

EXECUTIVE

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Monday, 29th July 2024 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Steve Fritchley in the Chair

Councillors Mary Dooley, Duncan McGregor, Clive Moesby, Sandra Peake and John Ritchie.

Officers:- Karen Hanson (Chief Executive Officer), Theresa Fletcher (Section 151 Officer), Steve Brunt (Strategic Director of Services), Pam Brown (Service Director Executive, Corporate Services and Partnerships), Vicky Difelice (Legal Executive), Victoria Dawson (Assistant Director Housing Management and Enforcement), Ian Barber (Director of Property & Construction Dragonfly Development Ltd) and Alison Bluff (Governance).

Also in attendance at the meeting were Councillors Donna Hales and Rita Turner, and Thomas Dunne-Wragg (Scrutiny Officer).

EX20-24/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Anne Clarke, and Junior Cabinet Member, Councillor Janet Tait

EX21-24/25 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business to consider

EX22-24/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

EX23-24/25 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Duncan McGregor and seconded by Councillor Sandra Peake
RESOLVED that the Minutes of an Executive meeting held on 24th June 2024 be approved as a correct record.

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MATTERS REFERRED FROM SCRUTINY

EX24-24/25 REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF COUNCIL'S WASTE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL EDUCATION

Executive considered a detailed report presented by Councillor Donna Hales, Chair of the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee, in relation to the Committee's recent Review of Effectiveness of the Council's Waste Collection and Disposal Education.

The Customer Services Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake the review as part of their 2023-24 Work Programme. The issue was initially raised due to concerns of contamination rates within recycling waste collections, creating additional costs to the Council through contamination charges. Members believed that the main cause of this issue was due to residents not knowing how to use their bins correctly and effectively.

The key issues identified for investigation were:

- the Impact of current contamination rates on recycling targets, additional costs to the Council.
- the usage of Household Waste Recycling Centre in Bolsover and whether there was clear messaging as to what could and could not be taken to the site.
- reduction in size of black residual waste bins. Costs associated with recycling by way of burgundy bin, with second available on request.
- the potential use of skip collections in problem wards or Freighter Days – this did not always encourage correct recycling and resulted in bulky type waste collection. This further increased residual waste which may normally be taken to a household waste recycling centre and therefore increased the amount of residual waste collected by the Council. This then lowers the overall combined recycling rates due to the amount recycled being calculated as the percentage diverted from the residual waste stream and not increasing as skip collections did.

The key findings arising from the review were:

- that there was most confusion over the burgundy bin and which items were supposed to be recycled and which items cannot be recycled.
- that since the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Council had struggled to regenerate school programmes and had not yet returned to the pre-COVID standards of recycling education for young people.
- that the Council acknowledged the introduction of separate weekly food waste collections from 1st April 2026 would influence the next major stepped change in Bolsover's combined recycling performance, by breaking the 50% barrier to head towards the 2035 target of 65%.
- that it was crucial that the Council considered accessibility of communication services and the statutory requirements with regards to education on Council services that affected all residents so that every service user could benefit from the waste collection services that the Council provided.
- that the Council should look towards the future of Bolsover by considering innovative modern methods of communication to consider ways to engage young people and future residents of the District.

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- that some of the Council's communication services were not being fully utilised due to a lack of educational content being received from the relevant specialist officers.
- that the Council must effectively utilise their current methods of communication to the highest standard with efficiency and coherence to frequently remind residents on the importance of recycling, the correct methods of recycling, and the best practice of how to engage with the Council's waste collection services.

Committee had put together 11 recommendations which were set out in the report and would hopefully assist the Council in improving recycling rates and reducing rates of waste contamination by improving the effectiveness of the Council's waste collection and disposal education.

The Director of Strategy thanked Councillor Hales and the Scrutiny Committee for involving Streetscene in the work they had carried out on the review.

Members agreed that the report was an excellent report and a lengthy discussion took place around promoting recycling in schools, youth clubs, parish councils and also using posters and via the Council's quarterly InTouch magazine.

Members noted that it was understandable that people were confused about what they could and could not recycle given the many different types of packaging, for example, waxed paper and mixed packaging that needed separating before it was put in the bins.

