

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**TUESDAY, 30 JANUARY 2024**

## **ADDITIONAL PAPERS**

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**COUNCIL – 30 JANUARY 2024**

**QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

**QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR J LEGRYS TO COUNCILLOR A WOODMAN**

Can the Portfolio Holder please inform me how much is it costing per month, to keep the old council offices since closure, secure, heated/ventilated & continue to enable staff access to items remaining in the building please?

**REPONSE FROM COUNCILLOR A WOODMAN TO COUNCILLOR J LEGRYS**

The Council continues to make low level use of the former Council Offices building such as to accommodate the town CCTV Server equipment. These systems are slowly being disentangled from the building and relocated. Much has now been completed to reduce holding costs. The current cost of retaining this building and the site it sits on is approx. £11k per month.

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## **COUNCIL – 30 JANUARY 2024**

### **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

#### **QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR P MOULT TO COUNCILLOR K MERRIE**

How much has the Council spent on defending the `Area of Separation between Whitwick and Coalville, including officer resources, appeals, and the high court judgement plus the cost of the five day judicial review, which supported it`s retention recognising it`s importance?

#### **REPOSENSE FROM COUNCILLOR K MERRIE TO COUNCILLOR P MOULT**

There have been two applications in the area of separation that have successfully been defended at appeal by the Council. The Stephenson`s Green proposal was also successfully defended at judicial review.

The legal cost of defending the Stephenson`s Green proposal (Application No. 10/01208/OUTM) was £33,433. (Note: made up of external legal fees - £31,600 and internal officer time - £1,833).

The legal cost of defending the Jelson`s proposal on land to the rear of Hall Lane (Application No. 14/00800OUTM) was £15,506. (Note: made up of external legal fees - £12,075 and internal officer time – £3,431).

I am unable to advise what the cost of the planning officer resource in dealing with these applications was, but those costs would have generally been covered by the fees received for the planning applications.

I would also advise members that the land at Broomleys Farm, agreed as a site allocation for the purposes of the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation at Local Plan Committee on 17 January, was not part of the either the Stephenson Green and Jelson`s proposals successfully defended by the Council.

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## **COUNCIL – 30 JANUARY 2024**

### **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

#### **QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR T EYNON TO COUNCILLOR R BLUNT**

The restoration of the Mother and Child Statue has been delivered as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and its relocation in the Belvoir Shopping Centre has been agreed in principle.

Can the Portfolio Holder please provide an update on the project, in particular the terms of the licence agreed between this Council and the owners of the Belvoir Shopping Centre (Gylo) and the timetable for the reinstatement of the Mother and Child Statue in the Belvoir Shopping Centre's public space?

#### **REPOSENSE FROM COUNCILLOR R BLUNT TO COUNCILLOR T EYNON**

A lease arrangement to relocate the Mother & Child Statue into the Belvoir Shopping Centre has been drafted by Council Officers, working with legal services. This draft lease is currently being finalised with the owners of the Shopping Centre.

Once the lease has been completed, officers will submit a planning application for the necessary consents to relocate the statue. Subject to the granting of planning consent, officers will then be able arrange for the statue plinth to be completed and the statue to be installed.

I'm unable to provide more specific detail on the timetable, but I will ask officers to keep you updated on progress as part of our UK Shared Prosperity Funded projects, through the shadow portfolio holder briefings.

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## **COUNCIL – 30 JANUARY 2024**

### **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

#### **QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR S SHEAHAN TO COUNCILLOR R BLUNT**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022, the Government published its Levelling Up Fund Round 2 prospectus. In an officer's email to a third party dated 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022, it was said that "it is unlikely that the Council will be submitting its own bid to round 2." Can the Leader please explain how the council arrived at that position and why, for instance did it not submit an improved version of the round 1 bid?

#### **REPOSENSE FROM COUNCILLOR R BLUNT TO COUNCILLOR S SHEAHAN**

I understand officers have already provided a detailed written response on this matter and have met with you to discuss.

National Government regularly announces funding opportunities for various activities. This Council has bid to those where it believes there is a strong chance of success. There is no council policy requiring that bids be made. To make bids takes significant resource, both officer time and external specialist consultancy support.

