

EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Coltman VC Room at the Town Hall, Burton upon Trent on Monday 18th December 2023.

Present:

Councillors M T Fitzpatrick (Chairman), A A Chaudhry, D F Fletcher, R Hawkins, S Slater (minute Nos 61/23-65/23 only) and P Walker.

Officers Present:

The Chief Executive, the Head of Environment and Corporate Services, the Head of Legal and Regulatory Services and Monitoring Officer, the Head of Regeneration and Development, the Interim Chief Finance Officer (via Zoom), the Environmental Health Manager, the Housing Options Manager, the Corporate and Commercial Manager and the Principal Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present:

Cabinet Support Members Councillors S McKiernan and L Walker.

PART II

51/23 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations at the commencement of the meeting.

52/23 **MINUTES**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th November 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor M T Fitzpatrick		
Councillor A A Chaudhry		
Councillor D F Fletcher		
Councillor R Hawkins		
Councillor P Walker		

53/23 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business prior to the commencement of the meeting.

54/23 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan from 1st December 2023 to 31st March 2024 was submitted for information.

NOTED.

55/23

PLANNING MONITORING REPORT

The report of the Head of Regeneration and Development on the 18th Authority Monitoring Report (AMR), presenting statistical monitoring data related to the Local Plan for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 was considered. Appendix 1: Authority Monitoring Report 2022/23 had been circulated with the report.

Cabinet noted that the Local Plan contained 36 strategic policies and 12 detailed policies. For each policy, indicators and targets were set out in order to measure progress and aims of the policy. Elements of the monitoring framework reported on by the AMR and other monitoring documents included:

- Update on progress of the strategic allocations in the Local Plan
- Number and type of applications permitted outside settlement boundaries
- Number of applications related to rural based enterprises
- Number and type of applications for leisure and tourism
- Types of dwellings completed, including number of bedrooms for sites fully complete
- Applications involving the loss of community facilities
- Applications refused and the reasons for refusal
- Applications for the re-use of vacant buildings
- Low carbon and renewable energy schemes
- National Forest planting

During 1st April 2022-31st March 2023 there had been a net increase of 935 dwellings, this compared to 705 dwellings in the previous monitoring period. Cabinet noted that had been a slight increase in the net amount of land used for employment purposes during this monitoring year, following the completion of some of the larger employment allocations at Land south of Branston Locks and Quintus Phases 1 and 2 at Branston Locks. A total of 117,210 sqm had been completed during the monitoring period. There were 17 Neighbourhood Plan areas in East Staffordshire, all of which were designated in previous monitoring years. In this monitoring period the Abbots Bromley Neighbourhood Plan was independently examined and following some modifications the plan had progressed and a referendum undertaken. The plan has subsequently been adopted albeit in the 2023/24 monitoring period.

The reasons for making the decision below were set out in the report.

Resolved:

That the Authority Monitoring Report attached at Appendix 1 of the report be approved and published.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor M T Fitzpatrick		
Councillor A A Chaudhry		
Councillor D F Fletcher		
Councillor R Hawkins		
Councillor P Walker		

56/23

A GREEN NEW DEAL – REVIEW OF PROGRESS

The report of the Head of Legal and Regulatory Services on the progress made against the corporate priority: Developing a Green New Deal for East Staffordshire was considered.

Cabinet noted that the report provided a comprehensive update on initiatives aligned to targets GD04 through GD09, focussing on promoting green technologies, increasing the use of public transport, implementing energy-efficient housing standards, establishing gardens and orchards, and working with partners on sustainability projects. Key achievements highlighted included supporting electric bus and EV infrastructure bids, researching community energy projects, piloting vertical gardens, and identifying locations for community orchards. It was highlighted that the Council was on track to meet its Green New Deal commitments by the 2023/24 year-end, demonstrating the council's strong commitment and progress to date in delivering a wide range of sustainability initiatives under the Green New Deal corporate priority.

The reasons for making the decision below were set out in the report.

Resolved:

- 1) That the contents of the report be noted and the developing and delivering of the current Green New Deal initiatives to ensure all targets are met be continued;
- 2) That where there are financial implications for the 2024/25 financial year from any new plans in this report, the financial implications be considered within the annual review of the 2024/25 Medium Term Financial Strategy, subject to further analysis.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor M T Fitzpatrick		
Councillor A A Chaudhry		
Councillor D F Fletcher		
Councillor R Hawkins		
Councillor P Walker		

57/23

PARKING REVIEW

The report of the Head of Corporate and Environment Services on the review of the operation and tariff regime of the pay and display car parks across the borough was considered.

Cabinet noted the details provided within the report including: Sales tariffs and income; Car Parking Provision – a Borough Wide view; Options Appraisal; Parking Machines; Decline in ticket sales and use of Council land; Tariff Structure and permits; Free After 3 and Staffing Consideration and ANPR.

