

Meeting of the Cabinet

Minutes - 7 July 2021

Attendance

Members of the Cabinet

Cllr Ian Brookfield (Chair)
Cllr Stephen Simkins (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Obaida Ahmed
Cllr Paula Brookfield (Virtually)
Cllr Steve Evans
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal
Cllr Linda Leach (Virtually)
Cllr Beverley Momenabadi (Virtually)

Employees

Mark Taylor	Deputy Chief Executive
Ross Cook	Director of City Housing and Environment
Charlotte Johns	Director of Strategy
Richard Lawrence	Director of Regeneration
David Pattison	Director of Governance
Laura Phillips	Deputy Director of People and Change
Alison Shannon	Chief Accountant
Jaswinder Kaur	Democratic Services Manager
Dereck Francis	Democratic Services Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Apologies for absence**
No apologies for absence were received for the meeting.
- 2 **Declaration of interests**
David Pattison, Director of Governance and other members of the Strategic Executive Board present who are impacted potentially by the proposals declared a pecuniary interest in item 5 (Our Future Senior Leadership (Phase1)).

The Director of Governance reported that Councillors Beverley Momenabadi and Bhupinder Gakhal had submitted written declarations of interests in respect to item 8 (Wolverhampton's Youth Justice Plan 2021-2022). He had advised them that the interests do not directly relate and therefore they would be able to take part in the discussion on the report and vote.

Councillor Linda Leach declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 9 (Black Country Plan Draft for Consultation).

Councillor Beverley Momenabadi declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 11 (Primary School Expansion Programme 2021-2022) in so far as she is a Governor of Bilston CE Primary School.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 June 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

5 Our Future Senior Leadership (Phase 1)

Councillor Ian Brookfield presented the report Our Future Senior Leadership (Phase 1) for recommendation to Full Council for approval. Changes were proposed to the way in which the senior management team are strategically aligned, maximising the Council's ability to respond to its operating environment in terms of both financial constraints and priorities as set through the City's Vision 2030, Council's Corporate Plan and Relighting Our City programme. It was noted that by the end of phase two there would have been a reduction in headcount and as a minimum the revised structure would be cost neutral.

Resolved:

That Cabinet recommends that Council approves:

1. The establishment of an Executive Director of Families post subject to appointment by a Special Appointments Committee.
2. The establishment of a Chief Operating Officer post subject to appointment by a Special Appointments Committee.
3. A Special Appointments Committee for the appointment of an Executive Director of Families.
4. A Special Appointments Committee for the appointment of a Chief Operating Officer.
5. That the Special Appointment Committees approved within this report have delegated authority to endorse both appointments on behalf of Council.
6. That a nominated chair of an employee equality forum also be included on the Special Appointment Committee panels as an observer to further embed our absolute commitment to equalities and diversity.

7. The revision to the Senior Management Pay structure to support the introduction of new senior management posts; Chief Operating Officer and Executive Director of Families.
8. The financial implications of delivering our future senior leadership would be considered as a whole, taking account of both phases one and two. By the end of phase two there would have been a reduction in headcount, and as a minimum the revised structure would be cost neutral.

That Cabinet approves:

1. That the Chief Executive be given delegated authority to undertake any final consultations with employees and trade unions to implement the changes contained within the report.
2. That the vacant Director of Housing post be deleted.

That Cabinet notes:

1. The restructuring of the Council's senior leadership team to create a stronger, more coherent structure focused on delivering the city's recovery plan and local priorities would be as a minimum cost neutral.
2. That a further delegated review (phase 2) of structures would take place by the Chief Executive/Strategic Executive Board following the appointments approved within the report.
3. That all senior management posts have been subject to job evaluation.
4. All Directors (Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and other statutory roles) would continue to have direct access and support from the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive.
5. The Director of City Housing and Environment assumes the responsibilities of the vacant Director of Housing post.
6. That the vacant Head of Human Resources post had been deleted.
7. That the vacant Head of Democratic & Support Services post had been deleted.
8. The Deputy Director of People & Change post had been created to assume the responsibilities of the vacant Head of Human Resources and Head of Democratic & Support Services posts.
9. The financial implications of delivering our future senior leadership would be considered as a whole, taking account of both phases one and two. By the end of phase two there would have been a reduction in headcount, and as a minimum the revised structure would be cost neutral.

Capital Budget Outturn 2020-2021 including Quarter One Capital Monitoring 2021-2022

Councillor Ian Brookfield presented the capital budget outturn and capital monitoring report for recommendation to Full Council for approval. The report provided an update on the outturn position for 2020-2021 and on the 2021-2022 financial performance of the General Revenue Account and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programmes whilst also providing a revised forecast for 2021-2022 to 2025-2026 as at quarter one of 2021-2022. Revisions were also recommended to the current approved capital programmes covering the period 2021-2022 to 2025-2026.

