

Cabinet  
5 November 2019

## WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET held on Tuesday 5 November 2019 at 7.30 pm 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)  
  
T.Mitchinson (Executive Member, Leisure, Culture and Communications)  
N.Pace (Executive Member, Housing and Community)  
B.Sarson (Executive Member, Regeneration, Economic Development and Partnerships)  
F.Thomson (Executive Member, Governance, Public Health and Climate Change)

OFFICIALS Chief Executive (R.Bridge)  
PRESENT: Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) (K.Ng)  
Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) (S.Russell)  
Head of Law and Administration (M.Martinus)  
Governance Services Manager (G.R.Seal)  
Communications Officer (C.Trussell)

---

57. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

58. APOLOGY

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S.Boulton (Executive Member, Environment and Planning).

59. ACTIONS STATUS REPORT

The status of actions agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 8 October 2019 in the report of the Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) was noted.

60. ITEMS RELATING TO THE BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL

The following items were considered:-

60.1. Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2020/21 (Forward Plan Reference FP928)

Report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) on continuation of the Council's localised council tax support scheme into 2020/21.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:

That the Council be recommended that the localised council tax support scheme continue in 2020/21 to help people on low/no income to receive a reduction on their council tax.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

The scheme fully protected pensioners and families with children under five years of age as well as certain other vulnerable claimants. For others, the assessed entitlement was calculated on 75% of the council tax bill.

Consultation had taken place with Hertfordshire County Council and the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner on the intention to continue with the same scheme and both bodies had responded in agreement.

The cost of the scheme was met through the collection fund, through a reduction of the tax base. Based on the latest information, the cost of the scheme for 2019/20 was likely to be £7M across all preceptors and this was forecast to continue at a similar level for 2020/21.

60.2. Duty of Care Enforcement for Fly-Tipping (Forward Plan Reference FP944)

Recommendation from the meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 September 2019 on the introduction of fixed penalty notices to allow individuals to discharge liability for the duty of care offence related to household waste by payment of a fixed penalty notice.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:

(1) That the introduction of a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) to allow individuals to discharge liability for the duty of care offence related to household waste by payment of a FPN be noted.

(2) That it be noted that the Duty of Care FPN would be issued by current authorised officers (Community and Environment Officers and Street Wardens).

Cabinet  
5 November 2019

- (3) That the Council be recommended that the level of fine should be set at £300, reduced to £200 for early resolution (if paid within ten days).
- (4) That the Council be recommended that the existing level of FPN for fly tipping offences should be amended to £300, reduced to £200 (currently £180) for early resolution (if paid within ten days) to ensure that the FPN that could be issued for fly tipping was consistent with the FPN for duty of care breaches and was in line with other Authorities in Hertfordshire which had introduced the fixed penalty notice.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

At present, the only options which are available to the Environment team when a breach of duty of care occurred was to prosecute, issue a simple caution or take no action. The introduction of a FPN would allow Officers to deal effectively with breaches and send out a stronger message than the current system allowed.

60.3. Service Standards for Regulatory Work (Forward Plan Reference FP945)

Recommendation from the meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 September 2019 on the adoption of revised service standards for regulatory work.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:

That the comments received from the recent consultation be noted and the revised regulatory service standards be agreed and recommended to the Council for adoption.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

The standards were originally adopted in 2014 and linked with the Council's corporate enforcement policy and the central government Regulators Code. In view of the production of the new corporate customer service strategy, it was timely to produce a revised set of standards.

61. ITEMS REQUIRING KEY DECISION

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

61.1. Digital Strategy and Revenue and Benefits Transformation Programme (Forward Plan Reference FP952)

Cabinet  
5 November 2019

Report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) providing the background and recommendations for the adoption and delivery of a digital strategy.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:

- (1) That following review the Digital Strategy be approved.
- (2) That it be noted that soft market testing would be undertaken on a single digital platform alongside an exercise to review the capabilities of the existing Customer Relationship Management system.
- (3) That the progress of the Revenues and Benefits Transformation Programme and its direct links with the draft Digital Strategy be noted.
- (4) That the progress of the Revenues and Benefits Transformation Programme and its direct links with the draft Digital Strategy be noted.
- (5) That the Cabinet notes the commitment in the strategy and approves the Council signing up to the Local Government Digital Service Standards.
- (6) That the Cabinet agrees that the recommendations relating to the financing of the strategy delivery be incorporated into the budget setting process.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

Following the very positive Local Government Association Peer Challenge report and recommendations, the Chief Executive had set out a vision to all employees of #OurFuture.

