

Cabinet

MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 31 JANUARY 2023 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Richard Clewer (Chairman), Cllr Laura Mayes (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Phil Alford, Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Nick Botterill, Cllr Jane Davies, Cllr Nick Holder and Cllr Caroline Thomas

Also Present:

Cllr David Bowler, Cllr Clare Cape, Cllr Gavin Grant, Cllr Bob Jones MBE, Cllr Dominic Muns, Cllr Nic Puntis, Cllr Ian Thorn, Cllr David Vigar, Cllr Graham Wright and Cllr Jon Hubbard

1 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Ashley O'Neill.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2022 was presented for consideration. Councillor Ian Thorn made a comment regarding the level of detail of public comments included within the minutes.

It was then,

Resolved:

To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2022.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Leader's Announcements

When opening the meeting the Leader announced that Councillor Dr Mark McClelland had stood down from the Cabinet following his appointment as Special Adviser to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury John Glen MP. He thanked Councillor McClelland for his work as Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste, Streetscene, and Flooding, and wished him well in his new role.

Councillor Caroline Thomas had been appointed as Cabinet Member for Transport, Streetscene, and Flooding.

Councillor Nick Holder had been appointed as Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change.

A detailed announcement was then made updating on council and other actions on addressing Cost of Living challenges, including bus fare reductions, cost of living payments, winter fuel payments, and support with energy bills. A full announcement is attached to these minutes.

Councillor Ian Thorn congratulated the council on the work taking place, and asked what more could be done to encourage housing associations to take proactive measures to provide assistance. The Leader noted Housing Associations were independent bodies, but reiterated support the council was able to offer, and that he was happy to raise concerns with the associations, and that MPs could also be contacted. Councillor Phil Alford provided details of complaints being raised with associations or through the Ombudsman.

Lastly, the Leader confirmed that following feedback from disability groups in Wiltshire, the council would soon be implementing a grace period to allow Blue Badge holders an extra hour on any parking ticket purchased in council-run car parks. Holders would need to purchase a ticket and display their Blue Badge as usual, and the additional time period would be implemented from when the ticket time has expired, to recognise the extra time need to leave and return to their vehicles.

5 Public Participation and Questions from Members

Questions were submitted from the following Members of the Public:

Celia Beckett on behalf of the Hilperton Area Action Group regarding the Local Plan review. Kevin Perrett on behalf of Staverton Parish Council regarding the Draft Local Plan and potential development of sites 4 and 5. Dr Jimmy Walker submitted a series of questions relating to cycling.

Written responses were provided along with the questions as detailed in Agenda Supplement 1.

Celia Beckett asked a supplementary question on the spread of proposed housing sites around Trowbridge. Councillor Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Strategic Planning, stated viability and sustainability of sites would be assessed as part of the Local Plan review process, with the draft plan due to be published later in 2023.

Keven Perrett asked a supplementary question relating to deliverability of sites and appropriate infrastructure being in place ahead of development on proposed sites. Councillor Botterill stated sites would need to be deliverable, and precise solutions would need to take account of local issues, though it was not possible to identify these at this stage.

Many questions were also received from Councillor David Vigar on several aspects of support being provided for Ukrainian refugees. The questions and written responses were also set out in Agenda Supplement 1.

Councillor Vigar asked a series of supplementary questions on the government definition of the purpose of funding provided to give support for Ukrainian families, assistance on finding rented accommodation, rental top up support and other measures.

The Leader responded disagreeing that rental top up support was a sustainable and appropriate measure, stating that families would require longer term solutions when funding may no longer be available, and that the council was assessing the latest revisions to government guidance on funding criteria.

