

Minutes of the Cabinet

**Thursday, 17th February, 2022 at 6.00 pm
In Committee Room 2, The Council House, Dudley**

Present:

Cabinet Members

Councillor P Harley (Leader - Chair)

Councillors N Barlow, R Buttery, S Clark, I Kettle, S Keasey, S Phipps, K Shakespeare and L Taylor-Childs

Opposition Group Members Nominated to attend the Cabinet

Councillors S Ali, A Aston, C Bayton, C Barnett, J Foster, P Lowe and S Ridney.

Officers

K O'Keefe – Chief Executive, B Heran – Deputy Chief Executive, I Newman – Director of Finance and Legal, H Martin – Director of Regeneration and Enterprise, P Mountford – Head of Economic Growth and Skills, J Branch - Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development (via Microsoft Teams) and S Griffiths - Democratic Services Manager.

50 Deputy Leader – Councillor David Vickers

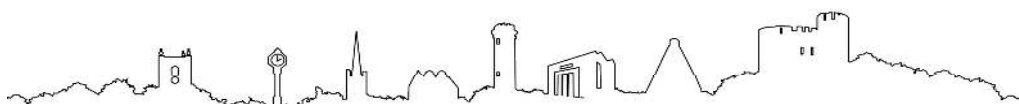
The Leader referred to the recent death of the Deputy Leader, Councillor David Vickers. The meeting observed a period of silence as a token of respect to his memory.

51 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors K Ahmed, P Sahota and Q Zada.

52 Declarations of Interest

No Member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.



53 **Minutes**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th December, 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed.

54 **Capital Programme Monitoring**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Legal on progress and proposed amendments in respect of the Capital Programme. The report also proposed the 'prudential indicators' required to be determined by the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities and the Local Government Act 2003; the updated Capital Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2022/23.

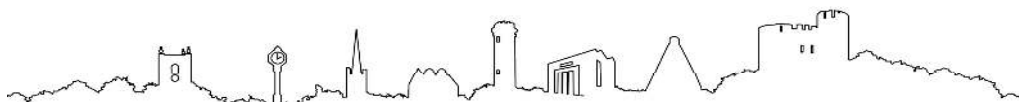
In response to a question from Councillor S Ridney, the Cabinet Member for Digital, Customer and Commercial Services (Councillor S Keasey) undertook to provide an opportunity for Member involvement in developing plans for the Himley Play Area.

The Head of Economic Growth and Skills was asked to send information to Councillor J Foster in connection with the list and priority ranking of sites identified by the Stalled and Derelict Sites Working Group.

Resolved

That the Council be recommended:

- (1) That progress with the 2021/22 Capital Programme, as set out in Appendices A and B to the report, be noted.
- (2) That the amendment to the Transport Capital Programme in paragraph 10 of the report be approved.
- (3) That the Tipton Road fence capital project in paragraph 11 of the report be approved.
- (4) That the additional items for the Very Light Rail project in paragraph 12 of the report be approved.
- (5) That the Social Care digitisation project and associated spend of £224,000 in paragraph 13 of the report be approved.



- (6) That the capital projects proposed in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy in paragraphs 14 to 19 of the report be added to the Capital Programme, subject to the approval of revenue funding by Full Council on 7th March 2022.
- (7) That the Prudential Indicators as required to be determined by the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities and the Local Government Act 2003, as set out in Appendix C to the report, be agreed.
- (8) That the updated Capital Strategy set out in Appendix D to the report be approved.
- (9) That the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy for 2022/23 be approved as set out in paragraph 23 of the report.

55 **Revenue Budget Strategy and Setting the Council Tax 2022/23**

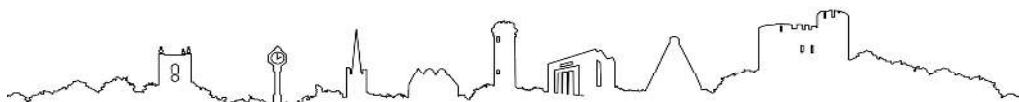
The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Legal on the deployment of General Fund revenue resources, a number of statutory calculations to be made by the Council and the Council Tax to be levied for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Legal noted comments made at the meeting, including future opportunities to improve consultation and engagement.

Resolved

That the Council be recommended:-

- (1) To note the actions of the External Auditors, as set out in paragraph 12 of the report.
- (2) To note the forecast variances to budget in 2021/22 and progress with the delivery of savings, as set out in paragraph 14 of the report and Appendices B and C.
- (3) To authorise the Director of Finance and Legal, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Legal and the Opposition Spokesperson for Finance and Legal, to approve any changes to the budget proposals resulting from the final Local Government Finance Settlement and final decisions on the West Midlands Combined Authority Transport Levy and non-transport funding contributions, as set out in paragraphs 24 and 35 of the report.

