

Cabinet  
5 October 2021

## WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET held on Tuesday 5 October 2021 at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors D.Bell (Deputy Leader and Executive Member, Resources)  
(Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

S.Boulton (Executive Member, Environment, Planning, Estates  
and Development)

N.Pace (Executive Member, Governance and Public Health)

B.Sarson (Executive Member, Leisure and Community Safety)

F.Thomson (Executive Member, Housing and Climate Change)

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) (N.Long)  
Legal Services Manager (S.Saunders)  
Principal Governance Officer (J.Anthony)  
Communications Officer (A.Wildey)

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38. APOLOGY

An apology for absence was received from Councillor T.Kingsbury (Leader of the Council).

39. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2021 was approved as a correct record and noted by the Chairman.

40. ACTIONS STATUS REPORT

The status of actions agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 7 September 2021 and for decisions taken by Cabinet Members exercising their individual delegated powers between 27 August 2021 to 27 September 2021 in the report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) was noted.

41. ITEMS REQUIRING KEY DECISION

The following items for decision in the current Forward Plan were considered:-

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41.1. Covid Recovery Framework (Forward Plan Reference FP1082)

Report of the Chief Executive on the Covid Recovery Framework.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:  
**(unanimous)**

Members noted the activities to date.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

Back in May 2020, Cabinet agreed to the establishment of a framework to guide the recovery phase of the Council's work in facing up to the Covid pandemic.

Since that time, there have been further lockdowns, as the pandemic has unfortunately endured.

Nonetheless, many aspects of recovery were underway, and the purpose of the report, which was presented for information, was to provide a summary of the Council's recovery activities to date.

The key points worth highlighting were:

- Support to businesses both through the administration of £30 million of government funded grants, and advice and guidance on opening businesses up again.
- Despite the pandemic disruptions, regeneration work in Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City had continued at pace, and a new "HatTech" business centre had opened.
- Support to the community, in particular with the introduction of a new Community Safety Partnership, which promoted mental health awareness, wellbeing support, and community inclusion.
- Partnership working, notably with the Hertfordshire Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG).
- Close attention to the undoubted financial challenges brought about by the pandemic.
- Continuation of the Council's modernization programme, which helped us address the financial challenges, and improve working practices and resilience in the light of pandemic experience.

Cabinet Members thanked Officers who have continued to work incredibly hard over the last couple of months.

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41.2. Business Rates Pooling 2022/23 (Forward Plan Reference FP1071)

Report of the Chief Executive on the Business Rates Pooling arrangement for 2022/23.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:  
**(unanimous)**

Cabinet agreed to give delegated authority to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Executive Member for Resources, to submit an application for the 2022/23 Business Rates Pooling arrangement for Hertfordshire, if after full consideration, there is a financial case for doing so.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

Membership of a business rates pooling scheme can be an advantage for a local authority, as it allows 50%, rather than 20%, of business rate growth to be retained by members of the pooling group.

That said, selection for membership of a pool depended upon being one of the authorities that collectively gave the greatest gain to the pool as a whole.

There was never any guarantee that a pool would be viable as a whole in Hertfordshire, or that Welwyn Hatfield would qualify for inclusion.

Welwyn Hatfield was a member of a Hertfordshire pool in 2020/21, but was not selected for 2021/22, the current year.

Whilst there was no guarantee of success, inclusion would be financially beneficial, and there was nothing to lose by applying. The application deadline was 8 October 2021.

41.3. Consideration of the Welwyn Garden City Business Improvement District Renewal Proposal (Forward Plan Reference FP1076)

Report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) on a proposal by Welwyn Garden City Business Improvement District (WGC BID) to continue for a second five-year term.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:  
**(unanimous)**

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- (1) Cabinet supported the Business Improvement District (BID) renewal proposal, having considered the draft Business Plan, baseline agreements and BID boundary and agreed that there was no conflict with any adopted policy, as set out in Paragraph 4.4 of the report.
- (2) Cabinet agreed to delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Public Protection, Planning and Governance to cast a YES vote in the BID ballot.
- (3) Cabinet noted that the Council would run the ballot, as set out in paragraph 4.5 and that Mr J.Merron will be the Returning Officer.
- (4) Cabinet noted that the Council would be the billing authority.
- (5) Cabinet agreed to delegate authority to the Head of Resources, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Executive Member, Resources, to agree the charge for managing the levy billing, collection and enforcement process.
- (6) Cabinet agreed, subject to a majority YES vote, to delegate authority to the Head of Community and Housing Strategy, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to enter into the operating agreement with the BID Company and to finalise the Baseline agreements, in consultation with relevant Heads of Service.
- (7) Cabinet noted that the Leader of the Council was currently the Cabinet member representative on the BID Board in place of Councillor B.Sarson, who was the previous representative.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

The BID comprised of ratepaying businesses within a defined area of Welwyn Garden City town centre, set out in Appendix C. These each pay an annual levy, as explained in the report in Sections 3.6 and 3.7. Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council was a member of the BID, and pays a levy based upon its own premises in the area.

The BID had been in existence for 5 years, and had delivered a number of benefits during that time.

The BID agreement was now due for renewal. Renewal had to be supported by a majority of BID members, as explained in Section 3.3.

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The BID involves the Council, as a member, paying a levy, and the Council administers the ballot, and collects the levies from members. However, it was considered that the benefits of having a BID, and being a member, significantly outweigh these costs.

42. PERFORMANCE EXCEPTION REPORT - QUARTER 1 (2021-22)

Report of the Chief Executive summarising strategic performance data for Quarter 1 for 2021/22.

The report summarised strategic performance data on an exception basis for the period 1 April, 2021 through to 30 June, 2021.

The report, which was drawn from more detailed exception reports reviewed by the Corporate Management Team, was self-explanatory, and was produced on a quarterly basis.

The report referred to the continued impact of Covid upon the Council's operations, as well as the ongoing work taking place to address housing compliance issues.

**RESOLVED:  
(unanimous)**

Cabinet noted the contents of the report and approved any proposed actions highlighted in the appendices.

43. COUNCIL ACHIEVEMENTS LIST (APRIL - JUNE 2021)

Report of the Chief Executive summarises the Council's key achievements and service improvements for Quarter 1 of 2021-22.

As this was also the first quarter of a new three-year corporate plan cycle, Members noted that the new corporate priorities against which these achievements have been listed.

As you will know, these were not only the Council's priorities, but also the priorities of the people who live, work, and spend time in the Borough. They were expressed in over 1,600 responses to the Council's Borough-wide survey at the end of last year, and it enabled the Council to say with confidence that we were delivering outcomes that really mattered.

Members noted the achievements in Quarter 1, the new and well-used skate park at King George V; the excellent work providing reassurance and encouragement to people returning to the high streets after the winter lockdown; the Civic Awards which celebrate the Borough's fantastic community heroes; and the "This Girl Can" campaign which delivered more than 40 sporting activities over the week for women of all ages and levels of ability.

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**RESOLVED:**  
**(unanimous)**

Cabinet noted the report and contents of the Achievements List.

Meeting ended 5.15pm  
JA