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CABINET

22/01/2024 at 5.30 pm



Oldham
Council

Present: Councillor Shah (in the Chair)
Councillors Ali, Brownridge, Dean, Goodwin, F Hussain, Jabbar,
Mushtaq and Taylor

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence received.

2 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mushtaq declared Other Registerable interests in agenda items 11 and 17 (Targeted Youth Support Commissioning and Delivery Intentions including UKSPF from April 2024) and in agenda items 12 and 18 (Youth Justice Service Extension to contract from 1 April 2024), by virtue of the fact that he was a Director of Positive Steps, Oldham. Councillor Mushtaq left the room during the consideration of these agenda items.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions for this meeting of the Cabinet to consider.

5 **MINUTES**

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held 11th December 2023 be approved as a correct record.

6 **LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE - FEEDBACK AND NEXT STEPS**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which updated members on the outcome and findings of the recent Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) and to agree the Council's action plan in response to the recommendations.

In early-November 2023 the Local Government Association (LGA) undertook a Corporate Peer Challenge in Oldham. The purpose of this was for the experienced and knowledgeable peer team to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement at Oldham Council.

The review looked at five key areas: 'our priorities and outcomes', 'organisational and place leadership', 'governance and culture', 'financial planning and management' and 'capacity for improvement'.

The most recent review had been broadly positive recognising a range of improvements made since the last LGA Peer Challenge in 2020, including the transformation of the town centre; clear corporate priorities, performance management and grip on the organisation; and that staff are passionate about getting the best

for Oldham. The review also suggested nine key recommendations which will support the organisation to meet its key priorities.

Options/alternatives considered:

Option 1: to note the recommendations and content of the Corporate Peer Challenge report, agree to the actions laid out in the action plan and note the timescales for completing those actions. This course of action would allow the council to improve in line with the recommendations.

Option 2: Do not agree with the actions set out in the action plan. This course of action would mean business as usual and disregarding the recommendations set out by the Corporate Peer Challenge.

Resolved:

1. That the Cabinet notes the LGA's Corporate Peer Challenge report, summarising their findings and recommendations
2. That the Cabinet agrees the Council's response and action plan, as detailed in the submitted report.
3. That the Cabinet agrees to refer the Corporate Peer Challenge report to Full Council for consideration.

7

COUNCIL TAX BASE AND NON-DOMESTIC RATES TAX BASE FORECAST 2024/25

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Finance which presented the Council Tax Base and provisional Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) Tax Base forecast for 2024/25 which would underpin the forthcoming Council Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy scheduled for consideration at the Budget Council on 28th February 2024.

The report also Sought delegated authority to finalise the 2024/25 Non-Domestic Rates (Business Rates) forecast to reflect up to date Non-Domestic Rates details to be submitted to Central Government via the annual NNDR 1 return by the statutory deadline of 31st January 2024.

The submitted report set out information on the Council Tax Base for 2024/25 using the most up to date valuation list and all other information and estimates available.

The total number of chargeable properties included in the Council Tax Base calculation in Oldham for 2024/25 was 98,628. This figure was reduced to 87,971.8 after allowing for discounts and exemptions and translated to the equivalent of 69,938.4 Band D properties. After applying adjustments for the Local Council Tax Support scheme offset by the additional charging for empty properties and an anticipated increase in the number of properties to be included in the valuation list over the forthcoming year, the number of Band D equivalent properties reduces to 61,374.7. The final Tax Base after the application of the anticipated collection rate of 96.75% was 59,830 which

represented an increase of 880 when compared to the Council Tax Base for 2023/24 of 58,500.

The 2024/25 Tax Bases for Saddleworth and Shaw and Crompton Parish Councils of 9,150 and 5,724 respectively, had been calculated using the same methodology.

Statute requires local Billing Authorities to prepare and submit to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) a locally determined and approved Business Rates forecast through the NNDR 1 return by 31st January each year. This forecast will be used to determine the 2024/25 “demand” and payment schedule for Business Rates between Oldham Council and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). The Council remained a participant in the Greater Manchester 100% Rates Retention Pilot Scheme, which meant that the Council no longer paid a share of Business Rates to Central Government. Instead, Oldham currently retains 99% of the income with 1% being paid to the GMCA for Fire and Rescue services.

