

# Meeting of the Council

## Minutes - 26 January 2022

### Attendance

**Mayor** Cllr Greg Brackenridge (Lab)  
**Deputy Mayor** Cllr Sandra Samuels OBE (Lab)

### Labour

Cllr Obaida Ahmed	Cllr Val Evans	Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr Qaiser Azeem	Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal	Cllr Anwen Muston
Cllr Mary Bateman	Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre	Cllr Phil Page
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE	Cllr Celia Hibbert	Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Olivia Birch	Cllr Keith Inston	Cllr John Reynolds
Cllr Dr Paul John Birch J.P.	Cllr Jasbir Jaspal	Cllr Susan Roberts MBE
Cllr Ian Brookfield	Cllr Jaspreet Jaspal	Cllr Zee Russell
Cllr Paula Brookfield	Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal	Cllr Stephen Simkins
Cllr Chris Burden	Cllr Rashpal Kaur	Cllr Clare Simm
Cllr Alan Butt	Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur (V)	Cllr Tersaim Singh
Cllr Craig Collingswood	Cllr Linda Leach	Cllr Paul Sweet
Cllr Claire Darke (V)	Cllr Asha Mattu	Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar	Cllr Barbara McGarrity QN (V)	Cllr Gillian Wildman
Cllr Steve Evans	Cllr Beverley Momenabadi	

### Conservative

Cllr Paul Appleby	Cllr Andrew McNeil
Cllr Simon Bennett (V)	Cllr Andrew Randle
Cllr Adam Collinge	Cllr Mak Singh (V)
Cllr Jonathan Crofts	Cllr Paul Singh
Cllr Wendy Dalton (V)	Cllr Wendy Thompson
Cllr Christopher Haynes	Cllr Ellis Turrell
Cllr Stephanie Haynes	Cllr Jonathan Yardley
Cllr Sohail Khan	

### Employees

Tim Johnson	Chief Executive
David Pattison	Chief Operating Officer
Emma Bennett	Executive Director of Families
Ross Cook	Director of City Housing and Environment
Claire Nye	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 Councillor Udey Singh.

**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 1 December 2021, be agreed as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Mayor.

**4            Communications**

**1.        Honorary Alderman John Davis**

The Mayor was saddened to report the passing of Honorary Alderman John Lamonby Goodfellow Davis, who passed away on 29 December 2021. He had also served as Mayor of the City in 2006 - 2007.

The Mayor passed on condolences to his widow Noreen and family.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ian Brookfield and Councillor Wendy Thompson also paid tribute to the late Alderman John Davis.

Council stood in silent tribute to the late Honorary Alderman John Davis.

**2.        Christmas Card Competition**

The Mayor reported he ran a competition in December for all our school students to design the mayoral Christmas Cards. Over 1000 entries were received and he was assisted in judging the winning entries by Councillor Bennett, Councillor Hardacre, Councillor Momenabadi and Simon Archer. He added the standard of entries was fantastic and the winning entries were:

Under 7's:

- Oscar Corbett (Aged 4), Oak Meadow Primary School
- Runner-up Simran Wahid (aged 5) Perry Hall Primary School

7 to 11's:

- Veeran Wahid (aged 9) Perry Hall Primary School
- Runner-up Zachary McCulloch (aged 11) Bilston CofE Primary School.

12 and Over:

- Karolina Wlaznik (aged 13) Thomas Telford UTC
- Runner-up Natalie Chanelle Freeman (aged 13) Moseley Park School.

The Mayor had invited all for afternoon tea and were given a small gift as thanks for taking the time to enter.

**3. New Year's Honours List**

The Mayor extended congratulations to the following individuals who received royal recognition in the Queen's New Year's Honours:

- Clare Dickens was awarded an MBE for Services to Education and Improving Suicide Awareness.
- Helene Dearn was awarded an OBE for Services to Public Service.
- Kathryn Beale was awarded a BEM for Services to the Community.
- Louise Rhodes was awarded an MBE for Services to Education and People with Hearing Impairments.

The Mayor had written to Clare, Helene, Kathryn and Louise on behalf of the City Council to extend the Council's sincere congratulations.

**4. For the Love of Fostering Awards**

The Mayor reported he attended For the Love of Fostering Awards on Thursday 2 December 2021, at which the City of Wolverhampton Council officially thanked dozens of dedicated foster carers for the vital work they do looking after vulnerable children and young people in the city.

**5. Holocaust Memorial Day**

The Mayor reported Holocaust Memorial Day would take place on 27 January to mark the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp by the Red Army in 1945. It was now a day of Remembrance for all victims of genocide wherever in the world the atrocities were committed. The Mayor would be attending a ceremony at the Cenotaph tomorrow morning to lay a wreath on behalf of the Council.

**6. Wolverhampton Food Banks Get-Together**

The Mayor reported it was a great privilege to visit several of the food banks currently operating in the City, to see first-hand the excellent work to assist our most vulnerable residents carried out by these volunteer organisations. The Mayor invited representatives from the food banks for an afternoon tea in the City Suite on Friday 3 December 2021 to thank them for their sterling work.

**7. Quiz Night in aid of the Mayoral Charity Trust**

The Mayor reported due to a late change in Covid-19 restrictions, the last Charity Quiz night had to be cancelled and has been re-arranged for the evening of Thursday 3 March in the City Suite. There were fantastic prizes to be won and encouraged all to enter.