6 Wiltshire Council's Budget 2023/24 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24-2025/26

Councillor Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning, introduced the report which proposed the 2023/2024 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2023/2024 to 2025/2026. The report also set out the Council's Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2029/30, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget 2023/24 and the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Councillor Botterill noted that the council and country was facing unprecedented times, with inflation at levels not seen for four decades, escalating costs to contracts of up to 20%, high energy prices, and continuing impacts from Covid-19. The council had faced a notional overspend of approximately £45m, but through a sound financial base and necessary decisions in preceding years including transformations and organisation changes, was able to present a balanced budget proposal encompassing the next three years.

He stated the proposal did not rely drawing upon reserves, which would be increased overall over the three years, with others released to support Business Plan priorities. He stated there had been some extra government funds relating to social care, but other direct grants had been removed, and was not relying on deferring capital expenditure. He provided details of proposed council tax rises over the next three years, and the careful analysis undertaken before recommending them, and the fees and charges increases where it was deemed necessary and where good value for money was provided.

Colin Gale had submitted questions on behalf Rushall Parish Council and the Pewsey Community Area Partnership, regarding the recovery of costs for elections from town and parish councils, and the use of the Rural Mobility Fund, respectively. Written responses were provided with the questions as detailed in Agenda Supplement 1.

Colin Gale asked a supplementary question regarding communication sent to parish councils. He criticised the effect on small parishes, and believed there could have been consultation through the Area Boards.

The Leader responded that as a budgetary matter the issue would be determined by Full Council and Area Boards were not an appropriate method of consultation. A response would be provided after the meeting regarding communication with parishes.

Colin Gale also asked a supplementary question regarding the Rural Mobility Fund, asking how savings would be achieved through maximising the geographic area. Councillor Caroline Thomas, Cabinet Member for Transport, Sreetscene, and Flooding, provided a response that maximising the area for demand responsive transport could reduce the schedule for bus services particularly affected by inflation. She stated it was about a more efficient use of limited resources, responding to requests rather than laying on services which may be empty.

Councillor Graham Wright, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, addressed the Cabinet regarding questions raised at the meeting of his Committee on 24 January 2023, with the report of the meeting included in Agenda Supplement 1.

Councillor Gavin Grant, Vice-Chairman of the Financial Planning Task Group, noted the thorough examination of the budget and council finances during the year by the Task Group, and planned to review the arrangements for budget scrutiny to ensure it was as effective as possible. The Leader noted the troubles faced by councils without effective financial scrutiny, and would await any outcome from a review by Overview and Scrutiny of its arrangements. He commented on the difficulty scheduling all the necessary meetings within the available timescales.

Councillor Botterill also provided details of a small update to Appendix 1 Annex 7 of the budget papers regarding £0.150m saving for cessation of support to VisitWiltshire. To ensure a smooth transition the saving would be delivered at the end of the contract in March 2024, so the saving would be delivered in the financial year 2024/25, not 2023/24. To manage the financial impact an underspend within Place services would be set aside in 2023/24 to fund the later timing of the delivery.

Councillor Jon Hubbard asked for details on how much was expected to be raised from parish councils paying for the cost of their own elections, raising concerns that it might act as a disincentive for people to stand and have contested elections in some areas, as the parish would then be liable for the cost of the subsequent election, and was not supportive of the proposal. The Leader responded that parishes bearing the cost of their elections was not uncommon and there had been a lot of discussion around setting the costs at a

reasonable level, and that income was expected to be approximately £0.400k for 2025.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was then,

Resolved:

That Cabinet approves:

- a) That the current Infrastructure List, is updated and the existing reference to upgrades to Trowbridge Sports Centre is deleted and a new entry is included to read New Trowbridge Leisure Facility Project.