The estimated rating income for 2024/25 attributable to Oldham Council using the latest information is currently £51.644m. Delegation was being sought to enable the Business Rates income forecast to be updated to take account of up-to-date Non-Domestic Rates information, enabling the submission to Central Government of the annual NNDR 1 return by the statutory deadline of 31 January 2024.

As the 100% Business Rates retention regime is continuing, the Council had assumed a benefit of £4.083m from the pilot scheme for 2024/25. The current arrangement was that the Council could retain 75% of this benefit with the balance attributable to GMCA. The Council’s share, £3.062m was to be made available to support the 2024/25 budget whilst the GMCA share would be transferred to a reserve to be paid to the GMCA once the final position has been agreed. These figures will only be confirmed by the end of 2024/25.

It was emphasised that the preparation of Council Tax and Business Rates Tax Bases was being undertaken in a period of unprecedented uncertainty and volatility. The current economic climate included uncertain prospects for economic growth, Government changes in policy in year, the revaluation of Business Rates from 1st April 2023 and the decoupling of business rates multipliers were amongst the issues which make forecasting challenging.

The Collection Fund (combined) had moved into a projected surplus position in 2023/24 providing the opportunity to use the surplus to support the 2024/25. This was the result of the continued recovery following the lifting of COVID-19 related restrictions and consequent improved collection rates. It also reflected the level of Government support provided via Business Rate reliefs which had reduced any losses in collection.



Options/alternatives considered:

Option 1 - The Council had little discretion in the calculation of the number of properties incorporated into the Council Tax Base given the legislative framework that is in place. However, there is some discretion in estimating the number of new properties that will be included on the Council Tax register during 2024/25 and the change to the number of claimants of Council Tax Reduction. A prudent view has been taken in this regard. The main area for an alternative approach is over the level of assumed collection rate. An increase in the collection rate would boost the anticipated Council Tax income and a decrease in the rate would decrease income. The Council has chosen to maintain its 2024/25 collection rate at 96.75%. This decision had been influenced by prevailing economic circumstances and current trends in collection rates.

Option 2 - The NNDR1 return generated the figures upon which the Business Rates Tax Base is prepared. It was not therefore appropriate to consider an alternative approach. However, as the figures included on the NNDR1 return on 31st January 2024 may vary from the estimated level, delegation was sought to allow the opportunity to revise the Business Rates forecast and approve a revised and more accurate position for budget setting.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet approves
 - a. That the Council Tax Base for 2024/25 at 59,380 Band D equivalent properties.
 - b. That the latest estimate for 2024/25 Business Rates revenue that is attributable to Oldham Council as being £51.644m.
 - c. That the drawing down from the Collection Fund of £4.083m of Business Rates retention gains anticipated for 2024/25, of which the Council will utilise £3.062m (75%)
2. Cabinet notes the Tax Bases for Saddleworth and Shaw and Crompton Parish Councils of 9,150 and 5,724 respectively.
3. Cabinet delegates the decision to vary the final Business Rates forecast and hence the Business Rates Tax Base, if required, to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Resources in consultation with the Director of Finance.

8

DIGITAL SWITCHOVER'S IMPACT ON THE HELPLINE & RESPONSE SERVICE

The Cabinet considered a report of the Managing Director of Miocare Group, which explained that funding would be required to help to mitigate the risk of Helpline and Response customers becoming disconnected from the service as a result of the national digital switchover programme.

The submitted report provided details on the Helpline and Response service incompatibility issues which may occur as a result of the national digital switchover programme.

The UK's digital network delivery providers (BT, Virgin, Talk Talk etc) were introducing a fully fibre UK-wide digital network by the end of 2025. Every business and home would have their connections upgraded. Current alarm units were not digitally enabled. To fully replace these with digital units will incur a significant IT capital cost but would future-proof customers for years to come.

Options/alternatives considered
Options to be considered at Item 14 of the agenda.

