

Attendance

Members of the Cabinet

Cllr Ian Brookfield (Chair)
Cllr Stephen Simkins (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Obaida Ahmed
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Chris Burden
Cllr Steve Evans
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal
Cllr Linda Leach
Cllr Beverley Momenabadi

Employees

Tim Johnson	Chief Executive
Charlotte Johns	Director of Strategy
Emma Bennett	Executive Director of Families
Claire Nye	Director of Finance
David Pattison	Chief Operating Officer
John Roseblade	Director of City Housing and Environment
Becky Wilkinson	Director of Adult Social Services
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**
No apologies for absence were received.
- 2 Declaration of interests**
No declarations of interests were made.
- 3 Minutes of the previous meeting**
Resolved:
That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 April 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services, City of Wolverhampton Council**

Councillor Beverley Momenabadi presented an update on the outcome of the recent Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspection of Children's Services. The service had received an overall judgement of 'Good', the best rating in the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) area. The Service was also the only local authority in the WMCA area to achieve an 'Outstanding' judgement for areas of practise. The impact of leaders on social work practise with children and families was rated 'Outstanding', and the experience and progress of children who need our help and protection', 'the experience and progress of children in care and care leavers', and 'Overall effectiveness' were all rated 'Good'. Five areas of improvement had been identified from the Inspection, for which an action plan would be submitted to Ofsted in August.

Councillor Momenabadi also reported that during the Covid-19 pandemic we became more appreciative of the risks many social workers and other professionals, put themselves through to care for others. The Inspection report was testament to their dedication, hard work and commitment to children in the city. She placed on record her thanks to the Council's social workers for their incredible efforts and work which would give children in the city the best start in life.

Resolved:

That the 'Good' overall judgement from the recent Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services be celebrated and our continued excellent position in the West Midlands and the country be noted.

5 **Reserves, Provisions and Balances 2021-2022**

Councillor Obaida Ahmed presented the report on the Council's resources currently held as earmarked reserves, provisions and general balances as at 31 March 2022, taking account of the outturn position for 2021-2022. She reported that reserves play a vital role in the financial sustainability of the Council. They enable funds to be set aside to manage risks and uncertainties but also to make sure that the Council has the funding it needs to invest in its priorities, to enable transformation and to help the development of the Council's projects in the city. The next report on the agenda (Performance and Budget Outturn 2021-2022) shows that as a council we have continued to manage our finances well and by coming in within budget we have been able to protect these vital reserves. The reserves would be continually reviewed and the reserve strategy would be updated in future budget reports.

Resolved:

1. That the transfers (to)/from earmarked reserves, provisions and general balances as detailed in tables 2, 3 and 4 of the report be approved.
2. That expenditure from provisions for their purposes as set out in Appendix 3 and 4 to the report, up to the value held in each provision as at 31 March 2022 be approved.
3. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Resources and Digital City, in consultation with the Director of Finance, to allocate funds from all reserves which fall within the Corporate remit as detailed in Appendix 1 and 2 to the report.

4. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Resources and Digital City and the relevant Cabinet Member, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the relevant Director/Deputy Director to allocate funds from all other reserves as detailed in Appendix 1 and 2 to the report.
5. That the level of the Council's earmarked reserves, provisions and general balances as at 31 March 2022 and the purposes for which they are being held, as detailed in Appendix 1, 2, 3 and 4 to the report be noted.
6. That it be noted that the reserve strategy is currently being reviewed in light of Our City Our Plan priorities and the budget challenge facing the Council over the medium term, and an updated Reserves Strategy would be reported back to Cabinet at a future meeting.
7. That it be noted that the relevance and adequacy of earmarked reserves and general balances would be reviewed as required by the Constitution during the 2023-2024 budget setting process.
8. That it be noted that allocation of funding from all earmarked reserves would be reported to Cabinet (Resources) Panel in the scheduled quarterly performance and budget monitoring reports.
9. That it be noted that the Resources and Equality Scrutiny Panel would scrutinise the use of reserves as part of the budget setting process as in previous years.
10. That it be noted that the Director of Finance considers that the overall level of all reserves, provisions and balances is sufficient to meet the likely level of obligations to be met from reserves, provisions and general balances in the short term.
11. That it be noted that whilst the positive General Fund outturn position during 2021-2022, and the resulting adjustments to reserves, would help to support the Council's short term financial position, it does not address the challenging financial position that the Council finds itself in over the medium term; namely identifying further projected budget reductions which were estimated at £12.6 million in 2023-2024, rising to £25.8 million over the medium term to 2025-2026 when reported to Full Council in March 2022.
12. That it be noted that the figures quoted in the report are still subject to statutory audit by Grant Thornton as part of the 2021-2022 accounts closedown process.

