

## **CABINET**

**Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 13 July 2023 at 10.00 am in The Telford Room, Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT**

**PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY 19 JULY 2023**

**(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY 24 JULY 2023)**

**Present:** Councillors S Davies (Chair), R A Overton (Vice-Chair), E M Callear, L D Carter, N A M England, C Healy, R Mehta, K Middleton, S A W Reynolds and P Watling.

**Also Present:** Cllr A J Eade (Conservative Group Leader) and Cllr W L Tomlinson (Liberal Democrats Group Leader)

### **CAB-8     Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **CAB-9     Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** - that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

### **CAB-10    Leader's Announcements**

The Leader announced that he would be making a Strong Leader decision on fly tipping to update the fixed penalty notices in line with the new legislative changes. It sought to increase charges to a maximum in order to cover the costs involved with investigation and the prosecution of cases. A report would be brought back to the next Cabinet meeting.

The Leader discussed the hospital reconfiguration which had taken another step forward. He had written to the government in respect of the hospital reconfiguration in March 2023, the Council's lawyers had written to the government in March 2023 and to date no response had been received to either letter. It was requested that the local Members of Parliament raise the relocation of the A&E and maternity services as significant issues. The Hospital Trust had been asked to work with the Council on the reconfiguration of services in order to ensure that Telford & Wrekin got a fair deal. The Leader confirmed he would continue to raise the cross party issues with Members of Parliament and the Department of Health until a response was received.

### **CAB-11    2023/24 Financial Monitoring Report**

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Customer Services and Governance presented the report of the Chief Financial Officer.

The report gave an update on the latest financial monitoring position for the year in respect of the revenue budget, capital programme and income collection. Since the Medium Term Financial Strategy was approved at Full Council on 2 March 2023, the economic climate had continued to change with high inflation and energy costs and interest rate rises. Due to the cost of living crisis there was an increasing demand on Council services to support local residents and businesses.

Early monitoring for 2023/24 indicated a number of variations from the approved budget particularly in relation to Adult Social Care and Children's Safeguarding and the pay increase to meet the national living wage. Work to identify efficiencies and additional income was currently underway in order to meet the projected pressures and protect services.

Prior to the application of contingencies, the projected outturn position was expected to be over budget by £2.653m at year end. It was expected that by making use of budgeted contingency the overall position would be within budget for the year leaving £1.3m contingency balance for the rest of 2023/24.

The capital programme totalled £145m with 93% of the budget already allocated.

Income collection in relation to business rates, Council Tax and Sales Ledger were slightly behind target but all debt would be pursued and continue to be collected after the end of the financial year.

Due to the impact of Covid and the cost of living crisis which had affected visitor numbers, the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (IGMT) had requested that an extension of 2 years to their current loan, due to expire on 31 January 2031, be granted. This extension would continue to support the valuable working partnership between the Council and the IGMT which was key to the effective management of the World Heritage Site, tourism and promoting Destination Telford.

Cabinet Members noted the report the hard work undertaken during the current challenging times. They welcomed the extension to the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust loan as this was an important partner within the visitor economy and this would ensure they could continue to function and rebuild the business. The Council would continue to work to deliver services despite the pressures of the cost of living crisis and increased energy costs and continue to protect residents and invest into local businesses.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat group welcomed the report. Despite the lack of government funding services were still a necessity for local residents and he noted that the Council should be in budget at year end.

The Leader of the Conservative group praised the Council Officers for their work. He noted the failure of successive governments to address social care issues and the burden it put on Local Authorities.

**RESOLVED – to RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that:**

- a) the 2023/24 revenue budget position be noted; the efficiency proposals, additional income and budget re-alignments summarised in Appendix D to the report and all associated changes to the Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved;**
- b) the position in relation to capital spend be noted; and the changes to the capital programme detailed in Appendix C to the report and all associated changes to the Medium Term Financial Strategy, including Treasury and Prudential Indicators be approved;**
- c) the current Treasury & Prudential Indicators position be noted;**
- d) the collection rates for NNDR, council tax and sales ledger be noted; and**
- e) the option to extend the IGMT loan repayment outlined in section 5.4 of the report and its terms to be delegated to the Director: Finance & HR and Executive Director: Housing, Communities and Customer Services with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Customer Services & Governance be approved;**

**CAB-12 Health & Wellbeing Strategy**

The Cabinet Member: Healthy, Safer & Stronger Communities and Partnerships presented the report of the Director: Health & Wellbeing.

The report introduced the Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Telford & Wrekin for 2023-2027. There had been unprecedented challenges during the previous three years faced by the Council and its partners but despite this there had been many improvements and innovations, including collaborative working which has strengthened the health and wellbeing offer.

Work to tackle the wider determinants of health, support for the cost of living crisis, homelessness and improving 'start well, live well, age well' would continue. This would be achieved with strong preventative measures, a community centred approach and by tackling the causes of poor health, unhealthy weight and health care needs in order to reduce inequalities.

