

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 22 April 2021 at 10.00 am by Remote Meeting

PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY, 28 APRIL 2021

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: TUESDAY, 4 MAY 2021)

Present: Councillors R A Overton (Vice-Chair), A J Burford, E M Callear, L D Carter, S A W Reynolds, P Watling, D Wright and S Davies (Chair).

Also Present: Cllr W L Tomlinson (Liberal Democrats / Independent Group Leader) and Cllr N A Dugmore (Conservative Group Leader).

Apologies: Councillors R C Evans and C Healy.

CAB-66 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CAB-67 Declarations of Interest

None.

CAB-68 Leader's Announcements

The Leader expressed his condolences and best wishes to Her Majesty The Queen and the Royal Family. The Mayor and The Leader had written to Her Majesty on behalf of the Borough to convey their condolences.

It was noted that the meeting was potentially the last virtual meeting of Cabinet. Any decisions that were taken under delegated powers would be reported to the next possible meeting of Cabinet and Full Council. Delegated decisions would be an exception.

That Friday was St George's Day, the Leader stated that it was important to celebrate as a community and that the Council had undertaken initiatives to do this.

CAB-69 Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan

Key Decision identified as **Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 24 March 2021.

Councillor D Wright, Cabinet Member: Economy, Housing, Transport and Infrastructure presented the report of the Director: Housing, Employment & Infrastructure.

The draft Strategy being presented for the period 2021-26 was an important element of the Council's housing strategy. The objective of the Strategy was to improve housing stock condition across the Borough; providing a decent place to live was the foundation on which people built their lives.

The Strategy aimed to reduce the number of houses that were classed as in fuel poverty. At the time of the meeting, over 9% of households were considered to be in fuel poverty. This was below the national and regional average but it meant that there were still many residing in cold and damp homes. The issue spanned both urban and rural areas, and in some parts of the Borough the fuel poverty rate was over 14% of households.

Tackling fuel poverty linked in with a number of Council initiatives such as building Safer & Stronger Communities, supporting the most vulnerable through the Health & Wellbeing Strategy, and it linked directly to the Authority's aim to create a better Borough.

More fuel-efficient homes would also help to tackle the climate emergency,

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and the Strategy noting the importance of warmer and higher quality homes in ensuring healthier lives. Telford & Wrekin was doing what it could to tackle fuel poverty but could not succeed alone. Government action was also needed.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat / Independent Group welcomed the report.

The Leader of the Conservative Group had a number of queries:

1. How would people living in fuel poverty be identified?
2. What was the Council's reduction target and over what period?
3. What power did the Council have over private landlords to address the problems raised in the report?

The Cabinet Member informed the Leader of the Conservative Group that households would be identified through cross-agency working, examining applications for benefits and other forms of support. Private landlords would be engaged through enforcement actions, they were also required to comply with a set energy efficiency rating. The target would have to be reviewed as indicators of fuel poverty had been changed.

The Leader of the Council stated that this Strategy went some way to addressing the problem that many faced – whether to eat or to heat their homes.

RESOLVED that:

- **The Council's draft Affordable Warmth Strategy for a six-week period of consultation with partners and stakeholders be approved.**

- **Responsibility be delegated to the Director: Housing, Employment and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport & Infrastructure to update and finalise the draft Strategy following the consultation. Any significant changes required as a result of the consultation would be brought back to Cabinet for approval before the Strategy is finalised.**
- **Responsibility be delegated to the Director: Housing, Employment & Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport & Infrastructure to finalise and launch the Affordable Warmth “Top-up” Fund based on the criteria set out in the local ECO-Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent approved at Cabinet on 9th July 2020 and published on the Council’s web-site on 17th December 2020.**
- **Cabinet would receive an annual progress report on the implementation of the Affordable Warmth Strategy.**
- **It be noted that the Council would report bi-annually to the Secretary of State in line with its obligations under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA).**

CAB-70 Allscott Free School Presumption

Key Decision identified as **Allscott Free School Presumption** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 24 March 2021.

