

Attendance

Mayor Cllr Claire Darke (Lab)
Deputy Mayor Cllr Greg Brackenridge (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Obaida Ahmed	Cllr Val Evans	Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr Mary Bateman	Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal	Cllr Anwen Muston
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE	Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre	Cllr Phil Page
Cllr Olivia Birch	Cllr Celia Hibbert	Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Dr Paul John Birch J.P.	Cllr Keith Inston	Cllr John Reynolds
Cllr Alan Bolshaw	Cllr Jasbir Jaspal	Cllr Susan Roberts MBE
Cllr Ian Brookfield	Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal	Cllr Zee Russell
Cllr Paula Brookfield	Cllr Rashpal Kaur	Cllr Sandra Samuels OBE
Cllr Alan Butt	Cllr Roger Lawrence	Cllr Stephen Simkins
Cllr Craig Collingswood	Cllr Asha Mattu	Cllr Mak Singh
Cllr Jacqui Coogan	Cllr Barbara McGarrity QN	Cllr Paul Sweet
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar	Cllr Louise Miles	Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman
Cllr Steve Evans	Cllr Beverley Momenabadi	Cllr Martin Waite

Conservative

Cllr Paul Appleby	Cllr Sohail Khan
Cllr Payal Bedi-Chadha	Cllr Paul Singh
Cllr Simon Bennett	Cllr Udey Singh
Cllr Jonathan Crofts	Cllr Wendy Thompson
Cllr Christopher Haynes	Cllr Jonathan Yardley

Employees

Tim Johnson	Chief Executive
David Pattison	Director of Governance
Mark Taylor	Deputy Chief Executive
Claire Nye	Director of Finance
Ross Cook	Director of City Environment
John Denley	Director of Public Health
Charlotte Johns	Director of Strategy
Richard Lawrence	Director of Regeneration
Laura Phillips	Deputy Director of People and Change
Jaswinder Kaur	Democratic Services Manager

The proceedings opened with Prayers

Item No. Title

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rupinderjit Kaur and Councillor Linda Leach.

2 Declarations of interest

David Pattison, Director of Governance advised that all Councillors were eligible to vote in accordance with the legislation and under the Council’s Constitution there was a standing dispensation to all Councillors in relation to member allowances, business rates, housing matters and rents.

Councillor Sandra Samuels declared a disclosable pecuniary interest.

The following declaration of interest had been made:

Councillor Paul Birch declared a disclosable pecuniary interest with Arts Council England.

Item 6 - Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan 2021-2022

Councillor	Interest	Reason
Payal Bedi-Chadha	Disclosable non-pecuniary	Wolverhampton Homes Landlord
Ian Brookfield	Disclosable non-pecuniary	Wolverhampton Homes’ Leaseholder
Sohail Khan	Disclosable non-pecuniary	Wolverhampton Homes’ Leaseholder
Lynne Moran	Disclosable non-pecuniary	Wolverhampton Homes’ Board Member
Rita Potter	Disclosable non-pecuniary	Wolverhampton Homes’ Board Member
Zee Russell	Disclosable non-pecuniary	Wolverhampton Homes’ Board Member
Susan Roberts MBE	Disclosable non-pecuniary	Dovecotes TMO – Board Member
Paul Singh	Disclosable non-pecuniary	Wolverhampton Homes’ Board Member

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 3 March 2021, be agreed as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Mayor.

4 **Communications**

1. Retiring Members of the Council

The Mayor expressed thanks to the following Councillors who were not seeking re-election in May 2021:

Councillor Payal Bedi-Chadha
Councillor Roger Lawrence
Councillor Hazel Malcolm
Councillor John Rowley
Councillor Caroline Siarkiewicz
Councillor Jane Stevenson
Councillor Martin Waite

2. Death of Staff Member

The Mayor was saddened to announce the death in service of Sandra Hevican, who had worked in the Revenues and Benefits Team for the last 21 years. Sandra was also a Councillor in Sandwell, representing the Tividale ward. The Mayor expressed her condolences to Sandra's family, friends and colleagues.

3. Day of Reflection

The Mayor announced that Tuesday 23rd March 2021 marked exactly one year since the country had gone into the first lockdown and a national Day of Reflection had been organised by Marie Curie to remember all those who had died during the pandemic. The Council had commemorated the occasion by observing a minute's silence and shining a beam of light into the night sky as part of the #shinealight event.