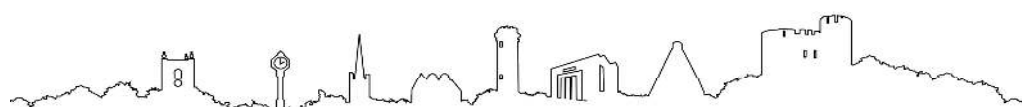


- (4) Subject to any amendments arising from the above, to approve the following:
- (a) The budget for 2022/23, and Directorate allocations (including the Public Health budget), as set out in the report.
 - (b) That the statutory amounts required to be calculated for the Council's spending, contingencies and contributions to reserves; income and use of reserves; transfers to and from its collection fund; and Council Tax requirement, as referred to in Section 67(2)(b) be now calculated by the Council for the year 2022/23 in accordance with Sections 31A, 31B and 34 to 36 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992, as shown in Appendix M to the report.
 - (c) That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts in Appendix M, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992, to agree the following levels of Council Tax for Dudley Council services for 2022/23.

Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
995.91	1161.90	1327.88	1493.87	1825.84	2157.81	2489.78	2987.73

- (d) The Medium-Term Financial Strategy as set out in the report.
- (5) To determine that a referendum relating to Council Tax increases is not required in accordance with Chapter 4ZA of Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as set out in paragraph 47 of the report.
- (6) To authorise the Cabinet Members, the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and Directors to take all necessary steps to implement the proposals contained in the report, in accordance with the Council's Financial Management Regime.



Deployment of Resources: Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Public Sector Housing Capital

The Cabinet considered a joint report on proposals for the deployment of resources for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Public Sector Housing Capital in the light of the latest government announcements on housing finance and our latest spending and resource assumptions and to approve the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and 30 Year Business Plan for the HRA.

Resolved

- (1) That the increase in rents for HRA dwellings by 3.99% from 4th April 2022, as set out in paragraphs 5 and 6 of the report, be approved.
- (2) That the changes to service charges as detailed in paragraphs 7 and 9 of the report, be approved.
- (3) That the maintenance of current heating and lighting charges for sheltered housing with an average weekly charge of £14.92, as detailed in paragraph 8 of the report, be approved.
- (4) That the increase in the current charge for pitch licences at Oak Lane by 3.99%, as outlined in paragraph 10 of the report, be approved.
- (5) That an increase of 2.3% for water charges at Oak Lane from £6.78 to £6.94 per week, as set out in paragraph 10 of the report, be approved.
- (6) That an increase in the current leaseholders' administration fee from £130 to £140 per annum be approved and that the charge for the leasehold information pack be maintained at £75 (plus VAT), as outlined in paragraphs 11 and 12 of the report.
- (7) That an increase of 6.5% (£1 per month) for private Telecare clients, together with a review of charging arrangements, as outlined in paragraph 13 of the report, be approved.
- (8) That the ongoing review of garage sites and plots, as referred to in paragraph 15 of the report, be noted.
- (9) That a charge of £12 per week for new garages, as set out in paragraph 16 of the report, be approved.

- (10) That the Council be recommended:-
- (a) To note the latest HRA financial forecast for 2021/22 and approve the HRA budget for 2022/23, as outlined in Appendix 1, noting consultation arrangements, as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report.
 - (b) To approve the public sector housing revised capital budgets for 2021/22 to 2026/27 as outlined in Appendix 2, noting consultation arrangements as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report.
 - (c) To authorise the Director of Housing and Community Services and the Director of Finance and Legal, to bid for, and enter into funding arrangements for additional resources to supplement investment in the public sector housing stock, as outlined in paragraphs 34 and 35 and that expenditure funded from such resources be added to the Capital Programme.
 - (d) To authorise the Director of Housing and Community Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Services, to manage and allocate resources to the Capital Programme as outlined in paragraph 36 of the report.
 - (e) To confirm that all capital receipts arising from the sale of HRA assets (other than any receipts that may be specifically committed to support private sector housing) should continue to be used for the improvement of council homes, as indicated in paragraph 36 of the report.
 - (f) To authorise the Director of Housing and Community Services to continue to buy back former right to buy properties, to buy other properties, and to buy land where required to assemble a viable site for housing development, subject to a robust assessment of good value for money and sustainability in terms of lettings, maintenance and major works, as set out in paragraph 37 of the report.
 - (g) To endorse the HRA medium term financial strategy and thirty-year business plan, attached as Appendix 3 to the report.
- (11) That the Director of Housing and Community Services be authorised to procure and enter into contracts for the delivery of the Capital Programme, as outlined in paragraph 38 of the report.

