

MINUTES of a meeting of the CABINET held in the Abbey Room, Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN on WEDNESDAY, 31 JANUARY 2024

Present: Councillor R Blunt (Chair)

Councillors M B Wyatt, T Gillard, K Merrie MBE, N J Rushton, A C Saffell and A C Woodman

In Attendance: Councillors D Everitt, J Legrys, P Moulton and S Sheahan

Officers: Mrs A Thomas, Mr J Arnold, Mr A Barton, Miss E Warhurst, Mr P Stone and Mr T Devonshire

77. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received.

78. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no interests declared.

79. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Mr Donovan asked the following question:

Is the Council aware of the wide-ranging services provided by Age UK Leicester Shire & Rutland across NW Leicestershire and funded from external sources, including the charity's reserves?

- A 4 day-a-week day centre based in Coalville serving 56 people at an annual cost of £108,000. Serving the needs of people living with dementia, mobility, and personal care needs, mental health and learning disabilities.
- A neighbourhood mental health cafe in Measham for people aged over 18 (2 days per week). Annual cost of £30,000.
- A Home Care Service supporting 54 older people - cleaning, meal preparation and companionship.
- A Dementia Support Service. Between October-December 2023 195 people supported. Plus, a memory clinic once a month. 31 members with 26 people on the waiting list.
- An information/advice Service. Between January 2022 and December 2023, the charity supported 1,152 people - benefit claims, benefit checks and general enquiries.

Benefits claimed for older people living across NW Leicestershire amounted to £249,107 during that period – money that would be spent in the local area.

The Corporate Portfolio Holder provided the following response:

Yes, the Council and Cabinet is aware of the work that Age UK conducts in the district. I'm also aware that the Chief Executive recently met with Mr Donovan to listen to his concerns in response to the budget proposals. The Council has also received written

Chairman's initials

representations from both Mr Donovan and Mr Young, Assistant Director, Age UK, Leicester Shire & Rutland.

The Council is aware of the reserves position of Age UK at both the local and national level.

At today's meeting, Cabinet will be considering the budget proposals to recommend to Council next month. From recent discussions and correspondence referred to above, the Council is aware that the funding provided supports around 40 clients in the district at a cost of £22,000 per year.

The Council is aware of the range of services provided by Age UK Leicester Shire & Rutland to support older people, their carers and families, many of which are highlighted in the question from Mr Donovan. We understand that they are committed to providing much-needed support to older people to help them remain independent in their own homes.

It would be wrong of me to pre-empt that discussion and decision of Cabinet today, but we are fully aware of the work and also the comments made by Age UK to our budget consultation which will be taken into account in coming to our decision today.

As a supplementary question, Mr Donovan said that he had made a promise over thirty years ago, to what was then Age Concern, that services within the district would be maintained and developed, as an indication of the longstanding commitment which Age UK Leicester Shire & Rutland had to the district. Were Members aware that the grant provided by the Council served to leverage other investment from Age UK Leicester Shire & Rutland into the district?

In response, the Corporate Portfolio Holder emphasised that he was aware of all the good work which Age UK Leicester Shire & Rutland did, but advised that the Council was in a position where tough decisions had to be made. However, he noted that this was still only a proposal at this stage, and he suggested that Mr Donovan could write to him detailing the grants which Age UK Leicester Shire & Rutland received from other District Councils in Leicestershire, as well as Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council. He would assess that information to ascertain the impact which the proposed cut would have, and in light of this information the final proposal might be amended before it was recommended to full Council on 22 February. Nevertheless, as of the moment, it would remain the recommendation of the Cabinet to withdraw the grant.

80. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 9 January 2024 were considered.

It was moved by Councillor T Gillard, seconded by Councillor T Saffell and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2024 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings.

81. ROBUSTNESS OF BUDGET ESTIMATES AND ADEQUACY OF RESERVES

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report.

It was moved by Councillor N Rushton, seconded by Councillor K Merrie, and

RESOLVED THAT:

Chairman's initials

The S151 Officer's advice, set out in section 7 of the appendix, be noted, as part of proposing to Council the General Fund Budget Report 2024/25, Housing Revenue Account Budget 2024/25 Report, and the Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25.

Reason for Decision: to ensure the Council meets its statutory requirements when considering its budget.

82. CAPITAL STRATEGY, TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2024/25

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report.

