

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 18 March 2021 at 10.00 am by Remote Meeting

PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY, 24 MARCH 2021

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY, 29 MARCH 2021)

Present: Councillors R A Overton (Vice-Chair), A J Burford, E M Callear, L D Carter, R C Evans, C Healy, 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)

CAB-57 Declarations of Interest

In relation to Item 8 on the agenda, Councillors S A W Reynolds and R A Overton noted personal, but no pecuniary, interests in relation to the Friends of the Cockshutt group.

CAB-58 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

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

CAB-59 Leader's Announcements

The Leader noted that it was CSE Awareness Day and reaffirmed the Council's commitment to tackling what was a horrific crime. The Council's own inquiry into CSE was ongoing and had received millions of pages of documents from the Council and other partner organisations. The Cabinet eagerly anticipated the inquiry's findings so that it could work to address this most serious of issues.

On what was International Recycling Day, the Leader expressed thanks to residents and the Council's partners at Veolia for their recycling efforts. Thanks to their efforts, Telford & Wrekin had become the fourth most improved Council in the region in terms of recycling.

The Leader was delighted with the work of the community action teams that had been mobilised across the Borough. Their hard work was helping to clean and green the communities of Telford.

The Borough's latest COVID-19 figures were due to be released shortly. There had been a significant decrease in case numbers and the Borough now had the lowest rate in the region. Thanks were extended to residents for their hard work as well as to the Council's staff and partners.

CAB-60 Environment Scrutiny Committee Recommendation

The Cabinet received a presentation from Councillor C Cassar, Vice Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Committee. The timeliness of this report, on what was International Recycling Day, was noted.

The Environment Scrutiny Committee had received a presentation on street waste and recycling and had been keen to investigate the possibility of installing dual-use recycling bins in the Borough. Members of the Committee were eager to enable and increase recycling participation in the Borough, allowing residents to recycle conveniently on the go.

Following passionate cross-party work, the Committee made the recommendation to Cabinet that the Council rollout dual-use recycling bins in the Telford Town Park and four other major Borough parks. The recommendation called for the trial to be reviewed and followed by a rollout of dual-use bins to the Boroughs high streets.

The Committee recognised the importance of providing opportunities for residents to recycle whilst visiting the Borough's towns and green spaces and had been encouraged by the progress being made within the Borough by many stakeholders concerning the Climate Emergency.

Cabinet Members expressed their support for this recommendation and thanked the Committee for its hard work.

RESOLVED that:

- a) **As part of the climate emergency commitment, the Council will install dual-recycling bins across the Borough. Working in partnership with Town/Parish Councils, local business and stakeholders, the Council will begin by installing dual-recycling bins across high footfall areas (including but not limited to Oakengates, Newport and Wellington) in the Borough including Telford Town Park and the Borough's Parks.**
- b) **Following detailed review and evaluation of this initial trial, the on-going provision of dual -recycling litterbins will be considered for a programme of further roll out.**
- c) **Authority be delegated to relevant officers to work with partners to determine the final location/s of this initial trial.**

CAB-61 Telford & Wrekin Draft Housing Strategy, 2020-25. Report on outcome of consultation process and consideration of revised draft Strategy.

Key Decision identified as **Telford & Wrekin Draft Housing Strategy, 2020-25. Report on outcome of consultation process and consideration of revised draft Strategy** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 17 February 2021.

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

The Council's draft Housing Strategy, 2020-25 was approved by Cabinet in June 2020. This was an overarching Strategy which set out the Council's commitment to work with partners and communities to ensure every resident had a safe and affordable home. It established three key objectives: to create sustainable, accessible, affordable and integrated communities; to make the best use of existing homes; and to provide homes to support and empower the most vulnerable people.

The Strategy set out a series of actions and priorities to guide delivery, some of which would be implemented by the Council through the Local Plan Review, and through new investment into delivering further homes via Nuplace, the Better Homes for All Programme, the Council's commitment to No Return to Rough Sleeping and new initiatives, which included the Safer and Stronger Communities programme.

The Strategy also set out priorities for the Council's partners and engagement through the consultation had contributed to the new Allocation Policy being presented to Cabinet alongside this Report. There was a commitment to work with the Authority on delivering the priorities in the Specialist & Supported Accommodation Strategy.

A new Affordable Warmth Strategy and a new Empty Properties Strategy were to be presented to Cabinet and would be key enablers in delivering some of the Council's strategic housing objectives.