Further challenges were expected over the next five years which included continued recovery from the pandemic and the impact of the cost of living crisis. The refresh of the strategy was an opportunity to re-frame ways of working through health and wellbeing partners, with particular focus on people who faced the greatest risk of poor health and disadvantage.

Cabinet Members noted the report and expressed that there was always more that could be done to improve statistics and this was supported by putting in place good health and wellbeing strategies.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat group welcomed the report and expressed that the open green spaces, local nature reserve and volunteering opportunities supported mental health in the Borough. He asked that the Council encourage initiatives to generate income and join up with local medical practices to signpost events.

The Leader encouraged health partners to read the report as it set out the Council's preventative agenda. It also gave details of the leisure offer, green guarantee and volunteering opportunities. He hoped this would bring forward funding and integration in order to create a stronger, healthier community.

**RESOLVED – that**

- a) the draft Health & Wellbeing Strategy for 2023-2027 be approved for publication; and**
- b) the annual progress update on the implementation and impact of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy be agreed.**

**CAB-13 Better Homes for All Update**

The Cabinet Member: Homes & Enforcement presented the report of the Director: Housing, Employment & Infrastructure.

The Better Homes for All Programme was introduced in 2018, and updated in 2020 in order to improve conditions in the growing private rented sector within the Borough. It also set out how it would tackle rogue landlords. In 2022 the Council's programme to 'Protect Care and Invest to Create a Better Borough' was introduced to continue this programme of development which included a key objective for the Council's Housing Strategy to make the best use of existing homes.

Private rented sector (PRS) housing was now the only housing option for many people including young families and vulnerable adults due to a decline in social housing and this filled a gap in the market. Many single individuals were living in shared housing with houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) being their only option. An ageing housing stock and the condition of PRS housing was a major focus.

During the previous twelve months, the Council had dealt with 489 requests from tenants living in poor housing conditions a 30% increase. A total of 300 inspections had taken place identifying 511 hazards such as falls, damp and mould and fire. An additional 50 property inspections had been undertaken linked to the Safer Streets Programme which had now totalled 500 inspections. A total of 18 HMO licences had been put forward for full

inspections and 10 Multi Agency Targeted Enforcements Strategy (MATES) operations had taken place. There had been 140 enforcement notices, 12 Civil Penalty Notices, 1 formal caution and 3 prosecutions undertaken and 137 long term empty properties brought back into use.

Capital grant funding for affordable warmth of £4m had been granted.

A Landlord/Tenant Programme had been introduced to support landlords and tenants to resolve issues at an early stage. Inspections had taken place on properties for Homes for Ukraine programme, monitoring of supported accommodation and visiting HMOs to ensure licenses were met.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and the work undertaken to raise the standard of private landlords. Having a dry, warm and safe home underpinned the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. With the increased cost of mortgages it was essential going forward that the standards of housing conditions remained high and it was vital that this work continued.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat group welcomed the report and noted that the majority of private landlords were of a good standard. This needed to continue and the Council be ready to support local residents when things go wrong.

The Leader of the Conservative group echoed comments made by the Liberal Democrat group leader. It was important to maintain the standard of living conditions and noted the pressures on landlords. He complimented the Officers on their difficult work and asked that this continued going forward.

The Leader reported that the Council had a good working relationship with the large social landlords, Telford and Wrekin Homes and NuPlace. They acted as a market disrupter and raised the bar in which was acceptable. Work was taking place with landlords and letting agents offering tenant matching services and guaranteed deposit schemes. Where there were poor living conditions this would be enforced and the Council secured the very first Landlord Banning Order in the UK. More powers were required to end no-fault evictions and a link between the payment of benefits and the standard of living conditions such as an incentive scheme could improve standards.

**RESOLVED** – that the continued progress of the Better Homes for All Programme be noted.

**CAB-14 Climate Change Guidance for Development - Supplementary Planning Document**

The Cabinet Member: Homes & Enforcement and the Cabinet Member: Climate Action Green Spaces, Heritage & Leisure presented the report of the Director: Housing, Employment & Infrastructure.

The report sought adoption of the Climate Change Guidance for Developers – Supplementary Planning Document (Climate Change SPD).

A Climate Change Action Plan (2020) had been published and this was reviewed on a regular basis. The Climate Change SPD was central to shaping new 'climate ready' development and built upon the existing Local Plan policy to set out clear guidance on the design of new housing, commercial and renewable energy developments.

A consultation and engagement programme took place in February and March 2023 and this resulted in the changes set out in the report.

The Climate Change SPD would allow the Council to continue with the effective use of its resources and support the efficient delivery of the Planning Application process.

