

Attendance

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

Labour

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

Conservative

Cllr Paul Appleby	Cllr Bob Maddox
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
Cllr Sohail Khan	

Independent

Cllr Celia Hibbert

Employees

Tim Johnson	Chief Executive
David Pattison	Chief Operating Officer
Alison Hinds	Director of Children's Services
James Howse	Director of Finance
Charlotte Johns	Director of Strategy
Richard Lawrence	Director of Regeneration
John Roseblade	Director of Resident Services
Becky Wilkinson	Director of Adult Social Services

The proceedings opened with Prayers

Item No. *Title*

1 **Apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Simkins, Councillor Claire Darke, Councillor Anwen Muston and Councillor John Reynolds.

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 – Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2024 – 2025 including Rent and Service Charges, 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 6 December 2023, be agreed as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Mayor.

4 **Communications**

1. Mayoral Christmas Engagements

The Mayor advised since the last Full Council meeting, he had attended 31 engagements, and a number of meetings within and outside the Council, as Mayor.

He had been well carolled by Ashmore Park choir, St Leonard's in Bilston at their Christmas Tree celebration, St Volodymyr's with the Rotary, as well as the Nativity walk from St John's in the Square to St Peter's and Dudley Street by re-enacting the journey of Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus. He reported that the importance and reverence given to these enterprises spoke well of the toleration and success of the message that Interfaith brought to the City.

He reported that he had joined with Veterans' in the Community and the Music School in their Christmas celebrations, had held Christmas parties for children from twenty schools in Wolverhampton and had attended the prize giving for gardens, communal and individual, in properties run by Wolverhampton Homes.

The Mayor reported that he had the honour of attending the Fostering Long Service Awards on 7 December 2023, where a number of foster carers had received the recognition they most definitely deserved, and would be attending the I Awards on Friday 26 January 2024.

He reported that he had maintained the Council's support for the Ukrainian community by attending a liturgy and carols service at the Ukrainian Church, held to mark their traditional Christmas celebrations in early January.

2. Young Active Citizen of the Year

The Mayor stated that Lord Lieutenant Sir John Crabtree OBE had requested nominations for his Young Active Citizen of the Year Awards for young people who have make a difference in their community. He encouraged everyone to participate and identify suitable candidates for their wards and communities and put them forward for the prestigious award.

3. Charity Fundraising

The Mayor reported that his fundraising efforts had gone into overdrive on the run up to Christmas. He reported that £1482 had been raised from events and expressed his gratitude to everyone who took part.

4. Quiz Night

The Mayor reported that the Charity Quiz 'n Chips would now take place on Thursday 15 February, in the City Suite at 7pm. There would also be a raffle draw and a range of prizes were on offer.

5. New Years Honours List

The Mayor was pleased to announce that local fundraiser Louis Johnson, of Tettenhall, had been awarded the British Empire Medal for raising £75,000 for local charities.

The Mayor was also pleased to report that Mr Philip Loach, recently retired Head of West Midlands Fire Service (OBE) and Mr Ian James Donald Sharp, Captain of 6th Wolverhampton Boys Brigade (OBE) had also been granted awards.

The Mayor had written to each of them offering congratulations on behalf of the Council.

6. Congratulations

The Mayor congratulated Councillor Ellis Turrell and his partner Soobin on the birth of their baby daughter Imogen.

The Mayor wished departing Director of Adult Social Care Becky Wilkinson all the best in her new role at Salford Council. Council gave applause to Becky.

The Mayor wished Councillor Jonathan Crofts a happy birthday.

5 Report of Leader of the Council

In the absence of the Leader of the Council, The Deputy Leader: City Housing, Councillor Steve Evans provided Council with an update on the Good Growth Strategy.

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

Councillor Steve Evans replied to the response.

6 Questions by Members of the Public

The Deputy Leader: City Housing, Councillor Steve Evans responded to a question put to the Leader of the Council by Mr Adam Wood on Wolverhampton College.

The Deputy Leader: City Housing, Councillor Steve Evans responded to a question put to him by Miss Teresa Carter on Housing List Delegations.

