

COUNCIL

28 FEBRUARY 2023

PRESENT:

Councillors Greatorex (Chair), Warburton (Vice-Chair), Anketell, Baker, Ball, Banevicius, Barnett, Birch, Cox, D Cross, R Cross, Eadie, Eagland, D Ennis, L Ennis, Evans, Gwilt, Ho, Humphreys, Lax, E Little, Marshall, Matthews, Norman, Powell, Robertson, Salter, Silvester-Hall, Smith, Spruce, Mrs Tranter, Strachan, White, M Wilcox, S Wilcox, A Yeates and B Yeates

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Checkland, Grange, Leytham, A Little, Pullen, Ray, Warfield and Westwood.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Eadie declared a personal interest as a Director of LWM Traded Services Ltd.

3 TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2022 were approved as a correct record.

4 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Former Councillors Brenda Constable and Margaret Stanhope MBE

The Chair informed Members that former Councillors Brenda Constable and Margaret Stanhope MBE had sadly passed away and led the Council in a Minutes' silence.

Former Councillor Constable had served on the Council from 1976-1995; 2003-2011 and 2015-2019, representing wards in Burntwood. Former Councillor Stanhope had served on the Council for 45 years from its inception in 1974, representing Alrewas and Fradley.

Members gave their condolences, remembered the former Councillors, including their dedication and commitment to the communities they represented, and spoke of the contributions they had made to the Council and the District.

Chair's Event

The Chair commented that the karaoke night was a success and helped raise funds for his charity, Easy-IT and the Mayor's charity.

Exclusive tour

The Chair informed members that an exclusive tour of Lichfield Guildhall, Donegal House and the Lichfield District Council Chamber would take place on 7 March. Proceeds from the tour would go to the Sebbie Hall Kindness Foundation, the Pathway Project and the Chair's charity.

5 REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL ON CABINET DECISIONS FROM THE MEETINGS HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2023 AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

The Deputy Leader of the Council submitted his report on Cabinet Decisions from the meeting held on 14 February 2023 and Cabinet Member Decisions.

Councillor Norman said that the points system used for the allocation of CIL should be reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide transparency and confidence in decisions made. Councillor Eadie advised that Overview and Scrutiny had previously agreed the implementation criteria used to assess the bids.

With regard to the in-sourcing of Leisure Provision, Councillor Norman asked whether the decision to outsource management was regretted. Councillor Eadie stated that he did not regret the decision as it was done for the right reasons and the change of circumstance brought about by COVID could not have been foreseen. He said there was little choice but to bring leisure provision back in-house.

6 MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor M Wilcox submitted the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 December 2022, 19 January and 8 February 2023.

Councillor Evans stated that mental health was a neglected area that needed to be addressed and CAHMS had not been as effective as it should have been. She expressed her disappointment that the George Bryan Centre was not being considered as a rebuild as it had served the district adequately.

Councillor Evans also questioned the allocation of places at St Georges in Stafford in terms of the number of places available and the distance. Councillor White noted that Councillor Wilcox was continuing to raise the issue at County level.

Councillor Wilcox informed members that a six-week consultation on the future of the George Bryan Centre was currently underway and urged members to respond.

Councillor Robertson commented on the Election Act and highlighted the importance of reminding residents that voter ID would be required for the election on 4 May and that residents without ID should be directed to the government portal.

Councillor Robertson also raised a matter of accuracy on the Work Program minutes.

7 MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

It was proposed by Councillor Marshall, seconded by Councillor Baker and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Planning Committee held on 9 January and 6 February 2023 be approved and adopted.

8 MINUTES OF THE AUDIT & MEMBER STANDARDS COMMITTEE

It was proposed by Councillor Spruce, seconded by Councillor Ho and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meetings of the Audit and Member Standards Committee held on 18 January and 2 February 2023 be approved and adopted.

9 MINUTES OF THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

Councillor Robertson noted the number of special meetings that had taken place. He stated that where possible business should be dealt with on the published dates.

Councillor Robertson thanked Councillor M Wilcox for agreeing to review item 17 'Restructure of Service' at Overview and Scrutiny as a more detailed discussion was necessary.

It was proposed by Councillor Matthews, seconded by Councillor S Wilcox and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2023 be approved and adopted.

10 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

It was proposed by Councillor Strachan and seconded by Councillor M Wilcox 'that the Medium Term Financial Strategy (Revenue and Capital) 2022-2027 and the Council Tax Resolution 2023-2024 be approved.'

In submitting his report Councillor Strachan expressed his thanks to the Assistant Director of Finance and Commissioning and his team for their work and members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Audit and Member Standards Committee in considering the report and providing critical analysis.

Members then debated the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Council Tax Resolution.

Councillors Norman, Robertson and Ball expressed support for the 0% increase in council tax but did not support the proposed budget. Councillor Robertson said that the MTFs proposed a 3% council tax increase for the following four years which was a cause for concern considering the cost of living was not predicted to decrease. He also commented on council tax being based on an outdated model that no longer made sense. Councillor Ball stated that there were holes in the budget and questioned the uncertainty of the options identified to close the funding gap.