Resolved:
That the Cabinet would consider the commercially sensitive information at item 14 of the agenda before making a decision.

9

REPORT REQUESTING CONTRACT EXTENSION FOR CARE AT HOME AND EXTRA CARE FLEXIBLE PURCHASING SYSTEM AND SEEKING AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO PROCUREMENT EXERCISES IN RELATION TO SPECIFIC ACTIVITY RELATED TO THE CARE AT HOME SERVICE

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Adult Social Care, which advised that the contracts awarded under the Care at Home and Extra Care Flexible Purchasing System were due to expire on 31st March 2024. The report was seeking authority to extend the term of these contracts for up to a further two years as these were statutory services. The report was also seeking authority to enter into procurement exercises via mini competitions running alongside these contracts, to appoint providers to deliver Care at Home services in two clusters of the borough and to deliver Hospital to Home services.

Care At Home (CAH) services were provided to over 1,000 adults in the borough and amounted to approximately 15,000 hours of care being delivered each week. The annual spend on these services was in the region of £17.5m. In addition, the Extra Care Housing (ECH) supported 147 people per week at a cost of £2.9m annually.

The CAH services were provided by 10 preferred cluster providers who operate across each of the five clusters of the borough. In addition, three back up providers had also been appointed to provide additional support where the 10 preferred cluster providers did not have sufficient capacity to meet need and one provider delivers the Extra Care service. CAH services support established Oldham, Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership and national priorities of a home first approach, by supporting people to live well at home, as independently as possible, focusing on the strengths and assets available to them to support them to remain at home and avoid hospital admissions and more intensive services such as a care home stay.

Options/alternatives considered
Options to be considered at Item 15 of the agenda.



Resolved:

That the Cabinet would consider the commercially sensitive information at item 15 of the agenda before making a decision.

10

AWARDING OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH CONTRACT FOLLOWING RE-TENDER EXERCISE

The Cabinet considered report of the Assistant Chief Executive which was seeking approval for the Council's re-contracting of Occupational Health and associated services from 1 April 2024 for four years, as part of a Greater Manchester (GM), Human Resources collaboration (a group of Northwest Local Authorities working together on key workforce programmes and contracts).

The Council currently used Occupational Health and Physiotherapy services to support employees, to meet its statutory obligations and to help to reduce sickness absence. These services were presently delivered, through contract, by a procured Occupational Health provider.

The current contract commenced on 1st April 2020 and the current arrangement is due to terminate on 31st March 2024. The confidential report, at item 16 on the agenda sets out how the Greater Manchester collaboration were retendering the contract and selecting a preferred supplier.

Options/alternatives considered

Options to be considered at Item 16 of the agenda.

Resolved:

That the Cabinet would consider the commercially sensitive information at item 16 of the agenda before making a decision.

11

TARGETED YOUTH SUPPORT COMMISSIONING AND DELIVERY INTENTIONS INCLUDING UKSPF FROM APRIL 2024

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Education, Skills and Early Years, which informed members that the current Targeted Youth Support Contract was due to end on 31st March 2024. The contract was currently held by Positive Steps. Approval was being sought to extend the current contract for a period of 12 months from 1st April 2024 up until 31st March 2025. Statutory services within scope would include:

- Targeted Impartial Information Advice and Guidance (TIIAG)
- Young Carers (YC)
- Return Home from Missing Interviews (RHFMI)

In addition, the extension would include the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) contract up until 31st March 2025 currently also delivered by the same provider and funded externally to the council.

Options/alternatives considered

Options to be considered at Item 17 of the agenda.

Resolved:

That the Cabinet would consider the commercially sensitive information at item 17 of the agenda before making a decision.

12

YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE EXTENSION TO CONTRACT FROM 1 APRIL 2024

The Cabinet received a report of the Director of Education, Skills and Early Years which advised members that the current Youth Justice Service (YJS) Contract expired on 31st March 2024. The contract was currently held by Positive Steps. The report sought approval to extend the existing arrangements for a period of 12 months from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025. This course of action would enable Oldham Council and its partners to continue to fulfil their statutory duties and meet the requirements of the Youth Justice Board (YJB).