Resolved:

That Cabinet recommend that Council approves:

1. The revised, medium term General Revenue account capital programme of £340.2 million, an increase of £3.0 million from the previously approved programme, and the change in associated resources.
2. The revised, medium term Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programme of £450.3 million, a reduction of £222,000 from the previously approved programme, and the change in associated resources.

That Cabinet approves:

1. The virements for the General Revenue Account capital programme detailed at Appendix 4 to the report for:
 - i. existing projects totalling £8.1 million;
 - ii. new projects totalling £2.3 million.
2. The virements for the HRA capital programme detailed at Appendix 4 to the report for:
 - i. Existing projects totalling £3.9 million.
3. The expansion of the delegation endorsed by Cabinet on 18 July 2018 which delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Education, in consultation with the Director of Finance, to approve the allocation of the provision of the Special Education Needs (SEN) Special Capital Fund Programme to individual capital projects in order that they may be progressed in a timely manner. The expanded delegation is to approve the payments of grants related to the SEN Special Provision Capital Fund programme where appropriate in order that projects can be progressed in a timely manner. In addition, approval is sought to enter into a grant agreement between the City of Wolverhampton Council and St Martins Multi Academy trust for the provision of a resource base as part of the Special Education Needs (SEN) Special Capital Fund Programme.

That Cabinet notes:

1. That the Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on development projects internationally, nationally and regionally and also on projects within the City.
2. There is an intentional 'over-programming' of projects to reflect the reality that some projects would inevitably be delayed due to unexpected circumstances or changes to priorities. Over-programming aims to ensure that, as far as possible, the resources available are fully utilised.

3. There is one new project created through the virement within the Primary School Expansion Programme included in the report, but which is subject to a separate detailed project report also on the agenda. The inclusion of this project is for budget approval purpose and is on the assumption that the approval to progress with the project is given. As the progression is dependent on that decision, if the project is not approved, the capital programme will be adjusted accordingly. The name of the project is:

- Bilston Church of England Primary - caretaker house renovation.

7

Treasury Management - Annual Report 2020-2021 and Activity Monitoring Quarter One 2021-2022

Councillor Ian Brookfield presented the Treasury Management report for recommendation to Full Council for approval. The report set out the results of treasury management activities carried out in 2020-2021, together with performance against the Prudential Indicators previously approved by Council. It also provided a monitoring and progress report on treasury management activity for the first quarter of 2021-2022, in line with the Prudential Indicators approved by Council in March 2021.

Resolved:

That Cabinet recommend that Council be asked to note:

1. The Council operated within the overall approved Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators, and also within the requirements set out in the Council's approved Treasury Management Policy Statement during 2020-2021, however due to the reprofiling of some capital programmes the operational boundary for commercial activities was slightly in excess of the best estimate included in the Treasury Management Strategy presented to Council on 3 March 2021.
2. That revenue underspends of £2.3 million for the General Revenue Account and £805,000 for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) were generated from treasury management activities in 2020-2021.
3. That revenue underspends of £1.4 million for the General Revenue Account and £11,000 for the HRA are forecast from treasury management activities in 2021-2022.

That Cabinet notes:

1. That two of the three credit rating agencies have downgraded the UK's credit rating. If the remaining credit rating agency follows suit the Director of Finance would lower the minimum sovereign rating in the Annual Investment Strategy in line with the delegated authority approved by Council on 17 July 2020.
2. The financial information included in this report is based on the 'Capital Budget Outturn 2020-2021 including Quarter One Capital Monitoring 2021-2022' report also on the agenda for this meeting. The capital report is subject to a report being separately approved by Cabinet also at this meeting. Therefore, if this approval is not obtained, a revised version of this report would be presented to Council on 21 July 2021.

3. The Council's external borrowing decreased during 2020-2021 due to repayment of a loan and no new loans were taken out during the financial year.

8 **Wolverhampton's Youth Justice Plan 2021-2022**

The recommendations contained in the report were moved by Councillor Ian Brookfield and seconded by Councillor Stephen Simkins.

Councillor Beverley Momenabadi presented Wolverhampton's Youth Justice Plan 2021-2022 which set out the work of the Youth Offending Team (YOT). The Council's approach towards youth offending in the city was to prevent, to divert, and to rehabilitate young people who are getting into a life of crime or going into youth offending. Councillor Momenabadi highlighted the key achievements and priorities for the YOT in the forthcoming year as contained in the plan.

