

Minutes of: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 13 April 2022

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

Also in attendance: Councillors N Jones and M Powell

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

**Apologies for
Absence:** Councillor C Cummins, Councillor A Quinn and Councillor
A Simpson

CA.255 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Clare Cummins, Alan Quinn and Andrea Simpson.

CA.256 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

CA.257 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

CA.258 MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

CA.259 MINUTES

It was agreed:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 9 and 22 March 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CA.260 THE DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT DEFICIT RECOVERY AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND/OR DISABILITY (SEND) TRANSFORMATION - PROGRAMME SAFETY VALVE

Councillor Tamoor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Skills, presented the report which provided an update on the deficit on the Council's Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and the revised plan and progress on Project Safety Valve, including how Bury was addressing the financial challenge of eliminating the cumulative DSG deficit by the end of the financial year 2024/25.

In response to Members' questions, it was noted that working with the families and carers of young people was a key part of making improvements to the Education

Health and Care Plan service, and feedback and proposals would be brought back to Children and Young People's Scrutiny along with progress on priorities.

Members expressed their thanks to officers and DfE colleagues, as well as the network of schools and parents involved in these improvements.

Decision:

Cabinet:

1. Noted the progress on the DSG recovery agreement between the Department for Education and the Council which forms the basis of the grant agreement that the Council has signed up to;
2. Supported the decisions required by officers to deliver the recovery plan within the agreed timeframe;
3. Noted the financial support provided by the DfE in assisting the Council to recover the DSG deficit and the expectation that this will lead to a balanced position by the end of 2024/25;
4. Noted that the settlement reached with the DfE will bring significant additional government funding into Bury to remove a large proportion of the DSG overspend;
5. Noted that the settlement gives the Council funding to improve services, including services for children and families with SEND; better services here in Bury will replace more expensive services out of borough; and
6. Agreed that no decisions for change affecting individual children and families will be made without them.

Reasons for the decision:

Cabinet is asked to consider the recommendations in order to demonstrate ongoing support to Project Safety Valve and SEND Transformation based on the key considerations as set out in the report.

Other options considered and rejected:

This report details the extensive progress made in respect to SEND Transformation and Dedicated Schools Grant deficit recovery where the recommendations included for consideration by Cabinet form part of the overall delivery requirements in accordance with the formal agreement between the Council and the DfE. There are no alternative options to be considered at this stage. Further recommendations will be brought to Cabinet in due course and in line with the continuing priorities of this programme.

CA.261 BURY MARKET AND FLEXIHALL - ACQUISITIONS TO FACILITATE DELIVERY OF LEVELLING UP PROJECT - PART A

Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which sought permission for the purchase of two properties as part of the Bury Market and Flexihall project. It was noted that the full financial detail was set out in the Part B report.

Decision:

Cabinet:

1. Approved the acquisition of properties 4 Princess Parade and 47 Market Street in accordance with the terms set out in Part B of this report; and

2. Delegated the finalised terms of the agreements to the Chief Executive in consultation with Cabinet Member for Finance, S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

Reasons for the decision:

To facilitate delivery of the Bury Market and Flexihall project in accordance with the Levelling Up bid submission and subsequent notification of a successful bid.

Other options considered and rejected:

An alternative option is to not purchase the property, this option was rejected as the land holding is required in order to continue with the Flexihall development.

The Council can seek to use compulsory purchase powers as an acquiring authority the Council is able to use compulsory purchase powers and acquire land without the consent of the landowner. The process however is not swift and could take in the region of 18-24 months to be concluded. The requirements of the levelling up bid stated that all funds would need to be defrayed by quarter 1 2025. This option has been rejected as the Council would not therefore have sufficient time to acquire the properties within the project delivery timeline.

CA.262 DISCRETIONARY GRANTS UPDATE REPORT

Councillor Tahir Rafiq, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs and HR, presented the report which provided an update in relation to the Member's Discretionary Grants scheme, guidance issued to members, internal audit review, recipients, and plans going forward. Members commended the range of groups that benefitted from these grants, and thanked officers for their reminders and suggestion of the Mayor's charity for small amounts remaining at the end of the year.

Decision:

Cabinet noted the content of the report.

Reasons for the decision:

An internal audit review of the Elected Members Discretionary Grants scheme was undertaken in 2021, the review contained four recommendations, including that a report be provided to the Council's Cabinet on Elected Member expenditure at year end.

Other options considered and rejected:

Not applicable.

CA.263 CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

Geoff Little, Chief Executive of Bury Council, provided an update on the progress of the Children's Services Improvement Programme. Members noted that since the last meeting of Cabinet Jeanette Richards had been appointed as the permanent Executive Director for Children and Young People, a position she was filling on a fixed term basis previously. This would bring certainty and stability to the leadership of Children's Services, which was important in recruiting and retaining staff, and give confidence in the Council's capacity to improve. Regarding capacity, it was noted that recruitment was underway for the Assistant Director of Social Work.

The final version of the Improvement Plan had been submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) by the deadline of 31 March. Prior to submission there was widespread involvement in the drafting from young people (via the Children in Care Council), frontline staff, Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, and the Children's Improvement Board. It was also subject to peer challenge by other NW Local Authorities. Feedback from the DfE was now awaited. A communication process was now being prepared for April and May to explain and embed understanding of the Improvement Plan with staff and partners.

The DfE advisor (who was also the Independent Chair of the Improvement Board), Linda Clegg, had submitted her first progress report. The next milestone would be an in-depth review to be submitted in May. Ms Clegg also provided feedback to the Board at their meeting in March, along with an update from the Executive Director, and the Board discussed priorities on the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, quality assurance, a new approach to performance management meetings, and improvements to the data dashboard used to track progress (though this was a work in progress).

Work had started on the review of the Bury Integrated Safeguarding Partnership by an external expert and a peer review had been conducted of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Team, the actions of which were being taken forward. Issues raised by frontline staff were being addressed and Bury was reaching out to other Local Authorities for their support in making improvements, including Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils. The focus of the next Improvement Board meeting will be the recruitment and retention of staff, which remained the highest priority.

In response to Members' questions, it was noted that more detail on the work with other Local Authorities would be brought to the Improvement Board, Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, and to Cabinet if required. Apprenticeships would be part of the discussion regarding recruitment and retention of staff, including ensuring vacancies and incentives were in place to enable Bury-trained social workers to stay working for the borough. The Leader advised that this was being supported by wider GM work looking at reducing competition between Councils and encouraging cooperation, which would benefit councils, social workers and the young people and families involved. It was also noted that social work caseloads were reducing but work was ongoing to reduce these further. Finally, Councillor Tariq advised that work with schools around children's social care was progressing through existing primary and secondary networks to secure sustainable and long-term relationships for the future.

Decision:

Cabinet noted the update.

Reasons for the decision:

This update was provided in response to a resolution of Council at the meeting held on 19 January 2022.

Other options considered and rejected:

N/A

CA.264 MINUTES OF ASSOCIATION OF GREATER MANCHESTER AUTHORITIES / GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY

It was agreed:

That the minutes of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority meeting held on 11 February 2022 be noted.

CA.265 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.266 BURY MARKET AND FLEXIHALL - ACQUISITIONS TO FACILITATE DELIVERY OF LEVELLING UP PROJECT - PART B

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

Decision:

Cabinet:

1. Approved the acquisition of properties 4 Princess Parade and 47 Market Street in accordance with the terms set out in Part B of this report; and
2. Delegated the finalised terms of the agreements to the Chief Executive in consultation with Cabinet Member for Finance, S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

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.

COUNCILLOR E O'BRIEN
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 6.04 pm and ended at 6.39 pm)