

Attendance

Members of the Cabinet

Cllr Stephen Simkins (Chair)
Cllr Obaida Ahmed
Cllr Chris Burden
Cllr Craig Collingswood
Cllr Jacqui Coogan
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal
Cllr Louise Miles

Employees

Tim Johnson	Chief Executive
Mark Taylor	Deputy Chief Executive
John Denley	Director of Public Health
Alison Hinds	Director of Children's Services
Charlotte Johns	Director of Strategy
Richard Lawrence	Director of Regeneration
Claire Nye	Director of Finance
David Pattison	Chief Operating Officer
John Roseblade	Director of Resident Services
Becky Wilkinson	Director of Adult Social Care
Jaswinder Kaur	Democratic Services and Systems 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 Steve Evans (Vice-Chair) and Paula Brookfield.
- 2 Declaration of interests**
Councillor Louise Miles declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Councillor for East Park Ward in item 6 (Performance and Budget Monitoring 2023-2024) insofar as the report refers to 'A454 City East Gateway Phase 1 & 2 Property Acquisitions'.

3 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 October 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **Capital Programme 2023-2024 to 2027-2028 Quarter Two Review**

Councillor Louise Miles presented the report on an update on the 2023-2024 financial performance of the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programmes as at quarter two, including a revised forecast for 2023-2024 to 2027-2028. The report also set out revisions to the current approved capital programmes covering the period 2023-2024 to 2027-2028 for recommendation to Full Council. Councillor Miles informed Cabinet that the report and its appendices provide a summary of the Council's ongoing capital projects and reflect its aspirational plans for the city despite the financial challenges the Council faced. The report also detailed the key projects that had led to an increase of £9 million to the General Fund capital programme, which also include the electrification of the Council's fleet of vehicles in line with its green agenda, and £500,000 for the maintenance of classified roads. A decrease of £5 million from the previously agreed HRA capital programme was mainly due to the unavailability of external funding for remedial work to non-traditional properties, the external funding for such repair work was not available at this time. The report also sought approval to virements from the General Fund and HRA capital programmes.

Resolved:

That Cabinet recommend that Council approves:

1. The revised, medium term General Fund capital programme of £358.8 million, an increase of £9.0 million from the previously approved programme, and the change in associated resources.
2. The revised, medium term Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programme of £523.5 million, a net decrease of £5.0 million from the previously approved programme, and the change in associated resources.

That Cabinet approves:

1. The virements for the General Fund capital programme detailed at Appendix 4 to the report for:
 - i. existing projects totalling £5.4 million;
 - ii. new projects totalling £1.3 million.
2. The virements for the HRA capital programme detailed at Appendix 4 to the report for:
 - i. existing projects totalling £8.9 million.

5 **Treasury Management Activity Monitoring - Mid Year Review 2023-2024**

Councillor Louise Miles presented the Treasury Management report for recommendation to Full Council for approval. The report set out the results of treasury management activities for both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) carried out in the second quarter of 2023-2024, together with performance against the Prudential Indicators previously approved by Council in March 2023. She informed Cabinet that the Council had operated in accordance with Treasury Management rules and regulations and particularly the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) code of practise. It was noted that a revenue underspend of £793,000 for the General Fund was forecast from treasury

management activities in 2023-2024. This was mainly due to no borrowing being undertaken so far in 2023-2024 and better interest rates achieved on the investments of surplus cash balances than budgeted. A forecast underspend of £1.5 million for the HRA from treasury management activities in 2023-2024 was again similarly due to no borrowing and a decrease in interest rates payable.

Resolved:

That Council be recommended to note:

1. That a mid-year review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement has been undertaken and the Council has operated within the limits and requirements approved in March 2023.
2. That revenue underspends of £793,000 for the General Fund and £1.5 million for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) are forecast from treasury management activities in 2023-2024.

