

**Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet
held on Monday, 5th February, 2024
from 1.00 pm**

Present: R Eggleston (Chairman)
A Bennett (Vice-Chair)

AM Cooke

I Gibson

C Hobbs

Also Present: Councillors R Bates, P Brown, A Eves and P Kenny

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Eves and Councillor Kenny to the meeting as group leaders invited under the Cabinet protocol.

1. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY MATTER ON THE AGENDA.

None.

2. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

No apologies were received as all Members were present.

3. TO BE AGREED BY GENERAL AFFIRMATION THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13 NOVEMBER 2023.

The Cabinet agreed the minutes and they were signed by the Chairman.

4. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN AGREES TO TAKE AS URGENT BUSINESS.

None.

5. CORPORATE PLAN AND BUDGET 2024/25.

Before the report was presented to Cabinet for debate, Councillors attending the meeting (not being a member of Cabinet) were asked for their contribution. Councillor Eves asked if an annual parking report had been issued for 2022/23. It was confirmed that this has been issued, and a copy of the report will be made available.

Louise Duffield, Director Resources and Organisational Development introduced the item, noting it was received at the Scrutiny Committee held on 24 January 2024. The outcome of that meeting has been taken into consideration by Cabinet who were present at the Scrutiny meeting.

The Leader proposed that the report be recommended to Council, acknowledging that it presents a balanced budget for 2024/25 utilising money from the General Reserves and Treasury Management income. He noted there remains a gap between income and expenditure with limited options to resolve the issue, resulting in

tough decisions which the Cabinet are willing to make in order to ensure the Council is prudently run and can continue to support employees and deliver services and enhancements to residents over coming years.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Revenues and Benefits seconded the recommendations, thanking Officers, the cross-party working group and Scrutiny Committee for the work involved. She acknowledged that it is set in the context of difficult and uncertain times and noted that the Council is in a better financial position than other authorities who are at risk of financial failure this year.

Discussion was held on the food waste collection trial and parking charges. The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Customer Services highlighted that the food waste collection will be rolled out to all houses in the District by March 2026 and will incur a capital cost on the new burdens, along with ongoing costs. Whilst the Government will provide a capital grant it will not cover the expenditure required and further income sources will be required. The agreed Parking Strategy will be implemented and will involve increases to parking charges. These will remain competitive compared to neighbouring towns and Districts and will enable further investment in new technology and increased capacity in certain areas.

The Deputy Leader welcomed the fact that the Council will become a Real Living Wage employer from April 2024. She also reiterated thanks to all involved in producing the Budget noting that it had been reached in a consensual way by all.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Economy and Housing noted the constraints faced by the Council in agreeing the budget particularly in relation to Council Tax. He also noted the difficulty of reducing the gap between income and expenditure at the same time as increasing reserves. He acknowledged the positive support provided for sustainability ambitions, housing and temporary accommodation and noted further work is needed to ensure the best use of available housing stock.

The Leader took the Members to a vote on the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

Cabinet approved and agreed to propose to Council the draft Corporate Plan and Budget set out at Appendix A, and specifically endorsed and recommends:

- (a) The financial outlook facing the Council over the medium term.
- (b) The proposed increase in Council Tax and Fees and Charges.
- (c) The strategy to use the General Reserve to balance the 2024/25 Budget.
- (d) The commitment to top up the General Reserve where possible over the medium term.

6. STRATEGIC RISKS 2023/24.

Before the report was presented to Cabinet for debate, Councillors attending the meeting (not being a member of Cabinet) confirmed that they did not wish to comment on this item.

Louise Duffield, Director Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report noting that it had been recommended by the Audit Committee at a meeting held on 28 November 2024.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Economy and Housing noted that there often needs to be an increased risk to encourage development in some areas, versus a low level of risk in other areas. In response to a query on staff retention, the Director confirmed that this is covered at operational level and not currently considered to be a high risk.

The Leader was content with the small number of strategic risks and acknowledged that there were operational risks sitting below them. The Director confirmed that independent consultants are advising Officers who are currently reviewing these for the 24/25 Operational Risk Register.

The Leader took the Members to a vote on the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

Cabinet noted the strategic risks, their score, and mitigations and agreed the Risk Policy at Appendix B.

7. INSURANCE CONTRACT PROCUREMENT

Before the report was presented to Cabinet for debate, Councillors attending the meeting (not being a member of Cabinet) confirmed that they did not wish to comment on this item.

Louise Duffield, Director Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report noting that the proposed extension by one year will enable the Council to consider the best options available on the market and ensure the right contract is procured at the right time.

The Leader noted that Cabinet had considered the contents of the exempt annexe and proposed the item. This was seconded by the Cabinet Member for Finance, Revenues and Benefits.

The Leader took the Members to a vote on the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

Cabinet agreed to:

- (i) delegate authority to the Director of Resources and Organisational Development to extend the Council's current insurance arrangements for a period of twelve months up to and including 31 March 2025;
- (ii) delegate authority to the Director of Resources and Organisational Development to carry out a procurement exercise for the organisation's insurance arrangements; and
- (iii) delegate authority to the Director of Resources and Organisational Development to award the new insurance contract to the preferred bidder(s)

following the evaluation of tenders to take effect from and including 1 April 2025 for a term of up to five years, to ensure continuity of cover.

- 8. TO CONSIDER WHETHER TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING DURING CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 100A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT INVOLVES THE LIKELY DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION AS DEFINED IN PARAGRAPH 3 OF PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 12A OF THE SAID ACT.**

An exempt session was not required.

- 9. EXEMPT ANNEX - INSURANCE CONTRACT PROCUREMENT.**

The exempt annexe contained costings. These costings are commercially sensitive and exempt from publication under paragraph 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The Leader noted that Cabinet had considered the contents of this annexe prior to voting on the recommendations.

The meeting finished at 1.32 pm

Chairman