Councillors White and M Wilcox spoke in favour of the proposal and commended the budget as a sensible approach during a period of considerable uncertainty. Councillor M Wilcox, on behalf of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, thanked the efforts of the finance team for their dedication and presentation of clear financial information.

Councillor Strachan responded to the issues raised during the debate and noted that council tax was a single year decision. He urged members to vote in support of the MTFs.

The Chair proposed two named votes. The first vote would be on whether to support the council tax resolution. The second vote would be on whether to support the Medium Term Financial Strategy (see recommendations as set out in the report).

To comply with statutory regulations a named vote was then taken on the council tax resolution and recorded as follows:

FOR (38)

Anketell
Ball
Baker
Banevicius
Barnett
Birch

AGAINST (0)

ABSTAIN (0)

Cox
Cross, D
Cross, R
Eadie
Eagland
Ennis, D
Ennis, L
Evans
Creatorex
Gwilt
Ho
Humphreys
Lax
Little, E
Marshall
Matthews
Norman
Powell
Robertson
Salter
Silvester-Hall
Spruce
Strachan
Taylor
Tranter
Warburton
White
Wilcox, M
Wilcox, S
Yeates, A
Yeates, B

RESOLVED: That the Council Tax Resolution 2023-2024 be approved.

A named vote was then taken on the MTFs budget and recorded as follows:

FOR (28)

Baker
Barnett
Cox
Cross, D
Cross, R
Eadie
Eagland
Creatorex
Gwilt
Ho
Humphreys
Lax
Little, E
Marshall
Matthews
Powell
Salter
Silvester-Hall
Spruce

AGAINST (0)

ABSTAIN (10)

Anketell
Ball
Banevicius
Birch
Ennis, D
Ennis, L
Evans
Norman
Robertson
Taylor

Strachan
Tranter
Warburton
White
Wilcox, M
Wilcox, S
Yeates, A
Yeates, B

RESOLVED: That the Medium Term Financial Strategy (Revenue and Capital) 2022-2027 as set out in the report be approved.

11 PROPOSED NEW LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME (LCTS)

Councillor Strachan submitted his report on the proposed new local council tax support scheme. He advised that the proposal aimed to provide more financial support to residents on the lowest incomes, distribute the support given more fairly to claimants based on their incomes and circumstances, provide more financial stability, and deliver greater customer satisfaction. Additionally, it would allow the council to streamline administration and reduce unnecessary paperwork and costs.

Councillor Robertson commended the report, his only concern was for the people receiving less support under the new model. He asked if Overview and Scrutiny Committee could look at transition and mitigating factors at the next meeting. Councillor Eadie responded that there was a hardship scheme that was intended to ease people into the new arrangements.

Councillor Strachan also noted that residents who were disproportionately affected by the changes and faced undue financial pressure would be considered for the Exceptional Hardship Scheme.

It was proposed by Councillor Strachan and duly seconded by Councillor Spruce and

RESOLVED: (1) That the Proposed New Local Council Tax Support Scheme be approved.

12 POLITICAL BALANCE AND APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES

It was proposed by Councillor Eadie and duly seconded by Councillor Norman "that the Membership of Cabinet, Committees and Panels including the allocation of seats and appointments by Political Groups as submitted be approved."

RESOLVED: (1) That the Membership of Cabinet, Committees and Panels including the allocation of seats and appointments by political groups as submitted be approved.

(2) That the Constitution be amended to reflect any changes made.

13 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023

Councillor Ball referred to the essential car user allowance and questioned if measures were in place to ensure the cars driven were electric rather than petrol or diesel. Councillor Marshall responded that not everyone subscribed to the carbon net zero narrative and a balance of views was needed. Councillor Eadie stated that the council could only encourage staff to drive

electric vehicles and advised that work was being done to increase EV charging points in the district.

Councillor Robertson suggested that carpooling could be looked at as an alternative.

Councillor Norman referenced the environmental impact section of the report which stated there was no impact, and queried whether the issue had been adequately addressed.

It was moved by Councillor Matthews, seconded by Councillor S Wilcox and

RESOLVED: That the updated Pay Policy Statement as submitted be approved for publication.

14 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

Councillor Norman commented that he would like to see some feedback from Youth Council soon to get their views on various issues.

Councillor Cox commented that he was pleased to see the inclusion of Youth Council in the calendar of meetings and stressed the importance of being able to access young peoples' views on current issues. He noted that so far there had only been two meetings, but he was proud of how the youth councillors had conducted themselves. Councillor Lax also expressed support of the Youth Council stating it was great step for the council to have made.

Councillor L Ennis noted that some people may not be able to attend the daytime Member Induction sessions and suggested an evening option be provided.

Councillor Eadie submitted the Calendar of Meetings 2023-2024 and it was

Resolved: That the Calendar of Meetings 2022-2024 be approved subject to further consultation over the date of Council in April 2024 and provisional dates in early 2024, with the final dates to be determined by the Cabinet Member in consultation with Leader of the Council and the Leader of the opposition.

15 MOTION ON NOTICE

The following Motion was submitted by Councillor Robertson and seconded by Councillor Strachan:

The Living Wage

1. Lichfield District Council notes that:

The Living Wage Foundation is an independent charity which calculates a real living wage, based on living costs in the UK, in the first week of November each year. The Real Living Wage currently stands at £10.90 per hour outside London for those aged 18 and above. Over 12,000 UK employers are now accredited by the Living Wage Foundation and voluntarily pay the Real Living Wage, including over 130 local authorities.

Since 2022 Lichfield District Council has ensured that no member of directly employed staff has earned less than the real living wage.

2. Lichfield District Council believes that:

Paying the Real Living Wage not only benefits employees but also employers and the wider economy.

Our staff are our most valuable resource and that anyone employed by Lichfield District Council should reasonably be able expect to earn a wage which will allow them to get by.

That paying at least a living wage to employees represents good employment practice and that companies who do so are demonstrating good social practice in this regard.

3. Lichfield District Council agrees:

To request that cabinet update the procurement strategy to include the living wage as part of the measurement of social value.

To instruct the head of paid service to begin the process of becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer with the Living Wage Foundation.

Councillor White expressed his support of the motion in general terms but noted that any commitments made needed to be funded. Additionally, the impact on third parties should be considered and the Council should not be imposing its will on these parties.

Members then voted on the Motion.

RESOLVED: That the Motion be approved.

16 QUESTIONS

Q1. Question from Councillor Anketell to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Ecology and Climate Change

“Motor neurone disease (MND) is a rapidly progressing condition – a third of people die within a year of diagnosis, and half within two years. During that time, symptoms worsen and needs increase, often at an unpredictable rate. To live in a dignified and reasonable way, a person with MND must make urgent adjustments to his/her home. These adjustments are often significant in scale. Such adaptations include increasing the size of doorways, building ramps and wet rooms, and installing hoists and through-floor lifts.

Will Councillor Lax therefore ensure Lichfield District Council improves its MND provision by introducing a fast-track process for delivering home adaptations for people with progressive and terminal conditions such as motor neurone disease by waiving the financial assessment for people with progressive and terminal conditions such as MND for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) up to at least £5,000 to ensure adaptations can happen in a timely, efficient manner with minimum impact on the people they are supposed to help?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Housing, Ecology and Climate Change

“With regards to residents who might have a fast-progressing condition such as MND or others there is provision within the policy to ‘fast-track’ those applications. All applicants are assessed using the mandatory DFG criteria and we then allocate a discretionary grant of £5000 regardless of means.

Legally we cannot have a disease specific grant for MND sufferers. This is so we do not discriminate against others with similar conditions such as fast progressive Parkinsons and those people who have had a catastrophic injury.

We are increasing our discretionary top-up assistance funding for where works exceed the current mandatory DFG limit due to recent building cost increases which of course will cover those with MND.

As members are aware, from the 1 April we are taking DFG provision back in house. In doing so we have designed a framework and revised policy to provide a more comprehensive, and bigger and better support which goes beyond the revised 2022 government Guidance. We will have a personalised approach to helping vulnerable people, we will engage with and visit to ensure we provide the right adaptations. We can do this as our new in-house service enables us to commit more resources to deliver a holistic and client focussed service.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Anketell

“Would the cabinet member write an open letter to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Minister of Local Government asking them to increase the local government grant by 10% with immediate effect or is she more concerned with the conservative governments reputation and has forgotten constituents’ wellbeing?”

Response from the Cabinet Member for Housing, Ecology and Climate Change

“Since I started this portfolio in 2019, I have assiduously supported ensuring that those who need disabled facilities grants get the help they should expect from this district notwithstanding the inherited problems caused by the former arrangements. The current limit is £30,000 which is the prescribed limit, I made it clear in my answer that we are going to look to double that because of the increased building costs. I do not need to write to the Prime Minister or the Chancellor of the Exchequer because we have been given the latest guidance from national government that every local authority should take their own course having regard to their demographic and their needs. I am very proud of the work the officers are doing bringing this to fruition and we will see results. It is going to be a hard changeover but be we are prepared, and we will be ready for the 1st of April.”

Q2. Question from Councillor Robertson to the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement

“Will the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement publish all communications that he has had with officers about CCTV on Dimbles Lane during this calendar year?”

Response from the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement

“Yes, I will.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Robertson

“I do look forward to seeing those communications published. I note that no person speaking on behalf of this council has apologised to the community for the repeated failures and repeated broken promises regarding the installation of this CCTV. Will the cabinet member take the opportunity to correct that this evening?”

Response from the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement

“I will in due course look at that question because I am not going to apologise when we ourselves have been let down by outside providers. If I was to apologise, I would be running our own staff under a bus and I am not prepared to do that.”

17 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: “That as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted,

the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, which would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972”

IN PRIVATE

18 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor M Wilcox submitted the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 February 2023.

(The Meeting closed at 8.20 pm)

CHAIR