

# COUNCIL - 23 February 2023

## MINUTES

Present: The Mayor of Solihull Cllr K Meeson and Councillors: A Adeyemo, M Allen, S Ashraf MBE, M Brain, A Burrow, J Butler, M Carthew, S Caudwell, Y Clements, I Courts, T Diccico, B Donnelly, A Feeney, S Gethen, D Gibbin, M Gough, K Grinsell, R Grinsell, J Hamilton, K Hawkins, A Hodgson, P Hogarth MBE, Mrs D Holl-Allen MBE, R Holt, D Howell, A Mackenzie, A Mackiewicz, M McCarthy, M McLoughlin, N Moses, J O'Nyons, M Parker, D Pinwell, W Qais, A Rebeiro, S Rymer, A Sandison, R Sexton, Mrs G Sleigh, R Sleigh OBE, K Thomas, J Tildesley, A Wilson and M Wilson

### 1. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Cllrs B Groom, R Long, K Macnaughton, L McCarthy, J Ryan and S Sheshabhatte

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY OR CONFLICTING INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

Councillors Mackiewicz and Gough declared a pecuniary interest in relation to item 9 on the agenda and left the room, when this item was considered.

### 3. PETITIONS

None received.

### 4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor made the following announcements:

#### Ukraine One Minute Silence

There will be a national minute's silence at 11:00am on Friday 24 February in recognition of the one-year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which the Council would be marking.

#### Mayor of Solihull's Funding Raising Concert.

The Mayor invited Members to a concert on Friday 24 March 2023, money raised will be going to vulnerable young people, carers and OVOS.

The Leader of the Council then advised Members on:

#### Solihull Police Station Update

The Leader confirmed that the Council House was one of a number of options being explored for offering a site for this essential service.

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### Nomination for Mayor 2023 to 2024

The Leader advised that the Conservative nomination for Mayor 2023/24 would be Cllr Mrs Holl-Allen MBE.

Cllr Mackiewicz Cabinet Portfolio for Climate Change, Planning and Housing advised Members on:

### Local Plan Update

The Cabinet Member provided Council with an update on the progress and clarification on the Local Plan.

Cllr Thomas Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group- advised Council that Cllr Laura McCarthy had recently given birth to a baby girl. On behalf of the Council the Mayor congratulated Cllr L McCarthy and her partner on the arrival of their daughter.

## **5. QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 9 AND 12**

None received.

## **6. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 8 (30 MINUTES)**

### 1) Cllr Thomas to Cllr Howell Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Communities and Leisure

For years Councillors in Elmdon and Lyndon have been trying to get their badly deteriorated tennis courts in Elmdon and Olton Jubilee Parks refurbished and whilst the council has never been able to afford the £50,000 required to do each of these, they did find £600,000 to refurbish the outdoor pitch at Tudor Grange Leisure Centre, as well as finding a further £267,000 to cover the overspend. Why can the council find 8.5 times the money for one pitch, but not the money for two tennis courts?

The Cabinet Member advised that the football pitch at Tudor Grange forms a key part of the leisure centre contract which is currently provided by Everyone Active. Both the Council and Everyone Active have responsibility for the maintenance of the pitch and a condition survey identified the need to replace the pitch and reconfigure the pitch size to meet the Football Association's current guidance for the layout of pitches. The pitch is a key asset of the Leisure contract and must be maintained to meet standards as set out in the contract. There is heavy demand for this facility from a large local catchment area including 6-a-side leagues, college use, sports clubs and private leisure hires all of whom pay a fee for usage. Prior to Covid, the pitch was generating £116,000 per annum towards the operation of the Leisure contract. The refurbished facility opened over the August bank holiday 2022 and indications are that previous annual income levels are likely to be exceeded.

Opportunities to further develop tennis provision within Solihull's Parks and Open Spaces are continuing to be explored with prioritisation based on current local provision and usage.

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The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), supported by additional Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) funding are currently working with Local Authorities to deliver tennis court refurbishments across the UK. Council Officers are working with the LTA to scope out priority sites that would benefit from this funding and the improvement works required. Following an initial review by the LTA, Elmdon Park has been highlighted as a priority asset to put forward to the current bidding stage, based on current usage monitored through the live booking system. Officers will continue to work with the LTA to develop a bid for the facility and support them with their further feasibility investigations.

While Olton Jubilee Park courts formed part of the initial scoping out works by the LTA, they were not taken forward on this occasion due to requiring significant intervention and funding if they were to be brought back into use. Officers continue to keep this site in mind should there be any future opportunities for LTA funding, as well as remain alert to other opportunities that may support the development of this facility.

### 2) Cllr Carthew to Cllr Karen Grinsell Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Partnerships and Wellbeing

Since lockdown, residents have been struggling with changes to access and communication with GP Practices across Solihull. What has the Council been doing to improve the situation for patients and practice staff?

