

## Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

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



**Date:** 25 November 2024 commencing at 6.31pm

### Present:

Councillors: Knowles (Chair) - Leader of the Council

Asher - Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Economy, and Tourism

Beadle - Portfolio Holder for Corporate

Galton – Portfolio Holder for Planning

Graves – Portfolio Holder for Finance

Knight – Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing

Woodiwiss – Portfolio Holder for Environmental and Climate Change

Forman – Domestic Violence Champion

Officers: J. Richardson – Chief Executive

L. Elliott – Deputy Chief Executive

C. Mason – Director of Finance & S.151 Officer

D. Atkinson – Director of Planning

C. Hartley – Director of Communities

C. Averill – Head of Property

N. Barnard – Head of Democratic Services and Elections and  
Monitoring Officer

E. Bird – Head of Regulatory Services

K. Aitken – Business Planning Officer

S. Nash – Housing Services Manager

I. Pennington - Consultant

The meeting commenced with introductions from Cabinet members and officers.

## **Information Exchange from Portfolio Holders**

### Strategy

The Portfolio Holder for Strategy provided the following update. A meeting has been held with relevant agencies to discuss flooding issues. Anglian Water confirmed they will be investing in the District to address issues. Thanks were offered to the Local Resilience Forum and Council staff for the support to residents affected by Sunday's flooding in Little Bowden and Market Harborough. The County Council have confirmed they will be conducting a review of the flood events that occurred in October.

Congratulations were offered to Harborough Town Football Club on reaching the second round of FA cup. It was confirmed that nearly 3000 tickets had been sold for the match against Reading Football Club.

The hard copy community newsletter should now have been received by all households in the District.

The first annual community awards are being held on 5 December and the response has been so positive that the event has been moved to a larger venue. The recent active Harborough sports awards were also a great success.

The £1m community grants fund has started to be allocated with the Cabinet Sub-Committee Grants allocating over £66,000 last week.

The Corporate Peer Challenge took place two weeks ago and thanks were offered to officers for the work put into making it a success. The Peer Review Team met a wide range of partners, staff and members and recognised the significant change the organisation has faced recently and the good foundations that have been built, including good evidence of investment in communities across the whole of the District. The draft report is awaited.

### Wellbeing

The Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing provided the following update. The need for affordable housing and support for homeless households is increasing with 89 households housed in October but 113 applications received. In total 127 homeless households were being worked with at the end of October and there is increasing reliance on temporary accommodation. It is increasingly challenging to deliver affordable housing and completions have decreased. Work is underway to increase temporary accommodation in the District and proactive work is being undertaken with developers and housing providers to maximise new affordable homes. An Affordable Housing Strategy is to be developed covering matters including lobbying for increased funding, working with Homes England, and increasing the number of affordable housing sites coming forward.

The planning for the Community Awards to take place on 5 December is in its final stages.

A Parish Liaison Meeting will be taking place in January and Community Safety teams are preparing to launch their festive messages for example, discouraging drink driving.

#### *Culture, Leisure, Economy and Tourism*

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Economy and Tourism provided the following update. Fifteen applications have been received to date for the £1million Community Grant. Seven of these were approved at a meeting of the Cabinet Sub-Committee, Grants last week. The outstanding application will be considered at a further meeting, the date of which is to be confirmed. The next application window is now open and closes on 9 February.

Plans for the Lutterworth town square redevelopment are progressing, ready for works to begin in 2025.

Eleven awards were presented at the Active Harborough Sports Awards and congratulations were offered to the winners and nominees as well as to those who'd organised the very successful event.

The Arena at Harborough Leisure Centre is now open offering a weatherproof space replacing the old dome. The centre refurbishment is nearing completion with an open day taking place this Saturday.

Key decisions coming forward include the Economic Development Strategy which will be progressing to Council for approval in December.

### Corporate

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate provided the following update. Two Neighbourhood Planning referenda will be taking place early next year. The annual Canvas of Electors is now concluding and a new register will be published on 1 December.

A national recruitment campaign is currently underway, seeking to inspire individuals to work for Local Authorities.

The Employee pay award has now been approved and all staff have been informed they'll receive their new salary, backdated to 1 April 2024 in their December pay. Members will also receive an uplift to their allowances in December.

A report is being taken to Council in December seeking approval to move to the next stage of the Community Governance Review for Mowsley parish. If the plans progress to the approval of the establishment of a Parish Council in Mowsley the first elections will take place in May 2025, alongside the County Council elections.