**8. British Art Show 9**

The Mayor reported the British Art Show 9 (BAS9) was being hosted by Wolverhampton Art Gallery and the University of Wolverhampton Art School from Saturday 22 January to Sunday 10 April, providing a major boost to the

recognition of arts and culture in Wolverhampton – the first English City to host the 9th edition of the show. The Mayor was delighted to attend the opening night last Friday and encouraged everyone to visit this exhibition and help to make it the great success.

**9. India Republic Day**

The Mayor passed best wishes on to the Indian community in Wolverhampton and to our twin city of Shimla on this India Republic Day. Wolverhampton Council had been honoured by the Indian Consulate in Birmingham to join in marking this important day with invites sent to several councillors, with Councillor Udey Singh and others representing the city.

**5 Report of Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ian Brookfield, provided Council with an update on the Annual Auditors Report and provided key highlights from the report. It was noted the Annual Auditors Report would be presented at Audit and Risk Committee in March and then Council in March.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ian Brookfield also went to provide an update on upcoming events to be hosted in the City.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ian Brookfield, wished the Director of City Housing and Environment, Ross Cook all the best for his new role at Herefordshire Council.

The update was debated by Council.

**6 Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2022-2023 including Rent and Service Charge Consultation**

The Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing, Councillor Bhupinder Gakhal presented the report on Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2022-2023 including Rent and Service Charge Consultation for approval. The report provided Council with an updated Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2022-2023 which was intended to balance the provision of new homes for rent, whilst continuing to invest in better and safer homes programmes to the existing stock and improving and redeveloping housing estates.

The Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing, Councillor Bhupinder Gakhal added the report also provided, as an integral part of that Business Plan, a proposed HRA budget for 2022-2023, including proposed rents and service charges to take effect from 1 April 2022, and a proposed HRA Capital Programme for the period 2022-2023 to 2026- 2027 recommended for approval.

The Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing, Councillor Bhupinder Gakhal added the rationale for the rate increases was to offset the costs of providing the service and were in line with the cost of inflation. Consultation was undertaken on the proposed rents and service charges and key themes from the consultation were outlined.

The report was debated by Council.

The Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing, Councillor Bhupinder Gakhal proposed the recommendations and the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ian Brookfield seconded the recommendations.

Resolved:

1. That the Business Plan set out at Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report be adopted as the approved Housing Revenue Account Business Plan including:
  - a. The revenue budget for 2022-2023 at Appendix 1 to the cabinet report.
  - b. The Capital Programme for 2022-2023 to 2026-2027 at Appendix 2 to the Cabinet report that includes the following among the proposed investment plans:
    - £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. That the implementation of an increase of 4.1% to social housing rents in accordance with the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 be approved and 28 days' notice be given to all secure and introductory tenants of the rent increase from 1 April 2022.
3. That the rates for garage rents and service charges set out in Appendix 3 to the Cabinet report be approved and tenants be formally notified.
4. That the Management Allowances for Managing Agents be approved as follows:
  - 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

## **7 Appointment of the External Auditor**

The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee, Councillor Alan Butt presented the report on Appointment of the External Auditor for approval. The Council received an invitation from Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) to opt into the national scheme for auditor appointments from April 2023. The arrangement with our current external auditors Grant Thornton expires in 2022-2023, and a new external auditor (which includes the independent audit of the Council's statutory accounts and arrangements for achieving value for money) had to be appointed before the end of December 2022.

The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee, Councillor Alan Butt added the Council had previously opted into the national scheme the alternative would be for the Council to procure its own auditor.

The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee, Councillor Alan Butt added the December Audit and Risk Committee considered the report and recommended Council opt into

the national scheme . The benefits of opting into the scheme were detailed in the report.

The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee, Councillor Alan Butt proposed the recommendation and the Vice Chair of Audit and Risk Committee Councillor Jonathan Yardley seconded the recommendation.

The report was debated by Council.

Resolved:

That the invitation from Public Sector Audit Appointments to opt into the national scheme for auditor appointments from April 2023 be approved.

## **8 Written Questions by Councillors**

The Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing, Councillor Bhupinder Gakhal responded to a question put to him by Councillor Susan Roberts MBE on Development Plans. He also responded to a supplementary question on the same subject matter.

The Cabinet Member for City Environment and Climate Change, Councillor Steve Evans responded to questions put to him by Councillor Simon Bennett on Garden Waste Service and Councillor Wendy Thompson on Bare-knuckle Boxing. He also responded to supplementary questions on the same subject matter.

The Deputy Leader: Inclusive City Economy, Councillor Stephen Simkins responded to a question put to him by Councillor Adam Collinge on City Investment. He also responded to a supplementary question on the same subject matter.

The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing, Councillor Jasbir Jaspal responded to a question put to her by Councillor Steph Haynes on West Midlands Police and Crime Panel. She also responded to a supplementary question on the same subject matter.

On behalf of the Leader of the Council, The Deputy Leader: Inclusive City Economy, Councillor Stephen Simkins responded to a question put to the Leader by Councillor Paul Singh on Platinum Jubilee. He also responded to a supplementary question on the same subject matter.

That the responses to written questions be noted.