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CABINET

16/12/2024 at 6.00 pm



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

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Shah.

2 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

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 on 18th November 2024, be approved as a correct record.

6 **COUNCIL TAX BASE AND NON-DOMESTIC RATES TAX BASE FORECAST 2025/26**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Finance which presented Members details of the Council Tax Base and provisional Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) Tax Base forecast for 2025/26, which would underpin the forthcoming Council Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy, that is scheduled for consideration at the Budget Council meeting on 6th March 2025.

The report also sought delegated authority to finalise the 2025/26 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 2025.

The total number of chargeable properties included in the Council Tax Base calculation in Oldham for 2025/26 was 98,912. This figure was reduced to 88,245.2 after allowing for discounts and exemptions and translated to the equivalent of 70,180.8 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 reduced to 61,499.5. The final Tax Base after the application of the anticipated collection rate of 96.75% is 59,501 which was an increase of 121 when compared to the Council Tax Base for 2024/25 of 59,380.

An estimate of the 2025/26 Tax Bases for Saddleworth and Shaw and Crompton Parish Councils of 9,250 and 5,784 respectively, this would be confirmed once tax base information became available.



The Director of Finance's report highlighted 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 decoupling of business rates multipliers and changes to relief schemes are amongst the issues which make forecasting challenging.

The Collection Fund (combined) had moved into a projected deficit position in 2024/25 resulting in additional pressure on the 2025/26 budget. This was largely the result of slower than anticipated growth in the council tax base during 2024/25.

Options/Alternatives considered:

- a. The Council has little discretion in the calculation of the number of properties incorporated into the Council Tax Base given the legislative framework that is currently in place. However, there was some discretion in estimating the number of new properties that will be included on the Council Tax register during 2025/26 and the change to the number of claimants of Council Tax Reduction. A prudent view had been taken in this regard. The main area for an alternative approach was 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 2025/26 collection rate at 96.75%. This decision had been influenced by prevailing economic circumstances and current trends in collection rates.
- b. The NNDR1 return generated the figures upon which the Business Rates Tax Base is prepared. It is not therefore appropriate to consider an alternative approach. However, as the figures included on the NNDR1 return on 31 January 2025 may vary from the estimated level, delegation is sought to allow the opportunity to revise the Business Rates forecast and approve a revised and more accurate position for budget setting.

The preferred option is Option b.

Resolved:

1. That the Cabinet approves:
 - a. The Council Tax Base for 2025/26 at 59,501 Band D equivalent properties.
 - b. The latest estimate for 2025/26 Business Rates revenue that is attributable to Oldham Council as being £56.177m.
 - c. The drawing down from the Collection Fund of £4.607m of Business Rates retention gains

anticipated for 2025/26, of which the Council will utilise £3.455m (75%)

2. That the Cabinet notes the estimate for Saddleworth and Shaw and Crompton Parish Councils Tax Base of 9,250 and 5,784 respectively.
3. That the 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 Value for Money and Sustainability in consultation with the Director of Finance.



7

REVENUE MONITOR AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2024/25 (MONTH 8)

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Finance, which provided Members with an update, as at 30th November 2024 (Month 8), of the Council's 2024/25 forecast revenue budget position and an update on the Medium Term Financial position (as outlined at Annex 1 to the report), alongside the financial position of the capital programme together with the revised capital programme 2024/25 to 2028/29 (as outlined at Annex 2 to the report).

The forecast overspend position based on the Month 8 profiled budget was £13.594m which if not addressed would result in a year-end overspend of £20.390m (£19.912m at month 6).

This financial monitoring report followed on from the position reported at month 6 and is a warning of the potential year end position if no further action is taken to reduce net expenditure. The management actions already implemented for 2024/25 have been factored into the Month 8 forecasts. Work continued across the organisation to address this position and it was anticipated that by the year end, the current outturn deficit position should reduce even further.

As part of its budget setting process, the Council annually updates its Medium-Term Financial Plan.

It was proposed that the Council seeks external support through a strategic partner to help complete a sophisticated and detailed review that would underpin the comprehensive work needed to support sustainable service reductions and better outcomes over the medium to long term. It was also proposed that Delegated Authority be granted to the Deputy Chief Executive for Health and Care, in conjunction with the Director of Finance to progress the procurement to support this work.