That Cabinet recommends to Council:

- b) That a net general fund budget of 2023/24 of £465.372m is approved;
- c) That the Council Tax requirement for the council be set at £332.187m for 2023/24 with a Band D charge of £1,719.90, an increase of £1.57 per week;
- d) That the Wiltshire Council element of the Council Tax be increased in 2023/24 by the following:
 - i. A 2.99% general increase;
 - ii. Plus a levy of 2% to be spent solely on Adult Social Care;
- e) That the Extended Leadership Team be required to meet the revenue budget targets for each service area as set out in Appendix 1 to this report, for the delivery of council services in 2023/24;
- f) That the Extended Leadership Team be required to deliver the revenue savings plans for each service area as set out in Appendix 1 to this report, over the three-year MTFs period 2023/24 to 2025/26;
- g) That the changes in the fees and charges as set out in the report are approved;
- h) That the Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2029/30 is approved;
- i) That the Capital Strategy set out in Appendix 2 is approved;
- j) That the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2023/24 is set at £26.401m;
- k) That a 7% increase is set for social dwelling rents, except for rents currently over the formula rent which will be capped at formula rent as per national guidance;

l) That all service charges related to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to cover costs and garage rents are increased by 5%;

m) That the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the forecast balanced budget over the MTFS period 2023/24 to 2025/26 is endorsed.

Reason for Decision:

To enable the Cabinet to recommend to Council a balanced revenue budget for the financial year 2023/24 and to set the level of Council Tax.

To enable effective, transparent decision making and ensure sound financial management as part of the council's overall control environment.

The Cabinet also sets out the final assumptions being used in the budget for growth, inflation, demand for services, the estimated level of income from sales, fees and charges and the level of income estimated from core funding e.g. Council Tax, Business Rates and government grants as well as the level of reserves held and assessed by the council's Section 151 Officer, as required, to provide future financial resilience.

This provides the council with a MTFS to deliver on the Business Plan priorities and drives long term financial sustainability.

7 Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2023/24

Councillor Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning, presented the report which proposed the Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24. The report included information about:

- Prudential and Treasury Indicators for the next three years
- Debt management decisions required for 2023/2024 that do not feature within the Prudential or Treasury Indicators (paragraphs 57 to 60)
- Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2023/2024; and
- Annual Investment Strategy for 2023/2024

Councillor Graham Wright, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee confirmed that the Committee considered the report at its meeting on 24 January 2023, raising issues such as the impact of higher interest rates, capital expenditures and cashflow management. The Financial Planning Task Group had looked at the report in greater depth.

Councillor Gavin Grant, Vice-Chairman of the Financial Planning Task Group commented on the report. He thanked the Cabinet Member and S151 Officer for providing answers to the Task Group on a number of matters. He commented on those elements of the capital programme funded by government grant and

those subject to loans taken by the council, and any implications this had on the council's treasury management.

Councillor Ian Thorn sought additional details on the report. In response to queries it was confirmed advice was received from external advisors though any decisions on treasury management were taken by the council. He asked about management through money market funds, where it was stated that due to interest rate rises banks were more competitive than before. He also sought clarity on lender option borrow option loans.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was then,

Resolved:

To recommend that the Council:

- a) Adopt the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy (paragraph 26 – 28)**
- b) Adopt the Prudential and Treasury Indicators (paragraphs 17 – 25, 40 – 46 and Appendix A)**
- c) Adopt the Annual Investment Strategy (paragraph 63 onwards).**
- d) Delegate to the Corporate Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive (S151 Officer) the authority to vary the amount of borrowing and other long-term liabilities within the Treasury Indicators for the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary**
- e) Authorise the Corporate Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive (S151 Officer) to agree the restructuring of existing long-term loans where savings are achievable or to enhance the long-term portfolio**
- f) Agree that short term cash surpluses and deficits continue to be managed through temporary loans, deposits and money market funds**
- g) Agree that any surplus cash balances not required to cover borrowing are placed in the most appropriate specified or non-specified investments, particularly where this is more cost effective than short term deposits; and delegate to the Corporate Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive (S151 Officer) the authority to select such funds**
- h) Agree the revised Investment Policy (paragraph 70)**
- i) Agree the revised Creditworthiness Policy (paragraph 77)**

Reason for Decision:

To enable the Council to agree a Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24 and set Prudential Indicators that comply with statutory guidance and reflect best practice.