This highlighted an opportunity to undertake a comprehensive modernisation programme, a cornerstone of which would be how the Council responded to ever-changing demands on its services and the new ways that people wanted to access them.

The Council's current approach to software purchases and development did not put the customer at the heart of services. Instead, the current approach put services' own requirements at the heart of service design.

This also meant that the Council was not obtaining economies of scale with all of its software purchases (for example, the Council had a number of document management systems).

Cabinet  
5 November 2019

61.2. Insurance Services Tender - Request for Delegated Authority (Forward Plan Reference FP948)

Report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) seeking delegated authority to award insurance contracts to successful bidders for a period of five years.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet, in accordance with the unanimous recommendation of the General Procurement Board, give delegated authority to the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services), in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Executive Member (Resources) and the General Procurement Board, to award insurance contracts to the successful bidders for a contract period of five years under long term agreements.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

The majority of the Council's insurance contracts were for a period of five years and would expire in June 2020.

The General Procurement Board agreed the scope and evaluation criteria for the renewal tender process. However, time would preclude the Board's final recommendation being brought to the Cabinet in 2020 prior to the renewal date. The results of the tender evaluation would be shared by the Board for agreement by email in 2020. The board unanimously recommended to the Cabinet that delegated authority should then be granted to proceed.

61.3. Professional Building Services - Extension of Contract (Forward Plan Reference FP949)

Report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) on the extension of contracts for consultants to undertake professional services in relation to the Council's construction projects, the initial terms of which would expire in March 2020.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with the unanimous recommendation of the General Procurement Board, professional building services contracts be extended by twelve months until 31 March 2021.

Cabinet  
5 November 2019

(2) Reasons for the Decision

These contracts covered services used by both resources and housing and would expire on 31 March 2020 with an option to extend by one year.

As all contracts were working well the General Procurement Board unanimously recommended that they be extended until 31 March 2021.

61.4. Amendment of the Restrictions in the Hatfield Town Centre Car Parks (Forward Plan Reference FP940)

The meeting of the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel on 31 October 2019 deferred this item for further consideration and report back to a future meeting.

62. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET PANEL

The following recommendations from the meeting of the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel on 31 October 2019 were considered:-

62.1. Introduction of Resident Permit Scheme, Double Yellow Lines, Verge and Footway Prohibition and Clearway in Aldykes, Hatfield

The meeting of the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel on 31 October 2019 deferred this item for further consideration and report back to a future meeting.

62.2. Introduction of Waiting Restrictions in Various Roads, French Horn Lane, East Ward, Hatfield

Consideration of objections and the introduction of proposed waiting restrictions in various roads around the French Horn Lane area in Hatfield.

In January 2018 the Council sent out the first round of consultation letters setting out the scope of the consultation and this also included a proposal to create a Verge Protection Order to prevent parking on grass verges and pavements. Some roads returned low numbers of responses, less than 20% and these roads were then given a second opportunity to respond in May 2018. As a result of the responses, the French Horn Lane area was split into five separate areas for consultation and detailed parking designs. Areas 1 and 2 (located on the south side of French Horn Lane and either side of Old Rectory Drive) were dealt with by the Panel in June 2019 and this report dealt with the remaining areas 3, 4 and 5.

Area 3 was residential and comprised Endymion Road, Endymion Court, Cranbourne Road, Old French Horne Land and School Lane. Out of the 103 properties included in the consultation, 62% responded and the preference was to retain the current restrictions in the area, with a number of double yellow line junction protections being put in.

Area 4 consisted of business units around Beaconsfield Road and Bury Road. It was clear that there was strong opposition to the shared use business

Cabinet  
5 November 2019

permit bays proposal and the majority of responses received would like to see no changes to the current restrictions.

