

Cabinet
21 MARCH 2024

Present: Councillors: Martin Boffey (Leader), Mark Baynham, Colette Blackburn, Ruth Fletcher, Jay Mercer, Jon Olson and Sam Raby

Apologies: Councillors: John Milne

Also Present: Councillors: Philip Circus, Paul Clarke, Mike Croker, Liz Kitchen, Lynn Lambert, Roger Noel and David Skipp

EX/82 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 25 January were approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

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EX/83 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

EX/84 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Mark Baynham, Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources advised the Cabinet that at the previous meeting of the Council, the Council Tax Long-term Empty Tax Premium was agreed whereby a premium rate of Council Tax would be charged to empty, unfurnished domestic properties unoccupied for 12 months. Concerns had been raised regarding the exemption criteria and Government guidance was awaited. Guidance was now due during 2024, however it would not be available in time for 1 April 2024, when the charges would apply. The Council would rely on its own discretionary authority regarding exemptions until further guidance is received.

Councillor Jon Olson, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Green Spaces provided an update to the Cabinet on the Capitol Theatre Decarbonisation and Refurbishment Project. He advised that Officers had been working with the Shared Procurement Service, and experienced construction industry specialists would work with the Council on the project. Further updates would be provided to Cabinet and Council as the project progresses.

EX/85 **LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND ROUND 3 (LAHF R3) IN 2024-25
AND 2025-26**

Councillor Mark Baynham, Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources introduced the report on the Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 in 2024-25 and 2025-26.

On 7 March 2024, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) confirmed a third round of Local Authority Housing Fund would be launched to the value of £450 million, over two years.

The funding would support local authorities to acquire good quality and better value for money Temporary Accommodation for families owed a homelessness duty and continue to provide resettlement housing for those on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

The Government had allocated the Council £1.029m in grant for 5 homes; two temporary accommodation, two standard resettlement homes and one large resettlement home. The Council's contribution was expected to be £1.276m and should the Council be unable to deliver all of the housing, unspent funding could be returned to the Government.

The Cabinet was recommended to approve the receipt of grant funding, as well as the capital expenditure and revenue grant income and spend.

Councillor Sam Raby, Cabinet Member for Housing, Communities and Wellbeing, was fully supportive of this scheme and felt that it was a positive opportunity to help provide temporary accommodation of a high quality to local residents.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

- i) To proceed with the application for, and receipt of, the grant allocation for the Council to provide or facilitate the provision of 2 resettlement homes and 2 temporary accommodation homes and 1 large (4+bed) resettlement home.
- ii) That the capital spend of £2.305m in the 2024/25 capital programme be approved.
- iii) That the revenue grant income and spend of £8,000 in 2024/25 be approved.

RESOLVED Subject to Council approval:

- iv) That the acquisition by Horsham District Council of up to 5 properties using the funds earmarked for this initiative, provided that any such acquisitions are undertaken in consultation with the Cabinet Member for

Finance & Resources, and Cabinet Member for Housing, Communities & Wellbeing be approved.

REASON

- i) To apply for, receive and use the grant to help purchase / provide more affordable homes for the district.
- ii) Full Council must approve the capital budget.
- iii) Subject to Council approval, to avoid the requirement to seek Cabinet's approval for the purchase by Horsham District Council of each individual property that would otherwise be required to give effect to this initiative.

EX/86 **COMMERCIAL FOOD WASTE**

Councillor Jay Mercer, Cabinet Member for Environmental Health, Recycling & Waste, introduced the report on Commercial Food Waste. He explained that the report outlined the implications and processes for introducing a commercial food waste collection service by 31 March 2025 which was a requirement through the Environment Act 2021.

Whilst the Council was not legally required to collect food waste from businesses, they would be required to have separate food waste collections by March 2025. Introducing these collections would help retain business and provide a growth opportunity to generate income for the Council. Initial research had shown that 10% of existing customers would be interested in this service.

Several projects would form the process of introducing the weekly food waste collections, which included vehicle procurement, receptacles procurement, communications/marketing and recruitment.

Councillor Colette Blackburn Cabinet Member for Climate, Action and Nature Recovery was fully supportive of the proposal and reinforced the importance of addressing waste within the district which was set out in the Climate Action Strategy. She advised that business owners considered waste seriously and the Council needed to support their operations within the district.

In response to comments regarding setting commercial waste recycling targets and pressing Government on this issue, the Cabinet Member advised that the Council was already setting and monitoring commercial waste targets, and considered on an on-going basis. Further information could be provided if required.

RESOLVED

- i) That the implementation of a weekly food waste collection to our commercial waste provision before 31 March 2025 be approved.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

- ii) That expenditure of £130,000 required to purchase the vehicle and £5,000 for containers in 2024/25 be approved.
- iii) That the revenue expenditure of £51,903.75 and the income of £32,500 with a net expenditure of £19,400 required for the transition to commercial food waste collections in FY24/25 be approved. This expenditure includes staff wages and the ongoing running costs.

