

## GENERAL REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 OCTOBER 2022

### MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY REFRESH

1. Councillor Richard Gold, Cabinet Member for Finance and Communities, presented the report which presented the mid-year review of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which ran to 2025/26. This had been undertaken as a matter of good practice and in the context of the unprecedented inflationary and demand pressures being experienced so far this year.
2. The review indicated a provisional budget deficit of £29.204m in 2023/24; a further gap of £3.475m in 2024/25 and a further £5.866m in 2025/26, and the report set out a range of options to address this deficit as a basis for consultation with affected stakeholders. Members noted this was a challenging picture but was one being faced by Councils across the country. Cross-party concerns were being raised nationally, and the response from the Government through the settlement figures expected in December would be crucial.
3. Members discussed the information and, in response to Members' questions, the following was noted:
  - Sufficient strategic capacity was important in ensuring the Council could run efficiently, but despite proposed reductions Chief Officer pay would remain competitive and was only one of Bury's attractions as an employer.
  - Rationalisation of buildings was a complex project and was progressing more slowly than expected. The balancing act of where to accommodate people and services was complicated, and it was noted that sale prices would also be affected by current utility costs and inflation.
  - Savings being made to strategic finance had been realised through the careful line-by-line review of budgets. Some savings were only achievable now that skills and capacity had been developed in a number of teams, and also through the maturation of longer term workplans and strategies.
  - Transformational changes were progressing, and the adaptability of staff demonstrated the relevance of internal transformation still to come.
  - It was agreed that fly tipping and was a problem but increases to commercial waste management costs were rising to meet the rise in operating costs from inflation rather than trying to secure a profit.
  - The Council worked closely with community groups in the borough, and the Let's strategy supported more liaison with the community as they were often better placed to offer help and support to residents. This was not an attempt for local groups to pick up Council work, but a different and more efficient way of working that had been part of long-term plans since before Covid.
  - The Council was exploring options regarding the service offer from the art gallery and costs would be considered as part of this, however outcomes were currently unknown as the options appraisal was still ongoing.
  - With regards to management structures, proposals agreed with the budget papers last year agreed to move to a flatter structure, with reductions in the number of managers needed and the number of levels of management, and this was progressing.
  - It was noted that staffing impacts were across the Council, not just frontline staff, and would be subject to full consultative processes.
4. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

## **BURY PROCUREMENT STRATEGY**

5. Councillor Richard Gold, Cabinet Member for Finance and Communities, presented the report which set out proposals for a new Procurement Strategy for Bury Council. The current Procurement Strategy 'Buying into Bury' expired in 2015 and required a comprehensive review for it to be a more strategic approach rather than operational and to bring it up to date. In response to Members' questions it was noted that although a full refresh had not been undertaken since 2015, improvements and revisions had been undertaken by degrees, and the move to STAR procurement had offered the best opportunity for a full review to ensure strategic consistency.
6. In response to further questions, it was noted that although it would not be on the scale of larger Councils, Bury did have the digital capacity to strengthen and maximise the use of the e-tendering platform and opportunities to streamline processes through digitalisation. With regards to learning from other organisations, it was noted that a wealth of national, regional and local strategies and legislation influenced procurement activity.
7. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

## **UPDATE ON THE DISPOSAL OF BROWNFIELD LAND AT SCHOOL STREET, SEEDFIELD (FORMER SCHOOL SITE) AND GREEN STREET**

8. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth and Skills, presented the report which provided an update on the disposal of three council owned sites on Brownfield land: Seedfields school site, School Street, and Green Street in Radcliffe.
9. It was noted that the proposed developments will deliver 309 new homes including 142 Affordable homes as well as recreational contributions via S.106 agreements and enable the Council to deliver the aspirations of the Radcliffe SRF and the Councils Let's Do It Housing strategy. The commercial terms for contracting with Hive Homes on the School St and Seedfield sites had been confirmed via independent Red Book valuations and the offer received from Watson Homes at Green St had also been verified by the same method. The off-market solution offered by Hive Homes and Watson Homes offered best value and accelerated housing delivery programmes, with the benefit of Brownfield Housing Funding on the School Street and Seedfield sites helping to unlock this brownfield site for the benefit of families, including those on lower incomes.
10. In response to some comments from opposition Councillors regarding availability of brownfield land, and crime and deprivation levels in the area, the Leader responded that if brownfield sites were not utilised then development would be needed on greenbelt land, which was not something the Council wanted to pursue. He advised of the high ambitions for Radcliffe, that it was a great place to live and therefore was a key site for development and regeneration. The Council were developing a new school, new housing sites (including affordable housing), new leisure facilities, and a new civic hub, as well as a People and Communities plan in addition to this physical regeneration. He acknowledged there were challenges but stated that the positives of the area should be recognised and improved, which is what the Council were doing with its current investment and development plans.
11. Other opposition Councillors voiced their support of the report, recognising that this addressed the need to regenerate the area, with the Council's plans using its own investment as well as Government funding.
12. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD SUPPORT HOUSING SERVICES - ADULLAM BURY BRIDGES SERVICE**

