

# Meeting of the Council

## Minutes - 6 December 2023

### Attendance

**Mayor** Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre (Lab)  
**Deputy Mayor** Cllr Linda Leach (Lab)

### Labour

Cllr Obaida Ahmed  
Cllr Qaiser Azeem  
Cllr Mary Bateman  
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE  
Cllr Ciaran Brackenridge  
Cllr Greg Brackenridge  
Cllr Paul Brookfield  
Cllr Paula Brookfield  
Cllr Chris Burden  
Cllr Alan Butt  
Cllr Jenny Cockayne  
Cllr Craig Collingswood  
Cllr Jacqui Coogan  
Cllr Lovinyer Daley

Cllr Claire Darke  
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar  
Cllr Steve Evans  
Cllr Val Evans  
Cllr Jane Francis  
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal  
Cllr Sally Green  
Cllr Jeszemma Howl  
Cllr Carol Hyatt  
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal  
Cllr Jaspreet Jaspal  
Cllr Rashpal Kaur  
Cllr Lamina Lloyd  
Cllr Asha Mattu

Cllr Barbara McGarrity QN  
Cllr Louise Miles  
Cllr Rohit Mistry  
Cllr Anwen Muston  
Cllr Rita Potter  
Cllr Susan Roberts MBE  
Cllr Zee Russell  
Cllr Stephen Simkins  
Cllr Harbinder Singh  
Cllr Paul Sweet  
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman  
Cllr Gillian Wildman

### Conservative

Cllr Paul Appleby  
Cllr Simon Bennett  
Cllr Jonathan Crofts  
Cllr Wendy Dalton  
Cllr Sohail Khan  
Cllr Bob Maddox

### Liberal Democrat

Cllr Andrew McNeil  
Cllr Paul Singh  
Cllr Udey Singh  
Cllr Wendy Thompson  
Cllr Ellis Turrell

### UKIP

### Employees

Tim Johnson  
David Pattison  
John Denley  
Ian Fegan  
Richard Lawrence  
Claire Nye

Chief Executive  
Chief Operating Officer  
Director of Public Health  
Director of Communications and Visitor Experience  
Director of Regeneration  
Director of Finance

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The proceedings opened with Prayers

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*Item No.*     *Title*

1     **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Deputy Mayor, Councillor Linda Leach, Councillor Christopher Haynes, Councillor Stephanie Haynes, Councillor John Reynold, Councillor Tersaim Singh and Councillor Iqra Tahir.

2     **Declarations of interest**

Councillor Louise Miles declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 6 - Capital Programme 2023-2024 to 2027-2028 Quarter Two Review, as a ward councillor for a capital programme detailed within the report.

3     **Minutes of previous meeting**

The Mayor proposed, Councillor Paula Brookfield seconded, and it was resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 8 November 2023, be agreed as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Mayor.

4     **Communications**

**1. Christmas Jumpers**

The Mayor thanked everyone who was wearing a Christmas jumper this evening and thanked everyone for donating to the Mayor's charitable fund so generously.

**2. Mayoral Engagements**

The Mayor advised since the last Full Council meeting, he had attended 30 engagements as Mayor.

The Mayor reported he had attended three memorial events over the course of Remembrance Weekend, all five of the Christmas lights switch-Ons in the City Centre, Wednesfield, Bilston, Tettenhall and Bantock Park and a Diwali celebration at the Arena Theatre.

The Mayor reported he was proud to attend both the Transgender Day of Remembrance flag-raising event on 20th November and the launch of the Orange Campaign to combat violence against women and girls.

**3. Windrush Generation Proposals**

The Mayor was pleased to announce that he was working with the EDI Team and other partners to propose a series of events and educational initiatives celebrating the Windrush community and broader diverse communities in the city. Several proposals were being considered and progress will be reported at the next meeting of Full Council meeting.

**4. Charity Fundraising**

The Mayor reported his efforts to raise funds for his chosen charities continue apace. Following his visit to the Grand Slam of Darts last week, the organisers had kindly donated some memorabilia which was now on sale on eBay. The Mayor encouraged all to view the items and to bid generously.

**5. The Great Mayoral Christmas Bake-Off**

The Mayor reported, the Great Mayoral Christmas Bake-Off was taking place on Thursday 7 December 2023, where our employees had been hard at work baking cakes, after judging a winner they would be sold off.

**6. Childrens Christmas Party**

The Mayor reported he would be hosting two Christmas parties in the City Suite for children from City schools, and was aimed at the most deserving of youngsters. The Mayor thanked Tesco, Penn Road and our Markets Department led by Joanne Huntbatch who donated presents and prizes to enable the parties to take place and also our MC for the day, Dickie Dodd.