8 **Financial Year 2022/23 - Quarter Three Revenue Budget Monitoring**

Councillor Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning, presented the report setting out the revenue forecast position for 2022/23 as at the end of November 2022, updated for any known significant changes in December 2022, for the third quarter budget monitoring period.

He explained that the current forecast indicated an underlying overspend for the year of £15.697m with one off mitigations in place resulting in a net overspend for the year of £5.037m. It was proposed that this overspend be met from the £8.8m inflation reserves that were set aside to cover the anticipated cost of inflation during 2022/23. He drew attention to net demand within Children's Services, though the number of Children in Care was within the target range, and necessary use of some agency staff. He stated 93% of identified savings were forecast to be achieved, which was a very good rate.

Councillor Botterill concluded that despite very significant inflation, unforecast pay award costs, and contract price rises, the overall position remained under control and sound.

Councillor Graham Wright, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee reported that the Committee met on the 24 January 2023 to consider the report briefly, which had been considered in more detail by the Financial Planning Task Group.

Councillor Gavin Grant, Vice-Chairman of the Financial Planning Task Group, highlighted the rise in the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit as set out in the report, asking about the implications of the rise. The Leader noted the deficit in high needs funding was a national issue, and the government had delayed further decisions on the matter.

Councillor Ian Thorn asked about the potential for further reductions in the forecast overspend position, and sought details on the proposed earmarked reserved for investment in the county's road sign infrastructure. The Cabinet commented that a plan was being developed for how this would be delivered.

Councillor Jon Hubbard noted that the number of Children in Care in Wiltshire was low compared to comparator authorities, and whether if there was a rise to similar levels there was adequate funding in the latent demand reserves. It was stated that reserve was to deal with demand issues arising from the persisting effect of Covid lockdowns, but that the council was in a good position for further resource due to prevention work.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

That Cabinet Approve:

- a) the utilisation of the inflation reserve to fund the net overspend, currently forecast at £5.037m, in 2022/23;
- b) the transfer of £0.015m in 2022/23 and £0.045m in 2023/24 from the SEN commissioning reserve to fund the SEND Youth Voice Pioneer Programme; and
- c) The transfer of the £16.5m Budget Equalisation Reserve and the balance remaining in the Inflation Reserves, estimated at £3.8m at the end of the year, as follows:
 - i. £7m to the General Fund Reserve
 - ii. £10m to a new earmarked reserve for accommodation needs
 - iii. £2m to the Transformation Reserve to support the community led Community Development pilots
 - iv. £0.5m to a new earmarked reserve for investment in the county's road sign infrastructure, and
 - v. The remaining balance to the Business Plan Priority Reserve.

That Cabinet Note:

- a) the current revenue budget is forecast to overspend by £5.037m by the end of the financial year.
- b) the current forecast savings delivery performance for the year.

Reason for Decision:

To inform effective decision making and ensure sound financial management as part of the Councils overall control environment.

To inform Cabinet on the forecast revenue financial position of the Council for the financial year 2022/23 as at quarter 3 (31 December 2022), including delivery of approved savings for the year.

9 Financial Year 2022/23 - Quarter Three Capital Budget Monitoring

Councillor Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning presented the report setting out the Capital Programme for 2022/23 as at 31 December 2022 for the third quarter budget monitoring period.

He explained that the report included movements from September 2022 and sets out how the programme is forecast to be financed. The final projection for the year 2022/23 was £172.227m, but was expected to conclude nearer to £130m. Councillor Botterill detailed improvements in the council's financial reporting that was coming through, so more realistic expectations of capital expenditure was being forecast for future years.

The Leader stated there had been significant improvements in budget monitoring, nothing the constant flow of issues relating to capital programmes which were outside the council's control.

Councillor Graham Wright, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee reported that the Management Committee met on the 24 January 2023 to consider the report.