Area 5 consisted of a mixture of residential and retail around St Albans Road East. The majority of responses would like to see a single yellow line restriction and double yellow lines being proposed for the area outside of the Court buildings.

RESOLVED:

That having considered the objection received, the reasons for the order and in addition the issues raised around equalities and diversity, together with all the detailed issues including any proposed mitigating actions; the unanimous recommendation of the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel to proceed with the creation of a traffic regulation order be approved.

63. QUARTER 2 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2019/20

Report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) presenting the forecast revenue account position at Quarter 2 of 2019/20.

Within the General Fund the forecast net drawdown for reserves for 2019/20 remained at £145,000 as reported at the previous quarter.

Variances included a positive variance of £500,000 arising from the “budget reset” following the recent Peer Review. Efficiency savings from this exercise had been built into both the current 2019/20 budget and the forthcoming 2020/21 budget. The £500,000 2019/20 savings would be used at year end to fund a revenue contribution to capital which would allow much needed replenishment of General Fund capital reserves.

The other significant variance was an adverse cost impact of £240,000 relating to work on the Local Plan which had been funded by a transfer from earmarked reserves previously established for this purpose.

Within the Housing Revenue Account the forecast closing balance was now £2,621,000, an adverse movement of £169,000 compared to the previous quarter which was due to a higher than forecast revenue contribution to capital. Such contributions minimised the Council’s future borrowing costs.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the revenue forecast outturn position as at Quarter 2 of 2019/20 be noted.
- (2) That the virements, detailed in section 3.6 of the report be approved.
- (3) That the position on debts as set out in the report be noted.

64. QUARTER 2 CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2019/20

Report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) presenting the capital expenditure and associated capital funding at Quarter 2 of 2019/20.

The current approved capital budget was £66.624M and the current forecast outturn was £43.080M.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the capital forecast outturn position as at Quarter 2 of 2019/20 be noted.
- (2) That the forecast position as at 31 March 2020 for funding of the capital programme and reserve balances be noted.

65. QUEENSWAY HOUSE CONSULTATION

Report of the Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) on the outcome of the consultation process with commercial and residential tenants and leaseholders of Queensway House, Hatfield.

The consultation ran from 12 August to 23 September 2019 and involved a preliminary letter being sent to all residents and leaseholders offering an appointment including face to face appointments with those residents and leaseholders who wanted that.

Several follow up letters were sent to any resident or leaseholder who did not have a face to face meeting which included detailed information in writing, including the summary of the Council's reasons for the consultation and a document which set out Frequently Asked Questions and Answers.

The majority view of tenants and leaseholders was a preference for Option D, which was *'to help occupants to move out permanently, demolish the building and redevelop the block'*.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the outcome of the consultation with key stakeholders with the majority of residents and leaseholders supportive of Option D which was to 'help all occupants to move out permanently, demolish the building and redevelop the site be noted.
- (2) That the Cabinet agrees that the process of fully decanting the block should commence.
- (3) That the Cabinet agrees that high level design work should commence on the redevelopment of the site and that a further report be brought to Cabinet setting out details of the proposals.

- (4) That the Cabinet agrees that Officers commence negotiations with residential and commercial leaseholders and tenants regarding their future options.
- (5) That the Cabinet agrees that further uneconomical planned works at Queensway House including sprinkler and ducted extractor system installation remain on hold with a responsive repairs service and other essential improvements still being provided.

**(Note:** Private and confidential information in respect of commercial leaseholders was set out in the exempt report at Agenda item 18 in the Part II section of the meeting – Minute 70 refers).

66. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2019/20

Report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) providing a mid-year update on the Council's trending activities for the first half of the current financial year including details of the investment and loans portfolios and an economic review from treasury advisors..

Investment balances in the first half of the year ranged from £23M to £42M with a daily average of £33M.

Given the lower level of balances than in previous years investments comprised mainly money market deposits due to their high credit rating, accessibility and favourable interest rates when compared to less secure, fixed term short duration investments. Two 95 day notice accounts were also utilised with UK banks, however, which both provided enhanced returns above similar fixed deposit periods with remaining cash being invested in instant access accounts and maturing long term deals.