6

Performance and Budget Monitoring 2023-2024

Councillor Louise Miles presented salient points from the report on the finance and performance update against the Council's Our City: Our Plan priorities for 2023-2024. She highlighted the General Fund projected outturn for 2023-2024 and that work was ongoing in order to identify ways to reduce a forecast overspend and bring the outturn back within budget. She reported that these are very difficult financial times for councils and had been since 2010. The lack of government funding and the lack of a medium term funding strategy for councils had led to some facing bankruptcy and placed many more on the brink of bankruptcy. City of Wolverhampton Council had managed its declining resources well over the years and continued to do so prudently. However, like other councils nationally, it faced rising financial pressures to do with inflation, social care costs, accommodation costs and also home to school transport. The Council would manage the forecast General Fund overspend and would continue to prudently look at its finances. Regarding the recommendations in the report on the write off of debts against the expected credit loss provision, Councillor Miles emphasised that the write offs are always in accordance with strict rules and criteria and usually because it had become impossible to trace the debtor concerned and the money was not recoverable.

Resolved:

That Cabinet note:

1. That the General Fund projected outturn for 2023-2024 is currently forecast to be an overspend of £1.0 million due to the forecast pressures outlined in this report. Work is ongoing in order to identify ways to reduce this pressure and bring the outturn back within budget.
2. That early indications are that the outturn for 2023-2024 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) would be within budget.
3. That the Director of Finance has approved write-off of debts against the expected credit loss provision as detailed in Appendix 5 to the report.

That Cabinet:

1. Approve to increase the management fee payable to Wolverhampton Homes of £1.5 million from the Housing revenue Account (HRA) for 2023-2024 to support inflationary and demand pressures associated with repairs and maintenance.
2. Approve a programme of £250,000 for remedial works to canopies at Bushbury Hill Estate to be delivered by Wolverhampton Homes and funded by the HRA.
3. Approve that authority be delegated to the Director of Finance to approve any necessary virements required to support the 2023-2024 pay award.
4. Approve the Strategic Risk Register which is shown at Appendix 6 to the report.
5. Approve the use of £600,000 from the Transformation Reserve as detailed in paragraph 8.5 of the report and establishment of associated supplementary budgets.
6. Approve the use of £321,900 from the Regeneration Reserve as detailed in paragraph 8.6 and establishment of associated supplementary budgets.
7. Approve 38 virements totalling £6.5 million on the General Fund, for transfers within directorates, as detailed in Appendix 8 to the report.
8. Approve the write-off of debts against the expected credit loss provision as detailed in Appendix 5 to the report.
9. Approve the General Fund Budget Risks 2023-2024 register as detailed in Appendix 7 to the report.
10. Approve virements totalling £11.4 million, on the General Fund as detailed in Appendix 8 to the report.
11. Approve virements totalling £1.8 million, on the Housing Revenue account as detailed in Appendix 8 to the report.
12. Approve the establishment of supplementary budgets within 2023-2024 as detailed in Section 7 of the report.

7

Principal Social Worker Annual Report 2022-2023

Councillors Jasbir Jaspal and Chris Burden jointly presented the Principal Social Worker (PSW) Annual Report 2022-2023. The report highlighted progress the PSW and her team had made against key priorities for promoting and improving the quality of social work practice in Children's and Adult Services over the last 12 months and set several priorities for the year ahead. Areas of progress and achievements Councillors Jaspal and Burden touched on included: the number of social work files rated good or outstanding; the continued commitment to social work learning and development, with a variety of training and progression opportunities offered; social worker recognition of this commitment to their development which is reflected in more social workers this year telling the Council that they are really happy with the opportunities available to them and they want to continue working for City of Wolverhampton Council; work in partnership with Think Local Act Personal (TILAP),

a national partnership committed to transforming health and care through personalization and the voice of people with lived experience; work on equalities and diversity initiatives; and the support for inspection and Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance activity.

Resolved:

1. That the work of the Principal Social Worker (PSW) and the continued impact it has on social work practice across Children's and Adult's Services be endorsed.
2. That the main priorities for the Principal Social Worker identified for 2023-2024 be approved.
3. That the work carried out in respect of quality assurance activity, the commitment to supporting the continual professional development of social workers and the actions taken to support the recruitment and retention of social workers which is helping the Council meet demand and supply needs now and for the future be noted.