

## Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

**Location:** Council Chamber, The Symington Building, Adam and Eve Street, Market Harborough, LE16 7AG



**Date:** 12 February 2024 commencing at 6.30pm

### Present:

Councillors:	S. Galton (Chair)	Cabinet member for Planning
	P. Beadle	Cabinet member for Corporate
	M. Graves	Cabinet member for Finance
	J. Knight	Cabinet member for Wellbeing
	D. Woodiwiss	Cabinet member for the Environment & Climate Change

Officers:

- J. Richardson- Chief Executive
- L. Elliot – Deputy Chief Executive
- C. Mason – Section 151 Officer
- J. Young – Head of Legal, Interim Monitoring Officer
- D. Atkinson – Director of Planning
- C. Bland – Head of Financial Services
- S. Baldwin –Interim Democratic Officer

The Chief Executive announced that Councillor Knowles, Leader of the Council, has appointed Councillor Galton as Deputy Leader of the Council and in the absence of the Leader, The Deputy Leader will chair this meeting.

Cllr Galton thanked the Chief Executive and opened the meeting.

### Information Exchange

Councillor Knight, Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing, gave an update on Plowman's Yard informing Cabinet that work on this has commenced with Welland Procurement to carry out the procedure with the open tenure being live from 26<sup>th</sup> January 2024. He also gave an update on Parish Liaison business commenting that an online meeting for Parish Clerks will be held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024.

Councillor Knight gave an update on housing informing Cabinet that the Strategy for Housing Consultation closed on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024 with him taking this and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to the Scrutiny Performance Panel on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024 following the Cabinet meeting in March for approval. This will also include the Health and Wellbeing Strategy action updates and the new Leisure Strategy 2024-2027 which will align with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027.

Councillor Beadle gave an update on the Corporate Portfolio, informing Cabinet that the migration of the legacy benefits including Job Seekers Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit and other tax credits to the Universal Credit System is still in process. He encouraged anyone with queries or concerns to contact the Department of Work and Pensions. Councillor Beadle commented that the Contact Centre continues to be very busy and in a recent Customer Satisfaction Survey regarding the website, it was given an excellent score of 94%. The Legal Team and Officers have a full schedule with 25 pieces of work currently being undertaken that has been commissioned for the Local Plan work in addition to their regular workload. He gave an update on the IT Department who are working on several projects including further development of the Intranet and ExCom, the new system for the management of the Section 106 process for which the legal contract has been agreed and is awaiting sign-off. A recent Health and Safety audit has been scheduled for the Market Harborough Indoor Market and further scheduled audits expected in the coming weeks for the Leisure Centres in Lutterworth and Market Harborough, Symington Recreational Ground Pavilion and the Harborough Enterprise Centre.

Councillor Woodiwiss gave an update on the Climate Portfolio, informing Cabinet that Hug 2 work is in progress with letters being sent out to those in the community who earn less than £31,000 and are off gas. 300 people have taken up installation of solar panels through the Solar Together scheme and the installation of these should be finished by April 2024. A switching auction is taking place for the electricity and gas supply for which 500 people have registered. The Flex D work to support car clubs is also going forwards with 7 sites identified and tender documents are completed and ready to go out, however there are obstacles with insurance that need to overcome for this to progress. A business plan has been created for the reduction of emissions to scope 1 and 2 with the first item of business to be considered later in this meeting.

Councillor Woodiwiss gave an update on environmental health. He informed Cabinet that the XL Bully dog breed ban is now in force for which a best practice protocol should be in place as the Council are responsible for picking up strays of this breed. The contaminated land strategy is up for review soon and as there have been no breaches for quite some time, it has been requested that air quality management area in Lutterworth be rescinded which is currently being worked on. The pest and dog warden contract is coming up for renewal, this will be extended for 2 years initially, and this will then go to full procurement.

Councillor Woodiwiss explained that the United States Food FDA visited a site in Harborough that they are planning to export jam from. The casework regarding the fatal accident that occurred has been completed and a report on this will be going out shortly. In Environmental Services, the last two potential sites for depots with one in the Harborough District being actively investigated currently. The funds from the government for the provision of food waste is on hold as there are renegotiations taking place on the number of vehicles needed. Councillor Woodiwiss thanked the local flood wardens for their work during the recent heavy rain.

Councillor Galton updated Cabinet on the Planning Portfolio. The drop-in events related to the consultation at Market Harborough, Broughton Astley, Lutterworth and Scraptoft have taken place with one further to take place in Kibworth. People have been well engaged with the process with over 100 attending the drop-in at Broughton Astley.

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Knowles (The Leader) offered his apologies.