The importance of a decent home as the foundation for people's lives had become even more apparent during the Covid-19 crisis. During this time, the Authority had seen many more households seek the Council's support as they faced homelessness following the loss of employment or family breakdown or challenges with the condition of their homes. Under the commitment to 'No Return to Rough Sleeping,' since March 2020 the Authority had accommodated c.400 people who were faced with rough sleeping and prevented a further 370 from reaching this point.

The Housing Strategy was a key element of how the Council would continue to respond to housing needs across the Borough to ensure it futureproofed and built resilience into its communities.

The draft Housing Strategy was subject to a ten-week period of consultation in 2020, which involved partners, stakeholders, and the community. Overall, there was strong support for the draft Strategy. A range of comments were received and a number of themes had emerged. They included:

- New house building and infrastructure
- Existing homes
- Affordable homes
- The housing needs of older, disabled and vulnerable people

- Green spaces and ecology
- Climate change

The report provided an initial response to these themes, highlighted actions already taken and identified how others would be addressed further over the life of strategy.

As a result of the consultation a number of amendments had been made to the Strategy including:

- To acknowledge the key themes raised through the consultation process
- To reflect the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic
- To set out arrangements for continued partnership working and consultation to support the delivery of this strategy

It was proposed to adopt the amended Housing Strategy (Appendix A) and to bring an annual report to Cabinet that set out progress in delivery against the objectives.

Cabinet Members expressed their thanks to the officers involved in the report and praised what was deemed a forward-looking plan. It was noted that the report embodied the pledge to Build a Better Borough.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat / Independent Group expressed his support for the strategy and his hopes that NuPlace could set high standards for other developers to follow. The environmental aspects of the report were also praised.

The Leader of the Conservative Group expressed support for the green agenda and an interest in the retrofitting of NuPlace properties in line with that. Support was expressed for the Council's plan to use its powers to bring empty dwellings back into use.

In response to the Leader of the Liberal Democrat / Independent Group, the Leader of the Council stated that as the largest private sector landlord in the Borough, NuPlace was well placed to raise standards across the sector.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The outcome and response to the consultation process in relation to the draft Housing Strategy be noted.**
- b) The final version of the Housing Strategy be approved.**
- c) An annual progress report on the implementation of the Housing Strategy be received.**

CAB-62 Telford & Wrekin Council Housing Allocation Policy, 2021 - 2026

Key Decision identified as Telford & Wrekin Council Housing Allocation Policy, 2021 - 2026

In the Notice of Key Decisions published on 17 February 2021.

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

This report introduced a draft version of the Council's revised Housing Allocation Policy. The Policy, which was a legal requirement, enabled the Council to work with local housing associations (Registered Providers) and to influence how they allocated their properties in Telford & Wrekin. It also set the context for when the Council nominated a household in need to a housing association. The Council's wider Housing Allocation Scheme also included its Tenancy Strategy. Housing Associations must 'have regard to' the Policy and Tenancy Strategy but would also have their own Allocations Policies.

The draft Policy supported the Council's commitment to ensure that every child, young person and adult lived well in their community and the objectives set out in the Housing Strategy:

- To create sustainable, accessible, affordable and integrated communities
- To make the best use of existing homes
- To provide homes to support and empower the most vulnerable people

While the Council did not hold a stock of social housing and did not operate a Housing Register or Waiting List, it supported local residents and households who are in housing need to find a home within the borough by:

- Advising and signposting them to apply direct to a local housing association
- Being nominated to a housing association property by the Council
- Receiving advice and support from the Council's Housing Solutions Service
- Publishing a Housing Allocation Policy

The Council's Housing Allocation Policy was last updated in June 2015. It was timely to review this given new national legislation and imminent changes in local arrangements for accessing social housing let by a number of housing associations. These changes would also provide the opportunity to review arrangements for the nomination of households in need by the Council to a number of local housing providers. The Council and the main local providers had worked closely together on this and the development of the draft Allocation Policy.

The Policy, in line with national guidance, gave 'reasonable preference' for social housing to those who:

- are homeless (statutory and non-statutory)
- are living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- are owed a duty by any housing authority
- need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including disability)
- need to move to a particular locality in the area to avoid hardship

The Council could also give additional preference to households who did not fall into these categories but had urgent housing needs, based on local circumstances. It was proposed that this would include:

- Those who would otherwise become homeless, which a planned move could prevent
- Those supported by Council homelessness prevention initiatives
- Those whose health will significantly deteriorate without a move
- Those moving on from supported or specialist accommodation
- Care leavers
- Those in adapted properties where the adaptations are no longer required
- Those needing to move to take up employment
- Households living in overcrowded accommodation
- Those who are under occupying a home which could be used to provide a home for a larger family
- Members of the armed forces and their families

An eight-week period of consultation was proposed with local partners and key stakeholders. Any significant changes to the draft Policy that arose from the consultation would be brought back to Cabinet for consideration.

