

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Thursday 14th November 2024

PRESENT

Councillor Phil Riley (Chair)

Councillor Julie Gunn	Children's, Young People and Education
Councillor Vicky McGurk	Finance and Governance
Councillor Jim Smith	Environment and Communities
Councillor Damian Talbot	Housing and Public Health

Councillor Mustafa Desai Leader of the Opposition Group

ALSO PRESENT:

Martin Kelly	Strategic Director Growth and Development and Deputy Chief Executive
Dean Langton	Strategic Director Finance and Resources
Asad Laher	Deputy Director, Legal and Governance
Jane Watson	Democratic and Scrutiny Lead
Zainab Shah	Youth MP
Nadeem Iqbal	Deputy Youth MP

RESOLUTIONS

21. Welcome and Apologies

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Phil Riley, welcomed all present to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Councillors Mahfooz Hussain and Quesir Mahmood.

22. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED

That, subject to the correction in the spelling of Councillor Mustafa Desai's name the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th October 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

23. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Jackie Floyd declared a prejudicial interest in minute number 28.4 as she was the Chair of the Blackburn with Darwen Food Alliance. Councillor Floyd withdrew from the meeting during discussion of this item.

24. Equality Implications

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

25. Public Forum

There were no questions from members of the public.

26. Questions by Non-Executive Members

There were no questions from Non-Executive Members.

27. Youth MPs Update

The Youth MP Zainab Shah and Deputy Youth MP Nadeem Iqbal provided a verbal update on recent events and activities.

This included an event celebrating Youth Work Week with a theme of ‘A Right to Youth Work for All – Delivering Positive Futures for Young People.’ The event was held at Blackburn Youth Zone and Members congratulated Zainab on her hosting skills of the event. Each youth organisation within the borough showcased their artwork, including poems, speeches and paintings. Overall, the event was a great success with many young people collaborating together to show the positive effects of youth work within the borough.

Members of the Youth Forum attended a meeting of the Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee where they received an insight into the Start Well Programme.

They also attended Youthforia in Oldham on 13th October. This event was part of Black History Month where the focus was on reclaiming narratives and celebrating Black culture. Those attending participated in a number of

activities which included discussions around the historical and ongoing challenges faced by Black communities.

Representatives had met with officers from Public Health to discuss the Strategy they were working on to reduce the impact of child poverty and to highlight the top three priorities which young people would like to see worked on. A consultation with other young people was planned to gain their input and priorities.

Going forward the group were continuing to work on their Gambling Harms project and would be attending the Northwest Youthforia event on climate change.

28. Executive Member Reports

LEADER

The Leader advised that a letter had been sent to the Government to start the process of a Combined Authority.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION

28.1 Fostering Report Quarter 1 2024/25

The Executive Board received a report which provided information on the management and performance of the Local Authority's Fostering Service which was revised on a quarterly basis. This, along with the information in Appendix 1 attached to the report, provided an analysis for the period 1st April to 30th June 2024 and reflected upon data and service development over this period.

It was noted the service priorities for the next quarter remained the same as the previous quarter:

- Quality Assurance
- Placement Sufficiency
- Recruitment
- Mockingbird Family Model
- Workforce

RESOLVED

That the report and Appendix be noted.

28.2 Annual Adoption Report 2023/24

A report which provided a review of adoption activity for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 was submitted along with children specific information. This fulfilled the Council's obligations in the Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011) and Adoption Service Statutory Guidance (2011) Adoption and Children Act 2002.

The Council was still a member of Adoption Now along with five other Local authorities including Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Oldham and Tameside.

Data in the report related to children with a plan of adoption was local data relating to Blackburn with Darwen children, however adoption support and recruitment data covered the whole Region unless stated.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES

28.3 Council Fleet – Vehicle Replacement Programme

A report on the Vehicle Replacement Programme for the Council's fleet was submitted for consideration.

New replacement vehicles were required across a range of services in different departments of the council including the refuse and recycling service, amenities, highways, building, cultural, welfare and youth services. Details of the condition of the existing vehicles and the proposed replacement vehicles, along with costings was detailed in the report.