Moved by Councillor Duncan McGregor and seconded by Councillor Sandra Peake

RESOLVED that: 1) the recommendations of the review outlined in section 2.5 of the report and Section 2 of Appendix 1, be endorsed,

- 2) monitoring takes place over a twelve-month period via the PERFORM system with an update report to the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee at the end of the monitoring period.

Reasons for Recommendation

The Committee had put together 11 recommendations which would hopefully assist the Council in improving recycling rates and reducing rates of waste contamination by improving the effectiveness of the Council's waste collection and disposal education.

Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

Executive could choose not to endorse the recommendations of the review where they felt the course of action recommended was beyond the delivery capacity of the Authority.

Councillors Donna Hales and Rita Turner, and Thomas Dunne-Wragg (Scrutiny Officer), left the meeting.

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EX25-24/25 DISPOSALS AND ACQUISITIONS POLICY

Executive considered a detailed report presented by the Portfolio Holder for Growth in relation to the Council's updated Disposals and Acquisitions policy.

The Disposals and Acquisitions Policy set out the processes that should be followed by the Council when it intended to either sell or purchase property whether that be land or buildings. The policy also covered the grant of a lease for a period of more than 7 years.

The Council's Asset Management Group had undertaken a review of the policy and amendments had been made to reflect legislative changes, and organisational changes to make the process more efficient. These changes were shown as tracked changes on the policy document at Appendix 1 to the report. The Local Growth Scrutiny Committee had considered the proposed changes at its meeting held on 25th June 2024.

The Portfolio Holder for Growth advised the meeting that at times the Council was offered land before it came to market and a decision was required to be made more quickly than the policy allowed. He suggested that a new Acquisitions Strategy be developed to sit alongside the policy document to enable the Council to make swift decisions regarding the purchase of land or property.

The Assistant Director Housing Management and Enforcement agreed that the policy document was 'disposal' heavy and this was because the Council had a legal obligation to get best value for its disposal of land. Although there was a section in the policy that allowed the Chief Executive to approve an urgent acquisition when required, the Assistant Director Housing Management would, along with the Asset Management Group and Dragonfly Development, work together to develop a strategy to sit alongside the policy document and this would then be presented to Members.

Moved by Councillor John Ritchie and seconded by Councillor Duncan McGregor
RESOLVED that: 1) the revised Disposals & Acquisitions Policy be adopted,

- 2) that a new Acquisitions Strategy be developed to sit alongside the Policy document to enable the Council to make swift decisions regarding the purchase of land or property.

Reasons for Recommendation

In order to make sure the Council's Disposals & Acquisitions Policy was up to date and relevant to current practices and legislation.

Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

To not adopt the proposed updated policy. This was not recommended as it would leave the Council with an out-of-date policy.

EX26-24/25 FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2023/24

Executive considered a detailed report presented by the Portfolio Holder for Resources, which informed Members of the outturn position of the Council for the 2023/24 financial year.

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General Fund: During the previous financial year, the Council had managed its budget effectively securing a favourable financial outturn. The Council was able to make contributions of £1.455m to reserves in preparation for future expenditure commitments. The Transformation Reserve, which was the Council's main general earmarked reserve, had £2.355m committed against it in 2024/25 and future years, so continued prudence was needed when committing against this reserve.

HRA: The HRA continued to operate within the parameters set by the 30 Year Business Plan and the MTFP. Officers would be working to ensure that the Business Plan continued to reflect the impact of government legislation and that the HRA remained sustainable over the 30-year period of the Business Plan.

Capital Programme: The Capital Programme saw good progress on approved schemes during the 2023/24 financial year. There were, however, a number of schemes which were work in progress and this required that the associated expenditure and funding be carried forward into the 2024/25 financial year.

Capital Financing: Capital expenditure during 2023/24 had been fully financed in line with the approved programme.

Treasury Management: The Council operated in line with its agreed Treasury Management Strategy during the 2023/24 financial year. This ensured that lending and borrowing arrangements were prudent and sustainable, minimising the risk of financial loss to the Council. Effective management of these arrangements ensured that interest costs during the year were minimised in order to assist the Council's revenue position whilst interest receivable rose.