The Leader of the Conservative Group queried the Council's ability to secure housing from social housing providers. The Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport and Infrastructure noted that the Authority had significant abilities to secure housing with its partners and that local providers often approached the Council for nominations.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat / Independent Group welcomed the document being opened for consultation. A guarantee was sought that residents would be able to access assistance via mediums other than the internet when applying for housing. The Cabinet Member stated that there would indeed be alternative ways to contact the Authority, this included a dedicated hotline and the option to write to Council if preferred.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The Council's revised draft Housing Allocation Policy and Tenancy Strategy for consultation be approved.**
- b) An eight week period of external consultation be agreed.**
- c) 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 Policy & Strategy following the consultation. Any significant changes required as a result of external consultation would be brought back to Cabinet for approval before the Policy & Strategy are finalised.**

Key Decision identified as **Definitive Map Modification Order - Policy and Procedures** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 17 February 2021.

Councillor C Healy, Cabinet Member: Visitor Economy, Historic & Natural Environment and Climate Change presented the report of the Director: Prosperity & Investment.

The Council was undertaking a major transformation of how Public Rights of Way were managed by the Authority, this included the digitisation of the Definitive Map and its Statement, other records and data, the processing of orders, and the categorisation of the Public Rights of Way in the Borough.

The Definitive Map and Statement was the official record of footpaths, bridleways, restricted bridleways and bypasses open to all traffic. A Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) was a method by which the Definitive Map and Statement could be changed where it was believed there was an error or omission. A DMMO could not create access rights that did not already exist, remove rights that did exist or divert paths onto a preferred route, it was only concerned with modifying the definitive map to show the rights that legally existed; this included through the evidence of a claimed route for a historic right of way. The decision on whether or not to make such a correction was based purely on the evidence of what public rights exist and it was important to understand that the process was not concerned with issues of management of the ways, desirability of the routes or other such matters.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 required Local Authorities to keep a register of all applications for a Definitive Map Modification Order and this register must be made available to the public.

The report set out the proposal to adopt a new policy and procedure that would clearly identify how the Council would prioritise and determine outstanding and new applications to modify the Definitive Map. Consequently, the Council would be able to determine decisions more efficiently through a transparent and defined process.

RESOLVED that:

- a) **The Definitive Map Modification Order be approved.**
- b) **Authority be delegated to the Director for Prosperity and Investment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy, Historic & Natural Environment and Climate Change to periodically review and amend the policy as required.**

CAB-64 Declaration of The Cockshutt Local Nature Reserve

The Cabinet Member: Visitor Economy, Historic & Natural Environment and Climate Change presented the report of the Director: Prosperity & Investment.

This report set out proposals for Cabinet to approve the declaration of The Cockshutt Local Nature Reserve (LNR) under Sections 19 and 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

The declaration of The Cockshutt as a local nature reserve formed part of a wider program of works being delivered by the Council to protect, care and invest in the Borough's natural environment. To date, the program had protected over 1000ha of locally important green spaces valued by local communities, protecting 200 Green Guarantee sites and 16 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).

The declaration of The Cockshutt would bring the number of LNRs in the Borough to 17 and complete the Cabinet process for those LNRs identified within the adopted Telford and Wrekin Local Plan (2011- 2031). The Local Plan was under review and the recent Issues and Options consultation had identified the designation of further LNRs as a key driver in the delivery of an enhanced and better protected natural environment within the Borough and therefore it was envisaged that further sites would be brought forward for declaration in due course.

The proposals to declare the site as a Local Nature Reserve would recognise the site's local importance for people and for wildlife nationally. These proposals were strongly supported by ward members, three local parish councils and a number of local groups, in particular the Friends of the Cockshutt, part of the Telford Green Space Partnership.

Cabinet Members expressed their delight that the space was being protected; this was compounded by the increased importance of green spaces over the preceding twelve months. Thanks were offered to the Friends of the Cockshutt group for their work.