The report outlines the most up to date capital spending position for 2024/25 to 2028/29 for approved schemes. The revised capital programme budget for 2024/25 is £99.553m at the close of month 8 (£99.505m at month 6), a net increase of £0.047m. Actual expenditure to 30 November 2024 was £46.557m (46.77% of the forecast outturn).

Options/Alternatives considered:

The options that the Cabinet considered were:

- a. To consider the forecast revenue and capital positions presented in the report, including proposed changes and an update on the Medium-Term Financial Plan for the period 2025/26 to 2029/30.
 - b. To propose alternative forecasts.
- The preferred Option was Option a.

Resolved:

1. That the Cabinet notes the report.
2. That the Cabinet approves forecast profiled budget, being an adverse position of £13.594m, at Month 8 (30th November 2024) and the forecast potential adverse position by year end of £20.390m, with mitigations in place to reduce expenditure, as detailed at Annex 1 to the report.
3. That the Cabinet notes the Medium-Term Financial Plan update for the period 2025/26 to 2029/30 included within Section 7, of Annex 1 to the report.
4. That the Cabinet approves the delegation of authority to the Deputy Chief Executive for Health and Care, in conjunction with the Director of Finance, to progress the procurement of an external strategic partner to support the work around transformation across three key areas.
5. that the Cabinet approves the revised capital programme for 2024/25 including the proposed virements and the forecast for the financial years to 2028/29 as at Month 8 as outlined in Annex 2, to the report.

8

OLDHAM'S STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT 2024

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Economy which sought approval for the publication of Oldham Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) 2024.

The SHLAA was a technical document identifying land that might have potential for housing at some future stage. The requirement to undertake a SHLAA was set out in paragraph 68 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The SHLAA formed a key component of the evidence base underpinning housing policies and land allocations and will help to meet the area's housing needs.

The SHLAA assessed the development potential of land that could be capable of delivering homes through an assessment of suitability, availability and achievability (economic viability). It then indicates when it may come forward for development.

The base date of the submitted SHLAA was 1st April 2024. It provides an update to previous SHLAA (1st April 2023) published in January 2024. The SHLAA 2024 identifies a total housing land supply of 13,475 homes (including allowances) over the short to long term.

More detail on the method used to carry out the assessment, along with the findings of the SHLAA were detailed in the submitted report and the appendices.

Options/Alternatives considered:

Option 1 - To approve and publish the SHLAA 2024 to provide evidence for the housing land supply position, Brownfield Register and Local Plan Review.

Option 2 – To not approve and publish the SHLAA 2024

The preferred Option was Option 1 - a fully assessed SHLAA provided the evidence base for identifying sites to be included in the housing land supply and for other requirements such as the Brownfield Land Register. It means the council has a full understanding of the borough's currently available land supply which helps to inform decisions on allocating land in the future and can be used by the development industry to identify land with potential for housing development within the borough. Not publishing the SHLAA (option 2) would leave the council with an outdated published housing land supply position and does not effectively promote the potential supply of housing land within the borough to interested parties for development.

Resolved:

That the Cabinet approves the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) 2024 for publication.

9

OLDHAM'S INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING STATEMENT 2023/24

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Economy, which sought approval for the publication of Oldham's Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023 - 2024.

As required under the 2019 revised Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations, the council had prepared an Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS). The IFS provided a summary of financial contributions that the council has secured through section 106 (s106) agreements from new developments for off-site infrastructure works and affordable housing, in addition to highway works completed as part of new developments through section 278 (s278) agreements. The IFS was attached at Appendix One, to the report.

Options/Alternatives considered:

Option 1 - to approve the Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) 2023 - 2024 for publication on the council's website and send it to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). (Advantages – approving the IFS meets the requirements of the regulations and is transparent). (Disadvantages – there are no disadvantages to approving the IFS).

Option 2 - to not approve the Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) 2023 – 2024 and not publish it on the council's website and not send it to MHCLG. (Advantages – there are no advantages in not approving the IFS.) (Disadvantages – not approving the IFS would result in us not meeting the regulations.)

The preferred Option was Option 1.

Resolved:

That the Cabinet approves the Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023 - 2024 for publication.

OLDHAM'S BROWNFIELD LAND REGISTER 2024

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Economy that sought approval for the publication of Oldham's 2024 Brownfield Land Register.

The Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017 required that each local planning authority in England prepare, maintain and publish a register of previously developed (brownfield) land suitable for housing. The government considered the purpose of the register being to provide up-to-date and consistent information on sites that local authorities consider to be appropriate for residential development. The Brownfield Register update for 2024 included 185 sites.

A Brownfield Register is made up of two parts, Part 1 comprises all brownfield sites that the council has assessed to be appropriate for residential development and could include sites with or without planning permission. Part 2 identified sites that the local authority had decided should be granted (planning) permission in principle (PiP) for residential development. PiP is an alternative route to obtaining planning permission which separated "in principle" matters, such as use and location, from technical details, which were left to be agreed later.

It is not proposed to include sites on Part 2 of the Register currently. The decision not to progress Part 2 would be kept under review. This was particularly the case given that the council may, in future, become obligated by the government to start granting PiP.

The report detailed Oldham Council's 8th Brownfield Register.

Options/Alternatives considered:

The following options were considered:

Option 1 - To approve and publish Part 1 of Oldham's Brownfield Land Register 2024 in line with the Regulations. Part 2 was not proposed.

Option 2 - To not approve and publish an updated Brownfield Land Register as the 2024 SHLAA already contained all brownfield land considered suitable for housing development. This would not comply with the current Regulations.

The preferred Option was Option 1, as this would comply with Regulations (there is no current obligation to include sites on Part 2 of the Register).

Resolved:

1. That the Oldham Brownfield Land Register 2024, be approved and published, in line with the Regulations.
2. That the Cabinet notes the It is recommended to note the approach to determining sites be included in Part 1 and 2 of the Brownfield Register.

3. That the Cabinet approves a 2024 update of the Brownfield Land Register (Part 1 only) for publication.
4. That the Cabinet agrees to delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) to make any minor amendments and updates to the register throughout the year, if and when required.

11

STREET LIGHTING ATTACHMENT POLICY

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Environment which sought approval for a Street Lighting Attachment Policy for the Borough of Oldham. Under Section 178 of The Highways Act 1980, there was a legal requirement for any individual who wishes to attach signage or equipment to a street lighting asset to obtain a licence from the local highway authority.

The Cabinet was advised that to date, the Street Lighting Service had been using a robust process to allow attachments to its lighting columns. However, the service had identified that there was no formal Council policy in place covering the requirements of the The Highways Act and the current contract for replacement of the streetlighting assets. The Director of Environment's report therefore requested approval of a policy, which outlined the legal and council requirements for anyone wish to attached items to the streetlights.

Options/Alternatives considered:

Due to the Highways Act and the current PFI contractual requirements, there was no alternative option for Street Lighting Attachments. A robust process had been undertaken to ensure that the policy is fit for purposes and compliant with both the Highways Act 1980 and PFI obligations.

Resolved:

That the Street Lighting Attachment Policy (detailed at Appendix 1, to the submitted report), be approved for implementation, thereby allowing the Council to formally provide the requirements needed for Applicants to gain an Attachment Licence, and therefore, ensure compliance with The Highways Act 1980 and the council's contractual requirements.

12

OLDHAM MBC – TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION FAIR SHARE POLICY

The Cabinet received a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) which asked members to consider enactment of a new policy, allowing for charges to be made for occupation of temporary accommodation (TA), based on appropriate affordability checks.

The proposed policy sought to ensure fairness by focusing on: ensuring affordability for the resident; not discouraging residents from seeking employment; ensuring there are no disincentives to residents seeking to move on from temporary accommodation; making sure residents have access to the support that they need to move on and live independently; and recouping as much of the costs to the Council as is reasonable, while remaining in line with the above principles.

If adopted, all residents being placed into TA would receive an affordability assessment, carried out by Housing Options, at the first point of contact. In addition, affordability assessments would also be carried out on current residents of TA, to assess whether they should be required to contribute to costs going forward.

Options/Alternatives considered:

Option 1 – to approve the proposed policy in its entirety in order to ensure that residents receive appropriate support to remain independent, and contributions towards costs are obtained from those who can afford to pay.

Option 2 - do nothing.

The preferred Option was Option 1 to approve the policy.

Resolved:

That the proposed Temporary Accommodation Fair Share Policy, as outlined in the submitted report, be approved and adopted.

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 6.20pm