Councillor Gavin Grant, Vice-Chairman of the Financial Planning Task Group, noted the variance between current position and expectation for the end of the financial year, suggesting some cash implications if there was borrowing for things that would not then happen. Whilst acknowledging some slippage would occur, the Task Group noted a gap of that order was of some concern.

Councillor Ian Thorn stated it would be important to see how much closer the estimates were for the next year.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

That Cabinet note:

- a) the additional budgets added to the programme totalling £2.652m, £1.633m in 2022/23 and £1.019m in 2023/24 under Chief Finance Officer delegated powers;**
- b) the movement of £20.563m of budgets into future years under Chief Finance Officer delegated powers;**
- c) the removal of £13.926m from the capital programme, £0.50m from 2022/23 and £13.176m from future years under Chief Finance Officer delegated powers;**
- d) budget movements between schemes;**
- e) the revised 2022/23 Capital Programme as at quarter three of £172.227m; and**
- f) the capital spend as at 31 December of £87.998m.**

Reason for Decision:

To inform effective decision making and ensure sound financial management as part of the Councils overall control environment.

To inform Cabinet on the financial position of the Council on the 2022/23 capital programme as at quarter three (31 December 2022).

(A break was taken from 1210-1215)

10 **Q3 Performance and Risk**

Councillor Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council presented a report which provided an update on performance against the stated missions in the Council's Business Plan 2022-32 for quarter three, along with a summary of strategic risk.

The Leader explained that the report provided the current corporate performance framework, with measures used to monitor progress against the 10 missions detailed in the Council's current Business Plan. The Strategic Risk Summary captured and monitored significant risks facing the Council in relation to in-service risks facing individual areas and in managing its business across the authority. He continued to note that the targets were flexible and would evolve over time, and so additional measures would continue to be added where these added value.

Councillor Graham Wright, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, reported that the Management Committee considered the report at their meeting on 24 January 2023 and that the Select Committees would continue to review performance measures relevant to their service areas.

Councillor Ian Thorn stated the report was improving from an already positive position and would be very useful in monitoring deliverance of the Business Plan. He sought details on how measures monitoring physical activity were compiled, and it was stated this was from survey data from Sports England. The difficulty in developing useful performance metrics for some issues was discussed. He also asked whether it Area Board Chairs or Council could receive the report in future. The Leader stated it was intended he would update Area Board Chairs and possibly Council.

Councillor Gavin Grant asked about specific metrics looking at the impacts of Covid-19, with it being stated that the impact could be seen in some measures such as education gap in phonics, but its impacts were wide ranging and not covered by a particular metric.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

- 1) Note the updates and outturns against the measures and activities ascribed against the Council's priorities and agree the initial targets.**
- 2) Observe the Strategic Risk Summary.**

Reasons for decision:

To provide Cabinet with a quarterly update on the current corporate performance framework, which is compiled of the measures used to monitor progress against the 10 missions laid out in Wiltshire Council's Business Plan 2022-32.

New measures and details of those being developed are also included, both within the scorecard and in the report commentary.

The Strategic Risk Summary captures and monitors significant risks facing the Council, in relation to in-service risks facing individual areas and in managing its business across the authority.

This is supported by, and in compliance with, the Council's Corporate Performance and Risk Policy.

11 **School Admissions Policies 2024-2025**

Councillor Laura Mayes, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills presented a report which detailed the four elements of the School Admission Policy 2024/2025, as part of the statutory process for the determination of admission arrangements to maintained schools and academies within the council area.

She noted the number of admissions per year and very low number of issues as an example of a high performing service.

Councillor Ian Thorn raised a query relating to school operating criteria.