The Leaders of the Conservative and the Liberal Democrat / Independent Groups both expressed their support for the declaration noting the importance of protecting green space.

The Leader of the Council stated that with more green flag parks than ever before, the delivery of 17 local nature reserves, more country park designations, and hundreds of green guarantee sites Telford & Wrekin's unique green-urban blend was protected and enhanced by the Council. Residents were never far from green space and the Council's message was that residents should get out and enjoy them. Such fantastic resources had to be celebrated.

RESOLVED that:

- a) **The declaration of the Cockshutt Local Nature Reserve be approved.**
- b) **Authority to complete the declaration process be delegated to the Director for Prosperity and Investment and the Associate Director for Policy and Governance in consultation with the Cabinet member for Visitor Economy, Historic & Natural Environment and Climate Change.**

Plan Annual Review

Key Decision identified as **Telford & Wrekin Council Becoming Carbon Neutral Action Plan Annual Review** in the Notice of Key Decisions published on 17 February 2021.

Councillor C Healy, Cabinet Member: Visitor Economy, Historic & Natural Environment and Climate Change presented the report of the Director: Communities, Customer & Commercial Services.

The Becoming Carbon Neutral Action Plan Annual Review report set out the progress the Council had made since declaring a Climate Emergency.

The Council had been committed to reducing its carbon footprint for the last ten years. However, following the declaration of a Climate Emergency in July 2019, with a clear target for the Council's operations to be carbon neutral by 2030, action to tackle climate change had been at the heart of everything the Authority did.

Good progress had been made in reducing emissions from the Council's operations, with a 36% decrease in 2019/20 compared to the previous baseline year. Emissions for the year 2020/21 would show a further reduction and would be published later this year.

This was as a result of the successful implementation of a wide range of carbon reduction measures. The Council had continued to prioritise this work, recognising the need to respond to the climate emergency as well as the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Actions planned for the next year included a £1.37m grant-funded scheme to fit heat pumps and improved insulation in Council Leisure Centres, retrofitting Council buildings and temporary housing, measures to deliver a 30% reduction in business travel and a commitment to plant a tree in a community forest for every reception age child in Telford & Wrekin on Council-owned land.

The report updated on how the Council had been working with partners locally, regionally, and nationally on the climate change agenda. The Partnership was developing an action plan to tackle climate change across the wider Borough, which would be published for public consultation later in 2021.

The Council had also run a successful programme of communication campaigns in 2020/21 to help residents, businesses and communities make changes to reduce their carbon footprints. In order to enable even more local organisations to take action, the Council launched a new £100k Climate Change Fund in February 2021.

Covid-19 had not undermined progress but had strengthened it with the changes to how everybody worked and lived. Sustainability was embedded at the heart of the Borough's post-Covid recovery,

The importance of this issue to the community was illustrated in the 2020 Residents' Survey, which found that the majority of Telford & Wrekin residents were concerned about climate change. The Authority could not succeed alone and required more legislation and greater funding support from Government.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat / Independent Group welcomed the report and noted the Borough's successes, specifically the solar farm and LED street lighting. Support was also stated for tree planting campaigns.

The Leader of the Conservative Group noted the importance of selecting the right tree for the right site. Clarification was sought on the location of the new community forest and on the planned number of electrical vehicle charging points in the Borough.

In response to the Leader of the Conservative Groups questions, trees for the forest would be planted at appropriate sites across the Borough as opposed to a single site. With regard to electric vehicle charging points, the Council was pursuing a number of strategies, investigating a forecourt scheme in partnership with the private sector, and how to facilitate charging in areas without private driveways.

RESOLVED that:

- a) **The Council's updated Becoming Carbon Neutral Action Plan 2020/21 set out in Appendix 1 outlining how the Council will continue to work to reduce carbon emissions from the Council's operations and activities and influence carbon reduction Borough wide, be approved.**
- b) **Authority be delegated to the Director for Communities, Customer & Commercial Services (and any Council Officer authorised in writing by the Director for Communities, Customer & Commercial Services) to exercise the Council's powers relating to the preparation, publication, consultation, and processing to secure the delivery of the Borough Action Plan.**
- c) **This report in relation to the Council's response to the Climate Emergency Declaration be noted and referred to Full Council for information as part of the 'Matters Determined by the Cabinet' report.**

The meeting ended at 11.02 am

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Anthea Lowe
Associate Director: Policy & Governance
Date: **Wednesday, 24 MARCH 2021**

Signed

Date: Thursday, 22 April 2021