

Cabinet
6 August 2024

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET held on Tuesday 6 August 2024 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors M.Holloway, Leader of the Council, Executive Member Climate Change

J.Quinton, Deputy Leader of the Council, Executive Member Leisure and Community

R.Grewal,
Executive Member Planning

G.Moore, Executive Member Housing

K.Thorpe, Executive Member Governance

S.Bonfante, Executive Member Environment

ALSO Councillor Kingsbury,
PRESENT: Leader of the Opposition

OFFICIALS K.Ng, Chief Executive
PRESENT: H.O'Keeffe, Assistant Director (Finance)
S.Saunders, Legal Services Manager
C.Cade, Governance Services Manager
M.Sherry, Communications & Marketing Manager

STATEMENT ON RECENT VIOLENCE

At the start of the meeting the Leader of the Council made the following announcement:

"We're all horrified at the scenes that have played and continue to play out across the Country and our heartfelt thoughts are with the community of Southport and the families of Bebe King, Elsie Dot Stancombe, and Alice Dasilva Aguiar for their dreadful loss.

And we condemn the way some people have weaponised this tragic event to sow hatred and division. There is no space in our communities for racism, for hatred or for violence. There can never be any justification in attacking and singling out minorities because of the colour of their skin or their faith.

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We're also witnessing shocking acts being targeted at those who are most vulnerable in our country, displaced people who have come to our shores, often with their children, seeking safety, refuge and stability.

It seems these riots are being organised by those who want to deliberately spread hatred in our country and not by the people who live peacefully side by side with their neighbours. There is no possible justification for this incitement and the hate riots they produce.

So we stand with everyone in our community who is appalled at what they're seeing in the news. In solidarity with our neighbours who will justifiably be feeling worried and uncertain about what this means, and against hatred and violence which can never be allowed to win.”

271. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2024 were approved as a correct record.

272. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Broach.

273. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND PETITIONS

There were no petitions or public questions.

274. ACTIONS STATUS REPORT

Cabinet noted the Action Status Report.

275. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 13

No notifications were received.

276. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

No declarations of interest were received.

277. ITEMS REQUIRING KEY DECISION

The following key decisions were considered:

277.1. FP2051 Air Quality Strategy

Cabinet received a report on the Council's Air Quality Strategy 2024.

Decision taken

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The Cabinet noted the report and approved the Air Quality Strategy 2024.

Reason for decision

The obligation to monitor and manage air quality within the borough lies with the Council. There was no breach of air quality limit values at present and pollution levels were reducing.

277.2. FP2069 Customer Services Policies

Cabinet received a report containing the updates to customer service policies.

Decision taken

Cabinet agreed the following:

1. The updates to the council's Complaints Policy.
2. The updates to the council's Unreasonably Persistent and Abusive Behaviour Policy
3. The updates to the council's Compensation and Redress Scheme.
4. The introduction of the council's Vulnerable Person and Reasonable Adjustment Policy.

Reason for decision

Following the publication of the final Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Codes, the Council undertook a full review of the council's relevant Customer Service policies.

278. RISK MANAGEMENT - QUARTER 1 RISK REGISTERS 2024/25

Cabinet received a report on the current identified strategic risks facing the Council, and those operational risks assessed as having a residual risk level of serious or severe. The report contained an assessment of risk as of 30 June 2024.

Decision taken

Cabinet noted the report, the actions being taken in relation of the strategic and serious/severe operational risk and the Risk Register Q1 2024/25.

279. QUARTER 1 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2024-25

Cabinet received a report on the forecast revenue outturn position as at 30 June 2024 for the financial year 2024-25 and the outline of the main variances from the original budget for both the General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

It was agreed additional details would be circulated to the Leader of the Opposition on the forecast outturn variance.

Decision taken

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Cabinet noted the revenue forecast outturn position as of Q1 and the position on debts in section 5 of the report.

Cabinet approved the virements set out in Section 4.1.3 of the report.

Reason for decision

The report presented the forecast revenue outturn position as at 30 June 2024 for the financial year 2024/25 and outlined the main variances from the original budget for the General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

There is a forecast adverse variance on the General Fund net controllable income and expenditure of £0.731m. A summary showing the General Fund position was included in Appendix A1 of the report. This left a net contribution from the General Fund Reserve of £0.633m which is an increase in the planned use of balances by £0.625m

The forecast closing balance on the HRA was £3.207m, which was an adverse movement of £0.069m from the Current Budget.

Outstanding debts as of 30 June 2024 total £1.88m.

280. PERIOD 3 CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2024-25

Cabinet received a report on the capital expenditure and associated capital funding as at the end of Period 3 (June 2024). The report and appendices detailed the changes to the original capital programme and funding plans, as a result of programme commitments and project delivery.

Decision taken

Cabinet noted the capital forecast outturn position and the forecast position as of 30 June 2024 for funding of the capital programme and reserve balances as reflected in Table 2.

Cabinet approved the virements set out in Section 3.2 of the report.

Reason for decision

At the end of the quarter, an overall underspend of around £18.1 million is anticipated. The majority of this was associated with the Housing Revenue Account. These projects are proceeding, but due to reasons set out within the report against individual projects, the timing of spend will be in next financial year.

Some virements are set out in the report, to adjust budgets in relation to an adjustment between affordable housing programme schemes and the affordable housing contingency budget.

Updates were included within the report, for key capital projects, which currently have no forecast variances.

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The capital financing had been updated to reflect the latest forecast spend, leading to an overall reduction to borrowing for the year. This borrowing will still be required in future years when the projects are completed.

281. PERFORMANCE EXCEPTION REPORT

Cabinet received a report setting out 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 report covers the period 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024 (Q1)

The Leader of the Opposition asked for the action(s) being taken to address the differences between actual times and target times.

Decision taken

Cabinet noted the report.

282. ACHIEVEMENT LIST

Cabinet received a report setting out the Council's key achievements and service improvements during Q1 2024/25.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- Officers were thanked for their work on the markets being held in Hatfield
- Congratulations were shared to the Council on the accuracy and speed of the work for both elections held this year.

Decision taken

Cabinet noted the report and its contents.

Meeting ended at 6.50 pm