

Attendance

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

Labour

Cllr Obaida Ahmed	Cllr Jasbinder Dehar	Cllr Barbara McGarrity QN
Cllr Qaiser Azeem	Cllr Steve Evans	Cllr Louise Miles
Cllr Mary Bateman	Cllr Val Evans	Cllr Anwen Muston
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE	Cllr Jane Francis	Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Ciaran Brackenridge	Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal	Cllr Zee Russell
Cllr Greg Brackenridge	Cllr Jeszemma Howl	Cllr Stephen Simkins
Cllr Paul Brookfield	Cllr Carol Hyatt	Cllr Harbinder Singh
Cllr Paula Brookfield	Cllr Jasbir Jaspal	Cllr Tersaim Singh
Cllr Chris Burden	Cllr Jaspreet Jaspal	Cllr Paul Sweet
Cllr Alan Butt	Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal	Cllr Iqra Tahir
Cllr Jenny Cockayne	Cllr Rashpal Kaur	Cllr Gillian Wildman
Cllr Craig Collingswood	Cllr Lamina Lloyd	
Cllr Jacqui Coogan	Cllr Asha Mattu	

Conservative

Cllr Paul Appleby	Cllr Sohail Khan
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

Independent

Cllr Celia Hibbert

Employees

Tim Johnson	Chief Executive
David Pattison	Chief Operating Officer
Ian Fegan	Director of City Economy and Partnerships
James Howse	Director of Finance
Charlotte Johns	Executive Director of Economy
John Roseblade	Director of Resident Services

The proceedings opened with Prayers

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lovinyer Daley, Councillor Claire Darke, Councillor Sally Green, Councillor Bob Maddox, Councillor Jacqueline Sweetman and Councillor Rohit Mistry.

2 Declarations of interest

Councillor Zee Russell, Councillor Rita Potter, Councillor Susan Roberts MBE and Councillor Jonathan Crofts declared a registerable interest in Item 7, Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan for 2024 – 2025, as board members of Wolverhampton Homes.

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 28 February 2024, be agreed as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Mayor.

4 Communications

1. Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr & Easter

The Mayor announced it was the Holy Month of Ramadan and wished all those observing it a blessed and peaceful month. He wished all Muslims a Happy Eid al-Fitr, Eid Mubarak and a happy Easter to all Christians in the city.

2. Mayoral Engagements

The Mayor advised that since the last Full Council meeting, he had attended 21 engagements as Mayor.

He reported he had attended the birthday anniversary celebrations for Shri Guru Ravidass, performances by many talented local citizens such as the Central Youth Theatre, ME Dance Company, Wolverhampton Chamber Choir, Wolverhampton Music Service Youth Choir and the Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra.

On Monday 11 March the Commonwealth Flag was raised to celebrate the Commonwealth of Nations.

He also attended the Local Policing Awards and was very impressed at the many examples where officers had gone above and beyond.

3. Charity Fundraising

The Mayor reported that he would be judging the next Mayoral Bake Off on Wednesday 10 April, entrants were asked to provide savoury bakes. He encouraged all to participate and advised that all money raised would be going towards his chosen charities.

4. MayorsFest 2024

The Mayor reported that this year's MayorsFest charity rock festival would take place on 6 April in KK's Steel Mill and 7 April in the Gifford Arms and encouraged everyone to attend and enjoy a great night out.

5. St George's Day

The Mayor announced that the national flag would be raised on our Patron Saints Day, on Tuesday 23rd April, at 10am at the flagpole in St Peters Square, followed by refreshments in the Georgian Room, at the Art Gallery.

6. Kings Award for Enterprise

The Mayor reported that he had joined with our Business Development department and the office of the Lord Lieutenancy to mentor and encourage local firms to apply for the Kings Award for Enterprise. A meeting was held that was well attended by a number of business representatives. An inspirational talk was given by a past winner, Julian Morgan of KPM Marine, who highlighted the huge benefits to his company from receiving the award.

7. West Midlands 50 for 50

The Mayor reported that the County of the West Midlands and the West Midlands Lord Lieutenancy was turning 50. To celebrate the Lord Lieutenant wants to thank volunteers across the region. He advised that nominations of volunteers making a difference in the local community, would be recognised throughout the summer. They will be invited to a celebration of volunteering and one lucky volunteer would have a West Midlands Metro Tram named after them.

8. Refreshments

The Mayor announced this would be his final time as chair before the Annual General Meeting. He extended an open invite to all councillors and officers to join him for refreshments in the City Suite.

5 Questions by Members of the Public

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, Councillor Craig Collingswood responded to a question put to him by Mr Cyril Bayton on recycling.