7 Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2024 - 2025 including Rent and Service Charges

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: City Housing, Councillor Steve Evans presented the report on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2024 – 2025 including Rent and Service Charges for approval.

The report provided an updated HRA Business Plan 2024 – 2025, which was intended to balance the continuing maintenance of and investment in the existing Council housing stock, improving, and redeveloping housing estates and the provision of new homes for rent.

The report also recommended a proposed HRA budget for 2024 – 2025, including proposed rents and service charges to take effect from 1 April 2024, and a proposed HRA Capital Programme for the period 2024 – 2025 to 2028 – 2029.

The Deputy Leader: City Housing, Councillor Steve Evans proposed the recommendations and the Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Louise Miles seconded the recommendations.

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

Resolved:

1. That the Business Plan be adopted as set out at Appendix 1 to the report as the approved Housing Revenue Account Business Plan including:
 - a. The revenue budget for 2024-2025 at Appendix 1 to the report.
 - b. The Capital Programme for 2024-2025 to 2028-2029 at Appendix 2 to the report that includes the following among the proposed investment plans:
 - £100 million for new homes
 - £67 million provision for estate remodelling
 - 41 million to complete the refurbishment of the Heath Town estate
 - £46 million remediation works to non-traditional properties including energy efficiency improvements
 - £141 million for programmes to high rise estates to include building safety improvements, infrastructure replacement, and external works to include energy efficiency
 - £34 million for low and medium rise infrastructure improvements
2. That the implementation of an increase of 7.7% to social housing rents in accordance with the Rent Standard and the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 and to give 28 days' notice to all secure and introductory tenants of the rent increase from 1 April 2024 be approved.
3. That the rates for garage rents and service charges set out in Appendix 3 to the report be approved and tenants be formally notified.
4. That an increase to Shared Ownership rents of 7.7% be approved.
5. That allowances to Managing Agents be approved as follows:
 - Wolverhampton Homes £47,700,000
 - Bushbury Hill Estate Management Board £2,070,000
 - Dovecotes TMO £1,280,000
6. That it be approved, that authority be delegated to the Deputy Leader: City Housing in consultation with the Director of Resident Services to approve managing allowances to New Park Village Tenant Management Cooperative to allow for further work on costs relating to the redevelopment of the estate and management responsibilities.

7. That it be approved, that authority be delegated to the Deputy Leader: City Housing in consultation with the Director of Resident Services to approve the equity sale of Shared Ownership properties.

At the conclusion of this item, Councillor Zee Russell, Councillor Rita Potter, Councillor Susan Roberts MBE and Councillor Jonathan Crofts returned to the meeting.

8 **Annual Auditors Report**

The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee, Councillor Jaspreet Jaspal presented the Annual Auditors Report for noting.

The report provided an update to members on the Auditor's Annual Report on City of Wolverhampton Council for 2022-2023.

The report by the auditor's considered whether the Council had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources. The auditor's report went in more detail on the Council's overall arrangements, as well as key recommendations on any significant weaknesses in arrangements identified during the audit. Overall, no statutory or key recommendations were reported by Grant Thornton.

The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee, Councillor Jaspreet Jaspal proposed the recommendation and the Vice-Chair of Audit and Risk Committee, Councillor Mary Bateman seconded the recommendation.

The report was debated by Council. Councillor Jaspreet Jaspal replied to the debate.

Resolved:

1. That the Annual Report from the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, be noted.

9 **In Year Appointments for the 2023-2024 Municipal Year**

The Deputy Leader: City Housing, Councillor Steve Evans presented the report on In Year Appointments for the 2023-2024 Municipal Year for approval.

The report detailed changes to in year appointments for the 2023-2024 municipal year.

The Deputy Leader: City Housing, Councillor Steve Evans proposed the recommendations.

Councillor Milkinderpal Jaspal seconded the recommendations and moved the following amendment to the report:

*"The removal of Councillor Celia Hibbert from the Planning Committee for the remainder of the Municipal year 2023/2024.
The appointment of Councillor Harbinder Singh to the Planning Committee for the remainder of the Municipal year 2023/2024."*

The Cabinet Member for Governance and Equalities, Councillor Paula Brookfield seconded the amendment.