Councillor S A W Reynolds, Cabinet Member: Children, Young People, Education and Lifelong Learning presented the report of the Director: Education and Skills.

The report sought approval to undertake a presumption competition to establish a new primary school at Allscott due to need arising from residential development in the area.

An Academy sponsor needed to be identified to open the new school at Allscott to ensure there were sufficient school places in the local area for children moving to the new Allscott development. It was proposed that the new school would open in September 2023 and provide 150 new primary school places.

The residential developer, through a s.106 agreement, would meet the capital costs of delivering the new school.

The Leaders of the Conservative and the Liberal Democrat/Independent Groups welcomed the proposal. The Leader of the Conservative Group queried what would happen if a sponsor did not present itself.

The Cabinet Member informed the Leader of the Conservative Group that the Department for Education would ensure that the Council did find a sponsor. The Director: Education and Skills noted that there had already been interest in sponsoring the proposed school.

RESOLVED that:

The commencement of the presumption competition to find a suitable school sponsor for the proposed Allscott Primary School be approved.

CAB-71 Local Plan Scrutiny Review Recommendations

Cabinet received a presentation from Councillor C R Turley, Chair of the Communities Scrutiny Committee and Co-Chair of the Local Plan Working Group.

At the 11 November 2020 meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee, the Committee received a briefing on the Authority's Local Plan proposals from the Council's Director for Housing, Employment & Infrastructure, the Strategic Planning Team Leader, and the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood, Commercial Services and Regeneration.

The Committee received briefings on specific policy areas and the form that the Local Plan consultation would take. Members expressed a specific interest in scrutinising the policy areas of Bio-diversity Net Gain and Urban Greening. Due to the cross-committee nature of the Local Plan, it was agreed that a working group made up of Members from a variety of committees would best serve scrutiny of the proposals.

A six-member Working Group was formed, meeting five-times throughout February and March to examine bio-diversity net gain and urban greening within the Local Plan proposals. At its meetings, the Working Group received evidence from Council officers and external speakers, shared research findings, and discussed the proposals.

The Group was keen for the Borough to adopt as strong a policy in both bio-diversity net gain and urban greening as possible whilst retaining the flexibility needed to allow the Borough to continue to grow and flourish. The Group made the recommendation contained within the report to contribute to the Council's efforts in addressing the Climate Emergency and creating a greener Borough.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat / Independent Group expressed his support for the proposals.

The Cabinet Member: Economy, Housing, Transport and Infrastructure welcomed the report and stated the intention to ask officers to incorporate the Working Group's recommendation into the review.

RESOLVED that:

- **Bio-diversity net gain should, wherever possible, be delivered on the site that is being developed. If this was not possible, then it should be delivered on a site agreed with the Council, such site to be as close as possible to the site being developed;**
- **Where urban greening and bio-diversity net gain was provided off-site, efforts should be made to secure additional benefits, such as public access, where possible. To maximise public benefit, investment should in the first instance be directed to publicly owned land;**
- **The provision of urban greening should be required of commercial and residential developments;**
- **That an urban greening policy should be adopted and that the Council instruct an appropriate urban greening specialist to prepare evidence to support as high an urban greening factor as possible;**
- **Unless otherwise required by the emerging Environment Bill, a policy requiring a bio-diversity net gain be adopted which distinguished between major and minor developments with measurable net gain on minor developments and a minimum net gain requirement of 10% on major developments;**
- **The Council should seek to introduce bio-diversity net gain and urban greening prior to both the formal adoption of an adopted local plan and the Environment Bill becoming law; and**
- **The Council should seek to lead by example in the fields of bio-diversity net gain and urban greening. The working group recognised that this could not be written into the Local Plan but wished to see the Council adopt it as policy.**

The meeting ended at 10.30 am

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Anthea Lowe
Associate Director: Policy & Governance
Date: **Wednesday, 28 APRIL 2021**

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Signed

Date: Thursday, 27 May 2021