It was highlighted that sales volumes had declined by 50% since 2017/18, set against this backdrop was a “crowded market place” with many private sector providers setting favourable tariffs to entice drivers. East Staffordshire Borough Council was towards the lower end of the tariff scale for a 2 hour stay, when contrasted with Staffordshire, CIPFA similar group and neighbouring authorities. As a result, it had been proposed that the 2 hour ticket/app purchase be matched to the median average (£1.90) of those Local Authorities covered in the study. (Although contrary to the Fees and Charges policy, it was noted that a below inflation increase would assist residents during the costs of living crisis whilst providing income to cover operational costs). A two year freeze on permit prices was also proposed, with three and six month options to be phased out due to low customer take up. Parking machines and their operation represented both the highest financial outlay and time consuming element of running a car park. Consequently, it was proposed that residents be consulted on the potential phasing out of parking machines and cash payments in Council car parks. Another element that had impacted income was the Free After 3 scheme - when launched, initial estimates expected a reduced income from Free After 3 of £184,000, however, given the decline in footfall, the estimated loss would now be approximately £83,500. Following the evolution of the Community & Civil Enforcement team and an ever increasing need to address community orientated issues such as fly-tipping, it was proposed to carry out a review of the structure and ANPR.

The reasons for making the decision below were set out in the report.

Resolved:

- 1) That under used parking spaces be converted into temporary urban parks on a case by case basis. In addition, that the proposed EV charging point installation at the Maltings, Uttoxeter be used as a test pilot example;
- 2) That Option 3 be implemented for the parking tariff from April 1st 2024, because it offered a below inflation price rise which should support residents in parking in ESBC car parks;
- 3) That three and six month options cease from April 1st 2024 and that 12 month permit prices be frozen at their present value of £575 for the next twenty four months and reviewed again in 2025. In addition, a two year pilot (reviewed after 12 months) of a one month permit be introduced;
- 4) That free After 3 to cease from March 31st 2024 as there is limited evidence to understand its worth;
- 5) That residents be consulted on the potential phasing out of parking machines and cash payments in Council car parks, with an appropriate ‘lead in’ time should this option be selected;

- 6) That the Community and Civil Enforcement structure and ANPR be the subject of a detailed review in 2024/25, subject to consultation with staff.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor M T Fitzpatrick		
Councillor A A Chaudhry		
Councillor D F Fletcher		
Councillor R Hawkins		
Councillor P Walker		

58/23

ASSESSMENT OF ESBC TREE STOCK

The report of the Head of Corporate and Environment Services on the examination of the condition of East Staffordshire Borough Council's tree stock, including the impact and consequences of climate change on trees and alternatives to their management was considered. Appendix 1: OTISS database sample extracts had been circulated with the report.

Cabinet noted that a full inspection of the Council's entire tree stock took place in early 2023 and provided a "snap shot" in time of the health of trees and in addition to a rough proxy for potential future budgetary pressures. The inspections yielded a total of 5,602 records. As a result, a £60,000 budget uplift was proposed for the next two years with any underspend automatically carried forward into the following year and used specifically for Woodland Management. It was highlighted that the Council's policy towards the management of trees had been to only action if trees were dead, diseased, dying or dangerous. With existing tree management policies potentially leading to increased budgetary pressures, there would be scope to evaluate these and adopt a revised practice that could be more nature friendly. Cabinet noted that across both the Horticulture Centre (Burton) and GO Garden (Uttoxeter) there would be an opportunity to use existing space to create tree nurseries. Although this would take 2-3 years to realise full potential, this could provide the Council with a £99,500 saving on the purchasing of trees.

The reasons for making the decision below were set out in the report.

Resolved:

- 1) That a revenue growth bid be submitted to uplift tree works budgets by £60,000 from 24/25 and reviewed again at the end of 25/26.
- 2) That Underspend from tree budgets be automatically carried forward into the following year and designated specifically for Woodland Management.
- 3) That the establishment of the tree nursery at Go Garden (Uttoxeter) and the Horticulture Centre (Burton) be approved.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor M T Fitzpatrick		
Councillor A A Chaudhry		
Councillor D F Fletcher		
Councillor R Hawkins		
Councillor P Walker		

59/23

REVIEW OF TACKLING ENVIRO CRIME – CORPORATE PLAN TARGETS GD02; GD03; GD10, GD11.

The report of the Head of Legal and Regulatory Services on the review of tackling Enviro Crime was considered.