REASON

- i) The Environment Act 2021 requires businesses, except micro-firms, to recycle all recyclable waste stream, excluding garden waste and plastic film. As a commercial operator we are not obliged to collect food waste but if we don't then we will likely lose income from businesses who will need to use the service.
- ii) The commercial waste service does not currently offer a food waste offering within the current service provision. To provide a comprehensive competitive commercial waste service a food waste service is required to ensure we are offering businesses all waste streams. Businesses are required to separate their waste in line with legislation by 31 March 2025.
- iii) Full Council approve capital and revenue budgets.

EX/87 DOMESTIC FOOD WASTE WEEKLY COLLECTIONS

Councillor Jay Mercer, Cabinet Member for Environmental Health, Waste and Recycling introduced the report on the Domestic Food Waste Weekly Collections. Following the Government's Simpler Recycling announcement, the report set out the implications and processes for introducing a weekly food waste collection to all Horsham residents, including flats by March 2026.

A number of projects were required to introduce these collections which would include, vehicle and caddy procurement, vehicle storage, routing of rounds, communication and recruitment.

He explained that Members forums had taken place in February, and it had been accepted that fortnightly residual waste collections would be retained, however three weekly collections could be considered in the future if legislation changes.

The Government were due to release capital funding of £1,486,271 by 31 March 2024, however the funding provided would be nearly £1.2m short of the

capital costs required. Additional revenue funding will be released during 2024/25 however current figures were unknown.

Councillor Collette Blackburn, Cabinet Member for Climate, Action and Nature Recovery was fully supportive of the proposals. It was felt that the scheme would be well received by residents, and that the community would be committed to combating unnecessary waste.

Councillor Ruth Fletcher, Cabinet Member for Local Economy & Place acknowledged the positive work undertaken by the consultants, however expressed disappointment in the restrictions and information received from Government. It was hoped that this would improve in the future.

In response to comments raised regarding the readiness of the Mechanical Biological and Treatment Plant (MBT) to process the additional food waste, the Cabinet Member gave assurances that the Head of Recycling & Waste met regularly with the MBT and any concerns will be addressed and collective action taken.

Further discussion included the requirement for further route planning, information on caddy collection and processing and joint working with West Sussex County Council at the Depot.

RESOLVED

- i) That the introduction of a weekly domestic food waste service before 31 March 2026 to all residents in Horsham District be approved.
- ii) That the collection frequencies, as follows be approved:
 - Residual Waste: fortnightly
 - Dry Mixed Recycling: fortnightly
 - Garden Waste: fortnightly
 - Food waste: weekly

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

- iii) That capital expenditure of up to £2,617,000 required to purchase the vehicles (to include in cab technology and CCTV), caddies and bins, is approved. This will be spent across 2024/25 and 2025/26 and profiled into the capital programme in the relevant year by the Director of Resources when the lead times for each capital items are known.
- iv) That revenue expenditure of £25,000 in 2024/25 for route planning required for the transition to weekly food waste collection is approved.

REASON

- i) The Environment Act 2021 set into legislation various requirements for local councils and specifically mandated for all waste collection

authorities (WCAs) in England to provide a weekly collection of food waste from households. On 21 October 2023, Government announced 'Simpler Recycling' waste reforms which stated the new requirement must be provided by 31 March 2026.

- ii) The roll out of weekly food waste collections encompasses a number of projects as detailed in the report, which will all feed into achieving the delivery of the service by 31 March 2026.
- iii) Full Council must approve capital and revenue expenditure.

EX/88 **AN ADDITIONAL SERVICE FOR THE ISOLATED PROPERTY ROUNDS**

Councillor Jay Mercer, Cabinet Member for Environmental Health, Recycling & Waste advised that approval was sought of additional capital and revenue budgets to award a contract to purchase an extra suitable electric vehicle and driver for isolated property rounds within the district.

The Council had a statutory duty to collect domestic waste from all domestic properties within the district. Some properties were inaccessible due to narrow lanes and tracks with no space to turn if using normal large vehicles, and smaller specialised vehicles are already at collection capacity.

An additional smaller vehicle would enable improved manoeuvrability in narrow lanes and would reduce health and safety and accident risks. Cabinet Members were fully supportive of the proposal.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

- i) That the additional capital budget in 2024/25 of £130,000 for an electric vehicle and charging point be approved.
- ii) That the additional revenue budget expenditure in the recycling and waste service 2024/25 budget of £27,000 be approved.

RESOLVED, subject to Council Approval

- i) That an increase in the waste collection service for the isolated rounds be approved.
- ii) That the award of the contract to the winning bidder to purchase a suitable collection vehicle on standard market terms be approved; and
- iii) Authority be delegated to the Director of Communities in consultation with the Head of Legal Services to finalise the terms of and enter into a contract with the winning bidder.

REASON

- i) Full Council must approve the allocation of funds outside of the budget.

EX/89 **DRILL HALL**

Councillor Ruth Fletcher, Cabinet Member for Local Economy & Place, presented the report on Drill Hall, Horsham. She explained its historical importance to the town, utilising the facility and reasons for requiring significant investment.

