

# EXECUTIVE BOARD

## Thursday, 13 June 2024

**PRESENT** – Councillor Riley (Chair), Councillors Desai M, Floyd, Gunn, Hussain M, Mahmood, McGurk, Smith J and Talbot.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Ethan Woods, Deputy Youth MP.

### **RESOLUTIONS**

#### **1 Welcome and Apologies**

Councillor Phil Riley welcomed all to the meeting.

Apologies were received from the Youth MP Zainab Shah and Deputy Youth MP Nadeem Iqbal.

#### **2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

##### **RESOLVED -**

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2024 be approved as a correct record.

#### **3 Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Phil Riley and Quesir Mahmood submitted Declarations of Interest in Agenda Item 9.3 IT Equipment – in relation to their roles as Directors of The Making Rooms.

Councillor Jackie Floyd declared an interest in Agenda Item 9.2 – Household Support Fund Round 5 (In relation to her role involving Food Banks).

#### **4 Equality Implications**

The Chair asked Members to confirm that they had considered and understood any Equality Impact Assessments associated with reports on the agenda ahead of making any decisions.

#### **5 Public Forum**

No Questions from members of the public had been submitted.

#### **6 Questions by Non-Executive Members**

No questions had been submitted by Non-Executive Members.

#### **7 Youth MPs Update**

The Deputy Youth MP updated the Executive Board on recent events and activities including:

- The Young People’s Interview Panels, where 5 young people from our SEEDS project have completed their training in recruitment and selection for posts in the Council. They helped in interviewing for another Head of Service in social work, a position in New Directions and for general social work posts.
- Northwest Youthforia Training Residential, which the Youth MPs participated in to gain skills in debating, as well as developing personal and social skills.
- Consultations, including the review of the new corporate parenting strategy 2024-2026, where young people in the Borough gave their input into what the new priorities should be, what works well and where improvements can be made. In addition, 3 of our young people from leaving care forum delivered Total Respect training and, following the session, the Lancashire police force requested the training for their officers, and this will be taking place at Hutton police headquarters on 1st July.

Members of the Executive Board highlighted the importance of the positive work the Youth MPs deliver and commended them on their confidence to deliver the Total Respect Training.

## **8 Executive Member Reports**

### **LEADER**

### **ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH**

### **CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION**

#### **9.1 School Effectiveness Partnership Strategy 2023-2026**

A report was received which provided an update on the School Improvement Strategy 2023–2026. The Executive Board was asked to acknowledge and support the strategy which details the 5 missions, 6 Public Commitments and 6 School Effectiveness Partnership Priorities for 2023-2026. The report also highlighted the collaborative work already in place noting how it will be used to drive forward improvements across the Borough for schools and settings in Blackburn with Darwen as well as the position with School Improvement funding.

The Executive Members commented on the positive ongoing work within the Borough in this regard and addressed the importance of both diversity and SEND support within schools.

#### **RESOLVED –**

That the Executive Board:

- Acknowledge and support the strategy including the work of the wider system and cross sector leadership.
- Note the 5 missions, 6 Public Commitments and 6 School Effectiveness Partnership Priorities for 2023-2026 outlined below.
- Continue to champion the collaborative work already in place noting how it will be used to drive forward improvements across the Borough for schools and settings in Blackburn with Darwen.
  - Note the position with School Improvement funding as set out in the report.

## **ENVIRONMENT & OPERATIONS**

### **PUBLIC HEALTH, PREVENTION & WELLBEING**

#### **9.2 Household Support Fund Round 5**

The Executive Board received a report which provided an update on the Government announced extension to the Household Support Fund (HSF) from April 2024 to continue supporting communities who were struggling due to the cost-of-living crisis.

It was noted that the announcement of the funding was received later than expected and that going forward it was hoped that the next Government would continue with the HSF.

#### **RESOLVED –**

That the Executive Board:

2.1 Agree to the distribution of the Household Support Fund Round 5 as set out in the report, and in BwD's delivery plan (submitted to DWP in May 2024 as required).

2.2 Give delegated authority to the Strategic Director Finance and Resources and the Strategic Director of Adults and Health, in consultation with the Executive Member for Public Health, Prevention and Wellbeing, to amend the distribution of the grant should that be considered necessary given guidance from Government and local circumstances (after having engaged with DWP regarding the Council's revisiting of its Delivery Plan during the Fund Period, as required by national guidance).

## **DIGITAL & CUSTOMER SERVICES**

#### **9.3 IT Equipment**

Councillor Phil Riley and Councillor Quesir Mahmood, having declared an interest in this item, left the meeting. Deputy Leader Julie Gunn took the Chair.

