

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET  
HELD ON**

12 October 2023

7.30 - 8.38 pm

**PRESENT**

**Committee Members**

Councillor Dan Swords, Leader of the Council  
Councillor David Carter, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing  
Councillor Michael Hardware, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development  
Councillor Nicky Purse, Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Environment  
Councillor Stacy Seales, Portfolio Holder for Community

**Other Councillors**

Councillor Simon Carter  
Councillor Tony Durcan  
Councillor Tony Edwards  
Councillor Alastair Gunn  
Councillor Aiden O'Dell  
Councillor Daniella Pritchard  
Councillor Matthew Saggars  
Councillor Lanie Shears  
Councillor Chris Vince

**Officers**

Andrew Bramidge, Chief Executive  
Niel Churchill, Communications  
Manager  
Neil Euesden, Interim Director of  
Housing  
Simon Freeman, Deputy Chief  
Executive and Director of Finance  
Simon Hill, Director of Governance  
and Corporate Services  
Adam Rees, Senior Governance  
Support Officer

38. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor James Leppard.

39. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

40. **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2023 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

41. **MATTERS ARISING**

The Leader agreed to provide Councillor Edwards with a written update surrounding the Strawberry Star development outside of the meeting in response to Cllr Edwards' question.

42. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

43. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

The questions, together with the answers, are appended to the minutes.

44. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader said the Council had shown support for Israel, inline with Government guidance, by flying the Israeli flag and lighting up the Civic Centre in blue and white.

He highlighted progress on delivering the Council's five priorities, including the backlog in housing repairs being more than halved since June, a reduction in voids, new landscape maintenance practices, new street name signs, the demolition of Occasio House and other such updates.

The issue with taxi drivers being licensed in Wolverhampton operating in Harlow was progressing and a meeting had been secured with the relevant Minister to raise the problems faced.

45. **PETITIONS**

None.

46. **RECENT RELEVANT DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE LEADER, DEPUTY OR PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S)**

None.

47. **HGGT INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY PLAN**

Cabinet received a report on the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Councillor Vince questioned whether the health requirements could be identified now, given that the number of new units was already known. The Leader said he would provide Councillor Vince with a written answer.

Proposed by Councillor Michael Hardware (seconded by Councillor David Carter) it was:

**RESOLVED** that it was recommended to Full Council that:

- A** Subject to all authorities within the Harlow and Gilston Garden (HGGT) partnership approving the updated wording of the revised HGGT Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), the HGGT IDP is supported and agreed and will form the basis of identification

of the infrastructure needed in the Garden Town area. The IDP sets out the necessary infrastructure requirements and their phasing, to support the sites allocated for development within the HGGT area.

- B** Authority is delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, to make any necessary, non-consequential and minor amendments and to liaise with the HGGT Chair and Director.

48. **HGGT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

Cabinet received a report on the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Economic Framework.

The Leader agreed to provide Councillor Durcan with a written update on the Health Security Agency's relocation to the old GSK site.

Proposed by Councillor Michael Hardware (seconded by Councillor Stacy Seales) it was:

**RESOLVED** that:

- A** The findings of the HGGT Strategic Economic Framework, as set out in Appendix A, based on Harlow Council's Economic Strategy be endorsed.
- B** Subject to all authorities approving the HGGT Strategic Economic Framework, the Framework is supported and agreed and will form the basis of the approach to economic development in the Garden Town area.
- C** Cabinet delegates to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, to make any necessary, non-consequential and minor amendments and refer those amendments back to the HGGT Chair and Director.

49. **PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ENFORCEMENT POLICY - CONSULTATION**

Cabinet received a report on a private sector housing enforcement policy consultation.

The Leader agreed to provide Councillor Durcan with written details on how the consultation would be carried out.

Proposed by Councillor Nicky Purse (seconded by Councillor Michael Hardware) it was:

**RESOLVED** that:

- A** Cabinet approves for consultation, with any necessary amendments, the draft Updated Private Rented Sector Housing Enforcement Policy as set out in Appendix A.
- B** Cabinet gives instruction for a 4-week period of consultation and to either:
  - i) Bring the draft Updated Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy back to Cabinet on 30 November 2023 for approval provided no objections are received; or
  - ii) If any objections are received to the proposed policy following the consultation period, that the decision be referred to the next meeting of this Cabinet on 15 February 2024.

50. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM COMMITTEES/WORKING GROUPS/PARTIES AND PANELS**

- a) **Referral from Scrutiny Committee - Review of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Harassment**

Cabinet received a referral from the Scrutiny Committee on support for victims of domestic abuse and sexual harassment.

The Leader agreed to provide written details to Councillor Shears with details of staff trained under the J9 scheme.

Proposed by Councillor Stacy Seales (seconded by Councillor David Carter) it was:

**RESOLVED** that:

- A** The Council seeks to take proactive steps to tackle the 'hot spots' the Police identified for harassment, and consideration be given to putting these locations in the public domain.
- B** Additional 'softer' measures to chart progress in tackling domestic violence (i.e., in addition to conviction rates) be developed.
- C** Agreements between relevant local authorities in supporting those who have escaped domestic violence to return to their home authority are formalised, where this is considered appropriate.

51. **MINUTES OF PANELS/WORKING GROUPS**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the following meetings are noted.

- a) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 27 June 2023 of Harlow Local Highways Panel
- b) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 23 August 2023 of Shareholder Sub Committee

52. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

# **Cabinet – 12 October 2023**

## **Questions from Councillors**

### **1 Councillor Chris Vince to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):**

At the cabinet meeting of 7 September, I asked for an impact report on the many vacancies throughout the council, some of which are being actively recruited for and other which are not, and I was promised this report 'by 5pm the next day.' Over a month has now gone by and I have not received this report. Can I ask again for this report?

### **Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):**

Thank you for your question. I chased this information from services and did not receive the information until Friday 6 October. I reviewed this information on Tuesday 10 October and sent it on to you.

### **Supplementary question from Councillor Chris Vince:**

When it is agreed that information will be provided, can these be included in future minutes?

### **Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):**

Yes, they will be minuted.

### **2 Councillor Chris Vince to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):**

Will the leader of the council recognise that his statement that the last administration failed to secure any funding for Harlow town centre regeneration failed to take into account the Town Investment Plan (the bid for which Harlow received £23.7 m funding) which was submitted to government on 30 October 2020 when Labour was in administration?

### **Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):**

Thank you for your question. No. The funding announcement was secured in June 2021 following meetings in the House of Commons which I attended with Harlow's MP, and Business Cases were actually signed off in October 2022.

### **Supplementary question from Councillor Chris Vince:**

Would you then suggest that the work developed and submitted under the last administration had nothing to do with the bid being accepted?

**Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):**

No I'm not.

**3 Councillor Alastair Gunn to Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

As the town's biggest landlord, Harlow Council will need to take a lead on decarbonising the town's housing stock, especially its social housing. Will Harlow Council be bidding for the £80 million available through Wave 2 of the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund when it opens in November, and what lessons have been learnt from its previous unsuccessful bid to the fund?

**Reply from Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

Harlow Council takes this responsibility very seriously. We have submitted previous bids for both Wave 1 and Wave 2, but unfortunately both bids were unsuccessful. We will bid for the Wave 3 grants when the process opens. We have looked at stakeholder feedback on our bid and have identified areas where we can improve. These include:

- Completion of further retrofit assessments to get a better understanding of the measures required to improve the energy efficiency of the stock.
- Introduce some pilot projects, especially to non-standard properties, will help to us to identify what measures are appropriate and effective for each archetype. It will also enhance awareness of potential risks and plan contingencies accordingly and prove that Harlow Council can deliver energy efficiency measures.
- Investigate and build relationships with supply chains. A condition of the SHDF funding is that work carried out must be completed by a supplier that is PAS 2035 registered. This limits the contractors we can appoint for the work. We have an opportunity to encourage our current non-registered suppliers to upskill their workforce to become PAS 2035 registered.
- Harlow Council will shortly be introducing fit-for-purpose Asset Management software, which includes a module on energy efficiency. Once in place, we will be able to better scrutinise the energy efficiency

data and devise programmes that deliver the most effective measures and provide value for money.

- Break down the administration and ancillary costs of each pilot project in more detail. This will assist with the justification for these costs in future application and to manage resources within the Energy Delivery Team.
- We need to publicise our Corporate Strategy.

We believe that by continuing to build on our knowledge, experience and understanding of domestic retrofit, we will be in a strong position to submit a favourable bid when the next wave of funding is released.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Alastair Gunn:**

How confident are you that the areas highlighted will be improved sufficiently?

**Reply from Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):**

I am confident they will be progressed sufficiently and the bid will be accepted.