13. Councillor Tamoor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Health, and Wellbeing, presented the report which sought to extend contractual supported accommodation service arrangements with Adullam Bury Bridges.
14. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GM INTEGRATED CARE PARTNERSHIP BOARD**

15. Councillor Tamoor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Health, and Wellbeing, presented the report which sought to establish the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership (GM ICP) as a joint committee and to agree the terms of reference for the GM ICP.
16. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

## **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OFSTED UPDATE**

17. Geoff Little, Chief Executive of Bury Council, provided an update on the progress of the Children's Services Improvement Programme, which focused on the verbal feedback received after the 2-day monitoring visit that had taken place last week. It was noted that the verbal feedback might differ from the formal written feedback that would be included in a Cabinet report in November. The monitoring visit was effectively to a mini inspection, with the Ofsted inspection team speaking to social workers and senior leaders in the department, as well as going through records of individual cases and viewing a range of documents.
18. Scope
19. The inspection team were looking at quality and impact of plans that related to individual children and their families, in particular cases that were stepped up to Children In Need from Child Protection, and the process of how cases were stepped up and down from work preceding court proceedings. They also looked at children where risk had escalated to the point of family breakdown. In looking at those areas they triangulated improvements made in the service as a whole, including workforce, performance management, management oversight and supervision, and quality assurance.
20. Key findings
  - No cases of children at immediate risk of harm
  - Most cases were being held at the right level of threshold
  - No formal escalations of cases from the inspectors to the management team
21. Overall, the inspection team acknowledged we had now established a permanent leadership team that fully understood the issues faced and knew the improvement journey would take time. Recognition was received from the team that we are going in the right direction, that we have established foundations of support for improvement, and that leadership is visible. The inspection team saw pockets of improvement in practice, demonstrating that frontline practice is starting to improve.
22. The most important issue raised was already known: workforce. Caseloads were too high, the number of social workers that children see was changing too frequently, and there was too high a proportion of agency staff leading to drift and delay in cases being dealt with. We were able to show inspectors we have made progress in overall staffing levels, that we are recruiting more staff, working on recruitment from abroad, improvements to the level and quality of business support (so social workers could focus on cases), and how we are further increasing, in some areas, rates of pay to attract social workers. The inspection team also noted the support the wider Council was giving to the department, the investment being put in to radically change the structure of the department and increase the number of posts. It

was noted that supervision in some of our internal teams was inconsistent and variable and needed further work (which had begun).

23. Geoff outlined five areas of detail:

- Quality assurance – the framework we had adopted since the inspection was now working and enabled us to gather evidence of impact of practice. However it wasn't always being used consistently to record the views of children and families, and opportunities were still being missed to listen to children in that process. But overall a significant improvement was noted in quality assurance.
- How Children In Need cases are stepped up into Child Protection Plans was seen as appropriate. Better practice was noted in the way we are working with our partners in strategy meetings, though not as evident in child protection meetings, and there were still issues regarding high levels of agency staff and children seeing too many different social workers.
- Pre court proceedings stage – improvements had been made, and the number of cases in this part of the system had increased, doubling since the original inspection. This was positive progress as we were intervening when things getting worse, and cases then stepped down after action was taken was at 65%. However, there was still some drift and delay owing to access to the right specialist services (e.g. therapy or domestic abuse services)
- Where cases were stepped down from Children In Need to Early Help, inspectors saw a clear focus on the need and the services to be delivered, and that was happening at the right level and in the right way to support changes in families. Good, shared decision making was also noted.
- With regards to children being under the disability team, although only a small sample of cases were looked at, most were found to have good, up to date assessments of need, the worries of parents about their children were well considered, and plans for the children were up to date with good partner agency processes in forming those plans. However, the daily lived experience of children wasn't always sufficiently reflected.