RESOLVED:

That the current treasury position and treasury management indicators be noted.

67. 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 Agenda items 16 to 19 (Minutes 68 to 70 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 (legal and professional privilege) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

Cabinet  
5 November 2019

In resolving to exclude the public in respect of the exempt information, it was considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

68. ITEMS OF AN EXEMPT NATURE REQUIRING KEY DECISION

The following items of an exempt nature for decision in the current Forward Plan were considered:-

68.1. Appointment of Contractor (Forward Plan Reference FP929)

Exempt report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) to the meeting of the Hatfield Town Centre Regeneration Board on 3 October 2019 and Minutes of that meeting.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:

That the Hatfield Town Centre Regeneration Member Procurement Board's unanimous recommendation that Bourne Parking Limited be awarded the Stage 2 construction contract for the Hatfield Town Centre multi-storey car park, subject to planning approval, be approved.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

The Hatfield Renewal Partnership identified a need for a new multi storey car park (MSCP) to be constructed in Hatfield Town Centre in order to unlock other surface level car parks in the vicinity for redevelopment.

The MSCP was being part funded by the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (£4.8M) and the Council (£1.2M). The total budget was £6M to include construction, planning and professional fees.

68.2. Award of Contract for Voice and Network Infrastructure Services (Forward Plan Reference FP946)

Exempt report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) on the award of contracts for these services.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with the unanimous recommendation of the General Procurement Board, the award of contracts for these services be approved as follows:-

Cabinet  
5 November 2019

- 1) Lot 1 (Voice Services) to Britannic Technologies for a period of four years from 1 December 2019.
- 2) Lot 2 (Network Services) to Daisy Communications Limited for a period of four years from 1 December 2019.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

Contracts needed to be in place to ensure that the voice and network infrastructure was adequately monitored and if any incidents occurred that they were acted on in a timely manner and by a company with the technical skills to provide a suitable support service.

With the impending expiry of the current contract a procurement exercise had taken place.

68.3. Appointment of Asbestos Consultancy (Forward Plan Reference FP947)

Exempt report of the Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) on the procurement undertaken to appoint a competent person/ company to assist with the management of asbestos across the housing portfolio.

(1) The Decision Taken

RESOLVED:

That the General Procurement Board recommendation that the contract for Asbestos Consultancy be awarded to Brian Robinson Asbestos Consulting, for a two year period (with the ability to extend for a further two years) commencing on 1 December 2019 be approved.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

Consultancy was required to ensure that the Council met its lawful obligations in the control of asbestos.

69. WELWYN GARDEN CITY NORTH DEVELOPMENT

Exempt report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) summarising the results of stage one of the development and setting out the approach for the next stage of the work.

As part of a long-term ambition to regenerate Welwyn Garden City a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was produced in 2014, setting out a vision for 98 new homes and approximately 6,000 sqm of additional retail space.

Since that time, there had been a significant development with Homes England.

Cabinet  
5 November 2019

In February 2019, Homes England offered £6.1M to assist with the development of Welwyn Garden City. However, this was predicated on delivery of a significantly larger number of homes than the 98 originally envisaged and the Homes England funding had to be claimed by March 2021. Delivery of additional homes would require the Council to investigate a larger site area than considered by the SPD.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Cabinet agrees to extend the terms of reference of the cross party Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Regeneration Board as set out in the exempt report.
- (2) That the Cabinet agrees with the proposed phasing of the project as stated in paragraph 3.3 of the exempt report in order to unlock the land necessary to deliver housing.
- (3) That the Cabinet agrees that discussion be held with the commercial retailers as stated in paragraph 3.4-3.5 of the exempt report.
- (4) That the Cabinet agrees that the design principles as listed in paragraph 3.8 of the exempt report be adopted.

70. QUEENSWAY HOUSE CONSULTATION

Exempt report of the Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) further to Agenda Item 12 in the Part I section of the meeting (Minute 65 refers).

RESOLVED:

That the feedback from the commercial leaseholders at Queensway House as considered alongside the information and recommendations set out in the associated Part I report be noted.

Meeting ended 8.10pm  
GS