4. Covid-19 Vaccine and Testing Progress

The Mayor announced that over 112,000 Covid-19 vaccines had now been given in Wolverhampton. Latest figures showed a total of 105,658 people having received the first of their two doses and 6,740 patients having had both.

The Mayor added that people who were eligible but had not yet had their first jab were being asked to do so as a matter of urgency. Vaccinations were currently available to anyone aged 50 and over; anyone who was clinically extremely vulnerable; frontline health and social care workers; and people who were in receipt of Carer's Allowance or were the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if their carer fell ill.

5. International Women's Day

The Mayor announced that it had been International Women's day on 8th March 2021 and was pleased to report that Wolverhampton had played its part in marking the event.

The Mayor added that she had taken part in a conversation with Multi Award Winning Artist, Dawinder Bansal about challenges women had faced in their careers. Other

local events included a presentation by our senior Archivist Heidi MacIntosh about Emma Sprosun and the Women's Suffrage Movement in Wolverhampton, Emma who went on to become our first woman councillor in 1921; and Dr Andrew Yarnold, Cultural Learning Facilitator for Wolverhampton Arts and Culture, gave a talk on "Women in Art".

6. Wolverhampton History Week 22nd to 26th March 2021

The Mayor announced that Wolverhampton City Archives celebrated its first ever Wolverhampton History Week with a series of free online talks on a wide variety of topics. Speakers from the Lace Guild, the Crabtree Society, the Friends of the Archives, and individuals, had showcased their research, alongside ongoing projects such as the digitisation of the Express & Star photographic collection.

5 Pay Policy Statement 2021-2022

Councillor Paula Brookfield presented the report: Pay Policy Statement 2021-2022 for approval. She outlined the recommendations of the report and advised that the national pay award for National Joint Council (NJC) and Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) Chief Officers and Chief Executives had not yet been agreed.

Councillor Paula Brookfield advised the Council had a responsibility under the Localism Bill 2011 to prepare and publish an annual pay policy statement which detailed the remuneration of chief officers, the remuneration of its lowest paid employees and the relationship of remuneration between chief officers and employees. She advised the Council had one of the lowest pay gaps ratios in the West Midlands region.

Councillor Paula Brookfield proposed the recommendations and Councillor Rita Potter seconded the recommendations.

Resolved:

1. That the Pay Policy Statement for 2021-2022 as set out in Appendix 1 of the Cabinet report be approved.
2. That the publication of the Pay Policy Statement as set out in Appendix 1 of the Cabinet report be approved, in line with the requirements of the Localism Act 2021.
3. That it be noted, that the national pay award for National Joint Council (NJC) and Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) Chief Officers and Chief Executives has not yet been agreed.

6 Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan 2021-2022

Councillor Jacqueline Sweetman presented the report: Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan 2021-2022 for approval. She outlined the recommendations of the report and detailed how the Delivery Plan supported the Council priority of 'Better Homes for All'.

Councillor Jacqueline Sweetman praised how Wolverhampton Homes had responded to challenges throughout the impact of Covid-19 and how they had focused on supporting the business and the changing needs and expectations of its customers.

Councillor Jacqueline Sweetman proposed the recommendations and Councillor Louise Miles seconded the recommendations.

Resolved:

1. That the Wolverhampton Homes Business Plan Delivery Plan 2021-2022 as set out in Appendix 1 of the Cabinet report be approved.
2. That the new arrangements for monitoring the delivery of the Wolverhampton Homes Business Plan Delivery Plan to Council scrutiny be approved.

7 Council Submission to Local Government Boundary Review

Councillor Paula Brookfield presented the report: Council Submission to Local Government Boundary Review. She outlined the proposed Labour Party submission and thanked Members for their hard work in producing the comprehensive proposal.

Councillor Paula Brookfield proposed the recommendations and Councillor John Reynolds seconded the recommendations.

Councillor Wendy Thompson stated that the Conservative Party intended to submit their own submission.

The report was debated by Council.

Resolved:

1. That the Council's Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

8 Calendar of Meetings 2021-2022

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ian Brookfield presented the report: Calendar of Meetings 2021-2022 for approval. He advised the report sought approval for the calendar of meetings for the next municipal year.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ian Brookfield proposed the recommendation and Councillor Louise Miles seconded the recommendation.

Resolved:

1. That the City of Wolverhampton Council Calendar of Meetings for 2021-2022 attached at appendix 1 be approved.

9 Decisions Made Under Urgent Action Powers

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ian Brookfield presented the report: Decisions Made Under Urgent Action Powers report for noting. The report detailed the decision taken under Urgent Action Powers.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ian Brookfield proposed the recommendation and Councillor Louise Miles seconded the recommendation.

The report was debated by Council.

Resolved:

That the decision made under urgent action powers be noted.

10

Written Questions by Councillors

a. Heath Town Baths

Councillor Simon Bennett asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy:

“The redevelopment of Heath Town Baths is an important project in the Heath Town Ward, what involvement has the Cabinet Member had in bringing this much delayed project forward?”

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins responded that since being in post since July 2020 he had received regular briefings from officers and had been assured that the project was moving forward despite the unavoidable delays caused by Covid-19. The Council had worked tirelessly to line up a private led scheme, following an open tender process, Gaddu Associates was appointed. The Council continued to hold regular talks with Gaddu Associates, supporting them to develop their proposals.

The Heritage Lottery grant programme had been suspended due to the on-going Covid-19 pandemic but had reopened in February and a case worker had been working with Gaddu Associates to support the resubmission of their bid. He added that the scheme was supported by the Council, the local community and more importantly the local MP.

Councillor Simon Bennett asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy the following supplementary question:

“This project is now on its third Cabinet Member, how has this impacted on delivering this important Community asset?”

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins stated that there had been ten years of austerity, ten years of lack of investment coming into the city, and finally a stage had been reached where a developer could be appointed.

b. Heath Town Baths

Councillor Paul Appleby asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy:

“How much did the tendering process cost for Heath Town Baths and how much was paid to the Consultants used?”

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins stated that the appointment of the commercial adviser to manage the developer and selection process was agreed by Cabinet due to the complex nature of the building, this was undertaken by way of a mini competition using the Property Panel of the then Homes and Communities Agency to ensure value for money was achieved. The tender value was £19,872.

Councillor Paul Appleby asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy the following supplementary question:

“In the last four years the redevelopment of this very important community facility has progressed very little under the successful bidder, does the Cabinet Member consider this process to have delivered value for money?”

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins stated that he would respond to Councillor Appleby in writing with the value for money on the contract.

c. Heath Town Baths

Councillor Jonathan Yardley asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy:

“Since the tendering process for Heath Town Baths concluded it is understood that the building has suffered further damage whilst standing idle. Please can the Cabinet Member detail the additional damage that has occurred since the tendering process finished?”

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins stated that the most significant damage to the building had occurred almost immediately after it was decommissioned. More recent damage had been relatively limited – some coping stones had been pushed off the roof and these had been taken into storage awaiting repair and re-use.

He added that the Ground floor openings had been blocked up and the building had been fenced to deter intruders and future anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Jonathan Yardley asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy the following supplementary question:

“Can the Cabinet Member advise who is responsible for the cost of these repairs, does it fall to the council or do Gaddu Associates assume the cost responsibility?”

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins stated that there was shared responsibility and that the security of the site was down to the authority.

d. Heath Town Baths

Councillor Jonathan Crofts asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy:

“When does the Cabinet Member expect a planning application to be submitted for Heath Town Baths?”

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins stated that a planning application was expected later this year. Much of the work required for the planning application had already been completed as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund submission therefore the planning application could follow on quickly. He added that Planning and Conservation officers of the Council had fully supported this.

e. Heath Town Baths

Councillor Udey Singh asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy:

“The Council estimated the cost of refurbishment at around £5m, the successful tenderer priced it around 75% lower. Which of these values is correct, the Council’s or the Tenderers?”

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins stated that the question referred to the Council’s costs estimate of £5m, that was in fact an exercise based upon a very different proposal for the site and was prior to the site being offered to the open market.

The £5m costings were provided in 2012 and reflected proposals for a sports academy to include; a new sports hall, training rooms, gym facilities, external outdoor athletic facilities. Unfortunately, the plans for the Sports Academy had not proceeded due to lack of resources in place by the Academy. The scheme that was before us today was completely different.

Councillor Udey Singh asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy the following supplementary question:

“Specifically, what safeguards are in place in the case of cost increase?”

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins responded that the scheme was based on estimated costings and being progressed through the timescales of the Big Lottery Funding and Heritage Lottery Fund and he would write to Councillor Udey

Singh to provide estimated slippage costs.

f. Heath Town Baths

Councillor Sohail Khan asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy:

“The renovation of Heath Town Baths is heavily dependent on a successful Heritage Lottery Funding bid. What contingency measures has the Council implemented in case the approved tenderer is unsuccessful with their bid?”

