

Cabinet
9 January 2024

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET held on Tuesday 9 January 2024 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors L.Chesterman (Deputy Leader)
S.Bonfante (Executive Member Environment)
J.Broach (Executive Member Governance)
M.Holloway (Executive Member Community)
D.Jones (Executive Member Resources)
J.Quinton (Executive Member Planning)

ALSO Councillor Kingsbury (Leader of the Opposition)
PRESENT:

OFFICIALS R.Baker, Executive Director (Finance & Transformation)
PRESENT: C.Barnes, Executive Director (Place)
S.McDaid, Service Director (Resident & Neighbourhoods)
S.Saunders, Legal Services Manager
C.Cade, Governance Services Manager
L.Ellis, Website Development and Intranet Manager

190. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2023 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

191. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Zukowskyj.

Councillor Sarson, Chair of the Street Scene Task and Finish Group had sent his apologies for Item 7a.

192. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND PETITIONS

No questions or petitions were received.

193. ACTIONS STATUS REPORT

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The Cabinet noted the Action Status report.

194. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 12

There was no notification of urgent business.

195. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

No declarations of interest were received.

196. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Cabinet received the below recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14th December 2023:

196.1. Street Scene Task and Finish Group Report

The Cabinet received a report of the Street Scene Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Bonfante introduced the report and provided the following update on the recommendations:

"I just want to give my thanks to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the task and finish group, especially Councillor Sarson and, of course the officers, for this report; we are very, very happy with it and we think residents are going to be too.

This report sets out recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 14th of December 2023. This report was very well received by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as well as a well considered report and body of recommendations. The Task and Finish Group discussed and debated a number of matters regarding waste and recycling, such as recycling rates, paper recycling and inner paper caddies, cardboard, recycling, Bring Bank recycling centres, communication, education and enforcement of rubbish being dumped and fly-tipped, waste cage days, grass verge protection and monitoring of actions and recommendations made by the task and finish group.

The recommendations of the Street Scene Task and Finish Group are as follows:

Recommendation 1 that the collections of flattened cardboard presented beside a blue lidded bin is implemented. This would help boost our recycling rate at no cost to the Council, I am very pleased to say, as an Executive Member for Environment, I have already approved this as a trial. The trial commenced in the last couple of weeks, and is going well. We are collecting more cardboard for recycling at the kerb side than previously. Once we have

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further information from the trial, I will consider if this is implemented on a permanent basis.

Recommendation 2 is that the bring bank recycling service is reviewed and a plan prepared for implementation of the change by the 1st of April 2024. The purpose of this review is to introduce a more efficient and resilient recycling service than the current bring banks. The current bring banks will be replaced with 1,100 litre bins that can be collected by all refuse collection vehicles rather than one specialist vehicle. This can also facilitate more frequent collections, especially before and after bank holiday weekends which often experiences high usage.

The review will also look at bring bank locations to ensure coverage, and it is possible that some locations will be removed, such as bring banks near Tewin Road Recycling Centre or locations that have to be driven to and are not close to flats served by a communal collection service.

Recommendation three, that the Council investigate options for entering a 12 month pilot contract with an external provider for environmental enforcement. This pilot would be for the enforcement of rubbish dumping, fly tipping and littering. Residents told us that the recent community survey said that they want to live and feel safe in cleaner neighbourhoods. This pilot would support a more robust approach towards tackling the illegal dumping of rubbish, including use of mobile CCTV.

Recommendation 4 is that the Council continue to collect paper separately from other dry mixed recycling as this provides a greater income than if it is mixed.

We will see about twice as much income from separating out paper, than if it is mixed with dry recyclables, so it makes sense to continue this rather than to collect paper with other recyclables. Our officers will be investigating alternatives to the current inner paper caddies as we are experiencing difficulties with supply and lead in times for delivery from the current manufacturer.

Recommendation 5 that a communications campaign be developed. The purpose of communications campaign is twofold, firstly, to encourage civic pride for our borough and secondly, the intention is to enhance education about matters such as travel, waste disposal and recycling, but also to publicise about the enforcement actions the Council has taken to tackle illegal dumping of rubbish

Recommendation 6 consideration of sponsorship by corporate contractors for waste cage days. Waste cage days have operated in the past to help support residents to dispose of large items or large amounts of waste. Officers will seek sponsorship from corporate contractors to support the cost of this.

Recommendation 7 that a Cabinet Street Scene Panel is introduced to provide regular oversight on the performance of the out outsourced waste and cleansing contract. Whilst further discussion is to be made with Cabinet, we

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believe that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is best placed to provide scrutiny for street scene, and our reasons are that members already receive KPI and performance data on them on the Member Information Hub. Members of OSC have the ability to call on any service areas as scrutiny topic rather than setting up a cabinet member panel. In order to address the point directly raised by Task and Finish Group, I will ask officers to provide an annual report to OSC on the performance of the outsourced waste and street cleansing contract. This will save a member panel being set up and the OSC could ask any further questions. We want to provide proper scrutiny for this, but we believe Overview and Scrutiny Committee is the best place to do this and we have great faith in our members.

And the final recommendation number 8 is that information is provided about the responsibility for grass verges and their protection. A briefing note will be distributed on the Members Information Hub on the responsibility for verge protection across the borough. Most verges adjoining the highway are Hertfordshire County Council land. Most other areas across the borough are either Council, land or privately owned. Each landowner makes their own decision regarding whether or not to protect grass verges with measures.

Thank you I recommend to Cabinet to approve this.”

During the discussion the following comments were made:

- Councillor Kingsbury stated that the recommendations of the Task & Finish Group were well informed, and thanked Cllr Sarson for chairing the Task & Finish Group. He expressed his understanding that it is right for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide scrutiny.
- *The Executive Member for Governance felt that part of the rationale for using the existing structure and not implementing a new Panel is that it will avoid additional costs to the council.*
- The Deputy Leader proposed that an annual report would go to Overview and Scrutiny Committee setting out the recommendations agreed by Cabinet and Council to ensure progress is recorded.

RESOLVED:

(unanimous)

DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet agreed to:

- a) Note the Street Scene Task and Finish Group Report,
- b) Note the update provided by the Executive Member for Environment;
- c) Approve the recommendations.

197. ITEMS REQUIRING KEY DECISION

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

197.1. FP2014 2024/2025 Budget and Council Tax Setting

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The Cabinet received a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation).

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- The Executive Member for Finance thanked the Executive Director for Finance and Transformation and his team for the work put into the proposals.
- It was highlighted that a meeting of the Budget Task & Finish Group was needed prior to Special Cabinet
- The Executive Member for Community raised concerns regarding local government funding and highlighted that Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council had had a 64% decrease in funding since 2010.

RESOLVED:

(unanimous)

DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet agreed to:

- a) Note the recommendations set out in the Cabinet Report; and
- b) Approved the budget proposals, noting that any comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be brought back to the Special meeting of Cabinet on the 23rd January 2024.

REASON FOR THE DECISION

The 2024/25 budget proposals and the updated medium-term financial forecasts have been produced to ensure that the Council maintains a sustainable financial position over the planning period to 2027/28.

The budget proposals will go for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 16 January 2024. Recommendations made by OSC and any changes will be presented to Special Cabinet on 23 January 2024, in order to recommend the budget proposals to Council at its meeting on 5 February 2024.

197.2. FP2033 Business Plan

The Cabinet received a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation).

RESOLVED:

(unanimous)

DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet agreed to note the Council's Business Plan for 2024/25 in Appendix 1 of the report and recommend the Business Plan to Full Council to agree.

REASON FOR THE DECISION

Each year, the Council publish a Business Plan with measurable actions supporting each of the Council's priorities, including major projects and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which measure the performance of a range of services throughout the year.

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197.3. FP2029 Parking Enforcement

The Cabinet received a report of the Executive Director (Place).

RESOLVED:

(unanimous)

DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet agreed that the Council enters into a new agreement for a period of 6 years (with the option to extend for a further 3 years) with East Herts District Council to provide parking enforcement services from 17 January 2026.

REASON FOR THE DECISION

The Council is currently part of a consortium to provide on street and car parking enforcement services with the lead authority being East Herts District Council, with Stevenage Borough Council the third member.

East Herts have a contract with an external contractor (APCOA) to deliver on street and car park enforcement for the three councils. Welwyn Hatfield Call off this contract. East Herts deliver the back-office services directly to the three councils. The back-office services include the processing of penalty notices, and the work is undertaken by directly employed staff.

There are separate Service Level Agreements between East Herts and Welwyn Hatfield and East Herts and Stevenage to deliver the services. An extension option was agreed by Cabinet on 11th July 2023, so that the current SLA now expires on 16th January 2026. At the same time, Cabinet asked Officers to appraise the options for how the service could be delivered when the extension expires.

197.4. FP2025 Non-Domestic Rating Act

The Cabinet received a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation).

RESOLVED:

(unanimous)

DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet agreed to:

- a) Amend the existing business rates discretionary relief policy in appendix A, to take into account the changes in the Non Domestic Rating Act; and
- b) Note the other changes being introduced to mandatory reliefs.

REASON FOR THE DECISION

The changes were a result of the Non Domestic Rating Act. The majority of the changes have been the subject of Government commitments during 2021 and 2022. These changes will be effective from 1 April 2024.

198. RECOMMENDATION OF GRANTS BOARD - ANNUAL GRANTS

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The Cabinet received a report of the Executive Director (Place).

Councillor Holloway thanked all those that submitted applications to the Grants Board and advised that any unsuccessful applicants would be contacted for future support. He also thanked the Grants Board for their work.

RESOLVED:

(unanimous)

DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet agreed the recommendations from Grants Board in relation to the applications for annual grants for 2024/25 as set out in table 3.2 of the report, subject to Council budget-setting.

REASON FOR THE DECISION

On 6th December 2023, the Grants Board met to consider the applications. Individual organisations were invited to apply for up to £20,000 of funding to support their activities, with a total of £73,000 available, subject to 2024/25 budget approval.

199. AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR REPLACEMENT OF MICROPHONES IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER

The Cabinet received a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation).

RESOLVED:

(unanimous)

DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet agreed that in accordance with section 31.2(g) of the contract procedure rules, Cabinet grant a dispensation to the Contract procedure rules to allow a direct award to Public-I Group Limited for the provision of replacement microphones for the webcasting system as it is considered to the advantage of the Council to do so.

REASON FOR THE DECISION

The microphones that are part of the Council Chamber facilities, have reached their end of life. A high level of battery failures had occurred, and it is no longer possible to source replacement batteries for the current model.

200. TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

The Cabinet received a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation).

RESOLVED:

(unanimous)

DECISION TAKEN

Cabinet agreed to note the contents of the report.

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REASON FOR THE DECISION

The Council's Transformation Strategy was agreed in December 2022 following a senior management restructure where a new Executive Director post was created to lead the Transformation programme. The strategy sets out how the council will transform services between 2022 to 2025. The report summarised the Council's progress against the Transformation Strategy for Year 1.

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

There was no other business to consider.

Meeting ended at 7.40 pm