

City of Wolverhampton Council – Decisions taken by the Cabinet on Wednesday, 19 January 2022

Item 4	
Title	Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2022-2023 including Rent and Service Charges
Status	Recommendations Approved
Record of Decision	<p>That the Council be recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt the Business Plan set out at Appendix 1 to the report as the approved Housing Revenue Account Business Plan including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The revenue budget for 2022-2023 at Appendix 1 to the report. b. The Capital Programme for 2022-2023 to 2026-2027 at Appendix 2 to the report that includes the following among the proposed investment plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £118.7 million for new build development. • £42.6 million provision for estate remodelling. • £50.4 million to complete the refurbishment of the Heath Town estate. • £79.8 million for programmes to high rise estates to include fire safety improvements, infrastructure replacement, retrofitting of sprinklers and external works. 2. Approve the implementation of an increase of 4.1% to social housing rents in accordance with the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 and to give 28 days notice to all secure and introductory tenants of the rent increase from 1 April 2022. 3. Approve the rates for garage rents and service charges set out in Appendix 3 to the report and formally notifies tenants. 4. Approve Management Allowances for Managing Agents as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wolverhampton Homes - £40,460,000 • Bushbury Hill Estate Management Board - £1,780,000 • New Park Village Tenants Management Organisation - £395,000 • Dovecotes Tenants Management Organisation - £1,148,000

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	<p>That the Cabinet notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The issues raised during the consultation have been communicated to the managing agents and would also be provided to tenants as areas for possible tenant scrutiny during 2022-2023.2. From 1 April 2020 the Regulator of Social Housing has regulated social rents charged by Local Authorities. The Rent increase at 4.1% is chargeable in line with Government policy set out in the Rent Standard 2020.3. The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper (2020) sets out the principles for a new, fairer deal for social housing residents, focusing on the provision of safe and decent homes, resolving complaints, empowering tenants, tackling stigma and building new homes.4. The National Building Safety Programme of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Grenfell Inquiry pending its full outcomes, would impact upon future building safety planning. The Hackett Review 2018 makes recommendations for residential building safety and improvements to be considered as part of all future HRA asset management and improvement planning and the Building Safety Bill introduces regulation seeking greater assurance on the safety of multi-occupied buildings.5. Asset planning in 2022-2023 would look at the future management and asset planning for non-traditional homes, including high-rise homes.
Options Considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proposed rent increase of 4.1% is chargeable in line with Government policy set out in the Rent Standard 2020. Not applying an increase would reduce the resources available to fund services and the capital programme. The proposed service charges are consistent with existing policy to recover the cost of the service. An alternative option could be to reduce the charges, in which case the cost would not be recovered, and a subsidy required from general rents.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council could decide not to plan to increase capital expenditure in response to the abolishment of the HRA borrowing cap and instead use the HRA net surplus to pay off debt instead of financing borrowing. However, it would not then be using available resources to improve and increase its housing stock as well as the requirement to respond to national building safety requirements.
Reasons for Decision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council is asked to approve the 4.1% increase to dwellings rent and garage rents and approve the proposed increase to service charges of 3.1% to enable the aspirations in the business plan to be met. 2. The Council is required to approve a balanced HRA budget which is based on income forecasts, maintains supervision and management expenditure, provides for depreciation and finances borrowing. 3. A risk matrix is attached at Appendix 5 to the report. The risk register has been updated to reflect the economic and legislative setting in which it operates.
Record of Conflicts of Interest	None
Dispensation Granted	There was standing dispensation to all councillors in relation to business rates, housing matters and rents.
Decision available for implementation (subject to call-in)	26 January 2022

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Item 5	
Title	SEND Inspection Outcome Written Statement of Action
Status	Recommendations Approved
Record of Decision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Local Area Written Statement of Action (WSOA) that is required to be submitted to Ofsted by the 16 February 2022 in response to the outcome of the Joint Inspection of the Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services and provision conducted by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) between 20 and 24 September 2021 be approved. 2. That it be noted that the Written Statement of Action requires some final detail to be added following feedback from Parent/Carer surveys, the Clinical Commissioning Group. The Written Statement of Action would be prepared as a final designed document prior to submission to Ofsted by the 16 February. 3. That it be noted that the Written Statement of Action would also need sign off by the Clinical Commissioning Group governance structures as it is required to be developed as a co-produced document including input from a range of stakeholders following their engagement in the process through focus groups and surveys undertaken since the publication of the Inspection report and the DfE Senior Officials meeting with Local Area Leaders on the 29 November 2021. 4. That the ‘6 Focus Areas’ which would outline the actions to be taken to address the ‘Areas of Significant Weakness’ as identified in the SEND inspection report in Appendix 1 to the report be noted. 5. That it be noted that the Joint SEND Strategy developed by the Wolverhampton SEND Partnership Board in 2020 and approved by the Cabinet and the Children and Families Together Board sets out the vision and key priorities of the Council and partners in the city to improve the lives of children and young people with SEND. Additional actions to those set out in the WSOA are also being closely monitored.

