

Attendance

Members of the Cabinet (Resources) Panel

Cllr Louise Miles (Chair)
Cllr Ian Brookfield (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Steve Evans
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal
Cllr Linda Leach
Cllr John Reynolds
Cllr Stephen Simkins

Employees

Tim Johnson	Chief Executive
Mark Taylor	Deputy Chief Executive
Emma Bennett	Director of Children and Adult Services
Ross Cook	Director of City Environment
Richard Lawrence	Director of Regeneration
Claire Nye	Director of Finance
David Pattison	Director of Governance
Laura Phillips	Deputy Director of People and Change
Jaswinder Kaur	Democratic Services Manager
Dereck Francis	Democratic Services Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. Title

- 1 Apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Dr Michael Hardacre and Jacqueline Sweetman.
- 2 Declarations of interest**
Mark Taylor, Deputy Chief Executive and Ross Cook, Director of City Environment declared a non pecuniary interest in item 7 - Schedule of Individual Executive Decision Notices (IEDNs), particularly the IEDN 'Loan to WV Living' as they are both Directors of WV Living.

3 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held 11 November 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

5 **Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020-2021**

Councillor Louise Miles reported on the salient points of the Revenue Budget Monitoring report which provided a projection of the likely revenue outturn position for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account when compared with the Council's approved revenue budgets for 2020-2021, and the projected financial implications of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Resolved:

1. That the use of £20,000 from the Regeneration Reserve to fund feasibility and valuation work at i54 Western Extension as detailed in paragraph 5.4 of the report be approved.
2. That the use of £942,000 from the Licensing Reserve in line with Licensing Committee approvals as detailed at paragraph 5 of the report be approved.
3. That the use of £98,000 from the Recovery Reserve to fund a project team for the Kickstart Work Experience Programme, as detailed at paragraph 5.6 of the report and in also in the 'Kickstart Work Experience Programme' report presented to Cabinet (Resources) Panel at this meeting be approved.
4. That the establishment of supplementary expenditure budgets within the 2020-2021 approved budget as detailed in section 6.0 of the report for grant funded expenditure be approved.
5. That the 29 virements totalling £9.7 million, for transfers within directorates, as detailed in Appendix 4 to the report be approved.
6. That the write-off of eight Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) debts totalling £85,898.47 as detailed in Appendix 5 to the report be approved.
7. That the write-off of three Council Tax debts totalling £21,112.96 as detailed in Appendix 6 to the report be approved.
8. That it be noted that the overall projected outturn for the General Fund for 2020-2021 is forecast to a break-even outturn position, after a forecast contribution to reserves, excluding the impact of Covid-19.
9. That it be noted that at this stage in the financial year it is difficult to forecast redundancy costs. However, as forecast in recent years it is anticipated that the cost of redundancies can be met from reserves.

10. That it be noted that a £9.9 million surplus on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is projected compared with a budgeted surplus of £10.8 million as shown at Table 20 and in detail at Appendix 3 to the report. The projected reduction to the surplus of £915,000 would reduce redemption of debt by £915,000.
11. That it be noted that 74 sundry debt accounts totalling £39,830.63, as detailed in paragraph 9.3 of the report, have been approved for write-off by the Director of Finance in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.
12. That it be noted that 1,215 council tax accounts totalling £441,438.14, as detailed in paragraph 9.5 of the report, have been approved for write-off by the Director of Finance in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.
13. That it be noted that 70 Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) debts totalling £257,198.94, as detailed in paragraph 9.6 of the report, have been approved for write-off by the Director of Finance in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.
14. That it be noted that 16 housing benefit overpayments totalling £4,098.69 as detailed in paragraph 9.10 of the report, have been approved for write-off by the Director of Finance in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.
15. That it be noted that 8 debts relating to Business Improvement District (BID) totalling £3,516.00, as detailed in paragraph 9.7 of the report, have been approved for write off by the Director of Finance in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.

6 **Kickstart Work Experience Programme**

The intention to make a key decision on the report 'Kickstart Work Experience Programme' at the meeting was not publicised in advance as required by the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. The decision was urgent and could not be reasonably delayed for the following reasons:

- Wolverhampton currently has the third highest percentage of youth unemployment in England at 15.9% with a total of 3380 young people claiming benefits (NOMIS September 2020). This has more than doubled since January 2020. This scheme would assist in responding to the urgent issue of youth unemployment in our city by placing young people in paid work who are claiming Universal Credit in Wolverhampton.
- There are currently 122 work experience placements ready to be submitted to DWP for approval before they can be offered to young people in our city. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) approval process takes up to 30 days and therefore a further 28 days would mean that decisions to offer placements in Wolverhampton could then not realistically start take place until at least February 2020.