57 **Invitation to Become an 'Opted in' Authority Public Sector Audit Appointments**

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Legal on a proposal to opt in to the National Scheme for auditor appointments.

Resolved

That the Council be recommended to opt in to the national scheme for auditor appointments.

58 **Halesowen Business Improvement District (BID) Reballot**

A joint report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise and the Director of Finance and Legal was submitted on proposals for a reballot for a new five-year term and to consider the timeline in respect of the Halesowen Business Improvement District (BID).

Resolved

- (1) That the BID proposal and timeline be approved.
 - (2) That Halesowen BID proceed to a re-ballot in Summer 2022.
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59 **Council Plan 2022-25**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive on the draft Council Plan for the period from April 2022 to March 2025 setting out the strategic direction for the Council, key priorities and how the Council was contributing to the delivery of the Borough Vision 2030.

Resolved

That the Council be recommended to endorse the draft Council Plan for 2022-2025 setting out the ambitions to be the place of choice for living, working, learning, visiting and delivering a service for our residents that we are proud of.

60 **Dudley Council Pay Policy 2022/23**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive on the Council's annual Pay Policy Statement to comply with Sections 38 and 39 of the Localism Act 2011. The Statement articulated the Council's policies on a range of issues relating to the pay of the workforce, particularly the most senior staff (or "chief officers") and the relationship of their pay to the lowest paid employees.

Following a query from Councillor J Foster, it was clarified that paragraph 5 of the report should be amended to read that, at the time of writing the report, the National Joint Council (NJC) and Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) pay negotiations for a national pay award in 2021/22, effective from 1st April, 2021, were still ongoing and so were not reflected in the salary grades contained in Annex 2 of the policy.

The Chief Executive advised Members that a separate report on the Gender Pay Gap would be submitted to the Cabinet in March, 2022.

Resolved

That the Council be recommended to approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23.

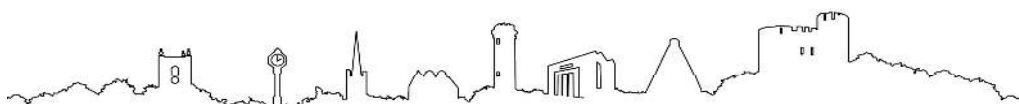
61 **Sheltered Housing Schemes - Update and Proposals**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive on an update concerning two sheltered housing schemes that were no longer viable and seeking approval for arrangements to rehouse the remaining tenants.

In response to a question from Councillor A Aston, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Services (Councillor L Taylor-Childs) indicated that work was in progress to address any potential gaps in service provision in the north of the Borough.

Resolved

- (1) That the winding down of sheltered housing at Joe Jones Court and Church View be confirmed, including the cessation of marketing any vacant properties and commencing the process of supporting all existing tenants to move to alternative accommodation.
- (2) That all current unallocated and arising vacancies within the Council's sheltered housing be ring-fenced for moves from Joe Jones Court and Church View unless not required.



- (3) That tenants from Joe Jones Court and Church View be awarded Band 1 with a start date of their current tenancy, so that preference between them and in relation to any other applicants competing for non-sheltered housing is given to those with the longest time in residence; and that those tenants moving within the Council's sheltered housing be prioritised according to their predictive risk score and then by length of tenancy.
- (4) That all tenants having to move out of Joe Jones Court and Church View be eligible for Home Loss and disturbance payments in line with statutory entitlements and Council policy.
- (5) That the Council, through its existing contracts and internal services, provide packing, removals, disconnections, and reconnections, redirection of mail, plus two hours of handy person time if required to assist with DIY type tasks such as curtain rails and that all tenants receive £200 for new curtains, and £500 where new carpets are necessary and have not been provided.
- (6) That tenants who prefer to arrange all of these matters independently be able to claim a fixed payment of £500, plus the curtain and carpet allowances where necessary.
- (7) That where interim moves are necessary, the Council provide carpeting, cookers and fridges and that these are to be left in place for subsequent occupiers.
- (8) That the standard of properties offered be clean throughout and with intact decorative finishes, subject to tenants being able to choose to receive decoration vouchers at standard levels should they prefer.
- (9) That any tenant considering that these levels of compensation are significantly lower than substantial investments they have recently made and which will be lost, be allowed to submit evidence and have the matter considered on a case-by-case basis.
- (10) That the Deputy Chief Executive be authorised to carry out the recommended actions as set out in the report.

The meeting ended at 6.35 pm

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

