

## FULL COUNCIL

5<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2022

### REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES

#### 1. COUNCIL UPDATE REGARDING RESOURCES

##### 1.1 Purpose of Report

1.1.1 To advise Members of the decisions taken at my decision-making session held on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2022 and of the matters to be considered at my meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

##### 1.2 Background

1.2.1 This report highlights some of the decisions which have been made, but not all. Members wishing to view all decisions made can find these at <http://eservices.solihull.gov.uk/mglInternet/mglListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

1.2.2 Attached to this report is a list of decisions made.

##### 1.3 11<sup>th</sup> April 2022

1.3.1 The ICT Capital Budget for 2022/23 is £500,000. In addition, £122,940 has been brought forward from 2021/22, making a total budget of £622,940. I approved the following programme of work for the current financial year, which will leave a small balance of £12,940 within the capital budget:

- £30,000 to implement a new payment gateway for the Council's Civica payment system;
- £60,000 to upgrade to the latest cloud based Civica payment system distribution module;
- £70,000 to migrate legacy data from the Opentext document management system into the NEC document management system used by Income and Awards;
- £30,000 for a new ArcGIS Enterprise environment to support GIS (Geographical Information Systems) web mapping applications across the Council;
- £10,000 to purchase new hardware to support a project to extend the life of the document management system (Paperlite) used by Adults and Children's Social Care so that it can be used as a read only archive system;
- £350,000 to support a 12 month programme of work for the Oracle Fusion Cloud system;
- £60,000 to support a project to assist the Council in the management of Cloud Security and Controls following go live of the new Oracle Fusion Cloud system.

1.3.2 I will receive update reports on progress with these projects at future decision sessions.

1.3.3 I received a comprehensive update from the Head of Income & Awards on Welfare Reform. This included details of the number of people claiming Universal Credit and the latest council tax reduction caseload figures (which at February 2022 totalled 13,254, a reduction of 759 cases compared to February 2021). The report also provided details of how we have awarded Discretionary Housing Payments, applied our Discretionary Crisis Fund and offered Financial Inclusion Support to help our residents. There is a lot of useful information in this report, which members may want to look at.

#### **1.4 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022 (Matters to be considered)**

1.4.1 The Council's Environmental Crime Strategy shows how the Council aims to prevent environmental crime by educating and engaging residents and setting out how the Council will use its investigatory and enforcement powers in response to environmental crime in the Borough. Following Covid lockdowns and as people ventured out into their local area more, there has been increased public awareness of issues such as fly-tipping and littering. Consequently, the action plan within the Strategy has a greater focus on addressing these issues directly and robustly, as well as providing a clear framework to report and monitor the levels of environmental crime across Solihull. We were keen to understand the views of residents and interested community groups on the revised strategy and carried out a six-week consultation. At my decision session, I will be asked to note the results of the consultation and approve the adoption of the Strategy.

1.4.2 Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) are made under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and replace Designated Public Place Orders (DPPOs), Gating Orders and Dog Control Orders. The previous Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Stronger and Safer Communities, at her decision session on 19 October 2021, agreed to consult with the public and interested parties on the potential implementation of two PSPOs relating to the exclusion of dogs from children's play areas and dog fouling, and to also seek the views on other dog related anti-social behaviour. There were 464 responses to the consultation and following careful consideration of the responses, I will be asked to approve implementation of a PSPO relating to the removal of dog faeces and implementation of a PSPO relating to the exclusion of dogs from children's play areas.

1.4.3 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) requires local authorities (LAs) to produce and approve an annual food service plan for 2022/2023. The framework agreement on LA Food Law Enforcement contains guidance in respect of how the plan should be structured and what it should contain. I will be asked to approve the Food and Safety Statutory Service Plan for 2022/23.