**7. Mayoral Christmas Card**

The Mayor reported his Christmas card this year, featured a photo of the beautiful Bantock Park in the snow and was sponsored by two local businesses who have made donations to his charitable fund: Collins Aerospace, as organised by former councillor Beverley Momenabadi, and Revolver Records, run by former councillors Paul and Olivia Birch. The Mayor placed on record his thanks to these two companies for their generosity.

**8. Mayoral Quiz Night**

The Mayor reported his charity quiz night would be taking place in early February. Full details would be announced in due course but as usual it would be for teams of up to four people with prizes, a raffle and questions set by the Mayoral team.

**5 Report of Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Simkins, provided Council with an update on the Cost of Living.

The Leader of the Opposition Group, Councillor Wendy Thompson responded to the update.

Councillor Stephen Simkins replied to the response.

**6 Capital Programme 2023-2024 to 2027-2028 Quarter Two Review**

The Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Louise Miles presented the report on Capital Programme 2023-2024 to 2027-2028 Quarter Two Review for approval.

The report provided an update on the 2023-2024 financial performance of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programmes, whilst also providing a revised forecast for 2023-2024 to 2027-2028 as at quarter two 2023-2024.

The report also recommend revisions to the current approved capital programme covering the period 2023-2024 to 2027-2028.

The Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Louise Miles proposed the recommendations and The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Simkins seconded the recommendations.

The report was debated by Council. Councillor Louise Miles replied to the debate.

Resolved:

1. That the revised, medium term General Fund capital programme of £358.8 million, an increase of £9.0 million from the previously approved programme, and the change in associated resources be approved.
2. That the revised, medium term Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programme of £523.5 million, a net decrease of £5.0 million from the previously approved programme, and the change in associated resources be approved.

## 7 **Treasury Management Activity Monitoring - Mid Year Review 2023-2024**

The Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Louise Miles presented the report on Treasury Management Activity Monitoring - Mid Year Review 2023-2024 for approval.

The report provides a monitoring and progress report on treasury management activity for the second quarter of 2023-2024 as part of the mid-year review, in line with the Prudential Indicators approved by Council in March 2023.

The Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Louise Miles proposed the recommendations and The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Simkins seconded the recommendations.

The report was debated by Council. Councillor Louise Miles replied to the debate.

Resolved:

1. That it be noted, a mid-year review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement had been undertaken and the Council had operated within the limits and requirements approved in March 2023.
2. That it be noted, that revenue underspends of £793,000 for the General Fund and £1.5 million for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) were forecast from treasury management activities in 2023-2024.

## 8 **Final polling district and polling station proposals**

The Cabinet Member for Governance and Equalities, Councillor Paula Brookfield, presented the report Final polling district and polling station proposals for approval.

The report sought approval for the final proposals for the polling district and polling place scheme for 2024 until the next statutory review in five years time.

The Cabinet Member for Governance and Equalities, Councillor Paula Brookfield proposed the recommendations and the Chair of Governance and Ethics Committee, Councillor Rita Potter seconded the recommendations.

Resolved:

1. That the polling district and polling place scheme contained in Appendix 1 to this report be approved and adopted in relation to all elections.
2. That the necessary amendments to polling districts for the publication of the revised register on 2 January 2023 be approved.
3. That it be approved, authority be delegated to the Returning Officer and Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Governance and Equalities, Leader and Leader of the Opposition to make minor alterations to the polling station scheme prior to the next compulsory statutory review in five years.
4. That it be noted, the annual publication of the revised register had been delayed from 1 December to 2 January 2024 due to a by-election taking place during the annual canvass period.
5. That it noted, the submissions made to the Council as part of the polling district and station consultation, and the Returning Officer response to these were contained in Appendix 2 to this report.
6. That it be noted, there had been an increase of 2 schools to 17. 1 of these schools stays open on polling day and 7 currently plan for polling day as either an inset day or remote learning day. Comparatively, Wolverhampton uses the least number of schools across the region. From analysis carried out in September 2022, the number of schools used by other metropolitan councils in the region was detailed in this report. All of these councils would also be carrying out their own statutory polling district review and many have boundary reviews so the situation may change.

## 9 **Appointment of Section 151 Officer and Other Senior Vacancies**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Simkins, presented the report on Appointment of Section 151 Officer and Other Senior Vacancies for approval.