It was then,

Resolved:

To approve the following:

- 1) the proposed scheme for the co-ordination of admission to secondary schools for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix A.**
- 2) the proposed scheme for the co-ordination of admissions to primary schools for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix B.**
- 3) the proposed admission arrangements for Voluntary Controlled & Community Secondary Schools for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix C.**
- 4) the proposed admission arrangements for Voluntary Controlled & Community Primary Schools for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix D.**

Reason for Decision:

It is a legal requirement to have these policies in place.

The schemes and arrangements as presented have been sent out to all schools for consultation and no alternative suggestions have been received to date.

12 **Extension of the Wiltshire Special Educational Needs and Inclusion (SEND&I) Strategy for a Period of 12 Months**

Councillor Jane Davies, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND, and Inclusion, presented a report highlighting the challenges associated with the renewal of the Wiltshire SEND&I Strategy within the previously agreed timeframe from 2020 to 2023.

The report sought an extension for the current Strategy of one year, with a renewed strategy to be produced by the summer of 2024. This was due to delays in implementing some activities due to Covid-19, and to await further details on potential changes coming from government.

There being no further comments, it was then,

Resolved:

- 1) That an extension of a year is agreed for the current Wiltshire SEND&I strategy, due to the delay from COVID in adopting the current strategy document, the associated delay in undertaking some elements of identified activity and the developments associated with the Government Green Paper (published for consultation Summer 2022).**
- 2) Co-production activity for the next Wiltshire SEND&I strategy to commence in Autumn 2023 with a finalised strategy available in Summer 2024 and shared with Health and Wellbeing Board for approval as soon after completion as possible.**

Reasons for Decision:

The process of writing a SEND&I strategy has a requirement for all elements to be co-produced with key stakeholders including partners in health and social care and local community representatives. A key tenet of a SEND strategy is also co-production from the very earliest stage with families and children and young people.

The COVID pandemic resulted in a delay to the SEND&I Strategy being presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board for approval. It was shared and discussed with this group on 24th September 2020. The pandemic did not result in a delay in all priority areas of the strategy but there are activities which have had to be amended to take account of challenges relevant to the pandemic.

A Green Paper 'Right Support, Right Place, Right Time' was published for consultation in the summer of 2022 which detailed proposed change to local area arrangements for SEND, including the formation of a local area board.

Consultation on this paper has now closed and we await further detail on the shape of these proposals in the future. This means that there are some key areas about which at the current time we remain unclear.

13 **Children's Residential Placements Block Contract**

Councillor Laura Mayes, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, presented a report outlining proposals to commission 12 residential children's home places in Wiltshire, to ensure children are able to remain closer to their home and community where appropriate.

The Deputy Leader explained that commissioning the additional places would secure long term accommodation for children and young people in Wiltshire through a 10-year contract with an external provider. She provided figures for the number of children and young people in residential placements, and whilst that number was relatively stable the costs were always increasing. There had been a successful bid to the Department for Education to assist with purchasing residential homes to lease to a provider.

Councillor Jon Hubbard, Chairman of Children's Select Committee, thanked officers for briefings on the subject. He noted the proposals would save money, but more importantly would improve quality of life for young people.

Councillor Ian Thorn raised a query relating to the reasons for out of county placements, such as safeguarding concerns. It was stated that in some cases needs were so specialist that out of county placements were the only option with current provision.

It was then,

Resolved:

That Cabinet agrees:

- 1) To award a 10-year block contract to an external residential care provider, to provide 12 places in Wiltshire for Wiltshire children and young people. This will include an annual review of the contract.**
- 2) That officers continue to undertake to prepare and complete the tender programme, award, and implement a new block contract for children's residential care by 30 April 2023.**
- 3) To delegate authority to approve and award a new contract and future extensions and variations and all associated documents to the Corporate Director of People in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills.**

Reasons for Decision:

1. *To ensure children are able to live closer to their home, family, community, and social networks where it is safe and appropriate to do so.*
2. *To ensure cost effective placements for children and young people within buildings owned by Wiltshire Council by leasing them to a provider at a peppercorn rent through a new block contract for 12 residential children's home beds.*

14 **Minor Amendments to the Councils Allocation Policy**

Councillor Phil Alford, Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets, and Asset Transfer, presented a report detailing minor amendments to the allocation policy ahead of a full policy review taking place later in 2023.