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	<p>6. That it be noted that the Strategy reflects the vision that Wolverhampton is an inclusive City where we work with children, young people, and their families with SEND so that they can achieve their full potential. It recognises that all children with SEND are individuals with aspirations to lead their own lives. While life for a child or young person with SEND and their family is anything but ordinary, the ordinary life principles are what extraordinary achievements are built on.</p>
Options Considered	<p>Option one - to agree to the content of the WSOA. This would result in the WSOA being submitted to Ofsted by the required date of the 16 February 2022.</p> <p>Option two - to not agree to the content of the WSOA and request further detail to be included. This could result in a delay to the submission of the WSOA to Ofsted.</p>
Reasons for Decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The benefits of a favourable decision would provide confidence in the Local Area’s determination to improve services and provision for SEND as outlined in the SEND Code of Practice and the SEND reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. • Risks in not taking the decision include increased oversight by Ofsted, the DfE and the CQC and a lack of confidence in the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group by parents, carers, children, young people and schools.
Record of Conflicts of Interest	None
Dispensation Granted	Not applicable
Decision available for implementation (subject to call-in)	20 January 2022

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Item 6	
Title	Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement and Draft Budget Update
Status	Recommendations Approved
Record of Decision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the outcome of the 2022-2023 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement be noted. 2. That it be noted that the final budget report presented to Cabinet on 23 February 2022 would reflect the outcome of the settlement and detailed budget work for 2022-2023, including a review of all budget reduction proposals and the risks associated with their delivery.
Options Considered	The report provides Cabinet with the outcome of the 2022-2023 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, to consider the impact on the City of Wolverhampton Council and medium term planning.
Reasons for Decision	Cabinet is asked to note the outcome of the 2022-2023 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement.
Record of Conflicts of Interest	None
Dispensation Granted	Not applicable
Decision available for implementation (subject to call-in)	20 January 2022

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Item 7	
Title	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2024
Status	Recommendations Approved
Record of Decision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Council’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2024 as attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved. 2. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Governance and Equalities in consultation with the Chief Operating Officer to update certain departmental targets and to correct typographical errors in the Strategy.
Options Considered	<p>To consider approving the EDI Strategy from 2022 to 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would result in clear direction and guidance on actions we will undertake to build an inclusive culture within our workforce and organisation. The strategy will also set out how we continue to shape services to actively address inequality and exclusion as well as address the progressive building of good relations between different communities. This will positively impact residents across the City who share protected characteristics as well as residents who do not share protected characteristics. <p>To not approve the EDI Strategy 2022-2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implications of taking this decision would be the removal of the four key priorities outlined in the strategy and the outline of how equalities will be embedded in the daily business of the Council. • We are aware that the City includes some of the most deprived areas in the country with significant inequalities facing certain neighbourhoods and communities of identity. This is why it is imperative that we work hard to ensure that the right services meet diverse needs at the right times, in the right ways.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should this decision be taken, it would negatively impact the ability to do the above. • Under the Equality Act 2010 we are required to publish our equality objective. If this decision was taken we would not be fulfilling our duty under this act and would not be compliant.
Reasons for Decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City of Wolverhampton is committed to equality, diversity and social inclusion. Promoting and advancing equality, tackling all forms of discrimination and harassment as well as fostering good relations is at the heart of our goals as a Council. • While we are a diverse city that pulls together to celebrate our differences, we know that many residents still face disadvantage and discrimination. • This Strategy therefore aims to guide us in our understanding of the different community needs, enable us to act to tackle inequality, discrimination and disparities where they exist and look to strengthen good relations between our different local communities to bring better outcomes for the people we serve. • Should this Strategy be endorsed it will help us ensure we maintain our Excellent status and further embed equality, diversity and inclusion into our daily policies, practices and procedures.
Record of Conflicts of Interest	None
Dispensation Granted	Not applicable
Decision available for implementation (subject to call-in)	20 January 2022

