

Attendance

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

Labour

Cllr Obaida Ahmed	Cllr Steve Evans	Cllr Louise Miles
Cllr Qaiser Azeem	Cllr Val Evans	Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Ciaran Brackenridge	Cllr Jane Francis	Cllr John Reynolds
Cllr Greg Brackenridge	Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal	Cllr Susan Roberts MBE
Cllr Paul Brookfield	Cllr Sally Green	Cllr Zee Russell
Cllr Paula Brookfield	Cllr Jeszemma Howl	Cllr Stephen Simkins
Cllr Chris Burden	Cllr Carol Hyatt	Cllr Harbinder Singh
Cllr Alan Butt	Cllr Jasbir Jaspal	Cllr Tersaim Singh
Cllr Jenny Cockayne	Cllr Jaspreet Jaspal	Cllr Paul Sweet
Cllr Craig Collingswood	Cllr Rashpal Kaur	Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman
Cllr Lovinyer Daley	Cllr Lamina Lloyd	Cllr Iqra Tahir
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar	Cllr Barbara McGarrity QN	Cllr Gillian Wildman

Conservative

Cllr Paul Appleby	Cllr Bob Maddox
Cllr Simon Bennett	Cllr Andrew McNeil
Cllr Jonathan Crofts	Cllr Paul Singh
Cllr Wendy Dalton	Cllr Udey Singh
Cllr Christopher Haynes	Cllr Wendy Thompson
Cllr Stephanie Haynes	Cllr Ellis Turrell
Cllr Sohail Khan	

Independent

Cllr Celia Hibbert

Employees

Tim Johnson	Chief Executive
David Pattison	Chief Operating Officer
Ian Fegan	Director of City Economy and Partnerships
Charlotte Johns	Executive Director of Economy
Alison Hinds	Director of Children's Services
Surjit Tour	Deputy Director of Governance

The proceedings opened with Prayers

Item No. *Title*

1 **Apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Philip Bateman MBE, Councillor Mary Bateman, Councillor Jacqui Coogan, Councillor Claire Darke, Councillor Milkinderpal Jaspal, Councillor Asha Mattu, Councillor Anwen Muston and Councillor Rohit Mistry.

2 **Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest made.

3 **Minutes of previous meeting**
The Mayor proposed, the Deputy Mayor seconded, and it was resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 24 January 2024, be agreed as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Mayor.

4 **Communications**

1. Death of Royal British Legion President

The Mayor was saddened to announce the death of the President of the Royal British Legion, Wolverhampton Central Branch, Mr. Fred Bunce. Fred served with the Royal Navy during the Korean War and became a stalwart of the Armed Forces Veterans community in Wolverhampton.

2. Death of Former Member of Parliament

With regret, the Mayor announced the death of Maureen Hicks, Wolverhampton North-East MP from 1987-1992, who passed away on 13th February 2024 at the age of 75. The Mayor passed on the Council's condolences to her family and friends.

The Council stood in silent tribute to Fred Bunce and Maureen Hicks.

3. Mayoral Engagements

The Mayor advised that since the last Full Council meeting, he had attended 28 engagements as Mayor.

He reported he had attended the Holocaust Memorial Day, the closing of a suicide awareness and prevention campaign, and raised the flag to begin LGBT History Month.

The Mayor reported that he and the Mayoress had attended the iAwards, which celebrated the achievements of looked-after children and care leavers, and had the privilege to attend a glittering occasion in Birmingham where local restaurant Cosmo of Wednesfield, became regional champions for Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion, and were also in contention for the National "Golden Chopsticks" award in April.

The Mayor reported that The Youth Council had met in the Council Chamber, and that he had seen the Schools' Orchestra combine with Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra play in the splendid surroundings of the Halls.

He reported that he had met with the Ukrainian community to show the Council's continuing support for them 2 years on from the start of the dreadful war.

4. Charity Fundraising

The Mayor reported that the charity quiz night on 15th February raised a magnificent £1,500. He publicly thanked everyone for their generosity, in particular the sponsors who assisted in making the evening so successful: Dicky Dodd, The Halls, Tesco, Cosmo Restaurant, The Grand Theatre, The Island House take-away, and all the generous individuals who donated raffle prizes.