Customer service teams have been conducting face to face appointments and on digital channels 1291 on-line forms were completed with the most common enquiries relating to missed bins and other waste queries.

The majority of staff have now completed the Equalities and Diversity Training. Members will also be emailed and asked to complete the training.

### Planning

The Portfolio Holder for Planning provided the following update.

Local Plan evidence continues to arrive to support its development. The timetable is very tight but is progressing and there is confidence that deadlines will be met.

The agenda for next week's Planning Committee is now published and contains five applications for consideration.

Recruitment is underway in the Development Management Service. Planning enforcement continue to be busy ensuring there is compliance with planning conditions.

The Local Plan Advisory Panel is meeting on Thursday where a general update and summary of responses received during the regulation 18 consultation will be among the items discussed. It is intended that the papers presenting the draft Local Plan to Cabinet will be published before Christmas.

### Finance

The Portfolio Holder for Finance provided the following update. The review of the Symington Building is now complete and will be considered at this meeting. Lanning for the 2025-26 Budget and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is underway.

The Harborough Innovation Centre occupancy rate remains at 98% with one until vacant and the solar panel installation is now complete. The response to the opening of the new café has been very positive. The Harborough Enterprise Centre currently has an occupancy rate of 88% but a new tenant is expected.

The footfall at the market is slightly down on last year with traders suggesting anticipation of the budget and the re-opening of the market in Northampton may have impacted.

Key Decisions coming forward include the budget and MTFS and two reports on remediation work at the Market Hall.

### Environment and Climate Change

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change provided the following update. Thanks were reiterated to those officers and volunteers who had supported in recent flooding events. Work is underway with agencies to understand the impact of storm Bert. Residents affected are encouraged to submit their experience through Leicestershire County Council's website.

Free Saturday parking is to be implemented in the run up to Christmas but shoppers are reminded that they will still need to either get a ticket from the machines or register their parking via their phones. The tenders are also back on new parking machines and lighting upgrades have been completed.

Work on procuring new food and other waste collection vehicles and mechanical sweepers is underway. The change of bin collection day for over 25,000 households was well managed.

Work on the Friendship Park is being carried out.

The Envirocrime Team are running an anti-littering campaign with other councils in Leicestershire.

### **Councillor Champion Update**

As Domestic Violence Champion, Councillor Forman gave the following update. It was noted that the meeting was being held on White Ribbon Day, an international campaign calling for the end of male violence against women and girls.

Reducing and tackling domestic abuse remains a priority for the Community Safety Partnership. There has been a 7.6% increase in reported domestic abuse compared to the same quarter last year but across the full year there has been a 2.9% reduction. The Community Safety Partnership, which is funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner proposed putting together care packages for those urgently leaving situations involving Domestic Abuse. A booklet has been designed to go into GP services and family wellbeing centres which provided basic safety advice and contact details for local and national services. Daily meetings are held regarding those at high risk of serious harm.

The UN international day to end violence against women and girls was marked through showing the impact Domestic Abuse can have and highlighting local services. Information was put out on social media and local radio. The Link Worker and Community Safety staff have been attending Leisure Centres in Broughton Astley, Lutterworth, and Market Harborough to raise awareness and signpost services.

There were no questions, petitions or notices of motion.

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

There were none

#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

### **3. DRAFT Cabinet Minutes – 28 October 2024**

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 28 October 2024 were proposed by Councillor Knowles, and therefore were accepted as a true record.

### **4. The Symington Building – Supplementary Asset Options**

Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the report. He explained that the asset options review had concluded that residential use within the Symington Building is unprofitable, that the ground floor is unsuitable for cinema use due to the low ceiling height, that managed co-working/serviced offices should be investigated further, and that development of the rear car parks is potentially profitable.

It was noted that any residential development on the rear car parks can only progress following consideration of the current car parking review and that no decisions were being made on the future of the car parks other than to continue to explore the matter. It was also noted that the new Chief Executive had introduced a stronger office presence with all staff expected to be in the office once a week and people managers in twice a week.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Graves and seconded by Councillor Woodiwiss.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that Cabinet:

- notes the contents of the Supplementary Assets Options Report (shown at Appendix 1 and 2 to the report).
- agrees to continue with exploring residential redevelopment in the car parking space surrounding The Symington Building.
- agrees to develop options for improved occupancy, including further tenanted options or alternative use opportunities for the Ground Floor, including customer service and/or managed office space, Second Floor with the current tenant, including potential sub-division for generating

income from managed office space, and Third Floor including looking into options for alternative use as multi-use, council only space.