Amendments included to place former children in care within Priority Band 1 up to the age of 25, for any application who was a current social housing tenants under-occupying by one or more bedrooms to be awarded Band 1 status, to enable households owed the homeless relief duties to be placed in the exclusion group, and to adjust wording regarding suspension from the housing register.

The Cabinet noted the need to be careful when making any adjustments to allocation policy, and commended the proposals as reasonable, highlighting the importance of commitment to care leavers. It was confirmed the allocations policy was receiving a full review in 2023.

Councillor Bob Jones MBE made a comment in support of the amendments.

Councillor Ian Thorn welcomed the report and raised queries on limited availability of larger properties.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was then,

Resolved:

To make the following amendments to the allocation policy:

1) Care Experienced Young People

For all Wiltshire care experienced young people , who are either relevant children or former relevant children to whom the Council owes duties under the Children Act 1989 (as amended), up to the age of 25:

- **to be awarded Priority Band 1 status when it is confirmed that they are ready to move on into independent accommodation. In each case, a joint assessment of the care experienced young persons ability to live independently under their Pathway Plan will have been performed by Children's Services and Housing, with an independent living**

assessment agreed with the care experienced young person for prospective landlords. Where the care experienced young person has a tenancy with the council or a private registered provider, and their housing circumstances mean that they have a housing need under this policy, a further housing application will be treated in the same way as the application of another transfer applicant; and

- **to be provided with an automatic local connection to Wiltshire as the Council are their corporate parents and the care experienced young person should always have a connection to Wiltshire. This would be an extension of the exclusion group contained within the existing allocation policy.**

2) Under Occupation

For any applicant who is a current social housing tenant within the Wiltshire Council area who is under- occupying by one or more bedrooms to be awarded Band 1 status to make homes more affordable, to help free up larger homes and make best use of our social housing stock.

3) Homeless Relief Duty

To enable households owed the homeless relief duties to be placed in the exclusion group.

4) Removal of suspension following a verbal offer of accommodation

To substitute the wording within paragraphs 4.12 of the policy to confirm that suspension from the housing register will only occur when a formal offer of accommodation has been made via email or letter and not a verbal offer.

Reason for Decision:

- 1) To improve our corporate parent offer to care experienced young people who are ready to live independently;*
- 2) assist households with reducing households bills by allowing them to move to smaller properties which will better meet their housing need;*
- 3) ensure that households who are owed the relief duty under the homeless act to be considered in the exclusion group; and*
- 4) ensure that the Council doesn't suspend applicants from the register who are only made verbal offers of accommodation to reduce the number of complaints and reviews*

Councillor Phil Alford, Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets, and Asset Transfer, presented a report which provided an annual update on the activities of Wiltshire Council's Housing Board between October 2021 and November 2022.

The report highlighted the key achievements of the Housing Board over the previous 12 months which included detail about economic response, planned investments in homes, services performance, approach and challenges and opportunities. The report also provided detail about Housing Revenue Account budgetary position.

Councillor Bob Jones MBE, Vice-Chairman of Environment Select Committee, stated the report had been considered at its meeting on 4 January 2023. The Committee had asked questions on performance indicators in need of improvement, sought details including on the number tenancies and how tenants were communicated with, and sought assurance on actions taken to improve performance and assistance for tenants to receive eligible benefit support.

It was then,

Resolved:

That the Housing Board Annual report be noted.

Reasons for Decision:

Wiltshire Council's Housing Board's Terms of Reference require an Annual report to be presented to Cabinet.

16 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 1.05 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Kieran Elliott of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718221504, e-mail stuart.figini@wiltshire.gov.uk

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