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Item 8	
Title	Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2025
Status	Recommendations Approved
Record of Decision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2025 be endorsed. 2. That Cabinet member roles and responsibilities as Corporate Parents be noted.
Options Considered	<p>Option one - make no change to the existing strategy. This would result in the City of Wolverhampton Council remaining with a strategy that is over three years old.</p> <p>Option two - to not have a Corporate Parenting Strategy leaving the Council at risk of not meeting its statutory requirements.</p> <p>Option three - to update the existing strategy with the proposed strategy. This strategy evidences the Council's commitment to co-production with children and young people in care and care leavers as part of the Co-Production Charter.</p>
Reasons for Decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option three is the preferred option. The reason for the decision to approve and endorse this strategy is not only to meet the Council's statutory duties as part of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, but also to ensure our children and young people in care and care leavers are clear that the Council takes its corporate parenting responsibility serious and are ambitious for them and their future • Following analysis and benchmarking with statistical neighbours Corporate Parenting Strategies, it is clear that this strategy is ambitious, clear and co-produced.
Record of Conflicts of Interest	None

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Dispensation Granted	Not applicable
Decision available for implementation (subject to call-in)	24 January 2022

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Item 9	
Title	Determined Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2023-2024
Status	Recommendations Approved
Record of Decision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Co-ordinated Admission Schemes for secondary and primary school admissions at the normal year of entry for 2023-2024 be approved and that the Secretary of State be notified by 28 February 2022. 2. That the proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2023-2024 be approved.
Options Considered	One alternative option may have been to propose changes to the admissions arrangements. However, a full consultation was conducted in 2015, and the current arrangements are compliant with the School Admissions Code 2021. A full consultation will be undertaken in the Autumn term of 2022.
Reasons for Decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As prescribed by The School Admissions Code 2014, Admission authorities must set (determine) admission arrangements annually. If there are no changes to admission arrangements, they must be consulted on at least once every seven years. A full consultation was conducted in 2015 and will next be undertaken in the Autumn term of 2022. • There are no proposed changes to the admission arrangements, and they comply with the mandatory provisions of the School Admissions Code 2021.
Record of Conflicts of Interest	None

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Dispensation Granted	Not applicable
Decision available for implementation (subject to call-in)	24 January 2022

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Item 10	
Title	Building Surveys of Large Panel System Blocks
Status	Recommendations Approved
Record of Decision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the requirement to hold a total of 18 void properties within the six tower-blocks built using the Large Panel Systems (LPS) to enable the completion of specialist surveys be approved. 2. That suitable void properties within the each of the six tower-blocks be held to allow the survey work to be carried out. 3. That the rehousing of the tenants from these dwellings following a consultation period and housing needs assessment be approved. 4. That a level of compensation payment and disturbance payments as detailed in exempt Appendix 2 to the report for those tenants in identified properties within the six tower blocks to voluntarily move to suitable, alternative accommodation to decant the property in order to carry out the specialist surveys be approved. 5. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing in consultation with the Director of City Environment, to agree any alternative compensation payment and disturbance payment to that detailed in exempt Appendix 2 to the report under exceptional circumstances. 6. That it be noted that a further report on the outcome of the testing and the future investment or regeneration of these tower blocks would be presented to a future meeting.

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Options Considered	If the testing is not carried out, we will be unaware of whether the blocks are suitable for further investment or regeneration.
Reasons for Decision	The surveys are needed to inform our long-term approach to the management of these assets.
Record of Conflicts of Interest	None
Dispensation Granted	Not applicable
Decision available for implementation (subject to call-in)	24 January 2022

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Item 11	
Title	Purchase of affordable rent and shared ownership units - Northicote development (WV Living)
Status	Recommendations Approved
Record of Decision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the purchase of 29 homes for affordable rent and 16 homes for shared ownership units from WV Living on the Northicote housing development site through a standard form of development agreement at the agreed purchase as detailed in exempt Appendix 1 to the report be approved. 2. That approval be granted to enter into contract using a standard form of development agreement between the Council and WV Living including staged payments as detailed in exempt Appendix 2 to the report. 3. That Chief Operating Officer or other authorised officers be authorised to execute the contract agreement, transfers, associated wayleave agreements, deed of easements, deeds of grant, collateral warranties together with any ancillary agreements.
Options Considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The properties will be built to meet Planning requirements under Section 106 obligations and are therefore designated as affordable housing. Should the Council choose not to purchase the affordable rent and shared ownership units from WV Living, the properties could be available for purchase by another party such as a Registered Provider. • If the Council did not purchase these units, WV Living would not achieve a viable scheme based on agreed a capital receipt for the purchase of the land initially purchased from the Council and subsequent sale of the affordable units.

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Reasons for Decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The purchase of the affordable rent units would meet the objectives within the Council's Plan – Better Homes for All and the Housing Strategy's More and Better Homes by increasing the number of additional affordable housing to meet the housing demands within the City.• The purchase of the shared ownership units will provide an opportunity for residents to access low-cost home ownership.
Record of Conflicts of Interest	None
Dispensation Granted	Not applicable
Decision available for implementation (subject to call-in)	24 January 2022