

## **Cabinet, 5 February 2025**

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD – COMMENTS TO CABINET ON BUDGET AND RELATED PAPERS**

Following its meeting on 29 January 2025, the Overview and Scrutiny Board submits the following comments to Cabinet and requests that Cabinet responds to these at its meeting on 5 February 2025.

#### **Havering and Wates Regeneration LLP Business Plan and Budget Update**

1. The Board wishes to record its concern over the potential for unsold units at the Park Rise development.
2. It is recommended that it be investigated if sole tenants etc of larger flats in the vicinity of New Green can be moved into the development itself, thus freeing up accommodation for families.
3. More detail should be given on social value aspects of the Joint Venture and the use of s. 106 funding. It is recommended that Havering Wates should consult with ward Members on these issues.

#### **HRA Business Plan Update, Budget 2025-26 and Capital Programme 2025/26 – 2029/30**

1. Further details should be given of the impact of the rise in National Insurance contributions. The Board is concerned over any potential shortfall in government funding designed to mitigate this.

#### **Bridge Close Regeneration LLP Business Plan 2025-26**

1. The position with existing businesses and residential properties on the site and negotiations to relocate these should be clarified in more detail.

#### **Mercury Land Holdings (MLH) Business Plan and Budget Update 2025/26**

1. The possibility should be explored of MLH homes being used as temporary accommodation or to otherwise assist with the housing shortage.
2. That MLH be formally requested to make a list of used contractors available to Members.

3. That the governance structure of MLH be reviewed to ensure that it is still fit for purpose, in line with a re-assessment of whether it is being utilised in such a way as to maximise the impact on the General Fund.

### 2025/26 Budget and 2025 – 2029 Medium Term Financial Strategy

1. The Board wishes to record its thanks to the Strategic Director of Resources for the hard work by her and her team in compiling the papers.
2. The Board fully supports ongoing efforts to secure further external grant funding for the Council.
3. The importance of the outcome of the Funding Reforms Review is noted and appreciated by the Board.
4. The Board supports the continuation of grant funding to the Citizens Advice Service.
5. The concerns expressed by officers over the levels of Council Tax arrears able to be collected are shared by the Board and the Board notes efforts by officers to address this.
6. The Board also wishes to record its concern over the cost impact of the rise in National Insurance contributions on the Council's Adult Social Care services.