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins stated that the Council had worked closely with the developer to maximise its chances of success with grant funding. Since the initial success of the Expression of Interest in the Heritage Lottery Enterprise grant, the lottery had identified and allocated a named officer to work with the developer to help align the bid to their grant award criteria.

A private sector led development with strong community involvement, exactly the scenario with Heath Town Baths, was what Heritage Lottery were awarding funding bid awards to so there were good reasons to be optimistic.

He added that if the grant application failed, the developer had stated that they would not walk away from the project. The developer had recently had a meeting with Jane

Stevenson MP who had pledged her support to the developer with any grant funding applications.

Councillor Sohail Khan asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy the following supplementary question:

“As a commercial profit seeking business is the portfolio Holder content with the amount of public funds involved in this project from both the HLF and the generous rental sales terms offered by the council?”

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins stated that he was unable to disclose the financial information in this meeting.

g. Heath Town Baths

Councillor Chris Haynes asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy:

“Can the Portfolio Holder set out what the Council considers as ‘successful track record’ when considering tenders for the development of historic and grade two listed buildings?”

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins stated that the Council could only assess the bids that arose from any invitation to tender. In the case of Heath Town Baths, the preferred developer included a number of previous schemes it had brought forward. One of these was Willenhall Baths, in many ways a similar heritage building to Heath Town baths. The redevelopment of an early twentieth century former public baths into a banqueting and conference centre would certainly count towards a “successful track record”.

Councillor Chris Haynes asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy the following supplementary question:

“In the portfolio holders opinion does one reprovod conversion of a former swimming baths constitute a successful track record?”

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins responded that any proposal bought forward for Grade II listed building would be a benefit to the whole community which has a commercial venture moving forward.

h. Heath Town Baths

Councillor Payal Bedi-Chadha asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy:

“The successful tenderer for Heath Town Baths seems to be a redevelopment firm rather than a venue hire firm. Who will be the tenant/owner of the building when redevelopment is complete?”

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins stated that the successful tenderer would be both the developer of the site and would also be responsible for the future operation and day to day running and upkeep as a venue and community facility.

He added that this followed the model of the developer's other schemes and was a major strength of their proposals.

Councillor Payal Bedi-Chadha asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy the following supplementary question:

"What safeguards will the council introduce to ensure that both the councils and the community's best interests are protected?"

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins stated that the best way to protect our interests was to get the scheme up, running and built.

i. Gaddu Associates

Councillor Paul Singh asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy:

"One of the directors of Gaddu Associates as listed on Companies House appears to be broker/financier rather than a developer. Another Director resigned at the end 2020. What checks did the Council do on Gaddu Associates before awarding the tender?"

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins stated that as part of the tendering exercise all prospective developers were required to submit information on their Professional/Technical Team and information on their financial standing and project specific funding. The developer submitted a five-year business plan which included projected finance and post completion financial viability. Based on the submitted information, the Council's Commercial Advisor Avison Young recommended Gaddu Associates as the preferred developer.

Councillor Paul Singh asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy the following supplementary question:

"Cabinet Resources Panel formally agreed to award Gaddu Associates on 10 January 2017. Gaddu Associates was officially registered with Companies House on 6 February 2017. Can the Portfolio Holder please explain the period between the decision and the registration of the company?"

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins stated that he was unable to disclose the financial information in this meeting and would provide the information requested in writing to Councillor Paul Singh.

j. Gaddu Associates

Councillor Wendy Thompson asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy:

"Please can the Portfolio Holder set out what work has been done between the Council and Gaddu Associates in the last three years?"

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins stated that the Council had worked closely with the developer ensuring safe access to the building, facilitating meetings with key officers, providing letters of support and applying flexibility to ensure that the Agreement for Lease can go unconditional prior to full

submission of the grant funding bid but in a way which protected the Council's interests.

The Council had also worked with the developer to minimise the effects on the building of anti-social behaviour and the Council was expecting to receive a proposal very soon which would see some early occupation of part of the building to help deter future anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Wendy Thompson asked the Cabinet Member for City Economy the following supplementary question:

"Please can the Portfolio Holder give any indication as to why Gaddu Associates have filed accounts for a dormant company in the last three years particularly as the council deemed the company an experienced developer?"

The Cabinet Member for City Economy, Councillor Steve Simkins stated that he was unable to disclose the financial information in this meeting.

Resolved:

That the responses to the written questions be noted.