The report sought approval from Council for the interim arrangements put in place following the resignation of the Director of Finance and imminent departure of the Director of Adults, this would ensure a smooth transition and a clear understanding of responsibility and accountability for the statutory Section 151 officer and statutory DASS function.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Simkins proposed the recommendations and Councillor Paula Brookfield seconded the recommendations.

Council placed on record thanks to the Director of Finance, Claire Nye, for her service to the Council and wished Claire all the very best. Council gave applause to Claire.

Resolved:

1. That it be approved, with effect from 6 December 2023 the statutory Section 151 Officer function would be assumed by the Deputy Chief Executive as part of the transitional arrangements following the resignation of the Director of Finance.
2. That it be approved, the implementation of the job allocation outcome for the Chief Accountant post from Grade 12 to Grade 13 with effect from 10 August 2023.

3. That it be approved, following the job allocation review that the Chief Accountant (Deputy Section 151 Officer) be redesignated to Deputy Director of Finance as per the current structure for Grade 13 posts, retaining the Deputy Section 151 Officer responsibility.
4. That it be approved, to appoint with immediate effect, James Howse, Interim Director of Finance, as a further Deputy Section 151 Officer.
5. That it be approved, that interim arrangements would be considered to ensure a smooth transition for the Director of Adults post pending the secondment to the vacancy - any interim Director of Adults would assume the statutory DASS responsibility.
6. That it be approved, the redesignation of the vacant Executive Director of Families post to Executive Director with effect from 6 December 2023.
7. That it be approved, the funding for the vacant Executive Director post (detailed at para 1.5 to this report) would be funded from corporate budgets should that be required, following the review by the Chief Executive of strategic capacity.
8. That it be noted, the Director of Finance, currently the Section 151 Officer leaves the Council on 26 January 2024.
9. That it be noted, interim arrangements had been made to ensure a smooth transition for the Director of Finance post pending the permanent recruitment to the vacancy, with James Howse, an experienced Section 151 Officer, as interim Director of Finance.
10. That it be noted, the Director of Adults, currently the statutory DASS would be leaving the Council in the new year (2024).
11. That it be noted, the 12 month secondment opportunity for the Director of Adults (including the DASS function) post would be subject to a Special Appointments Committee as per the Constitution.
12. That it be noted, the dedication, commitment and positive impact that both the Director of Finance and Director of Adults have had on our Council and city.
13. That it be noted, the Chief Executive would be carrying out a review of strategic capacity within senior officers and in the event that the vacant Executive Director role is required it would subject to a Special Appointments Committee as per the Constitution and have responsibility for portfolios as determined by the Chief Executive.

## 10 **Written Questions by Councillors**

The Cabinet Member for City Environment, Councillor Craig Collingswood responded to a question put to him by Councillor Harbinder Singh on Carbon Reduction Activities. He also responded to a supplementary question on the same matter.

The question on Grand Slam of Darts was withdrawn.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Chris Burden responded to a question put to him by Councillor Zee Russell on Child Poverty. He also responded to a supplementary question on the same matter.

The Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills Education, Councillor Jacqui Coogan responded to a question put to her by Councillor Celia Hibbert on Wolverhampton University. She also responded to a supplementary question on the same matter.

The Lead Member for the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel, Councillor Jasbir Jaspal responded to a question put to her by Councillor Wendy Dalton on Merry Hill Policing Hub. She also responded to a supplementary question on the same matter.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Chris Burden responded to a question put to him by Councillor Wendy Thompson on Youth Activity. He also responded to a supplementary question on the same matter.

The Cabinet Member for Governance and Equalities, Councillor Paula Brookfield responded to a question put to her by Councillor Udey Singh on Councillor Support Unit. She also responded to a supplementary question on the same matter.

Resolved:

That the responses to written questions be noted.

11

### Motions on Notice

<b>City Centre Review (Amendment)</b>	
Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre	Against
Councillor Linda Leach	Against
Councillor Obaida Ahmed	Against
Councillor Paul Appleby	For
Councillor Qaiser Azeem	Against
Councillor Mary Bateman	Against
Councillor Philip Bateman MBE	Against
Councillor Simon Bennett	For
Councillor Ciaran Brackenridge	Against
Councillor Greg Brackenridge	Against
Councillor Paul Brookfield	Against
Councillor Paula Brookfield	Against
Councillor Chris Burden	Against
Councillor Alan Butt	Against
Councillor Jennifer Cockayne	Against
Councillor Craig Collingswood	Against
Councillor Jacqui Coogan	Against
Councillor Jonathan Crofts	For
Councillor Lovinyer Daley	Against
Councillor Wendy Dalton	For
Councillor Claire Darke	Against
Councillor Jasbinder Dehar	Against
Councillor Steve Evans	Against
Councillor Valerie Evans	Against
Councillor Jane Francis	Against
Councillor Bhupinder Gakhal	Against
Councillor Sally Green	Against
Councillor Celia (CeeCee) Hibbert	Abstain
Councillor Jeszemma Howl	Against
Councillor Carol Hyatt	Against