The Deputy Leader for City Housing, Councillor Steve Evans responded to a question put to him by Mrs Jacqueline Small on The Acres.

6 Report of Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Simkins, provided Council with an update on education, skills and jobs.

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

Councillor Stephen Simkins replied to the response.

7 **Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan for 2024 - 2025**

Having declared an other registrable interest, Councillor Zee Russell, Councillor Rita Potter, Councillor Susan Roberts MBE and Councillor Jonathan Crofts left the Council Chamber for the consideration of this item.

The Deputy Leader for City Housing, Councillor Steve Evans, presented the report on Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan for 2024 – 2025 for approval.

The Business Plan as detailed in Appendix 1 to this report, sets out the strategic plan for how priorities would be supported. The Annual Delivery Plan as detailed in Appendix 2 to this report, sets out how strategic priorities would be operationalised over the coming year. The key performance indicators and arrangements for monitoring the plans were detailed in Appendix 3 to this report.

The Deputy Leader: City Housing, Councillor Steve Evans, placed on record his thanks to the Board members and officers of the Council.

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

The report was debated by Council. Councillor Steve Evans replied to the debate.

Resolved:

1. That the Wolverhampton Homes Business Plan 2024-2025 be approved.
2. That the Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan 2024-2025 be approved.
3. That the arrangements for monitoring the delivery of the Wolverhampton Homes Business Plan and Delivery Plan be approved.

Councillor Zee Russell, Councillor Rita Potter, Councillor Susan Roberts MBE and Councillor Jonathan Crofts re-entered the Council Chamber at the conclusion of this item.

8 **Good Growth Strategy**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Simkins, presented the report on Good Growth Strategy for approval.

The report detailed the Councils strategic economic plan, which was developed through consultation and engagement with communities and partners across the city. A presentation of the Good Growth Strategy was considered by Economy and Growth Scrutiny Panel on the 29 November 2024 and Cabinet on the 21 February 2024.

The report detailed that since the publication of the previous plan the local, regional, and national economic, political and social context had changed significantly. The Good Growth Strategy responded to the changing landscape and would help to boost the local economy in the right way. It focuses on three themes: people, place and productivity.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Simkins proposed the recommendations and the Deputy Leader for 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 City of Wolverhampton Council strategic economic plan, Good Growth Strategy (appendix 1 to the Cabinet report) be approved.
2. That it be noted, the priorities set out in the Good Growth Strategy had been developed through consultation and engagement with communities and partners across our city.
3. That it be noted, a presentation and draft Good Growth Strategy was considered by Economy and Growth Scrutiny Panel on the 29 November 2024

9 **Pay Policy Statement 2024 - 2025**

The Cabinet Member for Governance and Equalities, Councillor Paula Brookfield, presented the report on Pay Policy Statement 2024 – 2025 for approval.

The report detailed the remuneration of its chief officers, the remuneration of its lowest-paid employees, and the relationship between: the remuneration of its chief officers, and the remuneration of its employees who are not chief officers. This report had been compiled to comply with the requirements of section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011.

The Cabinet Member for Governance and Equalities, Councillor Paula Brookfield proposed the recommendations and Councillor Louise Miles seconded the recommendations.

The report was debated by Council. Councillor Paula Brookfield responded to the debate.

Resolved:

1. That the Pay Policy Statement for 2024-2025 be approved.
2. That the publication of the Pay Policy Statement in line with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 be approved.
3. That it be noted, the national pay award for 2024-2025 had not been agreed, at the time of writing the Pay Policy Statement.

10 **Municipal Calendar of Meetings 2024-2025**

The Cabinet Member for Governance and Equalities, The Chair of the Governance and Ethics Committee, Councillor Paula Brookfield presented the report on Municipal Calendar of Meetings 2024-2025 for approval. The report sought approval for the calendar of meetings for the next municipal year.

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

Resolved:

That the City of Wolverhampton Council Municipal Calendar of Meetings for 2024 – 2025 be approved.

11 **Healthwatch Co-opted Members - Health Scrutiny Panel**

The Cabinet Member for Governance and Equalities, Councillor Paula Brookfield, presented the report on Healthwatch Co-opted Members - Health Scrutiny Panel for approval. The report sought approval of appointments to the Health Scrutiny Panel.

The Chair of the Governance and Ethics Committee, Councillor Paula Brookfield proposed the recommendation and the Chair of Health Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Susan Roberts seconded the recommendation.

