

Cabinet
3 December 2024

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET held on Tuesday 3 December 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)
J.Quinton (Deputy Leader of the Council)
S.Bonfante (Executive Member, Environment)
J.Broach (Executive Member, Resources)
R.Grewal (Executive Member, Planning)
G.Moore (Executive Member, Housing)
K.Thorpe (Executive Member, Governance)

ALSO
PRESENT: Councillor Kingsbury, Leader of the Opposition.

OFFICIALS K.Ng, Chief Executive
PRESENT: R.Baker, Executive Director (Finance & Transformation)
G.Ramtohal, Assistant Director (Legal & Governance)
K. Robert, Assistant Director (Customer & Transformation)
C.Cade, Governance Services Manager

323. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 5th November 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

324. APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

325. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND PETITIONS

Question from Laura Hyde, Resolve:

Cabinet
3 December 2024

“My name is Laura Hyde and I am the CEO of Resolve, a local charity that manages the Restart programme aimed at combatting homelessness and rough sleeping.

Currently Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council has a Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy for 2019–2024. As part of this strategy the Council works with charities and stakeholders to combat homelessness and rough sleeping. This has included working with Resolve to help fund Restart's outreach work and ongoing support.

The Restart outreach team work 365 days a year with people who are rough sleeping on the streets in Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield. This work helps some of the most vulnerable in society turn their lives around, become productive members of our community and stops the cycle of homelessness. Something the Council has promoted and celebrated.

Recent communication with Officers has indicated uncertainty whether the Council is committed to combatting rough sleeping and requests for a meeting to discuss the strategy and options which are unclear.

With growing numbers of rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness, can the Leader of the Council explain it's strategy for tackling homelessness and rough sleeping? Can the Leader of the Council also specifically provide assurances as to the Council's commitment to combatting rough sleeping, working with stakeholders and assisting with the funding of the outreach teams?”

Answer from the Executive Member (Housing):

“Thank you for your question Laura, and thank you for the Result Team for coming out tonight. I know how passionate you are and it's a reflection of how much you care.

First of all, I would like to thank Resolve for all their hard work in helping us tackle rough sleeping in the borough through the Restart Programme. You are an important partner to us and we do value the good relationship we have managed to build throughout the years.

The Council is committed to combatting rough sleeping and homelessness and has utilised both Council resources and homelessness funding to support this area of work. Unfortunately, we are currently waiting for confirmation of our homelessness funding from central government for 2025/26 and this will not be known until much closer to Christmas. If our funding remains broadly in line with the current year, I could not see any reason why our support to Resolve would change. If, however, our funding is reduced or removed, then we need to review the position. I know our Chief Executive is planning to meet with you next month to discuss the position further, once our grant position is confirmed.

Cabinet
3 December 2024

With regards to the rough sleeper strategy, work is already under way to prepare for a new one. We will be taking this to our Cabinet Housing Panel in early 2025, and will be consulting with our stakeholders, partners (including Resolve), and the public shortly after that to ensure that the strategy meets the needs of our most vulnerable residents, it will also help inform how we will work with partners to deliver our service going forward.”

326. ACTIONS STATUS REPORT

Cabinet noted the Action Status report.

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

No notifications for urgent business were received.

328. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillors Broach and Thorpe declared an interests in Item 9b and would leave the meeting for the item.

329. ITEMS REQUIRING KEY DECISION

The below item requiring key decision was considered:

329.1. FP2078 Housing Planned Works (Internals) Contract

Cabinet received the Part 1 report on the Housing Planned Works. A procurement exercise had been carried out for small and medium bids to complete the work.

It was anticipated that as a result of the recent stock condition survey of the Council's housing stock, additional planned works will be needed and the council will require further resources to help to deliver the housing capital works programme.

To support this delivery, a procurement exercise had been carried out for internal work such as kitchens, bathrooms and electrical rewires. This exercise invited specialist contractors to tender and offer the procurement opportunity for small and medium businesses to bid. 19 bids were received and the bids were assessed based on a 50 % quality and 50 % price basis. As a result of the pre-procurement exercise Cabinet are asked to agree the award of the contract for internal plan works to Graceland's Complete Maintenance Services Limited.

The contract will commence on 1st February 2025 and can continue for an initial period of three years with possible extension of up to five years.

Cabinet
3 December 2024

The Cabinet noted that the details of the scoring were set out in the Part 2 report, and the report would be agreed under Part 2 discussions.

330. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The following report was received following recommendation from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

330.1. Report of the Grounds Maintenance Task and Finish Group

Cabinet received a report of the Grounds Maintenance Task and Finish Group. The report set out the details of the scope of the Group and a number of recommendations from the Group's findings.

During the discussion, the Leader of the Opposition noted that the length and time of cut of the were included in the recommendations in the report. The Leader of the Opposition asked how confident the Executive Member (Environment) was that there would be improvements within the next year. The Executive Member for Environment highlighted that significant changes were being made to how grass cutting would take place within the borough. A number of factors were weather dependent but assurances were provided that residents would see the improvement.

Decision taken

Cabinet agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

Reason for decision

On 20th November 2024, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended to Cabinet the recommendations of the Grounds Maintenance Task & Finish Group for approval

331. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET PANELS

The Cabinet received the following report following recommendation from the Council's Planning and Parking Cabinet Panel:

331.1. FP2089 Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

It was noted that in line with the recommendations set out in the report which went to CPPP, the decision had been taken using Executive Member Decision Notice.

331.2. FP2104 University of Hertfordshire Campus Masterplan

At this point in the meeting Councillor Broach and Thorpe left the room.

Cabinet received a report on the University of Hertfordshire's Estate Vision 2035.

Cabinet
3 December 2024

During the discussion, Councillor Zukowskyj raised concerns regarding the development of the site such as whether the height of the blocks within the site would be comprehensively assessed to ensure these do not impact the views of the Green Belt. The Executive Member (Planning) highlighted that the plans were for improvements for the university and all planning applications are assessed against planning policies such as the Local Plan.

Decision taken

The Cabinet:

- Endorsed the University of Hertfordshire Estates Vision and accompanying phasing plans for development management purposes; and
- Agreed that the contents of the Estate Vision be treated as material consideration in future planning applications

Reason for decision

Endorsement of the Estates Vision would enable future planning applications to be considered in the context of the overall vision and would enable the Vision itself to be treated as a material consideration. Whilst individual applications, along with their impacts, would still need to be considered through the planning process, the existence of a strategic framework would demonstrate the Council's in principle support for their future plans.

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

There were no items of urgent business.

333. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Cabinet agreed 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 Item 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 information, it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

334. ITEMS OF AN EXEMPT NATURE REQUIRING KEY DECISION

334.1. FP2078 Housing Planned Works (Internals) Contract

Cabinet received a report on the award of a contract for the planned internal works.

Decision taken

Cabinet
3 December 2024

Cabinet agreed to award the contract for Internal planned work to Gracelands Complete Maintenance Services to commence on 1st February 2025 and continue for an initial period of 3 years with a possible extension of up to 5 years.

Reason for decision

Details for the reason for decision are set out at paragraph 329.1