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

Upon being put to the meeting, and a division having been demanded and taken voting thereon was as follows:

In Year Appointments for the 2023-2024 Municipal Year Amendment (Amendment)	
Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre	For
Councillor Linda Leach	For
Councillor Paul Appleby	Against
Councillor Qaiser Azeem	For
Councillor Mary Bateman	For
Councillor Philip Bateman MBE	For
Councillor Simon Bennett	Against
Councillor Ciaran Brackenridge	For
Councillor Paul Brookfield	For
Councillor Paula Brookfield	For
Councillor Chris Burden	For
Councillor Alan Butt	For
Councillor Jennifer Cockayne	For
Councillor Craig Collingswood	For
Councillor Jacqui Coogan	For
Councillor Jonathan Crofts	Against
Councillor Lovinyer Daley	For
Councillor Wendy Dalton	Against
Councillor Jasbinder Dehar	For
Councillor Steve Evans	For
Councillor Valerie Evans	For
Councillor Jane Francis	For
Councillor Bhupinder Gakhal	For
Councillor Sally Green	For
Councillor Christopher Haynes	Against
Councillor Stephanie Haynes	Against
Councillor Celia (CeeCee) Hibbert	Against
Councillor Jeszemma Howl	For
Councillor Carol Hyatt	For
Councillor Jasbir Jaspal	For
Councillor Jaspreet Jaspal	For
Councillor Milkinderpal Jaspal	For
Councillor Rashpal Kaur	For
Councillor Sohail Khan	Against
Councillor Lamina Lloyd	For
Councillor Robert Maddox	Against
Councillor Asha Mattu	For
Councillor Barbara McGarrity QN	For
Councillor Andrew McNeil	Against
Councillor Louise Miles	For
Councillor Rohit Mistry	For
Councillor Rita Potter	For
Councillor Susan Roberts MBE	For

Councillor Zee Russell	For
Councillor Harbinder Singh	For
Councillor Paul Singh	Against
Councillor Tersaim Singh	For
Councillor Udey Singh	Against
Councillor Paul Sweet	For
Councillor Jacqueline Sweetman	For
Councillor Iqra Tahir	For
Councillor Wendy Thompson	Against
Councillor Ellis Turrell	Against
Councillor Gillian (Jill) Wildman	For
Carried	

The report was CARRIED by 40 votes.

Resolved:

1. That the removal of Councillor Celia Hibbert from the following Outside Bodies; Birmingham Airport Consultative Committee, Base 25 Board, Penn Almshouses and Wolverhampton Sports Advisory Council for the remainder of the Municipal year 2023/2024 be approved.
2. That the appointment of Councillor Milkinder Jaspal to the Birmingham Airport Consultative Committee for the remainder of the Municipal year 2023/2024 be approved.
3. That the appointment of Councillor Jane Francis to the Base 25 Board for the remainder of the Municipal year 2023/2024 be approved.
4. That the appointment of Councillor Carol Hyatt to the Penn Almshouses for the remainder of the Municipal year 2023/2024 be approved.
5. That the appointment of Councillor Sally Green to the Wolverhampton Sports Advisory Council for the remainder of the Municipal year 2023/2024 be approved.
6. That the removal of Councillor Simon Bennett from the Outside Body Wolverhampton Sports Advisory Council for the remainder of the Municipal year 2023/2024 be approved.
7. That the appointment of Councillor Wendy Dalton to the Outside Body Wolverhampton Sports Advisory Council for the remainder of the Municipal year 2023/2024 be approved.
8. That the removal of Councillor Celia Hibbert from the Planning Committee for the remainder of the Municipal year 2023/2024 be approved.
9. That the appointment of Councillor Harbinder Singh to the Planning Committee for the remainder of the Municipal year 2023/2024 be approved.

10

Written Questions by Councillors

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, Councillor Craig Collingswood responded to a question put to him by Councillor Ciaran Brackenridge on the Green Innovation Corridor – Opportunities for Wednesfield and the City. He also responded to a supplementary question on the same matter.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Chris Burden responded to a question put to him by Councillor Sally Green on the Green Innovation Corridor – Education Standards. 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 Paul Sweet on the Green Innovation Corridor – 2041 Climate Strategy. He also responded to a supplementary question on the same matter.