The Council had been initially approached by Lifespring Church with a proposal to lease the building on the same basis as the previous agreement with the Horsham Branch of the Royal British Legion. During the negotiations and due diligence period it became apparent that the Places of Worship (Enfranchisement) Act of 1920 meant that any lease to a church of more than 21 years gave the right to a church to buy the property. Therefore, essentially, if Lifespring were to acquire the building it would have to be through a purchase. Lifespring had provided a clear vision for the future of Drill Hall. Significant investment would be made to create a modern, fit for purpose church and community centre that would also host events previously run at Drill Hall. Entertainment, Art Exhibitions and Beer Festivals could continue to be held under the new ownership and it would also be available for private hire events.

The Cabinet Member advised, that the Drill Hall was an Asset of Community Value and if Cabinet agreed to the sale, a formal process would be started to give other community organisations the time and opportunity to develop a proposal. A key part of the sale would be to agree covenants to protect the site for community use long into the future as well as overage clauses in the event it is sold.

Both Councillor Sam Raby, Cabinet Member for Housing, Communities & Wellbeing and Councillor Jon Olson, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Green Spaces spoke in support of the recommendation. It was felt that Lifespring had already established good relationships within the district and improving the premises would vastly enhance this important community asset.

Councillor Martin Boffey, Leader of the Council also acknowledged the importance of the Drill Hall. He felt it was an important asset for the town and the proposal would be positive for the future of the historical building.

RESOLVED

- i) That the Drill Hall be sold to Lifespring Church, subject to approval and:

- a) Lifespring obtaining the appropriate planning use class for the building
 - b) Ministry of Defence approval for the sale
 - c) Appropriate covenants being agreed to ensure that the site remains for community use into the long term, with overage clauses to the benefit of HDC also in place should it ever be sold.
 - d) Completion of the Asset of Community Value process
 - e) A satisfactory sale figure for the property being agreed.
- ii) That authority be delegated to the Director of Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Local Economy and Place, to agree the sale once all of the above conditions have been satisfied

REASON

- i) To ensure a sustainable future for the Drill Hall.

EX/90 **ONE-OFF COST OF LIVING SUPPLEMENT**

Councillor Mark Baynham, Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources introduced the report on the one-off cost of living award. He summarised the reasons for recommendation. A permanent Horsham weighting was unaffordable, but the unexpected increase in government funding between Provisional Settlement in December 2023 and Final Settlement in February 2024 would fund this one-off award. This will support council employees on lower grades with managing the increased cost of living and bridge the anticipated delay in the national pay settlement for 2024/25. The projected cost was around £100,000.

The award would be offered to those employees on Grade 4 and below of £450 pro rata, payable monthly from 1 April until the national pay award for 2024/25 could be implemented, but with a maximum duration of 9 months – whichever was earlier.

The Unison Regional Officer and Chair of the Horsham Unison branch has made a positive recommendation to their members to accept the offer.

The Cabinet were supportive of the recommendation and acknowledged that Horsham District was an expensive place to live.

Councillor Sam Raby, Cabinet Member for Housing, Communities & Wellbeing stated that the district was still in the middle of the cost of living crisis with many more families unable to afford food. He was sure that this scheme would benefit and support those employees eligible for it.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

- i) That an increase of £100,000 in the income and expenditure revenue budgets in 2024/25 for the cost-of-living award be approved.

REASON

- i) To support council employees on lower grades with managing the increased cost of living and bridge the anticipated delay in the national pay settlement for 2024/25.
- ii) Full Council must approve the allocation of funds outside budget.

EX/91 **CLEANING SERVICES CONTRACT**

Councillor Ruth Fletcher, Cabinet Member for Local Economy & Place briefed Cabinet on the Cleaning Services Contract. Following the publication of the report she advised a typographical error under item 3.4 where the contractor for Lot 1 was placed 2nd not 4th and contractor for Lot 2 was placed 3rd and not 5th.

The cleaning services contract for Council operated buildings had been recently retendered due to current contracts expiring at the end of May 2024.

An open tender process had taken place with three other Councils on the Shared Procurement Service and both winning bidders provided scores on a 40% quality and 60% price basis which were within budget for 2024/25.

RESOLVED

- i) That the award of the contract to the winning bidders for Lot 1 and Lot 2 of the cleaning contract for the Council's operational buildings on the terms contained in the attached appendix in the report be approved.
- ii) That authority be delegated to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Head of Legal & Democratic Services to finalise terms and conditions of and enter into a contract with the highest scoring bidders for the cleaning contract

REASON

A compliant tender process has taken place to select the winning bidders who have confirmed they can deliver the services for the cleaning of the Council's operational buildings in line with the expiry date of 31 May 2024.

EX/92 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No questions had been received.

EX/93 **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

There were no matters currently outstanding for consideration.

EX/94 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan was noted.

EX/95 **TO CONSIDER MATTERS OF SPECIAL URGENCY**

There were no matters of special urgency to be considered.

The meeting closed at 6.54 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN