



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 23rd JANUARY 2025

PRESENT: Councillor , Councillors C Dean, D Foster, N Arkney, B Clarke, S Daniels and L Smith

The following officers were present: Stephen Gabriel (Chief Executive), Anica Goodwin (Executive Director Organisation), Joanne Goodfellow (Interim Executive Director Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer), Amerdip Kaur (Assistant Director – Policy and Performance), Anna Miller (Assistant Director – Growth & Regeneration), Tina Mustafa (Assistant Director Neighbourhoods), Paul Weston (Assistant Director Assets), Zoe Wolicki (Assistant Director People), Tania Phillips (Head of Corporate Communications), Christie Tims (Corporate Project Co-ordinator), Leanne Costello (Senior Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officer) and Laura Sandland (Democratic and Executive Support Officer)

99 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

100 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 12th December 2024 were approved as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor N Arkney and seconded by Councillor B Clarke)

101 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

102 QUESTION TIME:

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NO. 1

Under Schedule 4, 13, K Loxton will ask The Leader of The Council, Councillor C Dean the following question:

As a council have you considered making it a requirement in the council's constitution which includes the councillors code of conduct, for councillors to

respond to all forms of written correspondence within 10 working days of receiving the communication?

Response:

I can understand people's frustrations with this, but it is a difficult situation. As part of the Constitution review process, the Monitoring Officer reviews the composition of the Constitution, consulting with officers and members to ensure that the aims and principles are given full effect, with any proposed changes for Full Council approval.

While there hasn't been a formal review specifically addressing the requirement for councillors to respond to all forms of written correspondence within 10 working days, several factors must be considered in this regard. It is essential to find a balanced approach that supports timely and effective communication while allowing our councillors the necessary flexibility to manage their duties effectively.

At this time, we believe that members' administration is within their own gift, the way they manage their own time is up to them. We would not be able to easily monitor or indeed enforce such a 'rule'.

Supplementary Questions:

From my personal experience and with other residents in my ward, if I had contacted all my ward councillors on at least two occasions and yourself, and three months on I am still waiting for anyone to respond. I don't believe that is decent or polite or right, where do I take it and what would your advice be to residents in this situation.

Response:

I can only say that if you have contacted me I am really sorry that I haven't got back to you but I can't remember seeing that and I will speak to you after this meeting to make that I do know what it is that you are asking me about.

It is something we talk about in our group meetings about how we deal with our constituents, and it is a real priority of ours that people are listened to and that they get a response. Sometimes things do fall over, and we send things off and don't get a response, but I suppose what I would say to residents is please harass us, we are quite happy for you to come back and say I haven't had a response on this and I think that's only right that you should. I will definitely be talking at our next group meeting to make sure we are all on board with what we should be doing.

103 MATTERS REFERRED TO THE CABINET IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES

Report of the Chair of Infrastructure, Safety and Growth Scrutiny to notify Cabinet of the recommendations from the Climate Change Update report that was

discussed at the meeting of Infrastructure Safety & Growth Scrutiny Committee on the 11th December 2024.

This matter was discussed under item 11 on the agenda.

104 DRAFT BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/26 TO 2029/30

Report of the Leader of the Council to approve the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (attached at Appendix 1), to consult with the Joint Scrutiny Committee (Budget) on 28th January 2025 and receive their feedback on the:

- General Fund Revenue (GF) Budget and Council Tax for 2025/26;
- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2025/26;
- Capital Programme – General Fund & HRA;
- Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

This is a key decision as it affects two or more wards and involves expenditure over £100k.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Approved the draft package of budget proposals included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (as detailed at Appendix 1)
2. As required by the Constitution of the Council, the Joint Scrutiny Committee (Budget) on 28th January 2025 be requested to consider the budget proposals contained within this report

(Moved by Councillor B Clarke and seconded by Councillor L Smith)

105 BUSINESS RATES INCOME FORECAST 2025/26

Report of the Leader of the Council to report to and seek endorsement from Members on the Business Rates income forecast for 2025/26.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Approved the Business Rates income forecast for 2025/26 and subsequent NNDR1 form for submission to MHCLG by 31 January 2025.
2. Should material amendments be required to the forecast NNDR1, Cabinet authorised the Interim Executive Director Finance, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make such required amendments as necessary.

3. Noted discretionary relief granted to qualifying bodies in line with the existing policy.

(Moved by Councillor N Arkney and seconded by Councillor S Daniels)

106 UPDATE ON PROCUREMENT ACT 2023

Report of the Leader of the Council to provide Cabinet with a brief overview of the changes coming into force on the 24th of February 2025 with the new Procurement Act 2023 (PA23), to request approval of the Council's Social Value Policy and Pledges and to circulate the revised Procurement Strategy for review and approval.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Noted the requirements of the Procurement Act 2023 and endorsed the action plan to ensure compliance
2. Approved the Social Value Policy
3. Approved the Social Value Pledges
4. Approved the revised Procurement Strategy

(Moved by Councillor B Clarke and seconded by Councillor S Daniels)

107 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

Report of the Leader of the Council to advise members of the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge Report and seek approval for the action plan in response to its recommendations and any follow-up actions to complete the challenge in the required timescale.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Accepted the recommendations provided in the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report as set out in Appendix 1 and agreed to publish it by the deadline of 31 January 2025.
2. Approved the draft action plan developed to respond to the recommendations as set out in Appendix 2 and delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council to finalise development of this plan and publish it before the 31 March 2025 deadline.
3. Agreed to review the action plan as part of their quarterly performance update reports.

(Moved by Councillor L Smith and seconded by Councillor S Daniels)

108 ANNUAL RESIDENTS' SURVEY RESULTS

Report of the leader of the council to share the results of the annual survey and budget consultation, to inform the decision making process around council budget and priorities.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Endorsed the content of the report, in preparation for making budget and priority decisions as part of the annual budget setting process.

(Moved by Councillor B Clarke and seconded by Councillor N Arkney)

109 CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Sustainability, Recycling and Waste to update Cabinet on the authority's work around climate change and agree to adopt the proposed climate mitigation action plan and climate adaptation strategy. Secondly, to endorse the climate change communication plan and the Staffordshire County Council (SCC) net zero by 2050 planning policy.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Approved the climate mitigation action plan and committed to refresh every three years
2. Approved the climate adaptation strategy
3. Endorsed the Borough Council's climate change communication plan
4. Endorsed the Staffordshire net zero by 2050 planning policy

Cabinet also considered the recommendation from Scrutiny and:

5. Agreed to look at the feasibility of including solar panels on council properties

(Moved by Councillor D Foster and seconded by Councillor L Smith)

110 SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATORY PROGRAMME - COUNCIL HOUSING

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness and Planning to update Cabinet on the latest position regarding compliance with the Regulator Social Housing (RSH) Consumer Standards, following the Council's self-referral on 1/8/24, and to set out the achievements reflecting the scale, pace and positive progress in relation to the Social Housing Regulatory Programme and the outcomes from regulatory engagement.

The Portfolio Holder moved an amendment to recommendation 6 which originally read: delegate to the S151 Officer, in conjunction with the Executive Director Communities the releasing of contingency funding to support associated staffing matters referred to Appointments & Staffing Committee, noting the need for additional staffing resources within assets.

To be amended to: delegate to the S151 Officer, in conjunction with the Executive Director Communities and the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness and Planning the releasing of contingency funding to support associated staffing matters referred to Appointments & Staffing Committee, noting the need for additional staffing resources within assets.

(Moved by Councillor B Clarke and seconded by Councillor L Smith)

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Recognised significant progress of the Social Housing Regulatory Programme team, working with the Regulator of Social Housing and avoiding a C3/4 rating. Noted continued support from the Regulator (28/2/25) and onward formal inspection timetabling remains unknown. (Details at Annex Two).
2. Approved the refreshed terms of reference for the Homelessness & Housing Advisory Board. (Details at Annex Three).
3. Recognised the role of the Homelessness & Housing Advisory Board in terms of the proposed work plan, delegating authority to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness and Planning to agree the annual work-plan including the ongoing review of the conceptual framework (the preferred document for the Regulators required pre-inspection).
4. Supported continued development of the Housing Performance Dashboard, (Details at Annex One).
5. Confirmed the arrangements for the Portfolio Holder Housing, Homelessness & Planning to act as the accountable member for Housing Health and Safety supporting the Deputy Leader as Corporate health & safety Member Lead as defined under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.
6. Delegated to the S151 Officer, in conjunction with the

Executive Director Communities and the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Homelessness and Planning the releasing of contingency funding to support associated staffing matters referred to Appointments & Staffing Committee, noting the need for additional staffing resources within assets.

7. Delegated arrangements for the procurement and undertaking of a mock inspection of the housing service to the Portfolio Holder Housing, Homelessness and Planning; in consultation with Executive Director Communities - scope and brief to be agreed by 31/3/25
8. Noted that further reports are on the forward plan for the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan (8th March 2025) and the Tenant Inclusivity Plan including the Tenant & Leaseholder Voice and TSM improvement Plan (31st March 2025)

(Moved by Councillor B Clarke and seconded by Councillor N Arkney)

111 TAMWORTH ASYLUM DISPERSAL FUNDING

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Cooperative Council, Community Partnerships and ASB to outline Asylum Dispersal Funding proposals and seek delegated authority for grant spend.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Approved delegation of ongoing spend of the Government Asylum Dispersal fund to the Portfolio Holder for Cooperative Council, Community Partnerships and ASB and Executive Director Communities in accordance with Home Office guidance.
2. Approved process for emergency operational grant funding delegated to the Assistant Director Partnerships.
3. Endorsed the current approach to the ongoing spend of the Asylum Dispersal Fund with annual update to the Infrastructure Safety and Growth Committee.

(Moved by Councillor S Daniels and seconded by Councillor N Arkney)

Leader