It was moved by Councillor N Rushton, seconded by Councillor T Gillard, and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The attached Council Report (Appendix A) be endorsed and recommended to Council for approval at its meeting on 22 February 2024.
2. Authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Corporate Portfolio Holder to make amendments to the Council report prior to consideration at Council on 22 February 2024.

Reason for Decision: to meet the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Government.

83. GENERAL FUND BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2024/25

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report.

It was moved by Councillor N Rushton, seconded by Councillor T Saffell, and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The attached Council Report (Appendix A) be endorsed and recommended to Council for approval at its meeting on 22 February 2024 subject to the following amendments:
 - That the proposal to remove the grant of £1460 funding to Ashby Museum be withdrawn. The full amount is to be paid in 2024, but the Council is minded to reduce the grant in equal instalments over three years beginning the financial year 2025/26.
 - That the proposal to remove the freephone number, to make a saving of £2500, be withdrawn.
2. The fees and charges as set out in Appendix 3 of the Council report be approved.
3. Authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Corporate Portfolio Holder to make amendments to the Council report prior to consideration at Council on 22 February 2024.

Reason for Decision: to allow the Council to approve the 2024/25 budget.

84. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET AND RENTS 2024/25

Chairman's initials

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report.

It was moved by Councillor N Rushton, seconded by Councillor A Woodman, and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The attached Council Report (Appendix A) be endorsed and recommended to Council for approval at its meeting on 22 February 2024.
2. The fees and charges as set out in Appendix 3 of the Council report be approved.
3. Authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Corporate Portfolio Holder to make amendments to the Council report prior to consideration at Council on 22 February 2024.

Reason for Decision: to allow the Council to approve the 2024/25 budget.

85. FORMER TENANT RENT ARREARS, CURRENT TENANT RENT ARREARS, COUNCIL TAX, NON-DOMESTIC RATES AND SUNDRY DEBTS

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report.

A Member asked what the triggers were for the Council to recover National Non-Domestic Rates and over what time frame. The Corporate Portfolio Holder advised that he would consult with the Section 151 Officer and the Revenue and Benefits Team, and formally write to the Cabinet with the details.

It was moved by Councillor N Rushton, seconded by Councillor K Merrie, and

RESOLVED THAT:

The National Non-Domestic Rates write offs that are over £10,000 be approved.

Reason for Decision: to comply with proper accounting practices.

86. MINUTES OF THE COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSES WORKING PARTY

The Business and Regeneration Portfolio Holder presented the report.

It was moved by Councillor T Gillard, seconded by Councillor M Wyatt, and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The minutes of the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party be noted.
2. The recommendations made by the Working Party at its meeting on 20 December 2023 be approved.

Reason for Decision: So that the decisions of the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party can be considered.

87. HOUSING IMPROVEMENT BOARD AND SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH MOULD AND DAMP RECOMMENDATIONS

The Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio Holder presented the report.

A Member asked about planned changes to the IT system. The Portfolio Holder referred to the Strategic Director of Communities, who advised that tweaks had been identified as being required for the existing system to better manage the process and to incorporate best practice from other providers.

Chairman's initials

A Member asked whether the current Housing software system had been created by the organisation. The Strategic Director of Communities advised that it was one of three industry standard systems, tweaked to the Council's specifications.

The Chair noted that resolving issues in the Housing Service was something which was both a key Alliance priority and something that there was strong cross-party consensus over.

It was moved by Councillor A Woodman, seconded by Councillor K Merrie, and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Scrutiny Task and Finish Group be thanked for its work examining the issue of Mould and Damp during the last quarter.
2. The response to that report as set out in paragraph 2.2 of this report be agreed.
3. The actions by the Portfolio Holder in conjunction with the Strategic Director of Communities and the Head of Housing in addressing the improvement of the Housing Service, as set out in paragraph 3.3. onwards in this report, be noted and endorsed.

Reason for Decision: to comply with the constitution regarding a Task and Finish Report, and to update Cabinet on wider work to improve the Housing Service.

88. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor T Gillard, and

RESOLVED THAT:

In pursuance of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the business to be transacted involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Reason for decision: To enable the consideration of exempt information.

89. APPOINTMENT OF HOUSING CONTRACTORS

The Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio Holder presented the report.

Members discussed the contents of the report.

It was moved by Councillor A Woodman, seconded by Councillor N Rushton, and

RESOLVED THAT:

The recommendations within the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: to comply with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 5.34 pm

Chairman's initials