

Cabinet
3 November 2021

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET held on Wednesday 3 November 2021 at 5.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors T. Kingsbury (Leader of the Council) (Chair)

D. Bell (Deputy Leader and Executive Member, Resources)

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

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

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

OFFICIALS Chief Executive (K. Ng)

PRESENT: Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) (N. Long)

Head of Law and Administration (M. Martinus)

Head of Resources (R. Baker)

Commercial Manager (D. Murphy)

Procurement Manager (A. Harper)

Head of Housing Operations (S. Pearson)

Governance Services Manager (A. Marston)

Democratic Services Assistant (B. Taylor)

44. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor N. Pace (Executive Member, Governance and Public Health)

45. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2021 were approved as a correct record.

46. ACTIONS STATUS REPORT

The status of actions agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 5 October 2021 and for decisions taken by Cabinet Members exercising their individual delegated powers between 27 September 2021 to 25 October 2021 in the report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) was noted.

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

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Councillors S. Boulton, T. Kingsbury and F. Thomson declared a non-pecuniary interest in items on the agenda as appropriate by virtue of being a Member of Hertfordshire County Council.

48. ITEMS REQUIRING KEY DECISION

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

48.1. Council Tax Support Scheme (Forward Plan Reference FP1064)

Report of the Chief Executive on the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2022/23.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:
(**unanimous**)

Cabinet recommends to Full Council that our localised council tax support scheme continues in 2022/23 to help people on low/no income to receive a reduction on their council tax.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

The Council's localised council tax support scheme is based on reduction of 25% in council tax liability whilst still protecting some vulnerable groups. This means a claimant's assessed entitlement is calculated on 75% of the council tax bill.

Our scheme fully protects pensioners and families with children under 5 and those in receipt of Personal Independence Payments (PIP) (formerly disability living allowance) so that they continue to receive the same level of protection, and do not have to pay anymore council tax than they paid under the old council tax benefit system. This protects claimants with a disability premium, severe disability premium, child disability and families with young children.

Other claimants have an additional 25% to pay compared to the former council tax benefits scheme.

48.2. Appointment of Now Housing Directors (Forward Plan Reference FP1084)

Report of the Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) on the function of director appointments to the council's Shareholders' Group (SG) for Now Housing Limited.

(1) The Decision Taken

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RESOLVED:
(unanimous)

That Cabinet delegates authority to the Shareholders Group for Now Housing Limited, to appoint directors to the Now Housing Limited Board, in consultation with the Leader and Executive Member, Housing and Climate Change.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

The recommendation is for Cabinet to delegate the function of director appointments to the council's Shareholders' Group for Now Housing Limited. The Shareholders' Group comprises members of the Corporate Management Team and includes the Head of Housing Operations as the housing adviser to the Shareholders' Group.

Now Housing Limited is the council-owned housing company set up following Cabinet approval in January 2019 with the aim of helping to meet local housing need.

The current governance arrangements provide that any directors to Now Housing Limited are to be appointed by Cabinet, however the Shareholders' Group recognised that for the business to progressed director appointments needed to be made swiftly.

49. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2021-22 - QUARTER 2

Report of the Chief Executive on the capital expenditure and associated capital funding as at the end of Quarter 2.

This report presents the capital expenditure and associated capital funding as at the end of Quarter 2 (30 September 2021). The report and appendices detail the changes to the original capital programme and funding plans, as a result of programme commitments and project delivery.

A summary of forecast variances and re-phasing are shown in Table 3.2 and detailed explanations for key variances in section 3.5. Progress on key schemes are set out in section 3.6 and forecast financing are set out under section 4.1.

RESOLVED:
(unanimous)

(1) That Cabinet note the capital forecast outturn position as at Quarter 2 as shown in Table 1.

(2) That the virements set out in section 3.5.3 be approved.

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- (3) That Cabinet note the forecast position as at 30 September 2021 for funding of the capital programme and reserve balances as reflected in Table 2.

50. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2021-22 - QUARTER 2

Report of the Chief Executive on the forecast revenue outturn position as at 30 September 2021 for the financial year 2021-22; outlining the main variances from the original budget for both the General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

There was a forecast adverse variance on the General Fund explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3 with key additional variances that arose in the second quarter set out in table 3.2.2.

The second quarter outturn gave more visibility for the full year and for the 2022/23 Budget setting process. Any downside risks for the 2021/22 financial year are set out in section 3.2.3 and Appendix F. There were risks relating to commercial rental income however the bad debt provision was deemed to be adequate with collection holding up. Despite the financial impacts of Covid19 still being felt, these impacts were starting to lessen, and the Councils financial position remained strong.

Appendix C1 set out the forecast for the Housing Revenue Account. Variances and costings are set out in Appendices D1 to D4. Some of these relating to an increased volume of repairs and higher material prices. The Affordable Housing Programme will be assessed as part of the 2022/23 HRA capital budget setting process.

RESOLVED:
(unanimous)

- (1) That Cabinet note the revenue forecast outturn position as at Quarter 2 (30 September 2021).
- (2) That Cabinet note the position on debts set out in section 5 of this report.

51. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:
(unanimous)

That under Section 100(A)(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting for Agenda item 12 (Minute 51 refer) on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in

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Section 100A(3) and paragraph 3 (private financial or business information) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

In resolving to exclude the public in respect of the exempt information, it was considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

52. ITEM OF AN EXEMPT NATURE REQUIRING KEY DECISION

The following item of an exempt nature for decision were considered:-

52.1. Housing Maintenance Procurement Update (Forward Plan Reference FP1088)

Exempt report of the Chief Executive on the Housing Maintenance Procurement update.

(**Note** a more detailed record of the Cabinet discussion is contained in exempt item 52a)

Meeting ended at 5.17 pm
AM