The Cabinet Member advised that officers from the Integrated Care Board actually lead on the oversight of this area and have presented on the progress on numerous occasions to the Health and Wellbeing Board and also the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board. Last week ICB officers presented to the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Board showing progress on the improvement action plans that have been put in place. There has been a programme to address GP access that was established back in November 2022 and that is to support GP's. The three themes that they are looking at and particularly focused on are:

- tackling unwarranted variation in access to GP's so access should be the same wherever you are across Birmingham and Solihull
- reducing overall demand; and
- increasing capacity.

Any practises that are struggling with any of these areas are able to complete their own self assessments so as to determine where they need support and some of the areas that they are particularly looking at is around telephony, websites app access, ways they can improve their digital access and they are also supporting staff within the GP practises to improve business process. Every Thursday we get an updated position statement on what is happening right across the system covering Birmingham Solihull which equates to some 182 individual practises. The Local Authority role is about addressing some of those wider issues regarding determinants to health and social issues so we are building those relationships so we can offer support to people that are presenting to GPs with other things not just medical situations. We have seen some good improvements right across the system and patients are saying things are improving. We are now seeing a higher number of same day appointments and appointments offered within 14 days, we are seeing that they are higher than the regional and the national average and about 70% of appointments are now delivered face to face.

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3) Cllr Long to Cllr Hawkins Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment and Infrastructure

In previous years, Members were informed about Action that was being taken to recover the costs of replacing cracked brown recycling bins. Has the money been recovered and where is it shown in this budget?

Given that Cllr Long was absent from the meeting and could not put his question, the Cabinet Member advised that a written response would be sent, as per Standing Orders.

4) Cllr Adeyemo to Cllr Hawkins Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment and Infrastructure

In the last five years, how many bus services have been cancelled in the borough and what proportion is that of the overall bus provision in the borough?

The Cabinet Member referenced the question Cllr Thomas had raised at last full council meeting. Bus provision does not sit directly with my Portfolio, and really should be directed to Transport for West Midlands who are the Public Transport Authority for the Region. However, the Council are partners on the West Midlands Bus Enhance Partnership scheme where our officers work closely with the operators and colleagues at Transport for West Midlands, who will have access to this type of data. To support you in gaining the information you are seeking I have asked officers to contact you directly and then liaise with Transport for West Midlands on your behalf.

Cllr Adeyemo referenced elderly or disabled residents and the difficulties they have when services are cancelled and whether service cancellations impact on the Council's carbon reduction targets. The Cabinet Member referenced the answer already provided and stated that public transport services were key to carbon reduction plans.

### 7. COUNCIL TOPIC OF DEBATE

None received.

### 8. NOTICE OF MOTION

None received.

### 9. LEADERS REPORT- COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS FOR EMPTY PROPERTIES AND SECOND HOMES

The Leader of the Council presented a recommendation from Cabinet in relation to the Council Tax Premiums for Empty Properties and Second Homes.

#### RESOLVED:

- (i) That changes to the long-term empty premium so that with effect from 1 April 2024 the council tax premium is applied after the property has been empty and unfurnished for 12 months rather than 24 months be approved; and

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- (ii) That the decision from Cabinet on 9 February 2023 that a 100% council tax premium for furnished empty properties (known as second home) is not implemented at this stage and is instead deferred to a later date once the legislation is passed and more information is known be noted.

(Having declared a pecuniary interest Cllrs Mackiewicz and Gough left meeting when this item was considered.)

### 10. BUDGET FRAMEWORK, MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2023/24-2025/26) AND THE CORPORATE CAPITAL STRATEGY (2023/24-2032/33)

The Leader presented the recommendation from Cabinet in relation to the Council Budget for 2023/2024, the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Corporate Capital Strategy, including the Council's strategy on the flexible use of capital receipts and the annual MRP Statement, and the proposed carbon budget.

That Council:

- (i) Approves the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26, as updated in the Leaders report, and the Capital Strategy (incorporating the Council's strategy on the flexible use of capital receipts and the annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement);
- (ii) Approves the fees and charges proposed within each portfolio (Appendix F of the report of the Acting Chief Executive);
- (iii) Approves the Council's carbon budget, as outlined at paragraph 3.36 and detailed in Appendix G of the report of the Acting Chief Executive;
- (iv) Approves an increase of 2.99% in the level of general council tax in 2023/24 (to £1,388.02 at Band D);
- (v) Approves an increase of 2.00% in the level of the social care precept in 2023/24 (to £204.72 at Band D); and
- (vi) Approves a budget for 2023/24 of £199.250 million funded by total Band D council tax of £1,592.74.

The following amendment was proposed by Cllr McLaughlin and seconded by Cllr Caudwell:

“That following the motion passed by Council on 7 February 2023, Council **RESOLVE** to use a one-off amount of £50,000, funded from the Budget Strategy reserve, to progress the following initiatives

- Take a proactive role in identifying and promoting opportunities for renewable community energy and commercial renewable energy provision in Solihull.
- Investigate the potential for collective purchase schemes for renewable energy and insulation.
- Promote the Government endorsed quality scheme 'Trustmark' to help ensure households have access to accredited and regulated suppliers.
- Begin installing photovoltaic panels on all suitable Council owned buildings at the soonest available viable opportunity.