24. Overall, Geoff advised that verbal feedback showed we are on the right path and that the direction of travel was good. It was noted that written feedback yet to be received might differ, but it was hoped that it would show we have the firm basis for improvement.

25. Cabinet noted the update.

#### **APPOINTMENTS UPDATE**

26. Councillor Tahir Rafiq, Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs and HR, presented the report which set out amendments to the appointments made at the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 25th May 2022.

27. Cabinet noted the appointments.

### **GENERAL REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2022**

#### **QUARTER 2 MONITORING REPORT**

28. Councillor Gold presented the Quarter two Financial monitoring report. The report outlines the forecast financial position of the Council at the end of 2022/23 based on the information known at the end of the second quarter, 30th September 2022. The report sets out the position for both revenue and capital and provides an analysis of the variances, both under and overspending.

29. Members discussed the information and, in response to Members' questions, the following was noted:
- With regards to the progress of the Council's Capital projects; following formulation and inclusion in the budget process further work is undertaken and more detailed proposals are progressed. The detailed proposals will take account of external factors that may affect their progression including; inflation/supply chain issues.
  - The Leader gave an assurance that further information in respect of the Capital programme will be shared at a future Cabinet meeting.
  - The proposed savings in relation to the Admin buildings project; the Section 151 Officer reported that staff have now vacated Whittaker Street generating a part year saving; staff will vacate Humphrey House in next financial year, any savings in relation to this will not be realised until the next financial year.
  - Savings predicted in relation to procurement continue to be monitored but may be allocated to departments. Star Procurement have been brought in to undertake a review of the Council's current procurement arrangements.
  - There is a £2.5 billion overspend across all local authority areas.
  - Members were notified that a report on the progress of transformation will be a December Cabinet item.
30. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

#### **TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

31. Councillor Gold, Cabinet member for Finance and Communities presented to Members of the Cabinet a Treasury Management update. The Cabinet Member reported that it is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limits. During the half year ended 30th September 2022, the Council has operated within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2022/23. The Director of Finance reports that no difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years in complying with these indicators.
32. In discussions that followed the following questions and comments were raised:
33. The Section 151 Officer reported that Manchester Airport would be charged late payment interest on their outstanding loan.
34. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

#### **BURY CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY REPORT QUARTER ONE AND TWO 2022-23**

35. Councillor Rafiq, Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs and HR presented to Members an overview of the Bury Corporate Plan Performance and Delivery Report for Quarters One and Two 2022-23. The report provides a summary of the key delivery and performance outcomes that occurred during Quarter One and Two 2022-23, aligned to the 3R priorities.
36. The Cabinet Member reported that each quarterly report, includes a spotlight on an area of delivery, performance or intelligence to supplement acknowledgement of progress towards the 2022-23 Corporate Plan objectives. This quarter the focus is on the data available to assess the cost-of-living position for Bury.
37. In discussions that followed the following questions and comments were raised:
- Councillor Bernstein asked to further understand the cost of living issues in the Borough whether more work could be undertaken to map why there has been an increase in the number of Universal Credit claimants and the reduction in the numbers claiming Council tax support.

- With regards Education Healthcare Plans, the local offer is published online, parents can self-refer however the majority are instigated and developed together with the Local Authority, Health partners, Schools and Parents.
38. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

#### **PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT OF FLETCHER FOLD FOR THE DELIVERY OF SPECIALIST ACCOMMODATION FOR OLDER PEOPLE INCLUDING THOSE WITH LONG TERM CONDITIONS**