The report detailed the proposal to donate end of life laptop devices for reuse in the local community. The Executive Member for Digital and Customer Services highlighted the importance of this initiative to reduce

digital exclusion across the Borough and the benefits of upskilling residents in repairing and maintaining laptop devices. The Laptop Devices, as set out in the report, would be donated to local community centres, through The Making Rooms and also will be donated to communities across the Borough. The importance of data security when donating the devices was mentioned and this had been assured through the destruction of the data held on the devices and certificates issued ensuring data protection.

## **RESOLVED –**

It is recommended that the Executive Board:

- a) Notes the contents of this report.
- b) Approves the proposal to donate the laptop devices for reuse in the local community. It is anticipated that the exact number of devices donated will be determined by the number of devices deemed viable for reuse, by demand and by the ability to distribute effectively.
- c) Approves the proposal to make 'The Making Rooms' our primary delivery partner, alongside other partners that have the sufficient infrastructure in place to support redistribution to benefit local communities.
- d) Approves the proposal to recycle laptop devices that are not donated.
- e) Approve the distribution of other end-of-life devices through the same channels.

## **Growth & Development**

Councillors Phil Riley and Quesir Mahmood rejoined the meeting and Councillor Phil Riley took the Chair.

### **9.4 Growth Programme 24/25**

The report detailed the progress on the Growth Programme for 2024/25 and the Executive Member for Growth and Development highlighted the positive work the Council undertook in planning and providing affordable housing for residents.

The Leader of the Opposition asked a question around the affordability ratio for house prices compared to income rates and the Executive Member for Growth and Development agreed to provide this information.

## **RESOLVED -**

That the Executive Board:

1. Note the excellent growth performance in the Borough as demonstrated by the Growth KPIs attached as Annex A;
2. Note the continued progress made by officers in delivering the Darwen Town Deal programme.
3. Note the progress made by officers in advancing the Government's Levelling-Up projects in Blackburn Town Centre and our South East

Blackburn transport corridor;

4. Note the success of officers during the year in securing a further £20m funding for Darwen from the Governments Long Term Plan for Towns Initiative and a £20.3m investment package as part of the Levelling Up Partnership policy and investment programme (one of only 25 places in the Country) with a focus on major cultural investment priorities in Blackburn Town Centre, an acquisition fund, and new skills and innovation opportunities.

5. Note the continued progress made by the Council's two joint venture development companies Barnfield Blackburn Ltd and Maple Grove Blackburn Ltd.

6. Note the completion of Phase 1 of the Asset Review which assessed the Council's primary buildings to identify opportunities to improve utilisation or to consolidate and rationalise to release potential disposal or redevelopment opportunities;

7. Approve the Growth Programme for 2024-25 attached as Annex B for officers to progress projects from feasibility stage through to procurement and tender stage as required by project timelines.

8. Delegate authority to the Growth Director in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth & Development to agree the provision of specialist and affordable homes with the Borough's three key local Registered Providers; Together Housing, Great Places and Places for People to develop affordable housing on Council owned housing sites: and

9. Delegate authority to revise the Growth Programme for 2024-25 (by adding, removing or prioritising sites) to the Growth Director in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth & Development.

## **9.5 Companies Annual Report**

Following the dissolution of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, with the responsibilities of this to be subsumed by the County Combined Authority once established, the report recommended to note the dissolution of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Ltd and the Council's interest in various Companies as set out in the report.

### **RESOLVED -**

It is recommended that the Executive Board:-

a) note the Council's interest in various Companies as set out in the report.

b) note the dissolution of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Ltd.

## **9.6 King William Street Accelerator Green Spaces Funding**

A report was submitted which detailed the award of £500,000 of Green Spaces Funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and

Communities (DLUHC). The report detailed the key elements of the proposal to include:

- Creating a more flexible, open and safe space.
- More sustainable planting.
- Introduction of an architectural play feature.
- Greening of the three main entrances to the Mall to enhance visibility and encourage footfall.
- Repair or replacement of old planters, benches and removal of obsolete street clutter.
- Creative use of street furniture to better manage hostile vehicle risks and unauthorised parking.
- Creative lighting to provide a safer and more welcoming space in the evening.
- Improvements to pavement cafes.
- New planting to link streets - New Market Street, Town Hall Street and Lord Street.
- Maintenance to existing large trees to ensure their future health.
- Volunteer programme to encourage active engagement in the green space and to support maintenance, biodiversity, cleanliness, environmental education and wellbeing.

Ahead of approval of the recommendations in the report, Councillor Quesir Mahmood advised that due to the recent announcement of the General Election, the funding would not be available as soon as hoped, but requested that the recommendations be approved subject to the next Government confirming the funding.