1.4.4 The Head of Income & Awards will present the final debt monitoring report for 2021/22. This shows that for 2021/22, we were due to collect in excess of £346 million in council tax, business rates, sundry income, overpaid housing benefit and housing rents. For 2021/22, the council tax collection rate was 97.88%, compared to our pre-covid target of 98%. This is 0.11% ahead of last year. The business rates collection rate was 97.19% against our pre-covid target of 98%. This is 0.52% ahead of last year. For sundry income, at the end of March 2022, the in year sundry income collection was 73.76%, which is 6.8% behind this time last year. However, collection was impacted as several large value invoices were issued during the last 2 weeks of March 2022 (totalling over £6.8 million) with due dates in April 2022. Finally, rent collection stood at 97.95%, which is 0.25% ahead of this time last year.

- 1.4.5 The area currently occupied by Jean Linton Hall was originally transferred to the Council by the War Department in 1956 as part of a wider parcel of land bounded by Old Lode Lane, Tanhouse Farm Road and what is now the Jaguar Land Rover factory. The 2nd Solihull Scouts Group originally entered into a ground lease for 0.29 acres of land off Arlescote Road in June 1958 for a term of seven years to allow them to erect a Scout Hut on site, which became known as Jean Linton Hall. During the following 64 years, the Scouts have periodically renewed their ground lease with the most recent agreement commencing 24th June 2010 for a period of 21 years. The Scout Association no longer have a viable use for the site and have formally requested to surrender their ground lease early, prior to its expiry in 2031, returning responsibility and liability for the land to the Council. I will be asked to approve this early surrender of the lease.
- 1.4.6 Under the private part of my meeting, I will be asked to consider a request for the modification or release of restrictive covenants at a property in Olton. I will also be asked to consider two applications for hardship relief in respect of charges for business rates.
- 1.4.7 Further to the report to my March 2022 decision-session on the premises and lease arrangements for the 1st Olton Scout Group and The Olton Park Guides and following consultation with the Scouts and Guides, I will be presented with a report which proposes improvements to the premises for the Scouts and Guides at their existing location.

## **1.5 Issues of Interest**

- 1.5.1 **Registration** - Within Solihull, we have a number of external venues alongside our Statutory, Jubilee, and Ceremony suite where residents and non-residents choose to either get married or have Civil Partnerships. Owing to Covid, we inevitably experienced reduced bookings in the financial year 2020/2021. However, 2021/2022 was one of our best years on record with people making the most of the opportunity to get married or have a Civil Partnership once our doors re-opened. We had anticipated a return to normal levels in the current financial year of 2022/2023 but we are already booked up with the highest number of services in June, July, and August than there have been since we kept records (going back to 2012/2013).
- 1.5.2 We are aware of a change in our service users and that there is not currently an approved Muslim or Orthodox premise within Solihull that can perform Civil Ceremonies. We have therefore undertaken work with both the Muslim community hub on Hermitage Road and the Coptic Orthodox Church to engage with them on what requirements there are so that they can make an application. Both have advised they will be making an application to become an approved/registered religious premise to complete civil ceremonies. This is to ensure we are constantly doing as much as we can to increase our activities and encourage engagement with the evolving communities and changing demographics within Solihull.
- 1.5.3 **Environmental Health** - Environmental Health Officers have carried out 67 property inspections at very short notice. This is to ensure that the homes and living conditions offered by Solihull residents to Ukrainians accessing the Homes for Ukraine Scheme are suitable, safe and appropriate.
- 1.5.4 **Energy Bill Rebate** - There are just under 66,000 households that are eligible for the payment in Solihull. We have now paid over 90% of eligible households through the core scheme and in mid-June, we launched our additional discretionary scheme that was approved at the June 2022 Cabinet meeting.

1.5.5 **Final Accounts for 2021/22** – The Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive signed the Council’s Statutory Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 on 16<sup>th</sup> June, well ahead of the 31<sup>st</sup> July deadline. The Statement is now with our External Auditors for the statutory audit.

1.5.6 **Oracle Cloud** – I am pleased to be able to advise Council that phase one of Oracle Cloud went live on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022. This is a major milestone in this important project and follows two years of hard work by the Resources Directorate Leadership Team.

## **1.6 Future Decisions**

1.6.1 At future Resources decision sessions, reports will be presented on Revenue & Capital Monitoring; Debt Monitoring; ICT Capital Project updates, Applications for Discretionary Rate Relief and the Corporate Asset Management Strategy.