

Cabinet
5 March 2024

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET held on Tuesday 5 March 2024 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
J.Broach
D.Jones
J.Quinton

ALSO PRESENT: A.Hellyer

OFFICIALS PRESENT: K.Ng, Chief Executive
R.Baker, Executive Director (Finance & Transformation)
C Barnes, Executive Director (Place)
S.McDaid, Executive Director (Resident Services and Climate Change)
S.Saunders, Legal Services Manager
M Sherry, Communications and Marketing Manager
R Misir, Senior Democratic Services Officer

222. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

223. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr M Holloway.

224. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND PETITIONS

There were no public questions or petitions.

225. ACTIONS STATUS REPORT

Cabinet noted the actions status report.

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226. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 10

There was no notification of urgent business.

227. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Cllr Zukowskyj declared an interest as a Hertfordshire County Councillor.

228. ITEMS RECOMMENDING TO FULL COUNCIL

The following item was considered for recommendation to Full Council for approval.

228.1. FP2026 Council Tax Second Homes and Empty Homes Premiums

Cabinet received a report which advised of the new discretionary powers that would be available to charge an empty homes premium after 12 months and give at least one year's notice before the beginning of the financial year to which it relates to charge a premium on all second homes. This would be effective from 1 April 2025.

RESOLVED

DECISION TAKEN:

Cabinet:

- a) Recommended to Council that the current council tax 100% empty homes premium is applied after 12 months of a property being empty, instead of 24 months, effective from 1 April 2025. This will not be applied to the exempt categories of empty properties listed in the report.
- b) Recommended to Council that 1 year's notice is provided to apply a 100% second homes premium, from 1 April 2025. This will not be applied to the exempt categories of second homes listed in the report.
- c) Recommended to Council for delegated authority to be given to the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) in consultation with the Executive Member for Resources to make any changes to the Empty Homes and Second Homes Premiums, following regulations being laid.

REASON FOR THE DECISION

The long-term empty homes premium provides a positive incentive to encourage property owners to take steps to make more effective use of properties that have otherwise been left unoccupied. This will be reinforced by applying the premium to properties that have been empty and unfurnished for at least one year, rather than 2 years as is currently the case.

229. ITEMS REQUIRING KEY DECISION

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The following items were considered for decision from the Forward Plan:

229.1. FP2028 Service Level Agreement - CCTV Monitoring and Maintenance

Cabinet received a report about maintaining and monitoring its network of CCTV cameras that monitored public spaces.

RESOLVED

DECISION TAKEN:

Subject to Part 2 discussions, Cabinet:

- a) Gave approval for the Council to enter into a 5 year agreement (with a possible two year extension) with St Albans City and District Council (SADC) for the provision of CCTV services subject to the price quoted by SADC remaining competitive against any price quotation which may be received from another provider.
- b) Subject to a), delegated authority is given to the Executive Director (Resident Services and Climate Change) in consultation with the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) and the Legal Services Manager to agree the SLA with St Albans City and District Council for the provision of the CCTV services.

REASON FOR THE DECISION:

In 2018 the Council entered into a service level agreement with St Albans City and District Council (SADC) to maintain and monitor our network of CCTV cameras monitoring public spaces. The current service level agreement/contract terminates at the end of March 2025. The network of CCTV cameras provides a vital service to the Community Safety Partnership across the borough.

229.2. FP2032 Sale of Newspaper Contract

Cabinet received a report relating to the award of contract for the Sale of Newspaper consortium.

RESOLVED

DECISION TAKEN:

Subject to Part 2 discussions, Cabinet agreed that the contract for both Lot 1 (recovered newspapers and magazines) and Lot 2 (recovered mixed paper including tetra pak) are awarded to Edwards Recycling Limited for an initial period of 2 years (with an optional extension of up to a further two years), commencing on 1st June 2024.

REASON FOR THE DECISION:

Welwyn Hatfield is the Lead Authority of a consortium of local councils that collect newspaper and other papers from residents and sell the product for recycling. The current contract expires on 31st May 2024 and a tender process has been undertaken to appoint a new contractor to ensure service continuity.

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229.3. FP2003 Empty Homes Policy

Cabinet received a report that considered the Empty Homes Policy following the public consultation that was undertaken.

RESOLVED

DECISION TAKEN:

Cabinet:

- a) Considered and noted the responses to the public consultation and
- b) Approved the Empty Homes policy set out at Appendix A of the report.

REASON FOR THE DECISION:

The Council's proposed Empty Homes Policy firmly aligns with the Council's Housing Strategy and aims to unlock the potential of vacant sites and empty homes, thereby contributing towards meeting local housing supply needs. Empty homes can have a negative impact on the local community and in some circumstances may be the subject of multiple concerns such as anti-social behaviour and dilapidation including structural repair, nuisance, as well as unauthorised entry. Bringing these properties back into use can not only deal with the issues outlined above but can also bring assistance to the owner who may not have known what to do with the property.

229.4. P2004 Food Safety Plan 2024/25

Cabinet received a report which set out the Food Safety Service Plan for 2024/25 and draft Food Sampling Plan for 2024/25.

RESOLVED

DECISION TAKEN:

Cabinet considered and approved the Food Safety Service Plan for 2024/25 in Appendix A and Food Sampling Plan for 2024/25 in Appendix B.

REASON FOR THE DECISION:

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has overall responsibility for the official control of food law enforcement in England. This involves co-ordinating, monitoring, setting standards and auditing local authority food law enforcement activities. This includes a requirement that all local authorities produce a food safety service plan which has been agreed by their members.

230. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET PANELS

231. FP2044 WELWYN CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

This item was considered by Cabinet as a result of a recommendation from Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel on 18 January 2024.

RESOLVED

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DECISION TAKEN:

Cabinet agreed to recommend to Council that the Welwyn Village Character Appraisal and Management Plan be adopted and the boundary of the Welwyn Village Character Appraisal and Management Plan be revised.

REASON FOR THE DECISION:

Under national planning policy guidance and advice by Historic England, Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) are required to review their areas and formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. LPAs should also consult the public and take account of views expressed. A review of the Welwyn Village Conservation Area has taken place, public engagement was carried out and a final version of the Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) includes an amended conservation area boundary in response to the comments received.

232. FP2043 APPROACH TO MASTERPLANNING, PLANNING GUIDANCE

This item was considered by Cabinet as a result of a recommendation from Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel (CPPP) on 15 February 2024.

Cllr Hellyer asked what would happen if CPPP was to reject a masterplan and the applicant then put forward the masterplan to Development Management Committee (DMC). While there was a collaborative approach, he saw CPPP as a political panel that did not function in the quasi-judicial way that DMC did and could hypothetically reject a masterplan for partisan reasons. He asked how much weight DMC could put on the fact that CPPP had rejected a masterplan if it also wished to reject it or whether only strictly planning reasons could be used to reject it.

The Executive Director for Place advised that should an application with a masterplan come to DMC, officers would provide guidance as to whether the masterplan could be considered a material consideration and if so, guidance would be provided as to the weight that could be afforded to it on a case by case basis. The Leader added that if CPPP was dissatisfied with a masterplan it would presumably have sound reasons, and he noted a number of parties were involved in putting together a masterplan so this was not solely within the influence of the developer. He anticipated DMC would give weight to the application itself rather than the masterplan, as the masterplanning system provided guidance as to what the Council might expect on a particular site. The Executive Director for Place added that if the Council had endorsed a masterplan, that could be a material consideration for DMC members to give weight to alongside guidance from officers, and legal advice would be sought on a case by case basis. It was agreed the potential implications of different scenarios would be covered in the 'implications' section of relevant committee reports.

RESOLVED

DECISION TAKEN:

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Cabinet endorsed the approach to Masterplanning Guidance and delegated authority to the Assistant Director (Planning) in consultation with the Executive Director for Planning to make minor updates to the guidance if required.

REASON FOR THE DECISION:

Policy SP 9 of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan (adopted October 2023) requires that a comprehensive approach is taken to the development of large or complex sites. This is to be achieved through the production of a masterplan. By outlining principles and requirements for development, a masterplan document sets a template for guiding development and helps ensure sites are delivered in a comprehensive and well-planned manner. If endorsed or adopted by Council, the masterplan becomes a material consideration when determining planning applications.

233. INTRODUCTION OF 2024-2026 PARKING SERVICES WORKS PROGRAMME

This item was considered by Cabinet as a result of a recommendation from Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel (CPPP) on 15 February 2024.

RESOLVED

DECISION TAKEN:

Cabinet approved the Parking Services Works Programme for 2024-2026 and delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Regeneration and Economic Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment to make minor modifications to the Works Programme, including adding new small scale schemes and reprioritising projects, to assist with the delivery of Council's corporate projects and management of resources as and when required.

REASON FOR THE DECISION:

The Parking Services Work Programme sets out the areas within which the parking team are due to consider the need for, and deliver, parking interventions in specified areas across the Borough. Throughout the year, the Council receives many requests for parking restrictions, and these are recorded on the Parking Services Investigation List for consideration for a future Parking Works Programme. The Works Programme allows the Parking Services team to manage the expectations of the communities' requesting restrictions and the associated workload demand of the team.

234. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

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 Items 12 & 13 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in Section 100(A)(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

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information, it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

235. ITEMS OF AN EXEMPT NATURE REQUIRING KEY DECISION

235.1. FP2028 Service Level Agreement - CCTV Monitoring and Maintenance

Cabinet received a report about maintaining and monitoring its network of CCTV cameras that monitored public spaces.

RESOLVED

DECISION TAKEN:

Cabinet:

- a) Gave approval for the Council to enter into a 5 year agreement (with a possible two year extension) with St Albans City and District Council (SADC) for the provision of CCTV services subject to the price quoted by SADC remaining competitive against any price quotation which may be received from another provider.
- b) Subject to a), delegated authority is given to the Executive Director (Resident Services and Climate Change) in consultation with the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) and the Legal Services Manager to agree the SLA with St Albans City and District Council for the provision of the CCTV services.

REASON FOR THE DECISION:

In 2018 the Council entered into a service level agreement with St Albans City and District Council (SADC) to maintain and monitor our network of CCTV cameras monitoring public spaces. The current service level agreement/contract terminates at the end of March 2025. The network of CCTV cameras provides a vital service to the Community Safety Partnership across the borough.

236. FP2032 SALE OF NEWSPAPER CONSORTIUM

Cabinet received a report relating to the award of contract for the Sale of Newspaper consortium.

RESOLVED

DECISION TAKEN:

Cabinet agreed that the contract for both Lot 1 (recovered newspapers and magazines) and Lot 2 (recovered mixed paper including tetra pak) are awarded to Edwards Recycling Limited for an initial period of 2 years (with an optional extension of up to a further two years), commencing on 1st June 2024.

Meeting ended at 7.08 pm