

Cabinet
8 August 2023

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET held on Tuesday 8 August 2023 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors P.Zukowskyj (Leader)
L.Chesterman (Deputy Leader)
S.Bonfante (Executive Member, Environment)
J.Broach (Executive Member, Governance)
D.Jones (Executive Member, Resources)

ALSO PRESENT: Cllr T. Kingsbury (Leader of the Opposition)

OFFICIALS PRESENT: K.Ng, Chief Executive
R.Baker, Executive Director (Finance & Transformation)
C Barnes, Executive Director (Place)
M Sherry, Communications and Marketing Manager
C Cade, Governance Services Manager
R Misir, Democratic Services Officer

118. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2023 were approved as a correct record.

119. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Max Holloway and Jane Quinton.

120. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND PETITIONS

No public questions, or petitions, were received.

121. ACTIONS STATUS REPORT

The actions status report was noted.

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122. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 7

There was no notification of urgent business to be considered.

123. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Cllr Zukowskyj advised he is a Member of Hertfordshire County Council.

124. Q1 REVENUE MONITORING REPORT

The report presented the forecast revenue outturn position as at 30 June 2023 for the financial year 2023-24 and outlined the main variances from the original budget for both the General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

There is a forecast adverse variance on the General Fund net cost of services of £0.945m. This leaves a net drawdown from the General Fund Reserve of £1.522m, an increase in the planned use of balances by £0.906m.

The forecast closing balance on the Housing Revenue Account is £2.982m, which was an adverse movement of £0.024m from the Current Budget.

Outstanding debts as at 30 June 2023 totalled £2.269m, with rolling debtor days at 49.39.

Cllr Kingsbury commented that there was already a £1m variance, noted the already existing budgetary challenges and asked about measures to control the budget. Cllr Jones responded that while this was a concern it was early in the financial year; action was being taken, and some variables were yet to happen. Cllr Zukowskyj added that the Council was forecast to spend £450k less than anticipated on the waste contract this financial year.

DECISION TAKEN:

Cabinet noted the revenue forecast outturn position as at Quarter 1 (30 June 2023) and the position on debts set out in Section 5 of the report.

125. Q1 CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT

The report presented the capital expenditure and associated capital funding as at the end of Quarter 1 (June 2023). The report and appendices detailed the changes to the original capital programme and funding plans, as a result of programme commitments and project delivery.

The current approved capital budget is £95.304m (which includes the approved re-phasing of budgets from 2022/23) and the forecast outturn is £78.922m. A summary of forecast variances and re-phasing was shown in Table 1 and detailed explanations for key variances in Section 3.4.

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A summary of progress against key projects for which no variances had been identified was detailed within Section 3.5.

A forecast of the resources available to fund the capital programme and variances of the current forecast against the available resources budgeted were set out in Section 4 of the report.

DECISION TAKEN:

Cabinet noted the capital forecast outturn position as shown in Table 1.

Cabinet approved the virements set out in Section 3.4.2. Cabinet noted the forecast position as at 30 June 2023 for funding of the capital programme and reserve balances as reflected in Table 2.

126. PERFORMANCE EXCEPTION REPORT - QUARTER 1 (2023-24)

The report summarised the Council's corporate performance data on an exception basis following the monitoring and review of performance reports by the Chief Executive, Directors, and Assistant Directors. The period covered was 1 April to 30 June 2023.

Cllr Kingsbury commented that BPI 28 (the percentage of all planning enforcement cases where a decision on action had been taken within 28 days), the target was 87% but the actual figure was now at 47%. The service comments in the report explained why this was the case and he understood there were a lot of current enforcement cases but this was an issue residents raised and he asked about the scope for improving enforcement. Cllr Zukowskyj responded that enforcement was a priority; the issue was a combination of the way in which some cases were being progressed, and an influx of new cases that needed to be progressed through the system. This was an area of focus and a structured plan was in place to improve performance in subsequent quarters. Statistics over the year would provide a better perspective than those for this quarter alone.

DECISION TAKEN:

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

Reasons for the decision:

The performance exception report is presented to the Cabinet on a quarterly basis as part of the current performance management framework.

127. COUNCIL ACHIEVEMENTS LIST (APRIL TO JUNE 2023)

A short video that highlighted staff achievements was shown to Cabinet. In addition to those highlights, Members noted other achievements included the opening of the upper deck of Campus West car park; the opening of Tewin Road recycling centre; the endorsement of Armed Forces Day when a flag was raised; engagement with the summer anti-littering campaign; the World

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Food Festival in Welwyn Garden City; and implementation of new election rules. Cabinet thanked Council staff who had worked hard to secure these achievements.

Cabinet noted the report and contents of the Achievements List.

128. SUCH OTHER BUSINESS AS, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIRMAN, IS OF SUFFICIENT URGENCY TO WARRANT IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION

There were no items of business under this item and the meeting was drawn to a close.

Meeting ended at 6.58 pm