Having already made two unsuccessful bids for Coalville, firstly for the Future High Street Funding and then to Round 1 Levelling Up - which was in effect the "improved version" it was considered that our available resource needed to be spent delivering funded regeneration projects in line with our Council Delivery Plan.

The Council did begin discussing a new bid (not in Coalville) for round 2 with a third party in 2022, considering that this may be more attractive for government to fund than another bid centred on Coalville. After providing initial advice and support it was decided by the third party that they were not in a position to bid and would prefer to wait until Round 3 Levelling Up.

Given this, no Round 2 bid was submitted as it was considered any resubmitted bid for Coalville had a poor chance of success given the two failed attempts. Staffing resource was instead focused on deliverable projects.

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## **COUNCIL – 30 JANUARY 2024**

### **ITEM 10 - ELECTORAL BOUNDARY REVIEW - COUNCIL SIZE SUBMISSION**

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

As detailed in the report, members will be aware that during the discussions of the working party an increase in numbers to 39 was considered. The Labour group have since provided a summary for an increase to 39. For Council's information the summary is detailed below:

#### **“SUMMARY FOR AN INCREASE TO 39**

The following Council size options were considered:

##### **Remain at 38**

Consideration was given to remaining at the current size of 38. Currently NWLDC is already above the mean number of electors per councillor for nearby and similar councils (2132:2059). Based on the current forecast population for 2030 the ratio of number of electors to each councillor would be 2,358, almost 300 electors per councillor above the mean for comparable councils. This would place NWLDC in the upper, fourth quartile of electors per councillor.

The ongoing trends, highlighted above, of an increasingly ageing population and a rise in homelessness across the district (30% increase in over 65s in last 10 years), are likely to lead to a significant increase in casework and a poorer service to electors if the number of councillors remains at 38.

The Council's governance model includes flexibility in the size of Cabinet, with a maximum of ten including the Leader. The current Cabinet size is seven including the Leader. With a council size of 38 and the current balance of power comprising 19 administration councillors, 17 Labour and 2 Independent, the administration needs to appoint a minimum of five members to the Scrutiny Committees and a further five to the Audit and Governance Committee, leaving a maximum of nine councillors available for Cabinet positions. It is therefore not currently possible to expand the Cabinet to the constitutional maximum of ten, and expanding to nine would require five councillors to serve on both Scrutiny Committees, which is not conducive to thorough scrutiny. Future administrations should have the flexibility to appoint a larger Cabinet should they feel this to be necessary. Even with the current Cabinet size of seven, at least three members must sit on both Scrutiny Committees.

As mentioned above, the number of external partnerships and joint arrangements requiring Cabinet members to sit on their governing bodies has and is likely to continue to increase. This is one aspect that could warrant a future increase in Cabinet size, thus better distributing these tasks. Another is the increasing need for attention to climate change, the environment and biodiversity matters.

As has been found following the last Local Government elections in May 2023, an even number of councillors can lead to a less stable administration. This Council is currently evenly balanced (19 administration councillors and 19 non-administration councillors), with many important Council decisions resting upon the casting vote of the Chair. This situation means that stability is often dependent upon the presence or absence of just one councillor and places undue pressure on councillors who are unwell to attend council meetings.

##### **Increase the current number of 39:**

Based on current forecast population for 2030 the ratio of number of electors to each councillor would be 2,297. This appears to be in line with other authorities that have undergone recent reviews. It would bring the Council down into the third quartile of similar and nearby councils; We would still be below the mean number of councillors of 40 but be in a more reasonable position.

An odd number of councillors is also more likely to result in a stable power balance (e.g. 20:19 would be the least stable scenario)

In terms of workloads for members, the current model of governance has been well established for a number of years. It has proven to work well, whilst being reviewed to ensure that it remains effective. Members would continue to serve on the same number of committees that they currently do. The additional member would provide extra resilience for the Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Committees, which require there to be no cross over in membership and which Cabinet members cannot sit on, and for the broader functions of committees, sub-committees, working parties and task and finish groups. It would also allow expansion of the cabinet to its maximum constitutional size, should this be deemed necessary in the future, or allow expansion of the Cabinet to eight places whilst retaining the current distribution of places on Scrutiny.