Resolved:

That the appointment of Stacey Lewis (Healthwatch Wolverhampton Manager), Mandy Poonia (Healthwatch Wolverhampton Panel - Co-Chair) and Suffia Perveen (Healthwatch Wolverhampton Panel - Co-Chair) as the three Co-opted Healthwatch Wolverhampton Members, with full voting rights, on the Health Scrutiny Panel be approved.

12 **Written Questions by Councillors**

The Cabinet Member for Digital and Community Inclusion, Councillor Obaida Ahmed, responded to a question put to her by Councillor Wendy Dalton on Customer Service Access Points in the city. She also responded to a supplementary question on the same matter.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Councillor Craig Collingswood responded to a question put to him by Councillor Celia Hibbert on Bin Collection Rule. He also responded to a supplementary question on the same matter.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Councillor Craig Collingswood responded to a question put to him by Councillor Harbinder Singh on potholes. He also responded to a supplementary question on the same matter.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Simkins responded to a question put to him by Councillor Mary Bateman on Green Belt. He also responded to a supplementary question on the same matter.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Councillor Craig Collingswood responded to a question put to him by Councillor Wendy Thompson on Bin Collection.

The Cabinet Member for Adult's and Wellbeing, Councillor Jasbir Jaspal responded to a question put to her by Councillor Wendy Thompson on West Park.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Chris Burden responded to a question put to him by Councillor Udey Singh on the proposed children's home. He also responded to a supplementary question on the same matter.

The question on a four-day working week was withdrawn.

The Cabinet Member for Visitor City, Councillor Bhupinder Gakhal responded to a question put to him by Councillor Paul Singh on Kabaddi World Cup.

Resolved:

That the responses to written questions be noted. at the responses to written questions be noted.

13

Motions on Notice

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Simkins moved a motion on Household Support Fund.

"Whilst we welcome the six-month extension by the Chancellor in the Spring Budget, it still falls well short of the 2-year extension ask from charities who are dealing with the impact of the cost of living crisis across the country.

This decision will have a long-lasting effect on our struggling families in Wolverhampton and across the country, who now face an uncertain future – one where they are at risk of falling into financial crisis, destitution, and homelessness. These families will be looking to the Council for as much assistance to help with their daily living costs.

As we've seen in the Spring Budget, no such assistance will be given to local councils after the 6 months. This will be a damning testament of an uncaring government.

Council therefore calls upon the Conservative government to recognise the need of struggling families and extend the Household Support Fund for at least another 2 years.

Furthermore, Council calls upon the government to improve its wider cost of living support offer to ensure it is adequate in meeting the needs of families struggling with cost of living pressures in our city."

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

Councillor Ellis Turrell moved the following amendment to the motion:

“Council welcomes the six-month extension to the Household Support Fund by the Chancellor in the Spring Budget, which is the latest in a series of measures to support those most in need.

Council notes that across the country, the Government is providing an additional £500 million of funding to enable this extension to the Household Support Fund, bringing the total funding to £3 billion since October 2021.

This is on top of the Universal Credit uplift of 6.7% (which is above inflation), and the basic State Pension, new State Pension, and Pension Credit standard minimum guarantee all increased in-line with average earnings growth at 8.5% - again above inflation.

Notwithstanding the National Living Wage – which is set to rise by 9.8% next month, meaning an extra £1,800 a year for a full-time worker – these packages of support will go a long way to helping Wolverhampton residents offset the cost of the latest council tax rise by this Labour-led council.

Council knows that the Conservative Government will continue to provide support for families well into the future, as they have demonstrated over the last 14 years. We would encourage the Government to extend the Household Support Fund beyond the confirmed six month period, while recognising that the money to pay for this commitment has to be found from somewhere.

Furthermore, Council acknowledges that the biggest threat to families in Wolverhampton is a Labour Government, which would throw away the billions of pounds of investment into our city since 2019 and make substantial cutbacks to local authority budgets.

Council therefore calls on the Government to extend its support for struggling families, when it is fiscally responsible to do so, to safeguard our residents’ livelihoods and public services before a potential Labour Government bankrupts the country.”

Councillor Ellis Turrell outlined the rationale for the amended motion. Councillor Andrew McNeil seconded the motion and outlined the rationale for supporting the motion.

Resolved:

1. That the amended motion on Household Support Fund be deferred to the 19 June 2024 meeting.
2. That the motion on Recycling Bin Collection be deferred to the 19 June 2024 meeting.

The Mayor expressed thanks to Councillor Anwen Muston, Councillor Ellis Turrell and Councillor Rohit Mistry’s who would be retiring from the Council in May. He reported that he too would also be standing down following the elections and expressed thanks.

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]

The Mayor wished Councillor Paul Singh a happy birthday on behalf of the Council.