Additionally, the council was required to implement a food waste collection service in Spring 2026. The Government had allocated funding to assist with the purchase of new vehicles to undertake the food waste collections. It was acknowledged that demand for these types of vehicles would be extremely high, given the majority of councils in England would be procuring such vehicles at a similar time for the service commencement date. Therefore,

there was a need to purchase these vehicles immediately to secure delivery prior to implementation of the service.

The Council had set a target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. The report set out plans to purchase several electric vehicles to help achieve this target. There was likely to be additional costs in providing sufficient additional charging facilities at the Davyfield Road depot, which were currently being discussed and reviewed, with capital funding bids to be considered for increasing the capacity of the main electric substation which provided electricity to the depot.

RESOLVED

- (1) That delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Director Environment and Communities in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment and Communities to procure the vehicles detailed in the report, utilising the £1.7m that had been earmarked in the 2023/2026 capital programme for vehicle replacement.
- (2) That capital funding of £716,100 allocated by the Government for the purchase of the vehicles required for the food waste collection service be noted and any shortfall in funding for these additional eight vehicles be drawn from the Council's Asset Management Strategy Fund in the Capital Programme.

HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH

28.4 Household Support Fund Round 6

The Executive Board considered a report seeking ongoing support for the delivery of the Household Support Fund grant programme. In September 2024 the Government had announced a further extension of the Household Support Fund making this Round 6 of the Fund. The announcement was for a 6-month support package, running until March 2025, to the same level as previous rounds. For the Council this was a further £1.619m.

It was proposed the funding be allocated:

Area of Support	£m
Residents support given out through the resident application process, including support with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utility Bills• Winter Fuel Payment	0.80

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis Food • Emergency White Goods • Support and Advice Services 	
Support for subsidised school meals, enabling schools to support low income/vulnerable families who did not qualify for Free School Meals	0.22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted approach to schools most in need 	
Council Tax support, in the form of a credit, in lieu of supporting other cost of living pressures	0.40
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted households currently on Council Tax support 	
Support for the Food Alliance Sustainable Food Hub model	0.05
Miscellaneous smaller grants to third sector partners to provide support	0.069
Cost of administering the scheme	0.08
Total Household Support fund	1.619

RESOLVED

- (1) That the distribution of the Household Support Fund Round 6 be distributed as set out above and in the report.
- (2) That the Strategic Director Finance and Resources and the Strategic Director Adults and Health, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Public Health be granted delegated authority to amend the distribution of the grant should that be considered necessary given 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).

28.5 Approval to Award Tier 4 Services Lot 1 (Inpatient Detoxification)

The Executive Board received a report following the recent Tier 4 tender procurement exercise.

Invites for tenders on the following three lots had been opened on 15th August with a closing date of 12th September at midday.

Lot 1 – Inpatient Detoxification

Lot 2 – Inpatient Residential Rehabilitation

Lot 3 – Direct Access Beds

There had been five submissions for Lot 1 and all had scored over 50% which sufficiently met the requirements to be awarded a place on the Tier 4 framework.

Four tenders had been submitted for Lot 2 which was a reduction from existing current arrangements with one providing provision in the Blackburn with Darwen area. Officers felt this represented a risk to service and financial best value, together with service resilience and adequate access to service provision at reasonable geographical distance and transport challenges. Therefore, it was proposed that Lot 2 be subject to a waiver until June 2025 and goes out to tender again with a wider market engagement exercise to secure best value for money etc.

Unfortunately, no tenders were received for Lot 3. The current provider THOMAS had been given a 6 month extension from May 2024 and had in recent months managed and reduced new referrals into the service. It was proposed that the integrated pathway be incorporated into Lot 1 and Lot 2 with the existing Lot 3 service ceasing on 30th November 2024.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the intention to award Lot 1 for Tier 4 substance misuse services to five suppliers for specialist inpatient detoxification provision be approved. The Lot 1 inpatient detoxification suppliers being:

Adferiad Recovery
Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (GMMH)
Kaleidoscope Project
Mersey Care NHS Trust
Turning Point Services Ltd.

- (2) That Lot 2 be subject to a waiver until June 2025 and go out for tender again with a wider market engagement exercise to secure best value for money and achieve a balanced, cost-effective pool of service providers within close proximity of access to Blackburn with Darwen and that the re-tendering exercise also include elements of the crisis pathway services which were previously tendered as Lot 3.