5. MayorsFest 2024

The Mayor announced that the Mayors Charity Rockfest 2024 would take place over the weekend of the 6th and 7th April and provided details of the event. He reported that it would be a very poignant event as the main stage at KK's Steel Mill was to be called the "Ian Brookfield Stage" after the late Leader of the Council. Ian had been instrumental in setting up MayorsFest when he was Mayor in 2015-2016, with his Mayoress Paula by his side. It was therefore entirely fitting that his name be marked with this recognition of his foresight in helping to create an annual event that had so far raised over £30,000 for the Mayoral charities.

6. Fairtrade City

The Mayor was pleased to announce that Wolverhampton had retained its' Fairtrade City status and although the annual Fairtrade Fortnight had been moved to September, there would be a smaller event held at Wolverhampton University Chaplaincy on Friday 8th March which he would attend.

7. Commonwealth Day Flag Raising

The Mayor reported that with so much conflict around the world it was heartwarming to see the Commonwealth of Nations bring 56 diverse countries from around the globe together in peace, harmony and co-operation. He invited all those present to join him in St Peters Square at 11am on Monday 11th March to mark Commonwealth Day by raising the Commonwealth Flag and to join him afterwards for refreshments in the City Suite.

5 Report of Leader of the Council

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

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

Councillor Stephen Simkins replied to the response.

6 Our City: Our Plan Refresh 2024-2025

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Simkins, presented the report on Our City: Our Plan Refresh 2024-2025 for approval. The refreshed council plan, Our City: Our Plan was detailed in appendix 1 to the report.

The plan sets out an ambition that 'Wulfrunians will live longer, healthier lives'. Delivery of this ambition would be supported by six overarching priorities: strong families where children grow up well and achieve their full potential; fulfilled lives for all with quality care for those that need it; healthy, inclusive communities; good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods; more local people into good jobs and training, and thriving economy in all parts of the city. Supporting these six overarching priorities were four cross cutting principles: climate action; driven by digital, fair and equal and Wolverhampton pound. The Wolverhampton Pound had been added as a fourth principle in the 2024-2025 refresh.

The report also provided an update on the Council performance framework and how the Council would continue to monitor our progress towards delivering our city priorities.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Simkins, proposed the recommendations and the Deputy Leader: City Housing, Councillor Steve Evans seconded the recommendations.

The report was debated by Council. Councillor Stephen Simkins replied to the debate.

Resolved:

1. That the Our City: Our Plan refresh, the City of Wolverhampton Council Plan be approved.
2. That cross party engagement be sought to deliver the priorities set out in Our City: Our Plan the strategic framework to level up our city.

7 **Final Budget Report 2024-2025**

The Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Louise Miles presented the report on Final Budget Report 2024-2025 for approval.

The Capital Programme 2023-2024 to 2027-2028 Quarter Three Review and 2024-2025 to 2028-2029 Budget Strategy report provided Council with 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 three 2023-2024. The report also recommended revisions to the current approved capital programme covering the period 2023-2024 to 2028-2029 and the updated City of Wolverhampton Capital Strategy.

The Treasury Management Strategy 2024-2025 report sets out the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2024-2025. The report also incorporated six elements, which are appended to this report; The Treasury Management Strategy; The Annual Investment Strategy; The Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators; Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement; The Disclosure for Certainty Rate and The Treasury Management Policy Statement and Practices.

The 2024-2025 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2025 to 2026-2027 report presented a balanced budget for 2024-2025 aligned to the Our City: Our Plan and an update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024- 2025 to 2026-2027. The Council had a balanced budget for 2024-2025, without the need to use general fund reserves. There was still a high level of uncertainty going forward

and a significant financial challenge over the medium term with a projected deficit for 2025-2026 of £27.1 million, rising to £32.6 million in 2026-2027.

The Council Tax Base and Business Rates (NDR) Net Rate Yield 2024-2025 report set the estimates for Wolverhampton Collection Fund 2024-2025, which the Council manages on behalf of local precepting bodies and central government. The report also sought approval to extend the Council's local scheme for Business Rates Discretionary Relief with effect from 1 April 2024. In addition, the report provided an update on the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement announced on 18 December 2023.

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

Councillor Udey Singh provided the principal speech in response to the budget report and moved the report Conservative Group Alternative Budget and outlined the rationale to the amendment to the budget. Councillor Ellis Turrell seconded the amendment to the budget and outlined the rationale for supporting the amendment.