- The Kickstart work experience scheme is time limited and all placements need to be submitted and approved by DWP before December 2021.

In light of the above, consent had been obtained for the key decision to be made at the meeting under the General Exception provisions.

Councillor Stephen Simkins presented the report on a proposal to enter into a grant agreement with the DWP to deliver the Kickstart Work Experience programme. The programme was part of a package of measures announced by Government to provide enhanced support to young people and employers as a result of the pandemic. The programme provided funding to employers to create new six-month work placements for 16-24 year olds on Universal Credit, who are at risk of long term unemployment. It was proposed that the Council support the programme by offering an initial cohort of 30 work placements within the Council up until December 2021; providing a co-ordinated Gateway offer to employers through the Council's Enterprise and Skills teams ensuring that employers and young people are supported. The Gateway would initially support up to 150 work placements; and to offer funded support packages for young people who are taking part in the programme. The proposal would support the Council's commitment to create more jobs and opportunities for young people across the city.

The Chair added that the proposal was part of a major push to get many of the city's young people back into employment. He hoped that as many businesses in the city take up the opportunity to participate in the programme.

Resolved:

1. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for City Economy, in consultation with Director of Regeneration to:
 - a. Approve the Council entering into the required grant agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for the Council to employ young people aged 16-24 years old at risk of long term unemployment on the Kickstart scheme.
 - b. Approve the Council entering into required grant agreements with DWP for the Council to act as a Gateway for businesses in the city to deliver Kickstart work experience placements to young people aged 16-24 years old.
 - c. Approve payments of grants to employers who are approved as Kickstart work experience providers by DWP, funded from DWP grant.
 - d. Approve reimbursement of Kickstart salaries to employers who participate in the scheme through a claims process agreed with DWP, funded from DWP grant.
 - e. Approve the Council entering into back to back grant funding agreements with employers participating in the scheme.

- f. Approve the creation of the necessary supplementary budgets to deliver the scheme.
2. That it be noted that the delivery of support to employers and Kickstart participants would be provided through the Council's Enterprise and Skills teams, through Wolves at Work and Education Business Partnership as part of a traded service to employers.
3. That it be noted that the Council would be responsible for putting in place the appropriate financial management processes to reimburse Kickstart salaries for participants employed by employers approved for the Council Gateway.
4. That it be noted that the Council would be responsible for managing finance, audit and compliance requirements of the scheme in its role as a Gateway.
5. That it be noted that approval would be sought in the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020-2021 Report presented to Cabinet (Resources) Panel also at this meeting for the use of £98,000 over an 18 month period from the Recovery Reserve to fund a project team for the Kickstart Work Experience Programme.

7 **Schedule of Individual Executive Decision Notices**

Resolved:

That the summary of open and exempt individual executive decisions approved by the appropriate Cabinet Members following consultation with the relevant employees be noted.

8 **Exclusion of press and public**

Resolved:

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Part 2 - exempt items, closed to press and public

The Chair reported that as stated previously the meeting was in confidential session as the information included in the reports could, if released into the public domain, prejudice the financial position of the Council or its partners. As such all present are under a legal duty of confidentiality and must not disclose any confidential information - to do so would not only be a breach of the Council's codes (for councillors and employees) but also a breach of the legal duty of confidentiality.

9 **Procurement - Award of Contracts for Works, Goods and Services**

Councillor Louise Miles presented for approval the report on the award of contracts for works, goods and services. She drew to the Panel's attention the exemption to Contract Procedure Rules approved by the Head of Procurement and Director of Finance for the period 1 to 31 October 2020.

Resolved:

1. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for City Environment, in consultation with the Director of City Environment, to approve the award of a contract for Guarding – Locking and Unlocking of the Council's Parks and Cemetery sites when the evaluation process is complete.
2. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, in consultation with the Director of Children's Services, to approve the award of a contract for Detached Youth Work, when the evaluation process is complete.
3. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing, in consultation with the Director of City Environment, to approve the award of a contract for Housing Tenant Scrutiny and Engagement when the evaluation process is complete.
4. That the exemptions to the Contract Procedure Rules approved by the Head of Procurement and Director of Finance from 1 to 31 October 2020 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be noted.