

Attendance

Members of the Cabinet

Cllr Ian Brookfield (Chair)
Cllr Stephen Simkins (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Obaida Ahmed
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Chris Burden
Cllr Steve Evans
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal
Cllr Linda Leach

Employees

Tim Johnson	Chief Executive
Mark Taylor	Deputy Chief Executive
Emma Bennett	Executive Director of Families
Charlotte Johns	Director of Strategy
Claire Nye	Director of Finance
David Pattison	Chief Operating Officer
John Roseblade	Director of City Housing and Environment
Becky Wilkinson	Director of Adult Social Services
Jaswinder Kaur	Democratic Services Manager
Dereck Francis	Democratic Services Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

- | <i>Item No.</i> | <i>Title</i> |
|-----------------|---|
| 1 | Apologies for absence
Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Beverley Momenabadi. |
| 2 | Declaration of interests
No declarations of interests were made. |
| 3 | Minutes of the previous meeting
Resolved:
That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 September 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair. |

- 4 **Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-2024 to 2025-2026**
Councillor Obaida Ahmed reported on salient points from the report on an update on the draft budget strategy for 2023-2024 the medium term financial strategy (MTFS) 2023-2024 to 2025-2026 since the last report in July. She also reported on next steps that would be taken in order to address financial pressures faced by the Council over the medium term. Councillor Ahmed also placed on record hers and the Controlling Labour Groups thanks for all the efforts of the finance team and the whole of the Council who are working extremely hard to ensure that there is a balanced budget for 2023-2024 and continues to provide excellent services to the residents of Wolverhampton.

Resolved:

1. That the draft budget strategy and medium term financial strategy which underpin Our City, Our Plan, including changes to corporate resource assumptions, growth and inflation and budget reduction and income generation proposals be approved.
2. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Resources and Digital City, and the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Work, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Executive Director of Families, to approve changes to the local funding formula for Schools including method, principles and rules adopted.
3. That it be noted that a number of assumptions have been made with regards to the level of resources that would be available to the Council. It is important to note there continues to be a considerable amount of uncertainty with regards to future income streams for local authorities. Any reduction in Government's allocation of funding to the Council would have a significant detrimental impact and further increase the budget deficit over the medium term.
4. That it be noted that, due to external factors, budget assumptions remain subject to significant change, which could, therefore, result in alterations to the financial position facing the Council.
5. That it be noted that it is forecast that the budget deficit is £7.1 million for 2023-2024, rising to £31.6 million by 2025-2026 and that work would continue to be undertaken to bring forward proposals to set a balanced budget for 2023-2024 and deliver a sustainable medium term financial strategy.
6. That it be noted that the overall level of risk associated with the Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-2024 to 2025-2026 is assessed as Red.

- 5 **Bus Services in the City**
Councillor Steve Evans presented the report on a proposal to approve a variation to a regional Enhanced Partnership Scheme made in June 2021 between the Local Transport Authority, the West Midlands Highway Authorities and bus operators, for the purpose of ensuring improved high standards of bus services.

Cabinet commended the report, particularly its consideration of equalities implications and the wide range of travel incentives for specific hard to reach groups and groups who suffer exclusion because they are unable to access transport. It was noted that the Council had two representatives on the West Midlands Combined Authority Transport Delivery Committee that oversees and scrutinises bus services in the city and region. Updates on the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the incentive offers could be obtained through liaison with the two Council representatives.

Resolved:

1. That Variation 002 of the Enhanced Partnership to include the improvements identified in the Bus Services Improvement Plan (BSIP) be approved.
2. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for City Environment and Climate Change to approve Variation 003 of the Enhanced Partnership following the appropriate statutory consultation process.
3. That the need to revoke the Advanced Quality Partnership Scheme (AQPS) for bus services in Wolverhampton be noted.
4. That the proposed Variation 003 of the Enhanced Partnership which would capture the commitments of the AQPS and embed them in the Enhanced Partnership be noted.

6 **Digital Wolverhampton Strategy Update**

Councillor Obaida Ahmed presented the report on a six month update on progress in the delivery of the Digital Wolverhampton Strategy which had been adopted in January 2020. She highlighted some of the key achievements including: connected 170 public sector premises to full fibre broadband through our local full fibre network initiative; broadband Gigabit connectivity had increased from just 2% in 2020 to 93% this year; full fibre connectivity has gone from less than 1% to now at over 30%; CityFibre's commercial roll out had reached 50,000 homes and 800 businesses; both Virgin Media and BT Openreach are upgrading their infrastructure to full fibre; ensuring all residents have access to devices, connectivity and skills to take advantage of what digital has to offer.

Councillor Obaida Ahmed placed on record her thanks to the Council's partners for their valued contributions towards the achievement of the key milestones in the Digital Wolverhampton programme. She gave assurance that the Council would continue to deliver the Digital Wolverhampton Strategy, ensuring the Council is driven by digital to provide better and more efficient services, addresses key challenges across the city, and to make a difference to local people's lives.

Cabinet noted that the strategy was of importance to all citizens of Wolverhampton. Investment in digital would open up opportunities and bring investment and jobs into the City.

Resolved:

- That progress in delivering the priorities of the Digital Wolverhampton Strategy be noted.