The Conservative Group Alternative Budget was debated by Council.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 the votes were recorded as follows for the amended motion:

Conservative Group Amendment - Revenue Budget 2024/2025 (Amendment)	
Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre	Against
Councillor Linda Leach	Against
Councillor Obaida Ahmed	Against
Councillor Paul Appleby	For
Councillor Qaiser Azeem	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 Jonathan Crofts	For
Councillor Lovinyer Daley	Against
Councillor Wendy Dalton	For
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 Christopher Haynes	For

Councillor Stephanie Haynes	For
Councillor Celia (CeeCee) Hibbert	For
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 Barbara McGarrity QN	Against
Councillor Andrew McNeil	For
Councillor Louise Miles	Against
Councillor Rita Potter	Against
Councillor John C Reynolds	No vote recorded
Councillor Susan Roberts MBE	Against
Councillor Zee Russell	Against
Councillor Stephen Simkins	Against
Councillor Harbinder Singh	Against
Councillor Paul Singh	For
Councillor Tersaim Singh	Against
Councillor Udey Singh	For
Councillor Paul Sweet	Against
Councillor Jacqueline Sweetman	Against
Councillor Iqra Tahir	Against
Councillor Wendy Thompson	For
Councillor Ellis Turrell	For
Councillor Gillian (Jill) Wildman	Against
Rejected	

The amended motion was LOST by 37 votes.

The substantive report was debated by Council.

Councillor Ellis Turrell moved the following motion:

“That the issue of RAAC in the Council Buildings be referred to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Board and that the Leader of the Council was welcomed to attend to explain what he knew and when.”

Councillor Simon Bennet seconded the motion.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed, the issue of RAAC in the Council Buildings be referred to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Board and the Leader of the Council was welcomed to attend to explain what he knew and when.

The substantive report was debated further by Council.

Councillor Louise Miles replied to the debate.

The substantive motion on 2024-2025 Final Budget Report was put before Council.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 the votes were recorded as follows for the substantive motion originally moved:

Final Budget Report 2024-2025 (Motion)	
Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre	For
Councillor Linda Leach	For
Councillor Obaida Ahmed	For
Councillor Paul Appleby	Against
Councillor Qaiser Azeem	For
Councillor Simon Bennett	Against
Councillor Ciaran Brackenridge	For
Councillor Greg Brackenridge	For
Councillor Paul Brookfield	For
Councillor Paula Brookfield	For
Councillor Chris Burden	For
Councillor Alan Butt	For
Councillor Jennifer Cockayne	For
Councillor Craig Collingswood	For
Councillor Jonathan Crofts	Against
Councillor Lovinyer Daley	For
Councillor Wendy Dalton	Against
Councillor Jasbinder Dehar	For
Councillor Steve Evans	For
Councillor Valerie Evans	For
Councillor Jane Francis	For
Councillor Bhupinder Gakhal	For
Councillor Sally Green	For
Councillor Christopher Haynes	Against
Councillor Stephanie Haynes	Against
Councillor Celia (CeeCee) Hibbert	No vote recorded
Councillor Jeszemma Howl	For
Councillor Carol Hyatt	For
Councillor Jasbir Jaspal	For
Councillor Jaspreet Jaspal	For
Councillor Rashpal Kaur	For
Councillor Sohail Khan	Against
Councillor Lamina Lloyd	For
Councillor Robert Maddox	Against
Councillor Barbara McGarrity QN	For
Councillor Andrew McNeil	Against
Councillor Louise Miles	For
Councillor Rita Potter	For
Councillor John C Reynolds	No vote recorded
Councillor Susan Roberts MBE	For
Councillor Zee Russell	For

Councillor Stephen Simkins	For
Councillor Harbinder Singh	For
Councillor Paul Singh	Against
Councillor Tersaim Singh	For
Councillor Udey Singh	Against
Councillor Paul Sweet	For
Councillor Jacqueline Sweetman	For
Councillor Iqra Tahir	For
Councillor Wendy Thompson	Against
Councillor Ellis Turrell	Against
Councillor Gillian (Jill) Wildman	For
Carried	