Following a recent survey carried out with members it was acknowledged, that on a whole, members felt that their workload was proportionate and manageable at the current time, however, with the forecast growth in population and the current financial climate, which could lead to an increase in casework around issues such as homelessness and arrears, an additional member would again provide additional resilience to effectively represent the electorate.

An increase in the number to 39 would see only a small additional cost in relation to allowances and support to members.

### **Reduction in numbers**

Consideration was given to reducing the number of Councillors and although it could result in potential financial savings for the authority, it was felt that this could not be justified with the ongoing population growth, which is set to continue and therefore increasing the casework of the Councillors. As stated above, the current model of governance has been in place for a number of years and is well established. Reducing the number of Councillors could potentially mean that the governance and committee structures would need to be reviewed and amended and the Council does not see any justification for that.

### **Increase to 40 or above.**

We also considered an increase in council size above 39 but it was felt that this would impose an unjustifiable level of additional costs on taxpayers. 40 councillors would again bring the Council to the less preferable position for stability of an even number.

### **Recommendation:**

Taking into account all relevant data and analysis, North West Leicestershire District Council proposes that its number of councillors increases by one to 39 to effectively operate and represent the electorate.”

## **COUNCIL – 30 JANUARY 2024**

### **ITEM 11 – TREASURY MANGEMENT HALF-YEARLY REPORT 2023/24**

#### **DRAFT MINUTE EXTRACT – AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE, WEDNESDAY 24 JANUARY 2024**

DRAFT MINUTE EXTRACT of a meeting of the AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE held in the Abbey Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on WEDNESDAY, 24 JANUARY 2024

Present: Councillor D Everitt (Chair)

Councillors P Moulton, D Cooper, G Rogers, J G Simmons, R Sutton and A Barker

Officers: Ms K Beavis, Mrs A Crouch, Miss E Warhurst, Mr T Devonshire and Mr P Stone

#### **28. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY REPORT 2023/24 - QUARTER 2**

The Head of Finance presented the report.

A Member commended the report and the work that Officers were doing, and asked whether there would be challenges in the next few years regarding future borrowing to fund capital spending. The Head of Finance drew the Committees attention to the Treasury Management Strategy which stated that there would be no borrowing to finance the General Fund revenue expenditure, which was funded by Council Tax. General Fund capital expenditure would be financed by grants and Business Rates reserve. As for the HRA account, there was planned to be a relatively small amount of borrowing for capital expenditure.

A Member asked for further details on some of the specifics of the organisation's approach to investments and loans in the context of current and projected inflationary trends. In response, Officers advised that the organisation receives advice from external treasury advisors and considers all available options. Furthermore, particularly stringent due diligence is applied when lending and borrowing from other Local Authorities, in the current climate of Local Authorities across the country having widely reported financial difficulties.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments.

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## **Council Procedure Rules – Motions and Amendments**

### **What members can do**

- When seconding a motion, a member may reserve their speech until later in the debate (rule 15.3).
- Members may only speak once on a motion or amendment whilst it is being debated (rule 15.5, 15.5.1).
- Members may also move a further amendment if the motion has been amended since they last spoke (rule 15.5.2).
- Members can exercise a right of reply, raise a point of order or make a personal explanation during debate (rule 15.5.4, 15.5.5 and 15.5.6).
- Members can speak on the main issues if their first speech was on an amendment (rule 15.5.3).
- The mover of a motion has a right of reply at the close of debate on the motion, before it is put to the vote (rule 15.15).
- The mover of a motion has a right of reply at the close of debate on any amendment (rule 15.16).

### **What members can't do**

- Members cannot make a speech until a motion has been seconded (rule 15.1).
- Members cannot speak again whilst a motion is being debated, except to exercise a right of reply, raise a point of order or make a personal explanation (rule 15.5).
- Members cannot speak for more than 5 minutes without the consent of the Chairman (rule 15.4).
- The mover of a motion may not speak on an amendment, other than to exercise his right of reply (rule 15.16).
- The mover of an amendment has no right of reply at the close of debate (rule 15.17).

### Motions and Amendments – Flowchart

