

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held on Tuesday, 4 April 2023 in Council Chamber - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 10.30 am
Concluded 11.10 am

Members of the Executive – Councillors

LABOUR
Hinchcliffe (Chair)
I Khan
Ross-Shaw
Ferriby
Jabar
Duffy

Observers: Councillor Pollard (Minute 228), Councillor Sullivan and Harden Village
Councillor Kirkham (Minute 230)

224. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under discussion were made.

225. MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 February and 7 March be signed as a correct record.

226. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

227. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE

There were no recommendations to the Executive.

(Councillor Hinchcliffe)

228. QUARTER 4 FINANCE POSITION STATEMENT 2022/23

The Director of Finance submitted a report (**Document “BJ”**) that provided Members with an update on the forecasted year-end financial position of the Council for 2022-23. The report outlined the revenue and capital budgets and the year-end financial position based on information at the end of February 2023. The Council’s current balances and reserves and school balances were also set out.

The Head of Finance summarised the report and signposted Members through key aspects of the report, it was highlighted that inflation and increased energy costs had impacted all departments. Members were informed that any year end overspend would have to be bridged by using reserves, but reserve levels had reduced by an unsustainable rate as outlined in Section 2.9 of Document “BJ”.

A Member of the main opposition group sought further clarification in relation to the following:

- how much of the grant funding reserve of just over £14m was actually able to be used freely?
- was it correct to say that the revised general fund reserve was useable, but it would have to be restored in the budget setting?
- the budget update document brought to the Executive on 31 January stated that some of the residual reserves were already allocated to committed spend, how much of this was committed?

He also commented that the Strategic Risk Register routinely attached to quarterly monitoring reports needed to be reviewed and that the chances of the Council’s reserves being adequate for the 24/25 budget setting seemed slim.

The Leader responded that it was difficult for the Council to predict the future when the government remain inconsistent with funding allocations.

The Head of Finance explained that in relation to Grant Reserves, grants typically had conditions attached so the money had to be spent in a particular way so that money was mainly committed. In terms of the General Fund Reserve that was 5% of the Council’s net budget and it was recommended practice to keep that fund for unforeseen events. If the General Reserve was to be utilised it would have to be built up in the budget the following year. The Head of Finance advised that a reserves review was underway and that would identify the best mechanisms for bridging any year-end variants.

The Leader added that Bradford Council was not isolated in using reserves in the year 22/23 as the Government had expected Councils across the country to use their reserves, however what was needed was for Government to adequately fund Councils.

The Children and Families Portfolio Holder stated that the development and recruitment strategy was beginning to bear fruit as shown in the report and this would benefit the Bradford Children and Families Trust in the future. She added that she was pleased that the government had decided to put £10.8m into Children's Services in Bradford.

The Regeneration, Planning and Transport Portfolio Holder spoke positively about the Moorlands Restoration Programme and highlighted the role it had played in relation to the environment and climate change. He praised the work being completed in relation to natural flood management and the creation of new peatland that would act as a Carbon sink and help manage the environment. It was noted that the funding highlighted in the report would help expand the work on Ilkley Moor as well as other moors across the district such as Harden Moor.

Resolved -

- (1) That the contents of Document "BJ" and the actions taken to manage the issues highlighted be noted.**
- (2) That the change to the funding of the City Centre Regeneration, Parks Development Fund, Leeds City Region RIF, Schools 20 mph capital schemes from revenue / reserve contributions to corporate borrowing be approved.**
- (3) That the following capital expenditure scheme as outlined in section 12.4 of Document "BJ" be approved:**
 - £0.4m for moorland restoration work to mitigate flooding. This scheme is already included in Reserve Schemes and will be funded by £0.2m corporate borrowing and £0.2m third party contributions and grants.**
- (4) That the increase in court costs charges as outlined in section 13.4 of Document "BJ" be approved.**
- (5) That the long standing commitment to the modified Housing Benefit scheme as outlined in section 13.5 of Document "BJ" be reaffirmed.**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Corporate

Action: Finance Director

(Councillor Ferriby)

229. HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND AND THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

The Strategic Director, Health and Wellbeing submitted a report **Document “BK”** which sought endorsement for the Council’s approach to the cost-of-living crisis including use of the latest round of the Household Support Fund government grant for 2023/24, which would provide £11.39m to the Bradford District in 2023/24. Officers also explained how the West Yorkshire Mayor Cost of Living Fund would be utilised.