39. Councillor Cummins, Cabinet member for Housing Services attended the meeting to update Members on the proposal to redevelop the Fletcher Fold site.
40. In March 2022, Cabinet approved in principle a proposal for Six Town Housing to redevelop this site for general needs affordable housing, a mix of affordable rent and shared ownership.
41. The proposed course has since been reviewed and presented to Cabinet is a revised proposal for this site which will meet the Council's broader aims.
42. In August 2022, the Council procured a Registered Provider Partnership Framework, to maximise the delivery of affordable housing including specialist accommodation on Council owned land. Six registered providers have been appointed to the framework. This report seeks approval to dispose of Fletcher Fold to a registered provider on the framework, for the delivery of a low carbon, specialist affordable housing scheme for older people including those with long term conditions such as a learning disability, to facilitate delivery of the Housing Strategy and generate savings to the adult social care budget.
43. In discussions that followed the following questions and comments were raised:
- Councillor Cummins confirmed that this development will be community focused and residents at Millwood Court would be consulted on the plans for the site.
  - Responding with regards to the change of direction for the site; the Chief Executive reported that the recruitment of a new Director of Housing and a detailed analysis of the health and housing need in the Borough has informed the decision to re-purpose the site.
  - Councillor Cummins confirmed that the Council's preference is for social rent properties.
44. Cabinet approved the recommendations.

#### **EAST LANCASHIRE PAPER MILL SITE UPDATE**

45. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth and Skills, provided Members of the Cabinet with an update on the proposals for the East Lancashire Paper Mill.
46. The Leader reported that the Council has been working in partnership with Homes England since 2016, the Council has now entered in to a Collaboration Agreement with Homes England which will see Bury's land transferred to Homes England for onward lease with Morris Homes.
47. This report provides an update to the March 2022 Cabinet Paper 'East Lancashire Paper Site Update' and sets out changes in the original offer approved by Cabinet, resulting from a change in market conditions and viability appraisals.
48. Members discussed the proposals and the following comments and issues were raised:
- The Leader reported the decision to change the proposal would ensure that the Council receives a greater subsidy.
  - It is proposed that the site will have a mix range tenure but this is to be determined. Proposals to be considered at the Planning Committee in December 2022.
49. Cabinet approved the recommendations.

## **SALE OF NEW SUMMERSEAT HOUSE, RAMSBOTTOM**

50. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth and Skills, reported the results of a recent tender exercise for the sale of New Summerseat House. The site is part of the Accelerated Land Disposal Programme and has been vacant for many years. The sale will 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 for security and maintenance.
51. Cabinet approved the recommendations.

## **OFSTED MONITORING VISIT**

52. Councillor Lucy Smith, Cabinet Member for Children's Services presented an overview of the findings from the recently undertaken Ofsted visit. An accompanying Ofsted Monitoring letter had been circulated to Members ahead of the meeting. The visit took place on the 12th and 13th of October 2022.
53. The Cabinet Member reported that this is the Second monitoring visit and the first to be published on the Ofsted website following Children's Services receiving an overall judgement of inadequate on the 17th December 2021.
54. Cabinet approved the recommendations.

## **BURY COST OF LIVING AND ANTI-POVERTY APPROACH**

55. The Cabinet Member For Finance and Communities presented to members an overview of the Council's cost of living and anti-poverty approach. and the proactive and targeted approach we are taking as part of the strategy. Given the increasing cost-of-living pressures, the paper outlines the ongoing challenge and impacts along with the approach being taken to deliver the local anti-poverty strategy.
  - Councillor Smith commended the report for including support for energy bills for care leavers and that work is ongoing to support foster carers to enable them to get assistance.
  - With regards to supporting the long term unemployed in to work, Councillor Morris reported that the Cabinet are working to develop an Economic Development Strategy as well as an all age skills strategy.
56. Cabinet approved the recommendations.

## **FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH**

57. The Leader reported at a meeting of the Democratic Arrangements Forum held on 3rd November 2022 Group Leaders considered the following nominations for Freedom of the Borough:
  - Roy Walker – Nominated by Councillor Bernstein on behalf of the Conservative Group and Councillor Yvonne Wright.
  - Trevor Holt – Nominated by the Labour Group
  - Dorothy Gunther – Nominated by Councillor Bernstein on behalf of the Conservative Group
  - Itzik Alterman – Nominated by Councillor Bernstein on behalf of the Conservative Group and Supported by Councillor Richard Gold
  - Akram Baig – Nominated by the Labour Group.
58. The Group Leaders agreed to progress these nominations and seek further information in relation to the bestowing of the title of Freedom of the Borough on the premiership footballer, Kieran Trippier.
59. Cabinet approved the recommendations for onward consideration at Council.