### **2. Declaration of Members' Interests**

Cllr Woodiwiss, Portfolio Holder for the Environment and Climate Change, declared that he has been appointed as a Voluntary Director of Harborough Energy and has been involved with the contractor for the solar PV system for Harborough Innovation Centre.

### **3. Minutes**

Cabinet agreed the minutes of the meeting on 15 January 2024 as a true and accurate record.

### **4. Final Budget 2024/25 & the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2025/26 to 2028/29)**

Councillor Graves, Cabinet Member of Finance introduced the report. He gave a summary of the significance of the late provided figures from the NDR, extra business rates and increased collection fund surplus that have become apparent between the initial draft and the final budget. In summary of the report, it was outlined that the Council has a surplus revenue budget for the first two years of the MTFs of £5 million and as such, council tax fees would be frozen for 2024/25 for second successive year. The surplus funds will be balanced between community investment and set aside in various reserves as follows:

- £1.8 million into the financial sustainability reserve

- £2.1 million into the corporate plan and strategy reserve
- £470,000 into a capital and contracts reserve

Councillor Graves gave a summary of the new items being brought into the Strategy Reserve Funds and being proposed to Council:

- £1 million Grants to Parish
- £170,000/£5000 per Councillor Ward Area Improvement Fund with criteria yet to be established
- £100,000 Leisure Strategy Action Fund
- £100,000 Young Person's Initiative Fund
- £100,000 District Place Narrative/Vision Master Planning Fund
- £400,000 Net-Zero 2030 Initiatives Fund
- £470,000 Waste Vehicles Fund

The Section 151 Officer drew the Cabinet's attention to Appendix 1 to the Budget and MTFs and outline the contents further including the figures around Waste Household Collection Service, Landlord Works regarding the Leisure Centres and Public Realm work. He also explained the figures around Fair Funding and the risk around the business rates reset following more recent modelling since the Draft Budget in January. He also brought to Cabinet's attention his reflections as the Council's s.151 Officer in respect of the s.25 (Robustness of Reserves) report shown in Appendix 1. He summarised the budget overall, commenting on the sustainability of it even with the identified future risks outlined in the report.

Councillor Graves thanked those who had taken time to provide their view as a part of the consultation surrounding this report.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** to recommend the following to Council:

**A.**

- The Fees & Charges Schedule (**Appendix 2**, Annex D); including the delegation to the S. 151 Officer to vary Fees & Charges throughout the year in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, with retrospective reporting to Council.
- The Consolidated Final Budget 2024/25 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2025/26 to 2028/29) at **Appendix 2**.

**B.** Notes the comments of the Director of Resources (& S. 151 Officer) in respect of the "Robustness of the 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2028/29."

**C.** Comments on the Equalities Analysis (Appendix 3) in respect of implications of the Final Budget 2024/25 and MTFs (2025/26 to 2028/29).

**5. Approval of 5 Contracts over £50,000 to enable preparation of the new Harborough Local Plan and Granting Extended Delegated Authority to the Director of Planning, in Consultation with the Planning Portfolio Holder, to award future such contracts**

David Atkinson, Director of Planning outlined the report and the reasons for seeking the approval for granting extended delegated authority to award future contracts including a range of contracts for personnel and goods and services. He explained that having this approval will increase the flexibility of the Team and greatly help to efficiently and successfully complete the Local Plan for submission in June 2025, post-submission review and evidentiary work through to adoption of the Local Plan.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. Approve the award of the contracts set out in Appendix A.
2. Delegate authority to the Director Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Planning, to approve the award of Local Plan preparation related contracts up to the value of £100,000 for a temporary period up to the end of June 2026, unless there is a timely Cabinet meeting available to approve those contracts.
3. Delegate to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Planning and the Head of Legal Services, authority to negotiate and finalise the contracts, including minor variations.

**6. Supply and Installation of a Solar PV System for Harborough Innovation Centre**

The s.151 Officer outlined the contents of the report. He explained to the Cabinet that the reason it has been brought to their attention is because it is over the threshold of £50,000. He emphasised that installing the proposed system helps the Council to meet their Green Climate objectives.

Councillor Graves questioned the s.151 Officer about the functionality of the panels they were proposing to install.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. Approve the award of a contract for the supply and installation of solar panels at Harborough Innovation Centre to contractor 1 as detailed in Appendix A

2. Delegate to the Director of Resources (& s. 151), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Economic Development and the Head of Legal Services, authority to negotiate and finalise the contract, including minor variations.

## **7. Any Urgent Business**

There were no urgent items to consider.

The meeting ended at 7.13pm.

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