The substantive motion was CARRIED by 37 votes.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed, the issue of RAAC in the Council Buildings be referred to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Board and the Leader of the Council was welcomed to attend to explain what he knew and when.
2. That the updated City of Wolverhampton Capital Strategy be approved.
3. That the revised, medium term General Revenue Account capital programme of £373.7 million, an increase of £14.6 million from the previously approved programme, and the change in associated resources be approved.
4. That the authorised borrowing limit for 2024-2025 to support the capital strategy as required under Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003 to be set at £1,261.30 million (Reference PI 3, Appendix 3 of the Cabinet report) be approved. The forecast borrowing is below the authorised borrowing limit.
5. That the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024-2025 as set out in Appendix 1 of the Cabinet report be approved.
6. That the Annual Investment Strategy 2024-2025 as set out in Appendix 2 of the Cabinet report be approved.
7. That the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators as set out in Appendix 3 of the Cabinet report be approved.
8. That the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement setting out the method used to calculate MRP for 2024-2025 as set out in Appendix 4 of the Cabinet report be approved.
9. That the Treasury Management Policy Statement and Treasury Management Practices as set out in Appendix 6 of the Cabinet report be approved.
10. That authority be continued to be delegated to the Interim Director of Finance to amend the Treasury Management Policy and Practices and any corresponding changes required to the Treasury Management Strategy, the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators, the Investment Strategy and the Annual MRP Statement to ensure they remain aligned. Any amendments would be reported to the Cabinet Member for Resources and Cabinet (Resources) Panel as appropriate.
11. That authority be continued to be delegated to the Interim Director of Finance to lower the minimum sovereign rating in the Annual Investment Strategy, in the event of the UK's credit rating being downgraded by the third credit rating agency, due to the current economic climate.

12. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Resources, in consultation with the Interim Director of Finance, to amend the MRP statement should this be required following the outcome of the consultation.
13. That the net budget requirements for 2024-2025 of £332.0 million for General Fund services be approved.
14. That the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024-2025 to 2026-2027 as detailed in Section 9 and the key assumptions underpinning the MTFS as detailed in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 of the Cabinet report be approved.
15. That a Council Tax for Council services in 2024-2025 of £2,004.27 (Council element) for a Band D property, being an increase of 4.99% on 2023-2024 levels, which incorporates 2% in relation to Adult Social Care be approved.
16. That the refreshed Reserves Strategy as detailed in Appendix 8 of the Cabinet report be approved.
17. That it be noted that the Council Tax base for 2024-2025 is calculated at 66,645.60 (Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")), as reported to Cabinet on 17 January 2024.
18. That it be agreed, to calculate the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2024-2025 was £133,575,000.
19. That it be agreed that the following amounts be calculated for the year 2024-2025 in accordance with Sections 30 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended:
 - (a) £781,402,170 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.
 - (b) £647,827,170 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
 - (c) £133,575,000 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
 - (d) £2,004.27 being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (section 1 above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
 - (e) £0 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
 - (f) £2,004.27 being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.
20. That it be noted that West Midlands Police and Fire Authorities have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as detailed in the report.
21. That it be agreed that the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables as the amounts of Council Tax for 2024-2025 for each

part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings as detailed in the report.

22. That it be agreed, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at (3) (f) and (4) above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts detailed in the report as the amounts of the Council Tax for the year 2024-2025 for each of the categories of dwellings as detailed in the report.
23. That it be agreed, that a notice of the amounts payable in respect of chargeable dwellings in each valuation band for the year commencing on 1 April 2024 be published in at least one local newspaper and that in accordance with Section 3(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, this notice shall also make reference to the National Non-Domestic Rating Multiplier set by the Secretary of State, and specify that the Council Tax and the non-domestic rate demands are annual demands which cover the full financial year.
24. That it be agreed that the Council had determined that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2024-2025 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.
25. That it be agreed, that as the billing authority, the Council had not been notified by a major precepting authority that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2024- 2025 is excessive and that the billing authority is not required to hold a referendum in accordance with Section 52ZK Local Government Finance Act 1992.
26. That it be noted, that the MRP charge for the financial year 2024-2025 would be £20.8 million; it was forecast to increase to £23.2 million in 2025-2026 (paragraph 2.13 of the Cabinet report).
27. That it be noted, that Cabinet or Cabinet (Resources) Panel and Council would receive regular Treasury Management reports during 2024-2025 on performance against the key targets and Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators in the Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy, as set out in the paragraph 2.11 and Appendices 2 and 3 of the Cabinet report.