It was noted that the cost-of-living crisis had been driven by high inflation and that it had impacted on the cost of food, fuel and energy which had a detrimental effect on those at risk or experiencing poverty. The Council adopted an anti-poverty strategy in October 2022 and had developed strong partnerships focussed on supporting those households most at risk. Bradford’s allocation of the Household Support Grant Fund was £11.39m in 2023/24. Officers explained that the proposals set out in the report consisted of a new scheme to support Bradford’s foster carers with fuel costs, continued support for the voluntary community sector such as food banks, and a direct winter food and fuel payment to those households on the lowest incomes in the district. Funding would also support carers and care leavers. The report also proposed that the five area committees should distribute the funding provided by the West Yorkshire Mayor to support local needs via the voluntary community and faith sector.

The Leader thanked the West Yorkshire Mayor for her contribution to the work taking place throughout the Bradford district on tackling the cost of living crisis.

The Deputy Leader spoke about the work taking place in Bradford and that the funding was spent on a range of options which included warm spaces, direct payments and food parcels provided to people who were most in need. He expressed frustration surrounding the ongoing uncertainty of renewed government funding and the challenges this presented.

The Children and Families Portfolio Holder spoke about the impact that the Household Support Fund would have on children throughout the Bradford district. She highlighted the provision that would be delivered for foster carers and emphasised the significant support it would provide.

Resolved -

- (1) That the expenditure plans for the Household Support Fund 2023/24, in line with national grant conditions be agreed.**
- (2) That the expenditure plan for the West Yorkshire Mayor’s Cost of Living Emergency Fund within Bradford District be agreed.**

(3) That the council’s approach to anti-poverty and the cost of living crisis for residents be noted.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Corporate

Action: Strategic Director, Health and Wellbeing

**REGENERATION, PLANNING & TRANSPORT
PORTFOLIO**

(Councillor Ross-Shaw)

230. HARDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021 - 2030

The Strategic Director, Place submitted a report **Document “BL”** which reported on the Harden Neighbourhood Development Plan that had been prepared by the Harden Village Council. The Plan was the subject of an independent examination by Andrew Freeman of Intelligent Plans and Examinations (IPE) Ltd and his report confirmed that the Plan, subject to the incorporation of a number of modifications, met the Basic Conditions outlined in legislation. He recommended that the Plan should proceed to local referendum. The report recommended that the Executive agrees to all of the proposed modifications and that the modified plan should proceed to referendum.

The Regeneration, Planning and Transport Portfolio Holder in welcoming the Development Plan, noted the work and dedication of the Local Parish Council.

A Member of the main opposition Group emphasised the hard work and commitment of the Harden Village Council and introduced the Harden Village Councillor who reported on the process and work with local residents that had taken place and thanked the numerous advisers who had supported the work.

The Leader acknowledged the dedication and the work that had been completed and expressed thanks to all those involved in the production of the Plan.

The Regeneration, Planning and Transport Portfolio Holder added that the developments were beneficial to the district and having control through the local parish councils would be useful for local communities. He noted that in the business and employment section of the proposal it showed an emphasis on shared spaces, co-working and working from home and this reflected the localised economies throughout the Bradford district.

Resolved -

- (1) That the submitted Harden Neighbourhood Development Plan, Harden Design Code and accompanying Policies Map (Appendices 1a, 1b and 1c) be subject to the modifications (Proposed Modifications PM1 to PM12) as set out in the Examiner’s Report (Appendix 2), together with any relevant factual changes to ensure the amended Plan is correct.**
- (2) That the modified and amended Harden Neighbourhood Development Plan be subject to a local referendum in the designation neighbourhood area (the Harden Village Council area).**
- (3) That should the Plan be successful at the local referendum, the Plan should be formally made via delegated decision by the Assistant Director (Planning, Transportation and Highways) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder (Regeneration, Planning and Transport) in line with the agreed governance arrangements and within the timescales required by legislation.**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Regeneration and Economy

Action: Strategic Director, Place

231. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Resolved –

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Document “BM” the item relating to Amendments of Existing Guarantee for WYPF Admission Body on the grounds that it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if they were present, exempt information within Paragraph 3 and 5 (Finance or Business Affairs and Legal Privilege) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), would be disclosed and it is considered that, in all the circumstances, the public interest in excluding public access to the relevant part of the proceedings outweighs the interest in publication of the report.

It is in the public interest in maintaining these exemptions because it is in the overriding interest of proper administration that Members are made fully aware of the financial implications of any decision.

232. AMENDMENTS OF EXISTING GUARANTEE FOR WYPF ADMISSION BODY

The Director of Finance submitted **Not for Publication Document “BM”** which sets out the options for the amendment of an existing guarantee provided by the Council in respect of a West Yorkshire Pension Fund admission body.

Resolved –

That the recommendations contained in Not for Publication Document “BM” be agreed.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Corporate

Action: Finance Director

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Executive

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER