

**DECISIONS SHOULD NOT BE IMPLEMENTED BEFORE
MONDAY 20 MAY 2024**

CABINET

Tuesday, 7 May 2024

PRESENT – Councillors Harker (Chair), McCollom, McEwan, Porter, Dr. Riley, Roche and Wallis

INVITEES – Councillors Holroyd

APOLOGIES – Councillors Curry, Dulston and K Nicholson

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Bartch and Robinson

C128 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

**C129 TO HEAR RELEVANT REPRESENTATION (FROM MEMBERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC) ON
ITEMS ON THIS CABINET AGENDA.**

In respect of Minute C133 below, a representation was made by a Member in attendance at the meeting.

C130 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THIS MEETING OF CABINET HELD ON 9 APRIL 2024.

Submitted - The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Cabinet held on 9 April 2024.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be confirmed as a correct record.

REASON – They represent an accurate record of the meeting.

C131 MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET

There were no matters referred back for re-consideration to this meeting.

C132 ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no issues arising from Scrutiny considered at this meeting.

C133 AUDITOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

The Cabinet Member with the Resources Portfolio introduced the report of the Group Director of Operations (previously circulated) presenting the Auditor's Annual Report for 2021/22 (both also previously circulated).

The Auditors Annual Report provided a high level summary of the results from the 2021/22

audit work undertaken by Ernst and Young LLP (EY), the Council's external auditors; confirmed that the Council's accounts gave a true and fair view for the year ending 31 March 2022; and that the Council had put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in its use of resources.

In presenting the Annual Report, a representative from Ernst and Young LLP (EY), stated that there had been a sector wide delay in signing off accounts; presented the main findings from the Annual Report; stated there were no matters to raise; and that the certificate had been signed on 12 April 2024.

Reference was made to the delay in signing off the accounts; the additional costs that had been incurred as a result; and how long it would take to clear the backlog. The Cabinet Member with the Resources Portfolio and the representative from EY responded thereon.

RESOLVED - That the Auditor's Annual Report 2021/22, as appended to the submitted report, be noted.

REASON – To receive the results of external audit work carried out.

C134 KEY DECISIONS:-

There were no key decisions made at the meeting.

C135 (URGENT ITEM) HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 2024

The Cabinet Member with the Stronger Communities Portfolio introduced the report of the Chief Executive (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to a programme of support to deliver the fourth extension of the Government funded Household Support Fund (HSF) for the period 1 April to 30 September 2024.

The submitted report stated that as part of a number of measures to provide help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living, the HSF would be extended from 1 April to 30 September 2024. It was noted that the current programme was being delivered effectively, meeting spend and output targets, and that the proposed programme delivered in this next round would take forward the elements in the current programme.

It was reported that authorities were required to send a delivery plan to the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) by 10 May 2024, which outlined their intentions for the Fund.

Reference was made at the meeting to fuel poverty and the removal of the support for energy bills; the accuracy of the data held for the free school meals auto enrolment entitlement to ensure that everyone had been contacted; and the help available to ensure that people were receiving the relevant benefits. The Cabinet Member with the Stronger Communities Portfolio responded thereon.

RESOLVED - (a) That the proposed programme and estimated costings, as outlined in the submitted report, be approved.

(b) That delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, to amend funding pots as necessary to ensure full utilisation of the grant within the time period.

(c) That a submission to government be made based on the programme, as outlined in the submitted report.

REASONS – (a) To address the criteria laid down in the guidance.

(b) In order to secure the grant funding.

C136 HOUSING SERVICES ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member with the Health and Housing Portfolio introduced the report of the Group Director of Operations (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the Housing Services Asset Management Strategy 2024/29 (also previously circulated).

The submitted report stated that the Council provided over 5,300 high quality homes for local residents; the Council were committed to providing safe, energy efficient and comfortable homes; and that the Housing Services Asset Management Strategy 2024/29 set out how Housing Services would ensure the efficient and effective management of the housing assets, as a core requirement of meeting the Council's landlord services function.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That the Housing Services Asset Management Strategy, as appended at Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be approved.

REASONS – (a) The Housing Services Asset Management Strategy ensures the Council has a clear approach to managing the Council's housing assets.

(b) In addition, the Regulator of Social Housing's new Consumer Standards from April 2024 places a duty on social housing landlords to:

- (i) have an accurate, up to date and evidenced understanding of the condition of their homes that reliably informs the provision of good quality, well maintained and safe homes for their tenants, and
- (ii) provide an effective, efficient, and timely repairs, maintenance and planned improvements service for their homes and the communal areas and shared spaces for which they were responsible.

(c) The adoption of a formal Asset Management Strategy is one of the ways to demonstrate how the Council will achieve this.

C137 HOUSING SERVICES VULNERABILITY POLICY

The Cabinet Member with the Health and Housing Portfolio introduced the report of the

Group Director of Operations (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to the Housing Services Vulnerability Policy 2024/29.

The submitted report outlined the background to the introduction of the Housing Services Vulnerability Strategy; detailed the aims of the policy, and the outcome of the consultation.

Reference was made at the meeting to the terminology used in the policy; how to publicise the policy, particularly to those that did not believe that they were vulnerable; and how the policy would impact on neighbouring tenants with different needs, should there be a dispute. The Cabinet Member with the Health and Housing Portfolio responded thereon.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That the Housing Services Vulnerability Policy, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be approved.

REASONS – (a) The Housing Services Vulnerability Policy ensures the Council has a clear approach to supporting its tenants and taking consideration of their needs

(b) The Regulator of Social Housing's new Consumer Standards from April 2024 places a duty on social housing landlords to:

- (i) treat their tenants and prospective tenants with fairness and respect, and
- (ii) take action to deliver fair and equitable outcomes for their tenants and prospective tenants.

(c) The adoption of a formal Vulnerability Policy is one of the ways to demonstrate how the Council will achieve this.

C138 MEMBERSHIP CHANGES - TO CONSIDER ANY MEMBERSHIP CHANGES TO OTHER BODIES TO WHICH CABINET APPOINTS.

There were no membership changes reported at the meeting.

**DECISIONS DATED –
FRIDAY 10 MAY 2024**