Moved by Councillor Clive Moesby and seconded by Councillor Duncan McGregor
RESOLVED that: 1) the outturn position in respect of the 2023/24 financial year be noted,

- 2) that the transfers to earmarked reserves of £1.455m as outlined in detail in paragraph 2.3 be approved,
- 3) the proposed carry forward of capital budgets detailed in Appendix 5 totalling £12.332m be approved.

Reasons for Recommendation

As set out in the report.

Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

The financial outturn report for 2023/24 was primarily a factual report which detailed the outcome of previously approved budgets therefore there were no alternative options that needed to be considered.

The allocation of resources to earmarked reserve accounts had been undertaken in line with the Council's policy and service delivery framework and in the light of the risks and issues facing the Council over the period of the current MTFP. If those risks did not materialise or were settled at a lower cost than anticipated then the earmarked reserves would be reassessed and returned to balances where appropriate.

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EX27-24/25 CORPORATE DEBT 2023/24

Executive considered a detailed report presented by the Portfolio Holder for Resources in relation to a summary of the Council's corporate debt position as at 31st March 2024.

The main sources of income for the Council's General Fund were business rates, council tax, a small number of government grants and service-related income. The main source of income for the Council's Housing Revenue Account was dwelling rent, often referred to as 'housing rents'. Government grants were paid over to the Council on agreed dates directly into the Council's bank account so there was no need to include them on any debtor system. For most other sources of income, these had to be requested.

Overall, in 2023/24 £18.493m (net) more in income had been raised on the Council's systems. Arrears had increased by £0.117m but if any reductions in arrears were excluded, the increase was £0.902m. The impairment allowances had been increased by £0.682m (net).

International Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS) 9 – Financial Instruments, required the Council to write-off debt as soon as it was deemed uncollectable. This was to ensure the correct value of arrears was included on the Council's balance sheet at 31st March each year.

The Council's Constitution allowed the Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer, after consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to authorise the write-off of bad debts up to a limit of £2,500. Executive approved the write-off of bad debts which were individually over £2,500 on receipt of a report during the year. In all cases, every attempt was made to collect the outstanding debt before write-off was proposed and if there was chance to collect the debt in the future, these could be written back on to the relevant system. Writing-off amounts which were no longer collectable was an essential part of the debt management process – it ensured that a focus was maintained on those amounts which were collectable, thus maximising overall levels of collection.

This year had seen a significant amount of housing rent debt written-off as officers had looked through the debt in detail using the new software package purchased to help them focus on the most collectable arrears.

Moved by Councillor Clive Moesby and seconded by Councillor Duncan McGregor
RESOLVED that the report concerning the Council's Corporate Debt as at 31st March 2024 be noted.

Reasons for Recommendation

To ensure that Executive were informed of the latest position concerning the Council's debt.

Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

The report was for information only.

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KEY DECISION

EX28-24/25 AWARD OF HOUSING STOCK CONDITION SURVEY CONTRACT

Executive considered a detailed report presented by the Portfolio Holder for Housing which sought Members' approval to award a contract for a stock condition and energy survey of the Council's dwelling stock to Savills (UK) Limited.

At its meeting held in May, Executive had approved the commencement of a procurement exercise for a specialist supplier to undertake a 100% stock condition survey and a procurement exercise was completed to secure a contract under the Strategic Asset Management Services Framework. Savills were the only supplier who could meet all the Council's requirements for a stock condition and energy survey, under a competitive framework.

Moved by Councillor Sandra Peake and seconded by Councillor John Ritchie

RESOLVED that the award of the Stock Condition Survey be awarded to Savills (UK) Limited.

Reasons for Recommendation

A comprehensive stock condition survey was needed to ensure that the Council could meet the Safety and Quality Consumer Standard and provide accurate information about the Council's housing stock.

A procurement exercise was completed to secure a contract under the Strategic Asset Management Services Framework.

Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

Savills were the only supplier who could meet all the Council's requirements for a Stock Condition and Energy Survey, under a competitive framework.

The meeting concluded at 11:10 hours.