Cabinet members expressed support for the plan and referred to the role it played in creating excellence and opportunity for the city's young people. The importance of work in the Education service alongside social services in reducing exclusions in schools, was also highlighted. This was an area where young people could potentially end up in crime if suitable alternative education provision was not made.

Resolved:

That Cabinet recommends that Council:

1. Approves the adoption of the Youth Justice Plan 2021-2022.

That Cabinet notes:

1. The specific achievement of the Youth Offending Team during 2020-2021 including a reduction in first time entrants, a reduction in re-offending rates and a reduction in the number of young people receiving a custodial sentence.

9 **Black Country Plan Draft for Consultation**

Councillor Stephen Simkins presented the report seeking approval to consultation on the second formal stage of the Black Country Plan preparation process (the Draft Black Country Plan). The report contained a summary of the implications for Wolverhampton, an outline of the consultation process and next steps, and sought approval of a new Wolverhampton Local Development Scheme. Councillor Simkins said he encouraged all residents of the city and stakeholders to take up the opportunity during the consultations to have their say on how the city and the Black Country should develop and move forward over the next 10 to 20 years.

Councillor Ian Brookfield reported that the Council was an agent of the government on this matter and was required to produce the Plan. However, targets for the number of homes in the city and across the Black Country were set by the government. Every piece of brownfield land in the city had been included in the Plan for housing or regeneration and jobs. The Council had tried to protect the greenbelt as much as possible, but the city was still 7000 homes light on the government's target. He stressed that the Council was not trying to overbuild the city. It was required to produce the Plan based on the government targets. If the government and local MPs meant comments about being absolutely in support of the greenbelt and would save it all costs, it was in their hands to change their targets. He would be making this point, together with the other Black Country Council Leaders, to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Councillor Steve Evans reported that he had an open mind on the report and would make up his mind after the debate. However, he wished to place on record his dismay at comments made by the government and local Conservative MPs about the housing targets for Wolverhampton and the use of brownfield sites and the greenbelt to achieve those targets.

Resolved:

1. That the Draft Black Country Plan, Draft Wolverhampton Policies Map, Sustainability Appraisal Reports, and Wolverhampton Summary Leaflet attached as Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4 to the report be approved for consultation during summer 2021.
2. That authority be delegated to the Deputy Leader: Inclusive City Economy, in consultation with the Director of Regeneration, to make any necessary minor amendments to the Draft Black Country Plan, Wolverhampton Policies Map, Sustainability Appraisal Reports and Wolverhampton Summary Leaflet prior to commencement of the consultation process.
3. That a further report be presented summarising key issues raised during the consultation, to inform preparation of the Publication Black Country Plan.
4. That the Wolverhampton Local Development Scheme, attached as Appendix 5 to the report be approved.

10 **Exclusion of press and public**

Resolved:

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Part 2 - exempt items, closed to press and public

The Chair reported that as stated previously the meeting was in confidential session as the information included in the report could, if released into the public domain, prejudice the financial position of the Council or its partners. As such all present are under a legal duty of confidentiality and must not disclose any confidential information - to do so would not only be a breach of the Council's codes (for councillors and employees) but also a breach of the legal duty of confidentiality.

11 **Primary School Expansion Programme 2021**

Having declared an interest in the report Councillor Beverley Momenabadi left the meeting whilst the report was considered.

Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre presented the report on a proposal to include Bilston CE Primary School in the Primary School Expansion Programme 2021 and the associated capital expenditure in order to ensure the provision of sufficient school places for September 2021.

Resolved:

1. That the formal proposal for Bilston CE Primary School to be included within the Primary School Expansion Programme 2021 be approved.
2. That the capital allocation from the Master Primary School Expansion Programme budget to the Capital Primary School Expansion Budget for Bilston CE Primary School, in order to fund the scheme be approved.
3. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Work, in consultation with the Director of Children's and Adult Services and the Director of Finance, to approve the inclusion of any additional schemes to the Primary and Secondary School Expansion Programmes 2021 and 2022, the allocation of the Expansion Programme budgets to individual capital projects and to enter into any necessary and associated legal agreements to give effect to the inclusion of any additional schemes.
4. That it be noted that in light of the scale of recent primary and secondary expansion programmes practical opportunities to continue to expand the existing estate are constrained.
5. That it be noted that the School Expansion Programmes 2021 and 2022 involves both temporary and permanent solutions to meet short and medium-term demand. This approach has been taken to ensure that an oversupply of school places is not created. Future demand may be influenced as a consequence of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union, the arrival of Hong Kong British Nationals (overseas) and through the establishment of free schools within the City.