Cabinet noted the update provided in respect of the following Corporate Plan targets:

- GD02 Increase levels of action taken against anti-social behaviour by reviewing the performance of mobile CCTV provision and seeking to achieve a 20% increase in the number of deployments (from 22) ;
- GD03 Increase levels of action taken against anti-social behaviour through undertaking 4 initiatives to address fly tipping under the 'Tackle the Tippers' campaign;
- GD10 Introduce mobile fly-tipping removal vehicle ;
- GD11 Ensure fly-tipping is removed as quickly as possible (within 5 days of receipt of notice from CCE team) and disposed of in an environmentally friendly way.

Resolved:

- 1) That the updates for the corporate plan targets be noted;
- 2) That the proposal to purchase a mobile fly tipping removal vehicle be considered within the annual review of the 2024/25 Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor M T Fitzpatrick		
Councillor A A Chaudhry		
Councillor D F Fletcher		
Councillor R Hawkins		
Councillor P Walker		

60/23

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY RENEWAL

The report of the Head of Regeneration and Development on the Housing Strategy Renewal was considered. The following appendices had been circulated with the report:

- Appendix 1: Draft Homelessness Strategy 2023 – 2028;
- Appendix 2: Review of Homelessness 2018 – 2023;

- Appendix 3: Equality and Health Impact Assessment

Cabinet noted that the Council was required to adopt a new Homelessness Strategy every 5 years in accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002 and that legislation required that the Homelessness Strategy be based on the results of a Homelessness Review (as detailed in appendix 2).

Resolved:

That the draft Homelessness Strategy 2023 – 2028 be adopted.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor M T Fitzpatrick		
Councillor A A Chaudhry		
Councillor D F Fletcher		
Councillor R Hawkins		
Councillor P Walker		

61/23

QUARTER 2 REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT

The report of the Interim Chief Finance Officer on the forecast outturn position in relation to the Council’s revenue budget, capital programme of expenditure, treasury and risk management activities was considered.

The following appendices had been circulated with the report:

- Appendix A: Quarter 2 Forecast variances against budget at outturn 2023/24;
- Appendix B: Investments at 30th September 2023;
- Appendix C: Corporate and Strategic Risks – Quarter 2 2023/24

At this juncture Councillor S Slater joined the meeting.

Cabinet noted that the report presented an overall forecast underspend of £679k, despite spending pressures, due to investment returns from high cash balances and the Bank of England interest rate and that investment returns would be higher in 2023/24 compared to budget, but may decline in future years. The report presented forecasts, which were subject to uncertainty and volatility.

Resolved:

- 1) That the forecast financial position at quarter 2 for the 2023/24 financial year in relation to revenue and capital budgets be noted;
- 2) That the latest position in respect of the Council’s investments and borrowing be noted;
- 3) That the corporate and strategic risks, together with actions being taken to manage these, be noted.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor M T Fitzpatrick		
Councillor A A Chaudhry		
Councillor D F Fletcher		
Councillor R Hawkins		
Councillor S Slater		
Councillor P Walker		

62/23

QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023/24: CORPORATE PLAN, LEISURE CONTRACT AND TOWNS FUND PROGRAMME

The report of the Head of Corporate and Environment Services on progress at the end of the second quarter of the 2023/24 financial year towards delivering East Staffordshire Borough Council's Corporate Plan; Leisure Services Contract Performance and the Towns Fund Programme was considered. Appendix 1: Spreadsheet of Quarter 1 updates for Corporate Plan targets had been circulated with the report.

Cabinet noted that of the 132 targets in total, 114 were green status; 2 were amber status; 5 were red status and 9 were not yet due to be reported and 2 were proposed for deletion. Of the 121 'live' targets: 94.21% were green status; 1.65% were amber status and 4.13% were red status. Overall the Leisure Operator continued to be compliant with the services specification, with a small number of actions being identified for ongoing review. At the end of Quarter 1 of the 2023-24 contract year a review of the Outcomes Scorecard's RAG ratings for the Key Performance Indicators showed statuses as follows; 78 Green, 0 Amber, and 0 Red. The report provided an update on the Towns Fund programme as of 2023-24 Q1, providing a summary of project progress, key risks, current financial profiles. The total spend for the Council's own High Street project as of the end of Quarter Two was £6,155,348m from a total project budget of £20,259,335, representing 30% of the project budget.

Resolved:

- 1) That performance at the end of the second quarter of the 2023/24 financial year towards achieving the Council's Corporate Priorities and Leisure Services Contract and Towns Fund Programme be considered;
- 2) That targets RAD06 and PH01 as detailed in section 5.5 of the report be deleted.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor M T Fitzpatrick		
Councillor A A Chaudhry		
Councillor D F Fletcher		
Councillor R Hawkins		
Councillor S Slater		
Councillor P Walker		

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**Resolved:**

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor M T Fitzpatrick		
Councillor A A Chaudhry		
Councillor D F Fletcher		
Councillor R Hawkins		
Councillor S Slater		
Councillor P Walker		

