

Cabinet
30 November 2021

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET held on Tuesday 30 November 2021 at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors T.Kingsbury (Leader of the Council) (Chairman)
D.Bell (Deputy Leader and Executive Member, Resources)

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 Chief Executive (K.Ng)
PRESENT: Head of Resources (R.Baker)
Head of Law and Administration (M.Martinus)
Head of Housing Operations (S.Pearson)
Governance Services Manager (A.Marston)
Communications Officer (A.Wildey)

53. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

54. ACTIONS STATUS REPORT

The status of actions agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 3 November 2021 and for decisions taken by Cabinet Members exercising their individual delegated powers between 25 October 2021 to 22 November 2021 in the report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) was noted.

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillors S.Boulton, T.Kingsbury and F.Thomson declared a non-pecuniary interest in items on the Agenda as Members of Hertfordshire County Council.

56. ITEMS REQUIRING KEY DECISION

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

Cabinet
30 November 2021

56.1. Now Housing Limited Progress Report (Forward Plan Reference FP1090)

Recommendation from the meeting of Cabinet Housing Panel on the 8 November 2021.

(1) The Decision Taken

**RESOLVED:
(unanimous)**

Cabinet noted the update on the performance of Now Housing Limited and approved the updated Business Plan.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

Now Housing is a Council-owned company, operating within the General Fund. Its purpose was to provide housing for local people whose needs cannot easily be met through the private or social rented sectors.

The Council's Shareholder Group monitored the company's delivery against the business plan, and had overarching responsibility for the governance of Now Housing.

Now Housing was initially funded by loans from the Council, via the General Fund. Net rental income would permit Now Housing to repay these loans, and, as time goes on, Now Housing would use surpluses over and above this to complement the funding from the Council. The General Fund lending to Now Housing is itself financed by matched long-term borrowing, currently from the Public Works Loan Board.

As noted in the report, Now Housing currently owned and managed a block of 12 units at Chequersfield in Welwyn Garden City. Performance had been good, with rent collection currently at 100%. Only 4 days rent had been lost, through a void, but that was re-let quickly.

The initial business plan was approved in October 2019. The latest indicative plan, which was consistent with the Council's current 2021/22 budget was set out in the appendix to the report, and aimed to deliver 416 homes over the next 5 years.

The business plan is reviewed annually, and in this way can be kept consistent with future council budgets.

The report was unanimously noted, and found helpful, by the Cabinet Housing Panel at its meeting on 8 November 2021.

Cabinet
30 November 2021

56.2. Parking Works Programme 2022-24 (Forward Plan Reference FP1075)

Recommendation from the meeting of Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel on the 11 November 2021.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:
(unanimous)

- (1) Cabinet approved the new Works Programme 2022-2024, as outlined in the Cabinet Planning and Parking report with the exception of Robin Hood Lane/The Common & Pine Grove.
- (2) Cabinet agreed to give delegated authority to the Head of Environment in consultation with Executive Member for Resources to make minor adjustments to the programme, in order to assist with the delivery of Council's corporate projects as and when required.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

The areas to be covered were set out in the report. The report was discussed at the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel at its meeting on 11 November 2021.

Whilst the majority of the report was accepted, concern was raised at the exclusion of part of Woods Avenue, where some members felt that problems were equal to those in Pine Grove.

The Panel therefore asked that officers to consider options to include Woods Avenue in the programme and return to the Panel.

57. RECOMMENDATION FROM GRANTS BOARD

The following recommendation from the meeting of the Grants Board on 3 November 2021 was considered:-

57.1. Grants Board - 3 November 2021

Recommendation from the Board on the payment of annual grants in 2022/23.

In November, Grants Board met to consider applications for the award of annual grants. £73,270 was anticipated to be ring fenced for the distribution of Annual Grant payments for the financial year 2022/23.

Eight applications were received. To ensure that the fund was available widely, the maximum amount that could be supported through the fund was £20,000 per organisation.

Cabinet
30 November 2021

The fund was oversubscribed, with the eight organisations applying for a total of £148,150.

The Board gave careful consideration to each application and had made the recommendations on awards, as set out in the minutes which were contained in the Cabinet papers. The total sum recommended was £73,270, which was the full budget available.

**RESOLVED:
(unanimous)**

Cabinet agreed that the inclusion of £73,270 for Annual Community Grants in the draft 2022/23 Council budget be confirmed, and that this was allocated according to the recommendations set out in the minutes of the Grants Board of 3 November 2021.

58. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2021/22

Report of the Chief Executive on the mid-year update on the Council's treasury activities from 1 April to 30 September 2021.

The report summarised both the Council's borrowing and investments. The report was primarily a "point in time" analysis, as at 30 September 2021. The report was updated every six months.

As noted, until recently, borrowing had been for Housing Revenue Account (HRA) activities only. However, as the Council's General Fund capital schemes, particularly the regeneration projects, advance, recourse to borrowing within the General Fund had been required, as predicted. General Fund borrowing would also be needed in the future to finance lending to Now Housing as their investment needs increase.

The bulk of borrowing remained for HRA purposes. The level of HRA borrowing for the immediate future would be assessed as part of the HRA Capital Budget for 2022/23.

**RESOLVED:
(unanimous)**

Cabinet noted the current treasury position and Treasury Management Indicators.

59. PERFORMANCE EXCEPTION REPORT - QUARTER 2 (2021-22)

Report of the Chief Executive summarising strategic performance data for Quarter 2 for 2021/22.

Cabinet
30 November 2021

The report summarised the Council's corporate performance data on an exception basis and covered the period 1 July to 30 September 2021. It included any corporate projects and key performance indicators (KPIs) reported as not meeting their target over the period.

Cabinet noted only one corporate project in this category, at Appendix One, which was linked to the progress of the Local Plan. All KPIs below target were set out in Appendix Two with explanatory notes provided by the respective heads of service.

RESOLVED:
(unanimous)

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

60. COUNCIL ACHIEVEMENTS LIST (JULY-SEPTEMBER 2021)

Report of the Chief Executive summarising the Council's key achievements and service improvements for Quarter 2 of 2021-22.

The achievements include the appointment of the Council's new chief executive, the full re-opening of Campus West, Mill Green Museum and The Hive, and the delivery of a wide range of summer events and activities throughout the Borough. This saw thousands of people get involved in free physical and leisure activity while increasing much-needed footfall to the town centres.

The achievements in the report were all promoted on social media, with well over 50,000 people engaging with that content on Facebook alone (either by liking, sharing, or commenting on posts), and nearly 35,000 unique users visiting the ONE Welwyn Hatfield website which is more than one third of adults in the Borough.

The appendix noted whether council press releases were taken up by local media. A summary of these achievements were also covered in the latest edition of ONE magazine, which was delivered to every home in the Borough.

Cabinet thanked officers and Members who had made the achievements happen within the Borough.

RESOLVED:
(unanimous)

Cabinet noted the report and contents of the Achievements List.

61. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

Cabinet
30 November 2021

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 14 (Minute 62 refer) on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in Section 100A(3) and paragraphs 3 (private financial or business information) and 5 (information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings) 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 exemptions outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

62. ITEM OF AN EXEMPT NATURE REQUIRING KEY DECISION

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

62.1. Award of contract for development of 20 affordable units at Swallowfield's (Forward Plan Reference FP1081)

Exempt report of the Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) on the Swallowfields Site Development.

(Note: a more detailed record of the Cabinet discussion is contained in exempt item 62a).

62.2. 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 62b).

Meeting ended 5.25pm
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