The Cabinet was advised that at its last inspection, the service had been rated Good by Ofsted.

The service was regarded as being high performing and was a statutory duty. The contract extension being sought would provide a period of stability for service delivery. If approval were to be given to the extension, this would avoid possible gaps in statutory service delivery affecting some of the Borough's most vulnerable and at-risk young people.

Options/alternatives considered:
Options to be considered at Item 18 of the agenda.

Resolved:
That the Cabinet would consider the commercially sensitive information at item 18 of the agenda before making a decision.

13

EXCLUSION OF THE 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 five items of business on the grounds that they contain exempt information under paragraph 3 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and it would not, on balance, be in the public interest to disclose the reports.

14

DIGITAL SWITCHOVER'S IMPACT ON THE HELPLINE & RESPONSE SERVICE

Consideration was given to the commercially sensitive information in relation to Item 8 - Digital switchover's impact on the Helpline & Response Service.

Resolved:

1. That the Cabinet notes the potential impact and proposed solutions to the customers of the Helpline and Response service as a result of the digital switchover.
2. Cabinet approves the recommended option detailed within the report that IT capital funding be utilised for the replacement and installation of Helpline units that are compatible with the digital switchover, at a cost of circa £473K.

3. That the Cabinet approves the recommended option, detailed within the report, for the allocation of £50K to be used throughout 2024/25 to resource an additional installer and project support in the Helpline & Response team.

15

REPORT REQUESTING CONTRACT EXTENSION FOR CARE AT HOME AND EXTRA CARE FLEXIBLE PURCHASING SYSTEM AND SEEKING AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO PROCUREMENT EXERCISES IN RELATION TO SPECIFIC ACTIVITY RELATED TO THE CARE AT HOME SERVICE

Consideration was given to the commercially sensitive information in relation to Item 9 – Report requesting contract extension for Care at Home and Extra Care Flexible Purchasing System and seeking authority to enter into procurement exercises in relation to specific activity related to the Care at Home service.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet agrees to extend the existing FPS for up to a further 2 years on an annual basis; the necessary contract extensions to be issued to providers prior to 31st March 2024.
2. Cabinet agrees to enter in to a mini-competition procurement exercise to enable new cluster providers to be appointed in the cluster areas of Central and North. (The newly appointed providers would then be able to deliver this work beyond 31st March 2024, by virtue of the extension recommended above).
3. Cabinet agrees to enter into a procurement exercise regarding the delivery of the Hospital to Home service in the future. (The newly appointed provider would then be able to deliver this work in the future, by virtue of the extension recommended above).

16

AWARDING OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH CONTRACT FOLLOWING RE-TENDER EXERCISE

Consideration was given to the commercially sensitive information in relation to Item 10: Awarding of Occupational Health contract following re-tender exercise.

Resolved:

That the Cabinet endorses the outcome of the procurement process, detailed in the submitted report and approves the Council's continued commission of Optima Health to provide Occupational Health and Physiotherapy Services over the next 4 years, effective from 1st April 2024.

17

TARGETED YOUTH SUPPORT COMMISSIONING AND DELIVERY INTENTIONS INCLUDING UKSPF

Consideration was given to the commercially sensitive information in relation to Item 11: Targeted Youth Support Commissioning and Delivery Intentions including UKSPF.

Resolved:

That the current contract arrangements with Positive Steps be extended for a 12-month period, from 1st April 2024 up until 31st March 2025, enabling any budgetary considerations to be taken into account and future delivery models to be explored.

18

YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE EXTENSION TO CONTRACT

Consideration was given to the commercially sensitive information in relation to Item 12: Youth Justice Service Extension to contract.

Resolved:

1. That the options and alternatives, that the Cabinet considered in the confidential appendices to the report, be noted.
2. That the current contract arrangements with Positive Steps, be extended for a period of 12 months, from 1st April 2024 up to 31st March 2025, within the funding envelope awarded by the Youth Justice Board.

The meeting started at 5.30pm and ended at 5.55pm

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