadium was safe and suitable, and ongoing conversations to ensure a one-club, fan-owned club with a successful governance system.
5. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

BURY TOWN CENTRE GOVERNANCE

6. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which proposed governance arrangements for the implementation of projects planned for Bury town centre, including the Bury Market Flexi Hall. In response to Members' questions it was noted that a report on the establishment of the Regeneration Programme Board and the Programme Management Office would be brought to Cabinet before the end of the municipal year.
7. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

APPROVAL OF TERMS TO DISPOSE OF THE FORMER CPU KITCHEN SITE ON WILLOW STREET, BURY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIALIST/SUPPORTED HOUSING FOR ADULTS WITH A PHYSICAL AND/OR SENSORY DISABILITY OR LEARNING DISABILITY - PART A

8. Councillor Clare Cummins, Cabinet Member for Housing Services, presented the report which sought approval for the disposal of Council-owned brownfield land in Bury, which has the potential to provide much needed supported housing for young adults with a physical and/or sensory disability or learning disability. Full financial details were contained in Part B of this report.
9. Members voiced their support for this scheme and the support it provided for those with a disability. It was noted that the housing would be built to the latest low carbon and eco-friendly standards and, in response to a Member's question, Councillor Cummins undertook

- to report back outside the meeting as to whether provision for electric car parking was included. It was also noted that this site would also be subject to a planning application.
10. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

11. Councillor Tamoor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Skills, presented the report which informed Cabinet of the findings of an Ofsted inspection of the Council's children's services. The inspection found the services to be inadequate. The report explained the form of intervention by the Secretary of State for Education and the action already taken to implement improvements. The report also sought approval to the framework for an Improvement Plan which the Council will submit to the Department for Education by 31st March 2022.
12. Members discussed the report thoroughly, noting the less severe interventions recommended for Bury, being a DfE advisor rather than commissioner. The advisor would work with Bury to develop their improvement plan and feedback regularly to DfE on progress made.
13. In response to Members' questions it was noted that pressures had been known internally for some time with work underway before the inspection to address problems. This work was recognised in the Ofsted inspection and means the Council was in a better position to progress and implement changes. Members debated the briefings given to Opposition Members, but it was stated that these problems should be above party politics. With regards to scrutiny, this had been encouraged and a dedicated Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee set up to recognise this.
14. Councillor Tariq advised that, as Cabinet Member, he had been raising concerns for a long time and had been taking actions to improve the situation, and it was noted this was a managerial failure not a political one. Councillor Tariq advised that it was the responsibility of the Council as a whole to fix these problems, and he was confident we would do.
15. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

GENERAL REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 FEBRUARY 2022

THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2021:

16. 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 third quarter, 31st December 2021. The report set out the position for both revenue and capital and provides an analysis of the variances, both under and overspending.
17. In response to Members' questions, it was noted that the day-to-day operational budgets for departments were overall on target and the £1.247m underspend was largely due to one-off funding received from the Government as well as vacancies or budget savings. There were ongoing challenges for the Council, particularly around Children's Services where investment was being made into early interventions, address high levels of casework, and reduce demand on out-of-borough placements. These needed to be achieved in a sustainable way to reduce pressures on the Council's reserves. It was noted that a corporate approach to recruitment and retention of social workers was being developed which had been successful in other boroughs. With regards to civic venues, it was noted that the detail

in the report reflected the outcome of the review carried out last year and that a consultation with Unions was currently underway with regards to possible redundancies.

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

HOUSING REVENUE REPORT:

19. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which formed part of a suite of documents relating to the Council's budget setting process for 2022/23 and set out the proposed Housing Revenue Account for 2022/23 and proposals for Dwelling and Garage rents, Sheltered Support, Management, Amenities and Heating charges, Furnished Tenancy charges and Fernhill Caravan site tenancy charges. The report also established the Management Fee paid to Six Town Housing for 2022/23. It was noted that this increase would be challenging for some families and plans were in place to support those most affected.

20. Cabinet approved the recommendations.

2022/23 BUDGET REPORTS:

21. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the suite of budget papers with comprised:

- The Council's Budget 2022/23 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 - 2025/26
- The Dedicated Schools Grant and setting the Schools Budget 2022-23
- Capital Strategy and Capital programme 2022/23
- Flexible use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2022/23
- Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators 2022/23

22. The Leader advised that Overview and Scrutiny Committee had made two recommendations:

- That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee put forward to Cabinet that a Reserves Strategy be reviewed to look at setting out guidance for the use of the reserves within Services; and
- That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee put forward to Cabinet that the impact of budget saving OPS 007 regarding food waste caddy liners is closely monitored and Cabinet Member Portfolio meetings and if recycling rates drop due to the changes a review takes place on the budget saving proposal.

23. Both these recommendations were noted and would be taken forwards.

24. The Leader reported that the Council still faced a number of challenges which would continue in future years. A £3m smoothing fund was proposed in light of these future pressures, as was a 1.94% increase in Council Tax. He advised this was the lowest in Greater Manchester but would still be difficult for residents, however an increase in Council Tax was included in Government funding assumptions and as such this increase was necessary to balance budgets.

25. The suite of documents set out all proposed cuts and efficiency savings, as well as ambitious capital targets including historic investment in Bury's towns and highways. The papers also set out flexible use of capital receipts, and the welcome increase in schools' budgets. In response to Members' questions, it was noted that despite filling posts as soon as possible, in an organisation of this size there would always be some vacancies at any given point which was represented in the vacancy factor. With regards to trading services, a more commercial relationship was being pursued with schools, seeing them as customers to

encourage uptake. The Chief Executive advised that the effects of Covid might increase this, but the savings identified were mostly from IT efficiencies which he was confident could be achieved. .

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

BURY CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY REPORT QUARTER THREE 2021-22:

27. Councillor Tahir Rafiq, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs and HR, presented the report which provided a summary of key delivery and performance that occurred during quarter three 2021-22 aligned to the 3R priorities. The report also highlighted intelligence on customer contact services.

28. In response to Members' questions, it was noted that detail on the apprenticeship and skills strategies could be provided to Councillor Jones outside of the meeting, and that green rated targets were on track while amber targets were waiting on the resolution of an issue before being brought back on track. With regards to potholes, five times as many potholes were being fixed than reported during the last quarter as staff had been released from Covid-related redeployments, and as such the next quarterly report would see this spend increase. Details of this and on how the decrease in recycling rates was being mitigated would be provided to Councillor Powell outside of the meeting, and the guide price of one of the assets sold could be clarified.

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

BURY COUNCIL AND CCG CORPORATE PLAN 2022/23:

30. Councillor Tahir Rafiq, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs and HR, presented the report which summarised the progress made in 2021/22 and includes new priorities that have been agreed with Cabinet Members based on consultation with ward members, residents and other stakeholders. In response to a Member's question regarding the impact on staff numbers, it was noted that consultations were currently ongoing. Once those had been completed further detail could be provided. The Chief Executive added that the workforce assessment included in the papers identified that circa 10 posts across the Council were directly affected, the impact of which would be mitigated through redeployment where possible, but he advised that future years might have a larger impact on staff numbers.

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

APPOINTMENT OF A DEVELOPMENT PARTNER FOR PHASE 2 OF CHAMBERHALL BUSINESS PARK, BURY - PART A:

32. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which sought approval regarding the results of the recent tender exercise to bring forward the development of Phase 2 of Chamberhall Business Park. The site forms part of the larger Chamberhall business park. Phase 1 which consisted of 130,000 sqft has been successfully developed by St Modwen's. The phase 2 land comprises of circa 7 acres of serviced employment land. The appointment of a development partner will ensure that a high-quality sustainable development is brought forward as well as ensuring best value is achieved for the site.

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

GREATER MANCHESTER ONE (GMONE) ICT NETWORK - PART A:

34. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which set out the process for a joint procurement of ICT network services across several councils (Bury, Rochdale, Oldham, and Stockport), Greater Manchester Combined Authority including Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service and Transport for Greater Manchester. In response to comments from Members, it was noted that this proposal focussed on linking up public estates but might provide opportunities in the future to expand on private ones.
35. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME:

36. Geoff Little, Chief Executive of Bury Council, provided an update on the progress of the Children's Services Improvement Programme. Following the Ofsted's judgement, the Council's Children's Services were said to be Inadequate and the Department for Education (DfE) published an improvement notice. This requires the Council to submit an improvement plan by 31 March 2022 and to establish an Improvement Board with an Independent Chair. The Council had already met that requirement following the earlier Local Government Peer Review and it will now meet monthly.
37. Also in accordance with the improvement notice, the DfE had now appointed a case officer and an independent advisor to support the Council and report to the Secretary of State on progress. Linda Clegg has been appointed to this role and as Independent Chair of the Improvement Board. She also led the Peer Challenge last year and so this appointment established consistency and continuity. It was noted that fortnightly meetings have been established between the DfE case officer and the Executive Director of Children's Services to monitor progress and to agree and establish additional support to the department via sector-led improvement partners.
38. The Improvement Board first met on 25 January 2022 and approved its Terms of Reference and membership. It also received a report setting out the work progressing the improvement plan. This was organised around 3 key themes: leadership and management, quality and impact of practice on the outcomes for children, and workforce. It was noted that a workforce board has been established to provide input from staff to the Improvement Board.
39. Immediate actions have already commenced and progress was being tracked and would be reported to future meetings of the Improvement Board. That immediate action included: action to reset the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub following Covid, a new approach to quality assurance enabling a more qualitative approach, and a new audit framework to provide more space and time for learning, and crucially a comprehensive review of staffing with the aim of one manager to six social workers and an average caseload of 15 cases per social worker. To that end, recruitment and retention procedures have been revised and additional staff have begun to be recruited.
40. The Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on 20 January 2022 considered the Ofsted report and the report on the Council's response and will meet again in March to discuss the draft improvement plan. This plan will be submitted to Ofsted by 31 March, and feedback then brought to the Improvement Board. The first monitoring visit from Ofsted is expected in the summer; this first report will not be published but all subsequent reports will be.
41. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Skills added that an ask would shortly go out to Opposition Members for a cross-party group to recruit an Assistant Director for

Children Social Care. This post was important to improve capacity and to strengthen the leadership team.

42. It was noted that future updates will be provided to future meetings of Cabinet and the Chief Executive was thanked for his weekly briefings for Opposition Group Leaders.
43. Cabinet noted the update.