Good quality homes were important but they also needed to incorporate fabrics that were able to adapt to conditions such as heat, cold and wet weather. It was important to future proof developments in respect of drainage schemes due to changes in weather patterns and the risk of flash flooding.

Future home standards were due to come into force in 2025 but, currently, new developments could be built out with no solar panels or EV charging points as this could not currently be mandated.

The SPD set out the direction of travel on energy efficient homes and this was a step forward in the right direction.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and the work that had been undertaken. They noted the impact in terms of health in relation to damp and air quality and reducing fuel costs. Developers were encouraged to engage in the policies.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat group welcomed the report. He noted the issue of viability was a national planning issue and awaited the introduction of the national guidelines.

The Leader of the Conservative group acknowledged the advantages of solar panels, good insulation and ground pumps within developments but raised issues in relation to costs within the current housing market. He asked if the Council were lobbying government to bring this agenda forward and to request local powers to insist on better standards. It was noted that currently there was no easy solution.

The Leader stated that frustrations were felt cross party on sustainability of developments and he welcomed government plans to change the dynamics around developers/landowners. He noted the good practice that was taking place in Wales in relation to interest free loans for retrospective solar panels and pumps. The Council had been lobbying government on this issue but felt that the retrofit costs were far greater than bringing forward the future homes standards.

**RESOLVED** – that the Climate Change Guidance for Developers Supplementary Planning Document for determining planning application within the Borough of Telford & Wrekin be approved.

**CAB-15 Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site - Supplementary Planning Document**

The Cabinet Member: Climate Action Green Spaces, Heritage & Leisure and the Cabinet Member: Homes & Enforcement presented the report of the Director: Housing, Employment & Infrastructure.

The report sought adoption of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site (WHS) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which would be used to provide locally distinctive planning guidance to help protect the gorge and support sustainable development within the WHS. As the WHS boundary extended into Shropshire the SPD would be used by both Local Planning Authorities if adopted by Shropshire Council at their Cabinet meeting on 19 July 2023.

To help local established communities the SPD contained property-level guidance that would help residents and businesses when bringing forward development proposals and set out how the planning system would fulfil the responsibility and opportunities that arise from WHS status. It would also form part of a suite of document covering the World Heritage Site and Severn Gorge Conservation Area including the WHS Management Plan the overarching framework and strategy for managing and protecting the Outstanding Universal Value of the area.

A consultation exercise engaging with stakeholders and organisations had been undertaken in January and February 2023 and the results of the feedback were contained within the report.

Cabinet Members commented that the WHS was a unique place and it could be challenging to make modifications to modern living standards whilst preserving the local heritage. The report contained clarity on new developments within the WHS which would bring greater consistency and protection. An easy read version of the document had been produced for residents together with drop in sessions and face to face query sessions. It was a challenge but the WHS guidance set out what was possible.

**RESOLVED-** that the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Supplementary Planning Document for use in determining planning applications in relation to area of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site be adopted.

**CAB-16 Ercall Magna Neighbourhood Development Plan - Referendum Version**

The Cabinet Member Homes & Enforcement presented the report of the Director: Housing, Employment & Infrastructure.

The report sought approval for the implementation of the recommendations from the Independent Examiner in relation to modifications to the Ercall Magna Neighbourhood Development Plan and to proceed to a referendum on the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Ercall Magna Parish Council submitted their neighbourhood development plan in June 2022. All statutory checks and a six week publication period took place where written representations could be received. An Independent Examiner was appointed to conduct an external examination of the Ercall Magna Parish Neighbourhood Plan (EMNP) with the report being received in June 2023 with recommendations to proceed to Referendum subject to a number of modifications which had been applied to the Referendum Versions of the EMNP attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The Referendum version of the EMNP supported the policy approach to Ercall Magna and the rural area in the adopted Telford & Wrekin Local Plan.

A further report would be brought to Cabinet for consideration following the outcome of the Referendum.

**RESOLVED – that**

- a) **the findings of the Independent Examiner that, subject to his recommended modifications, the Ercall Magna Neighbourhood Development Plan meets the “basic conditions” and all other legal requirements as summarised in this report and in the Independent Examiner’s report be agreed;**
- b) **the required modifications to the Ercall Magna Neighbourhood Development Plan and that the Ercall Magna Neighbourhood Development Plan Referendum Version (July 2023) should proceed to Referendum be agreed;**
- c) **the Referendum Area should not be extended beyond the designated area to which the Ercall Magna Neighbourhood Development Plan relates be agreed; and**
- d) **the Returning Officer proceed to exercise all the relevant powers and duties and undertake all necessary arrangements for the Ercall Magna Neighbourhood Development Plan (Referendum Version) to now proceed to Referendum and for the Referendum to take place asking the question whether the voter wants Telford & Wrekin Council to use this neighbourhood development plan for the Ercall Magna Neighbourhood Development Plan area to help it decide planning applications in this neighbourhood area be agreed.**

The Cabinet Member: Inclusion, Engagement, Equalities and Civic Pride presented the report of the Director: Communities, Customer & Commercial Services.