Councillor Jasbir Jaspal	Against
Councillor Jaspreet Jaspal	Against
Councillor Rashpal Kaur	Against
Councillor Sohail Khan	For
Councillor Lamina Lloyd	Against
Councillor Robert Maddox	For
Councillor Asha Mattu	Against
Councillor Barbara McGarrity QN	Against
Councillor Andrew McNeil	For
Councillor Louise Miles	Against
Councillor Rohit Mistry	Against
Councillor Anwen Muston	Against
Councillor Rita Potter	Against
Councillor Susan Roberts MBE	Against
Councillor Zee Russell	Against
Councillor Stephen Simkins	Against
Councillor Harbinder Singh	Against
Councillor Paul Singh	For
Councillor Udey Singh	For
Councillor Paul Sweet	Against
Councillor Jacqueline Sweetman	Against
Councillor Wendy Thompson	For
Councillor Ellis Turrell	For
Councillor Gillian (Jill) Wildman	Against
<b>Rejected</b>	

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Simkins, moved a motion on City Centre Review:

*“Council notes that earlier this year, a local business owner commissioned an ‘independent review’ of Wolverhampton City Centre. Although not convinced that such a review was required, Council nevertheless offered its full support to the consultants appointed and were eventually provided a verbal update on the work they had undertaken. Council does not expect the report of this ‘independent review’ to provide any new insight into the challenges faced by city centre businesses in Wolverhampton and indeed, across the country (e.g. factors beyond the council’s control such as the impacts of the pandemic /Brexit, soaring energy costs, emergence of online shopping, out of town retail parks etc). Irrespective of the findings of the ‘independent review’, Council reaffirms its ongoing commitment to supporting local businesses to thrive and establishing Wolverhampton as a destination city for years to come.*

*Furthermore, Council calls upon the Metro Mayor and the Government for local authorities to be given greater powers, freedoms and adequate funding to keep our city centres thriving, after years of Tory under-investment.”*

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Simkins outlined the rationale for the motion. The Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Evans seconded the motion and outlined the rationale for supporting the motion.

The motion was debated by Council.



Councillor Simon Bennett moved the following amendment to the motion:

*“Council notes that earlier this year, a well-respected local business owner commissioned a much-needed independent review of Wolverhampton City Centre. An open invitation to the summary presentation of this independent review at the Wolverhampton Business Forum meeting on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November was attended by many local businesses and stakeholders, including the City Council’s Chief Executive.*

*This Council recognises and appreciates the time, money and immense effort over a number of years by Henry Carver to make this review happen.*

*Irrespective of the findings of the independent review, Council will look seriously at the conclusions once the full report is published and work with Wolverhampton Business Forum members and the wider business community in Wolverhampton to implement the tangible recommendations required, in order for local businesses to thrive and establishing Wolverhampton as a destination city for years to come.*

*Furthermore, Council commits to continue working with the West Midlands Mayor and the Government on expanding the powers, freedoms and funding for local authorities, while noting that since 2019 alone, Wolverhampton has received more than £2.2 billion direct investment from central Government.*

*Therefore, Council resolves that the Leader of the Council will:*

- *Send a letter of thanks to Henry Carver for commissioning such a thorough review that benefits the city, its businesses, and its residents, while recognising Mr Carver’s dedication to our city over many years*
- *Send a letter of thanks to Wolverhampton Business Forum for their efforts to help revive the city’s economy and business environment, after decades of decline under consecutive Labour administrations*
- *Create a working group to implement the findings and recommendations of the independent review in full, including a comprehensive review of vacant land and floorspace in the city centre and identifying sites where compulsory purchase orders should be used to bring them back into use.*

Councillor Simon Bennett outlined the rationale for the amended motion. Councillor Ellis Turrell seconded the amended motion and outlined the rationale for supporting the amended motion.

The motion was debated by Council.

Upon being put to the meeting, and a division having been demanded and taken voting thereon was as follows:

The amended motion was LOST by 39 votes.

The substantive motion was debated by Council.

Resolved:

1. That the motion on City Centre Review be agreed.
2. That the motion on Green Innovation Corridor be deferred to the next meeting and be the first motion considered.