The Cabinet Member for Adults and Wellbeing, Councillor Jasbir Jaspal responded to a question put to her by Councillor Celia Hibbert on Physical Inactivity. She also responded to a supplementary question on the same matter.

The Deputy Leader: City Housing, Councillor Steve Evans responded to a question put to the Leader of the Council by Councillor Wendy Thompson on the Former Eye Infirmary. He also responded to a supplementary question on the same matter.

The question on Customer Service Access Points was deferred.

Resolved:

1. That the responses to written questions be noted.

11

Motions on Notice

Councillor Simon Bennett moved a motion on the Green Innovation Corridor:

“This Council welcomes the recent announcement of £20 million to kickstart and deliver the first phase of the green innovation corridor, a proposal led by the MP for Wolverhampton North East, Jane Stevenson, and confirmed in the Chancellor’s autumn statement. It’s another shot in the arm for government investment in Wolverhampton, and on top of almost 2.5 billion the city has been given since 2019.

The green innovation corridor is an ambitious project to create a 6 mile stretch of high value job creation in specialist sectors, upskill our own local talent, and encourage private sector investment. This will lead to wider regeneration along the corridor and the unlocking of brownfield sites for new affordable housing, delivering new commercial space and creating 1,220 jobs. It brings back into use nearly 4 hectares of brownfield land.

Therefore, this Council agrees to:

- *Setup and facilitate a summit of schools, the college, the university, local and regional business stakeholders to ensure educational institutions are providing the relevant skills required in delivering high quality skilled jobs that these emerging jobs and opportunities need.*
- *Explore opportunities in improving our roads and transport infrastructure along the green innovation corridor - particularly the A449 Stafford Road - to make sure we have the infrastructure required to get people to and from these new work and training opportunities.”*

Councillor Simon Bennett outlined the rationale for the motion. Councillor Ellis Turrell seconded the motion and outlined the rationale for supporting the motion.

The Deputy Leader: City Housing, Councillor Steve Evans moved the following amendment to the motion:

“This council welcomes the recent announcement of £20 million to kickstart and deliver the first phase of the Green Innovation Corridor, a proposal co-produced and led by the council, under our late Leader Councillor Ian Brookfield, in partnership with the University of Wolverhampton, with support from Jane Stevenson MP and the West Midlands Mayor.

The provisional Levelling Up Round 3 award recognises the calibre of the bid initially put forward by the council for round 2 funding – it was simply too good to ignore after being recognised by the Government as ‘high quality’ and ‘ready to deliver’.

The Green Innovation Corridor is an ambitious project to create a 6 mile stretch of high value job creation in specialist sectors, upskill our own local talent, and encourage private sector investment. This will lead to wider regeneration along the corridor and the unlocking of brownfield sites for new affordable housing, delivering new commercial space and creating 1,220 jobs. It brings back into use nearly 4 hectares of brownfield land.

Therefore this council agrees to:

- engage with key stakeholders to ensure educational institutions are providing the relevant skills required in delivering high quality skilled jobs that these emerging jobs and opportunities need.*
- call on the Government for adequate funding to improve our roads and transport infrastructure along the Green Innovation Corridor - particularly linking our city from the A449 Stafford Road all the way up to the i54 (e.g. through additional Metro / Sprint services) - to make sure we have the infrastructure required to get people to and from these new work and training opportunities.*

Council also calls upon the Government to provide us with additional funding to ensure the wider West Midland Investment Zone is supported by a comprehensive skills and business support offer which ensures we maximise the investment and ensure local people benefit from the opportunity.

Lastly, Council reiterates the importance of government investment in research and innovation and notes that funding for this has significantly been directed to the South East of England. Levels of public investment in innovation in the West Midlands is relatively low. Therefore, Council calls on the government to address this imbalance and increase funding for the West Midlands, to empower us to close the productivity gap with London and the South East.”

The Deputy Leader: City Housing, Councillor Steve Evans outlined the rationale for the amended motion.

The amended motion was debated by Council.

Resolved:

1. That the substantive amended motion on the Green Innovation Corridor be agreed.

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]