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- Encourage the use of brownfield land for renewable energy, recognising that Green Belt land will come under pressure due to the character of the Borough.
- Make sure promoters are aware that Very Special Circumstances will need to be robustly demonstrated for any Green Belt proposals, including how alternative solutions, including brownfield land, have been considered and why any proposed site is the most appropriate. Any local community benefits should also be clearly identified.”

Following a debate on the amendment a named vote was held.

The following Members voted in favour of the amendment:

Councillors Adeyemo, Allen, Ashraf, Brain, Burrow, Butler, Carthew, Caudwell, Clements, Courts, Dicicco, Donnelly, Feeney, Gethen, Gibbin, Gough, K Grinsell, R Grinsell, Hamilton, Hawkins, Hodgson, Hogarth, Mrs Holl-Allen, Holt, Howell, Mackenzie, Mackiewicz, M McCarthy, McLoughlin, Meeson, Moses, O’Nyons, Parker, Pinwell, Qais, Rebeiro, Rymer, Sandison, Dr Sexton, G Sleigh, B Sleigh, Thomas, Tildesley, A Wilson, M Wilson.

The amendment was carried.

The substantive motion was then debated, and a named vote held.

The following Members voted in favour of the substantive motion:

Councillors Adeyemo, Burrow, Butler, Carthew, Clements, Courts, Dicicco, Feeney, Gethen, Gibbin, Gough, K Grinsell, R Grinsell, Hawkins, Hodgson, Hogarth, Mrs Holl-Allen, Holt, Howell, Mackenzie, Mackiewicz, M McCarthy, Meeson, O’Nyons, Parker, Pinwell, Qais, Rebeiro, Sandison, G Sleigh, B Sleigh, Thomas, Tildesley,

The following Members abstained:

Councillors Allen, Ashraf, Brain, Caudwell, Donnelly, Hamilton, McLoughlin, Moses, Rymer, Dr Sexton, A Wilson, M Wilson.

The substantive motion was carried, and Council **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Approve the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 – 2025/26, as updated in the Leaders report, and the Capital Strategy (incorporating the Council’s strategy on the flexible use of capital receipts and the annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement);
- (ii) Approve the fees and charges proposed within each portfolio (Appendix F of the report of the Acting Chief Executive);
- (iii) Approve the Council’s carbon budget, as outlined at paragraph 3.36 and detailed in Appendix G of the report of the Acting Chief Executive;
- (iv) Approve an increase of 2.99% in the level of general council tax in 2023/24 (to £1,388.02 at Band D);
- (v) Approve an increase of 2.00% in the level of the social care precept in 2023/24 (to £204.72 at Band D);
- (vi) Approve a budget for 2023/24 of £199.250 million funded by total Band D council tax of £1,592.74. and

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(vii) Approve a one-off amount of £50,000, funded from the Budget Strategy reserve, to progress the following initiatives:

- Take a proactive role in identifying and promoting opportunities for renewable community energy and commercial renewable energy provision in Solihull.
- Investigate the potential for collective purchase schemes for renewable energy and insulation.
- Promote the Government endorsed quality scheme 'Trustmark' to help ensure households have access to accredited and regulated suppliers.
- Begin installing photovoltaic panels on all suitable Council owned buildings at the soonest available viable opportunity.
- Encourage the use of brownfield land for renewable energy, recognising that Green Belt land will come under pressure due to the character of the Borough.
- Make sure promoters are aware that Very Special Circumstances will need to be robustly demonstrated for any Green Belt proposals, including how alternative solutions, including brownfield land, have been considered and why any proposed site is the most appropriate. Any local community benefits should also be clearly identified.

The Leader then presented the recommendation under item 10(b) - The calculations and amounts of Council Tax for the year 2023/24. Which was seconded by Cllr Sleigh:

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Council approve the sums required for the purposes of sections 31A, 31B and 34-36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and to set the Council Tax for 2022/23 in accordance with section 30 of the same Act.

The recommendation was then debated, and a named vote held.

The following Members voted in favour of the recommendation:

Councillors Adeyemo, Burrow, Butler, Carthew, Clements, Courts, Diccico, Feeney, Gethen, Gibbin, Gough, K Grinsell, R Grinsell, Hawkins, Hodgson, Hogarth, Mrs Holl-Allen, Holt, Howell, Mackenzie, Mackiewicz, M McCarthy, Meeson, O'Nyons, Parker, Pinwell, Qais, Rebeiro, Sandison, G Sleigh, B Sleigh, Thomas, Tildesley,

The following Members abstained:

Councillors Allen, Ashraf, Brain, Caudwell, Donnelly, Hamilton, McLoughlin, Moses, Rymer, Dr Sexton, A Wilson, M Wilson.

The recommendation was carried, and Council **RESOLVED** to: Approve the sums required for the purposes of sections 31A, 31B and 34-36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and to set the Council Tax for 2022/23 in accordance with section 30 of the same Act.

The meeting ended at 6.56 pm