DIGITAL AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

28.6 Asset Transfer of Statutory Allotments

The Executive Board considered a report which set out a proposal to asset transfer the management and maintenance of 8 allotment sites from the Council to formal structured community groups by way of lease.

Options for the remaining council-owned allotment site at Burnley Road in Blackburn would be brought to a future meeting once plans for the wider Carl Fogarty Way/Imperial Mill area had been finalised.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the asset transfer of the 8 statutory allotments be agreed by way of long leasehold to formal structured community groups that have pre-existing connections to the relevant allotment site:

Broadfold Allotments
Ewood Allotments
Feniscliffe Allotments
Leyburn Road Allotments
Queens Park Allotments
Sunnybank Road Allotments
Teak Street Allotments
Witton Park Allotments

- (2) That delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Director of Growth and Development, in consultation with the Deputy Director of Legal and Governance, to agree final terms for the asset transfers; and all associated legal, financial and administrative arrangements.
- (3) That it be noted that no submissions for Lot 3 (direct access beds) had been submitted and it be agreed that the existing service (currently subject to a 6-month waiver extension) would cease with effect from 30th November 2024. Also, that crisis pathway services be provided under the re-tendering commissions in Lot 2 and/or by services commissioned from Tier 4 framework providers (via a Tier 4 panel extra-ordinary meeting when required).

28.7 Blackburn Town Centre – Site Acquisition and Masterplan

The Executive Board considered a report on proposals for the Council to take full control of the former Thwaites Brewery site by acquiring the financial interest from Maple Grove Developments Ltd., in the joint venture company.

The site was originally acquired in 2021 by Maple Grove Blackburn, a joint venture company between the Council and Maple Grove Developments Ltd., (part of the Eric Wright Group). Following acquisition, the joint venture developed plans with Morrisons to relocate their store to the Site. However, Morrisons withdrew their interest in March 2024.

As a result, the Council intended to revise and consult on an updated masterplan to identify new opportunities for the Site, including employment, leisure, retail and housing uses.

It was noted a new Skills and Cyber Campus was proposed on the existing Brown Street car park site, with the first phase of the development planned to commence in 2025, as illustrated by the plan at Annex 2 attached to the report. The Council was working closely with partners including the University of Central Lancashire and Training 2000 to finalise the scheme.

It was proposed that BDP Consultants be appointed to prepare an up-to-date town centre masterplan. They prepared the original Development Framework document for the joint venture company, which was submitted to the Council and used as part of the Local Plan consultations and referenced in the final adopted plan.

RESOLVED

- (1) That it be noted the former Thwaites Brewery site represented a major development opportunity and was of key strategic importance to Blackburn Town Centre.
- (2) That it be noted that Maple Grove Blackburn Ltd., the joint venture company between the Council and Maple Grove Developments Ltd., had acquired the former Thwaites Brewery site in 2021, for the purpose of preparing the site for future development.
- (3) That the withdrawal of the food store relocation planning application in March 2024, which subsequently instigated a review of the joint venture company arrangements with the recommendations to

acquire control of the company and therefore control of the Site, be noted.

- (4) That the purchase of Maple Grove Developments Ltd., financial interest in the joint venture company for the Purchase Price be approved to ensure the Site was delivered as part of a robust masterplan to ensure future development would deliver positive outcomes for the town centre.
- (5) That the revised terms for a 3-year non-exclusive option agreement to Maple Grove Developments Ltd., be approved to acquire a parcel of land as identified on the plan attached at Annex 2, which would support Building 2 being brought forward as a speculative scheme which was part of the Council's emerging Skills and Cyber campus.
- (6) That subject to compliance with the Council's Financial procedure Rules in relation to Purchase of Land and Buildings, a capital spend of up to £1,000,000 be approved to cover further land assembly enabling works and masterplan activities and it be noted that this funding would be drawn down from the existing Development Investment fund and therefore required no additional funding.
- (7) That the Council's Contract Procedure Rules be waived and BDP Architects be appointed to commence work on revising the Town Centre East Development Framework document, published in 2021, to create a robust masterplan for the Blackburn Town Centre East Investment area, and it be noted the Council will consult on a draft of the revised masterplan for the town centre in 2025.
- (8) That delegated authority be granted to the Growth Programme Director, in consultation with the Strategic Director Finance and Resources and Deputy Director of Legal and Governance to agree final terms for the acquisition of Maple Grove Developments Ltd., financial interest in the joint venture company; and all associated legal, financial, administrative and management arrangements of the company.

FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

28.8 Treasury Management Mid-Yer Strategy Review 2024/25

An update on the Treasury Management position to date and the proposed Strategy for the remainder of 2024/26 was submitted for consideration. This was following approval of the Strategy by the Board in March 2024.

The report provided information on the Original Strategy for 2024/25, the Economic Review for 2024/25 along with Treasury Performance to date.

The Executive were advised that in keeping with the Council's key objectives, no new borrowing had been undertaken in the first half of the year. Therefore, it was proposed that the Borrowing Strategy remained unchanged, with the council looking to take new borrowing as determined by cash flow requirements and by reference to movements in actual and projected long-term interest rates.

RESOLVED

- noted
- (1) That the Treasury Management position for the year to date be and the proposed Strategy for the remainder of the year, as detailed in Appendix 1 be approved.
 - (2) That no changes be identified to the existing Treasury and Prudential Indicators for 2024/25, as set by the Executive Board on 7th March 2024.

28.9 Corporate Capital Programme and Balance Sheet Monitoring Quarter 2 2024/25

An update on the Council's Capital Programme for 2024/25 based on a budget monitoring exercise undertaken at the end of September 2024 was submitted for consideration.

As at 30th September 2024 the total capital expenditure across the portfolios was £11.751m which represented 10.56% of the current, revised projected capital spend. The estimated capital receipts figure expected in 2024/25 was £3.484m; £1.506m had been received in the first six months of the year.

The variations in actual spend and resource availability for 2024/25 were summarised by portfolio in Appendix 1 and variations in spending were set out in Appendix 2. It was noted the Capital Programme for 2024/25 had

reduced by £1.619m in the second quarter of the year and the reasons for this were detailed in the report.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the forecast outturn on the Council's Capital Programme 2024/25 based on the Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring exercise be noted.
- (2) That the revised Capital Programme for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 1 and the variations to the Programme as set out in the report and as shown in Appendix 2 be approved.

28.10 Corporate Revenue Budget Monitoring Quarter 2 2024/25

A report providing an update on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2024/25 based on a budget monitoring exercise undertaken at the end of September 2024 was submitted for consideration.

Appendix 1 provided a detailed analysis of the various budget adjustments that had occurred during the period to 30th September 2024. The impact of these adjustments on the Council's budget for 2024/25 was summarised in Table 1 in the report.

Appendix 2 provided a summary of the General Fund Revenue Account along with the Forecast Outturn as at 30th September 2024.

Appendix 3 provided information on the Earmarked Reserves and General Fund Balance as at 30th September 2024.

The following were identified as key variances:

An estimated underspend of £1.050m on the contingent sum held for the 2024/25 pay award for staff.

Forecast of additional Investment Income of £1.570m.

Lower than expected debt interest payments.

An underspend on the Minimum Revenue Provision of £260k.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Portfolio Cash Limit Adjustments, as outlined in Appendix 1 be approved.

- (2) That the General Fund Budget Summary position as at 30th September 2024, as shown in Appendix 2 and in particular the forecast overspend of £2.156m at the end of Quarter 2 which, if sustained until the year end, would result in an equivalent additional draw down of reserves, be noted.
- (3) That the Portfolio Holders be requested to review their budgets for the remainder of 2024/25 with a view to identifying potential mitigating actions.
- (4) That the forecast overspend on the High Needs DSG budget in 2024/25 and the emerging risks around the affordability of High Needs provision from 2025/26 onwards be noted.
- (5) That the Earmarked Reserves and General Fund Balance position as at 30th September 2024, as shown in Appendix 3 be noted.

29. Matters Referred to the Executive Board

No matters had been referred to the Executive Board.

30. Corporate Issues

None.

Signed at a meeting of the Executive Board
On Thursday 12th December 2024
(being the ensuing meeting of the Executive Board) by

CHAIR