- agrees to commence scoping for delayed remediation works for The Symington Building

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

To provide more efficient use of space and environment improvement within The Symington Building for existing and future users. To reduce the energy consumption of The Symington Building. To protect the external structure of the Symington Building.

### **Other Options Considered**

An option open to the Council is to do nothing. This was not considered a viable option because of the financial implications of operating offices larger than that required to accommodate Harborough District Council staff.

## **5. Corporate Plan 2024-31 for Consultation**

The Portfolio Holder for Strategy introduced the report. He explained that the current Corporate Plan was approved in February 2022 and runs until 2031 but that in May 2023 a new administration was elected for Harborough district and, as a result, a light touch review of the Key Activities of the Corporate Plan was undertaken. Following this a refresh of the Corporate Plan was undertaken and the revised plan requires public consultation and scrutiny before being finalised.

It was noted that the Plan lists the Coalition's commitments. And that the recently undertaken peer challenge may produce feedback on further improvements. These will be considered alongside any responses to the consultation in the New Year prior to a final document being brought back for approval.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Knowles and seconded by Councillor Knight.



It was therefore **RESOLVED** that Cabinet approves the Draft Corporate Plan 2024-31 for public consultation.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

The Corporate Plan outlines the Council's Vision, Priorities and Critical Outcomes. It is essential to engage with the key stakeholders on its content before it is finalised to help the Council deliver better outcomes for communities, which reflects the views of those affected.

### **Other Options Considered**

It would be possible to do nothing but this would not support the Corporate Plan in remaining up to date and relevant. It is important that the citizen voice is reflected in the refreshed version of the plan therefore consultation is required.

## **6. Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland's Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy Public Consultation**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning introduced the report. He explained that the Environment Act 2021 had introduced mandatory Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) to support spatial planning for nature and reverse the national decline in biodiversity. Leicestershire County Council, as the 'responsible authority', is charged with a legal duty for producing the LNRS while Harborough District Council is a 'supporting authority' under the LNRS Regulations and contributes toward the preparation of the strategy. The report sought Cabinet endorsement and approval of the draft LNRS document for public consultation in January 2025.

It was noted that the County Council and all Leicestershire Districts and Boroughs have been working in partnership on this matter. The document will be used in spatial planning and aims to reduce national decline in biodiversity and provide a baseline of the state of nature in the area. There are links to the local plan and the public and other stakeholders are asked to engage with the consultation.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Galton and seconded by Councillor Woodiwiss.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that Cabinet endorses and approves the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland's Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy to be published for consultation by Leicestershire County Council in January 2025

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

To support the delivery of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

### **Other Options Considered**

Cabinet does not endorse and approve the Draft LNRS for consultation in January 2025. This was not the recommended option as it could potentially result in delay to delivery of the LNRS, adversely impact on the potential to deliver strategic opportunities for nature recovery and interventions to contribute toward the delivery of the relevant Corporate Objectives outlined in the report.

## **7. 2025/26 Budget & MTFS - Budget Principles & Reserves Strategy**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the report. He explained that in February each year, the Council is required to approve the Council Tax for the forthcoming year. To achieve this, the Council has to prepare an annual budget that has to comply with statutory regulations as well as its own Constitution and local corporate priorities and prepare a medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) that aids future decision making. An essential part of the budget setting process is the agreement of a set of "budget principles", which were detailed in the report. These principles set the foundation upon which the budget will be built. In addition the report asked Cabinet to review and agree any updates to the Reserves Strategy.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Graves and seconded by Councillor Galton.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that Cabinet approves the budget principles, delegations and definitions that are summarised in Appendix 3 to the report and the Reserves Strategy in Appendix 4

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

To develop the foundation on which to support the development of the Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

### **Other Options Considered**

No other options were considered as this process is an essential part of the budget setting process which is a statutory duty.