The report provided an update on the progress made on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and Action Plan and the Council's Equality Objectives under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

It sought adoption of Armed Forces Personnel (veterans and families) being given due regard with all other protected characteristics as set out in the report.

Positive steps had been taken which included the EDI being considered as part of the decision making processes, the implementation of employee led groups, the results of the recent employee survey, EDI focus on recruitment and selection and the engagement with the deaf community.

Engagement had been undertaken with local community groups, partners and Council employees with the first 4-year Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy being launched in July 2022.

The report set out the EDI Strategy vision and objectives and the positive steps being taken across the organisation to meet the Equality Objectives and the overall vision.

Whilst a lot had been achieved in the previous 12 months, there was still a lot to deliver longer term with the key actions set out in the report and progress would continue to be monitored.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and the work and dedication to celebrate diversity across the Borough. The EDI strategy cut across all services and departments and there was a very positive culture in relation to inclusiveness. It evidenced the protect, care and invest agenda which now included care experience for young people. Work around Armed Forces Personnel, the introduction of the Neurodiversity Group and work with the Windrush generation had been very positive. The strategy would continue to develop to support and protect the local community.

**RESOLVED – that**

- a) the progress the Council has made over the last 12 months with regards to its 4-year Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and Action Plan be noted;**
- b) Armed Forces Personnel (veterans and families) to be given due regard in the same way as those with all other protected characteristics be approved;**
- c) the publication of new EDI actions as set out in paragraph 5.0 and**

**the progress on the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan be approved; and**

**d) the updated strategy to reflect the latest demographic data as set out in paragraph 6.1.1. of the report be approved.**

### **CAB-18 Customer Feedback Reports for 2022-23**

The Cabinet Member: Finance, Customer Services & Governance presented the report of the Director: Communities, Customer and Commercial Services.

The report provided an update on the Council's Customer Feedback between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 in order to provide assurance that the Council's response to complaints was effective and that lessons were learnt and continual improvement to services made.

Approval was sought to adopt the policy for dealing with complaints concerning CSE as set out in Appendix D to the report.

There had been new challenges during the year for the Council, residents and customers due to the cost of living crisis and an increased demand on services, particularly in relation to financial support.

Compliments had continued to increase year on year with 566 compliments being received, an increase of 19% during the reporting period, from 475 the previous year. This equated to a 95% increase over the last four years.

A total of 656 complaints were received across the Council in 2022/23 which was a 13% reduction from 759 in the previous year.

The number of Children's Statutory Complaints decreased during the year to the lowest number received in 8 years. Adult Statutory Complaints had a slight increase to 35 from 33 in 2021/22.

Corporate complaint response times were down from 12 days to 11 days for a response.

There had been a continuation of the Mystery Customer programme, customer satisfaction surveys and back to the floor exercises. The Corporate Contact Centre had achieved a 91% performance target with 99% of calls being handled within 10 minutes.

The Council were working with individuals with lived experience to help shape policies and there was an opportunity for complainants to access support and services.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and encouraged the receipt of both compliments and complaints as they started vital conversations. They noted the reduction in children's statutory complaints and the cut to response times

to often complex complaints. The 95% increase in compliments spoke as a testament to the work of officers.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat group welcomed the report and the direction of travel in relation to complaints on children's and adult services. He thanked the public for being the eyes and ears of the Borough and encouraged the public to continue reporting issues. The Council had an excellent track record of being open and accessible and asked that the Council continued to maintain telephone access for residents as this remained an important feature.

The Leader discussed the report and the effective work that was undertaken with local residents. It was important that the Council remained accessible via extended contact centre hours, letters, telephone and the use of the app. The Members' enquiry system was a useful system that was used to track enquiries and response times in order for members to undertake their casework. Compliments and complaints enabled the Council not to become complacent or defensive but ambitious backed up by facts and evidence.

**RESOLVED** – that:

- a) **the Customer Feedback Reports for 2022-23 in respect of Adult Statutory Complaints, Children's Statutory Complaints and Corporate Customer Feedback be reviewed;**
- b) **the reduction in complaints received in 2022/23, the increase in positive feedback and the improvement in complaint handing performance;**
- c) **the new Policy and Procedure for Complaints involving Child Sexual Exploitation attached at Appendix D be approved; and**
- d) **delegated authority be granted to the Director for Communities, Customer & Commercial Services in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance, Customer Services and Governance to make amendments to the policy going forward in line with changes to the appropriate legislation and other relevant information.**

The meeting ended at 10.59 am

**Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices**

Anthea Lowe  
Director: Policy & Governance

Date: **Wednesday 19 JULY 2023**

Signed .....

Date: Thursday 21 September 2023