6 **Performance and Budget Outturn 2021-2022**

Councillor Obaida Ahmed presented the report on the Council's outturn position for 2021-2022 compared with approved budgets and targets and a performance update against the Relighting Our City priorities. She reported that the Council had strengthened the links between performance and budget to ensure that it was robustly monitoring delivery of the Council's priorities, underpinned by its resources. The update on the Relight Our Council performance indicators for quarter four of 2021-2022 would be the last publication of these indicators before the new Council Plan performance framework commenced in quarter one of 2022-2023. The report

also showed many areas of strong performance, and the Council's response to challenges it had faced during 2021-2022.

Resolved:

1. That the write-off of two Council Tax debts totalling £13,450.90 as detailed in Appendix 7 to the report be approved.
2. That the write-off of nine Sundry Debts totalling £111,259.34 as detailed in Appendix 6 to the report be approved.
3. That it be noted that the Council has once again managed its money well and delivered within budget - despite hugely challenging circumstances. Overall, the revenue position for 2021-2022 is an underspend of £2.2 million, after meeting the net costs of redundancy and pension strain and contributions to essential earmarked reserves.
4. That it be noted that the Housing Revenue Account revenue outturn position for the year was a surplus before allocations of £13.1 million, compared to a budgeted surplus of £13.1 million.
5. That it be noted that the capital programme has an outturn position of £82.5 million for the General Fund and £55.9 million for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). A summary of the outturn is detailed in section 10 of the report. A full detailed report on the Capital Outturn 2021-2022 including Quarter One Capital Monitoring 2022-2023 would be reported to Cabinet in July 2022.
6. That it be noted that 605 council tax accounts totalling £344,368.87, as detailed in paragraph 11.2 and Appendix 5 to the report, have been approved for write-off by the Director of Finance in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.
7. That it be noted that 19 Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) debts totalling £164,898.52, as detailed in paragraph 11.2 and Appendix 5 to the report, have been approved for write-off by the Director of Finance in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.
8. That it be noted that 15 housing benefit overpayments totalling £10,085.40 as detailed in paragraph 11.2 and Appendix 5 to the report, have been approved for write-off by the Director of Finance in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.
9. That it be noted that 212 sundry debt accounts totalling £133,325.24, as detailed in paragraph 11.2 and Appendix 5 to the report, have been approved for write-off by the Director of Finance in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.
10. That the performance against the key indicators as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be noted.

7 **Our Commitment to All Age Carers**

Councillor Linda Leach presented for approval and endorsement the Council's ambitions and commitment to carers of all ages living in Wolverhampton. The Commitment described the Council's priorities for carers and the cross cutting values that would underpin all the work undertaken to implement it. She reported that carers are the bedrock of our social care system. Their importance had always been understood but the global Covid-19 pandemic highlighted how crucial carers are. Carers and our attitude towards them should be front and centre of our thinking when building future social care. The Commitment would be regularly reviewed and it was recommended that the Health and Wellbeing Board oversee its implementation.

Resolved:

1. That the Our Commitment to All Age Carers be approved and endorsed.
2. That the Health and Wellbeing Board consider Our Commitment to All Age Carers and oversee the implementation of the plan.
3. That it be noted that the priorities set out in Our Commitment to All Age Carers have been developed through engagement and conversations with carers and professionals in the city.