#### **RESOLVED -**

That the Executive Board approves: -

- The acceptance of the £500,000 DLUHC High Street Accelerator Green Spaces Funding as the accountable body for the King William Street High Street Accelerator Partnership; -
- Agrees a supplementary capital estimate of £450,000 and supplementary revenue estimate of £50,000 funded from the grant referred to the above; -
- The commencement for the delivery of environmental improvements and initiatives to enhance the King William Street area, subject to consultation on the detailed designs; and –
- The procurement of any services required for the delivery of the initiatives outlined in the report, in accordance with procurement law and the Contracts and Procurement Procedure Rules.

#### **9.7 Developer Contributions and Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

The report submitted detailed the changes to guidance for developer contributions, referred to as Section 106 contributions, which included the

change to providing useful guidance to applicants within one document, helping to speed up the planning process by minimising amendments or negotiations, often necessary following submission of planning applications.

This report also sought approval to adopt the Developer Contributions and Affordable Housing SPD which would sit alongside the Blackburn with Darwen Local Plan (2021-2037).

The Executive Member for Growth and Development responded to the Leader of the Opposition's comments around how Section 106 contributions were distributed, reaffirming that this was done on a case-by-case basis, following the Borough's needs, and the developer's size and capacity for contributions.

## **RESOLVED -**

That the Executive Board:

- Notes the changes which have been made to the Developer Contributions and Affordable Housing SPD following the two consultations on the draft document; and
- Adopts the Developer Contributions and Affordable Housing SPD.

## **FINANCE & GOVERNANCE**

### **9.8 Development of the General Fund Revenue Budget 2025/26**

The purpose of this report was to provide the Executive Board with an update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2025/28 as the start of the process for developing the Council's Budget for 2025/26.

The Council plan to deliver a balanced budget was discussed including savings proposals that are robust and deliverable. The report was referred to for the Council's options to achieve a balanced and sustainable budget over the medium term. The importance of the 'grow, charge, save and stop' model was noted in reference to continuing to provide the foundation for the Council's financial plans.

Concerns around cuts to services and the pressures in terms of demand for Council Services were raised, and the importance of protecting these services was discussed and as detailed in the report. The Executive member for Finance and Resources emphasised the importance of putting people first and that this is supported in the Council's strategy.

## **RESOLVED -**

2.1 It is recommended that the Executive Board:-

- a) note the key risks to the delivery of the budget in 2024/25 and that these will be subject to consideration as part of the regular Budget Monitoring reports submitted to the Executive Board;
- b) note the uncertainty with the funding outlook for the Council, not least the

- limited progress on Local Government Finance reforms and that these will not now take place before the next General Election;
- c) note the update to the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2025/28 as shown at Appendix A and that a further update will be provided in October 2024;
  - d) note the scenario analysis shown at Appendix D and E which models 'worst'/'best' case scenarios around the baseline MTFP as part of the assessment of potential risks facing the Council;
  - e) note the timetable set out in the report for the development of the Council's Budget for 2025/26;
  - f) agree that all Portfolio Holders instigate a review of all fees and charges in their Portfolios, in line with the agreed Fees and Charges Framework, with a view to maximising the amount of income received by the Council;
  - g) request that Lead Officers for Portfolios/Directorates be asked to identify and bring forward budget savings options for 2025/26;
  - h) agree that, subject to consideration by respective Portfolio Holders, any budget proposals arising from the work above be considered by the Executive Board in due course (and subject to the proposal on consultation below);
  - i) as part of a process of identifying savings options over the medium term, agree to commission external advisors to support the development of strategic business cases and that a budget of £350k, funded from the Invest to Save Reserve, be agreed for this;
  - j) subject to the work above and agreement with Councillors, agree that some form of public and business-based consultation on the budget savings proposals should take place over Autumn 2024 with a view to informing decisions on the Council's budget for 2025/26.

## **9.9 Council Office Accommodation Strategy**

This report set out the next steps for the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy and sought approval for phases Phase 3b, 3c and 3d of the Office Accommodation as set out in the report.

### **RESOLVED -**

It is recommended that the Executive Board:-

- a) note the approach for the delivery of Phase 3b, 3c and 3d of the Office Accommodation Strategy as set out in the report;
- b) agree a virement of £260k to complete the delivery of Phase 3 (as set out at (a) above);
- c) note the outstanding matters for each of the Council's core office accommodation sites as set out in the report and, subject to further work on this matter, the likelihood that additional funding will need to be identified for the continued delivery of the Office Accommodation Strategy;
- d) note that future reports on this matter will be brought forward for consideration by the Executive Board in due course as required.

## **10 Corporate Issues**

None.

## **11 Matters referred to the Executive Board**



None.

Signed at a meeting of the Executive Board  
on Thursday, 11 July 2024  
(being the ensuing meeting on the Executive Board) by

CHAIR