## **8. 2024/25 Performance Report – Financial (Outturn) and Corporate Performance Quarter 2 (Year ending 31 March 2025)**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the report. He explained that the report combines two reports that were previously brought separately. The report outlined the Financial Performance (Outturn), and Performance for the year ending 31 March 2025 for revenue and capital as at end of Quarter 2. It also covered performance monitoring of the refreshed corporate plan for Quarter 2, July to September 2024. In relation to Financial Performance, Revenue is forecasting an underspend of £485k, a variance of 3.3% to the approved budget and Capital is forecasting an underspend of £11.6m, a variance of 50% to the approved budget. In relation to Performance a refresh of the corporate plan Key activities was undertaken prior to 1 April 2024, resulting in 21 Key activities for the year 2024/25 and the report covered progress against all 21 Key activities in the Corporate Plan. At the end of Quarter 2 there were no activities at red status The report also covered the 19 key performance indicators (KPI's). At the end of Quarter 2, two KPIs were at red status.

It was noted that the underspend in Capital was due to delays in schemes. Budget variances greater than £25,000 were also reported and included an

increase in IT costs, additional income from trade waste and a drop in income from Development Control.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Graves and seconded by Councillor Galton.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that Cabinet notes the report.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

The Council's Performance Management Framework requires that both Scrutiny and the Cabinet have a role in monitoring the performance of the Council against its Corporate Plan. Good financial governance requires the Cabinet to consider and comment on financial outturn. Such commentary demonstrates to customers, partners, and stakeholders that the Council is actively considering the environment within which the Council is operating.

### **Other Options Considered**

This report is for information only so no alternatives were considered.

## **9. Homelessness Temporary Accommodation Purchase Strategy**

The Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing introduced the report. He explained that the Council in its role as a Local Housing Authority must provide emergency accommodation in connection with its homelessness duties. Demand for accommodation has been rising significantly and with it the costs of providing temporary accommodation. To address this the report recommended the adoption of a Temporary Accommodation Purchase Strategy which sets out a way to move from private sector provision to stock ownership in order to achieve best value. It also recommended the purchase of 3 one-bedroom flats funded from within the existing allocated capital programme.

An amendment to recommendation three was proposed by the Director of Communities to allow the purchase of one or two bedroomed flats as further

analysis of the market has revealed a shortage of one bedroomed accommodation. The amendment was accepted by Cabinet.

The recommendations, as amended, were proposed by Councillor Knight and seconded by Councillor Asher.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that Cabinet:

- notes the Temporary Homelessness Accommodation Business Case included as Appendix 1 to the report
- adopts the Temporary Accommodation Purchase Strategy at Appendix 2 to the report
- agrees to the purchase of 3 one or two bedroom flats funded from within the existing allocated capital programme and
- approves the rent setting for Council owned or operated temporary accommodation properties in line with the Local Housing Allowance Rate as set out in section 3.4 of the report.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

To address the rising demand and cost associated with fulfilling the duty to provide Temporary Accommodation as set out in the Business Case.

The purchase of accommodation which is subsequently operated directly by the Council allows an element of cost mitigation.

### **Other Options Considered**

Do nothing and continue to deliver the service as is now. The current demand for temporary accommodation already far exceeds the supply of owned stock. The use of hotels, Bed and Breakfast and other private sector rental has a significant impact on the budget and whilst these accommodation types will still be required to meet the need, relying only on this sector is not the preferred option. Charging rent for our own properties below the Local Authority Housing Allowance Rate, means that the Council is not maximising its ability to recover costs.

To adopt a Temporary Accommodation Purchase Strategy - Whilst the business case and purchase strategy will not negate the need for alternative provision of temporary accommodation, the ability to increase the Council's own stock will improve value for money and provide better accommodation for those in need. The purchase of more stock directly is the preferred option.

To align Temporary Accommodation Rent to the Local Housing Allowance Rate – This is the preferred option as it would ensure that the Council will maximise its income to cover the costs of providing temporary accommodation and there will be no impact on the service users as rental costs are covered by Housing Benefit.

#### **10. Section 100A (4) Local Government Act 1972**

It was **RESOLVED** to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining item by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972. The public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it due to procurement process currently being undertaken.

#### **11. Food Waste Caddies Capital Funding Allocation**

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental and Climate Change introduced the exempt report.

The recommendations, as set out in the exempt report, were proposed by Councillor Woodiwiss and seconded by Councillor Asher.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that Cabinet approve the recommendations as set out in the exempt report.

#### **Reasons for Recommendations**

As set out in the exempt report.

#### **Other Options Considered**

As set out in the exempt report

## **12. Any Urgent Business**

There was none.

The meeting ended at 19.49.