

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET
HELD ON**

15 January 2024

7.30 - 8.36 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 James Leppard, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance
Councillor Nicky Purse, Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Environment
Councillor John Steer, Portfolio Holder for Community

Other Councillors

Councillor Tony Durcan
Councillor Tony Edwards
Councillor Stacy Seales
Councillor Chris Vince
Councillor Nancy Watson

Officers

Niel Churchill, Communications
Manager
Simon Freeman, Deputy Chief
Executive and Director of Finance
James Gardner, Assistant Director -
Regeneration
Simon Hill, Director of Governance
and Corporate Services
Amanda Lucas, Graphic Designer
Cara Stevens, Assistant Director,
Housing Operations (People)
Adam Rees, Senior Governance
Support Officer

74. **WEBCAST INTRODUCTION**

The Leader said the meeting was being webcast live and would be available for repeated viewing after the meeting has ended. By continuing to attend the meeting, you were consenting to being filmed and to appearing in the webcast.

75. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

76. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

77. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

78. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

79. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

80. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

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

81. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader said the council had been progressing with its five priorities and looked forward to seeing further success in 2024.

82. **PETITIONS**

None.

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

RESOLVED that the following decisions be noted.

- a) Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing - 1 December 2023
- b) Portfolio Holder for Economic Development - 6 December 2023
- c) Leader of the Council - 13 December 2023

84. **PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ENFORCEMENT POLICY**

Cabinet received a report to adopt a new Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy.

The Leader said he would resend Councillor Durcan information on the number of consultation responses.

Proposed by Councillor Nicky Purse (seconded by Councillor James Leppard) it was:

RESOLVED that:

- A** Cabinet approved The Private Rented Sector Housing Enforcement Policy as set out in Appendix A to the report. The results of the consultation on the proposed policy detailed in Appendix B to the report be noted.
- B** The Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy be adopted and implemented on 24 January 2024.

85. **HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT SPD**

Cabinet received a report to adopt the Health Impact Assessment SPD.

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

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- A** Noted the responses received to the consultation and agrees the consequential amendments made to the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (as set out in Appendix B to the report).
- B** Formally adopted the SPD (as set out in Appendix A to the report) and delegates authority to the Interim Head of Planning and Building Control. in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders, to make and agree any minor or inconsequential amendments to the HIA SPD arising from any matters discussed and agreed at Cabinet.

86. **LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME PROPOSALS**

Cabinet received a report on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme.

Proposed by Councillor James Leppard (seconded by Councillor Michael Hardware) it was:

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- A** Acknowledged the current position regarding the 2023/24 Local Council Tax Support Scheme and endorses continuing stability within the scheme for 2024/25 and recommends to Full Council that the current Local Council Tax Support Scheme remains unchanged for the 2024/25 financial year.
- B** Recommended to Full Council that a Council Tax premium of 100% is levied in respect of empty and substantially unfurnished properties 12 months after the property becomes vacant, with effect from 1 April 2024.

- C** Recommended to Full Council that the application of a Council Tax premium of 100% is levied in respect of dwellings which are unoccupied but substantially furnished (second homes) with effect from 1st April 2025.
- D** Recommended to Full Council that the proposed Empty Homes and Second Homes Policy 2024/25 be adopted, and that the Section 151 Officer is given delegated powers to implement the policy in regard to empty properties in line with the council's requirements and any guidance given by the Secretary of State or regulation.

87. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2023/24: MID-YEAR REVIEW**

Cabinet received a report on the mid-year review of the Treasury Management Strategy.

Councillor Leppard said he would at publishing debt/borrowing benchmarking information in relation to the TMSS.

Proposed by Councillor James Leppard (seconded by Councillor Michael Hardware) it was:

RESOLVED that the Mid-Year Review of the Treasury Management Strategy, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted and referred to Full Council for consideration.

88. **DEBT WRITE OFFS**

Cabinet received a report on debt write offs.

Councillors agreed to place on record, their thanks to the Revenues and Benefits team for their work during the pandemic and their diligence which ensured funds were properly allocated.

Proposed by Councillor James Leppard (seconded by Councillor David Carter) it was:

RESOLVED that:

- A** Irrecoverable Council Tax amounting to £26,966.49 be written off.
- B** Irrecoverable Non-Domestic Rates amounting to £637,414.50 be written off.
- C** Irrecoverable Sundry Debts amounting to £66,917.71 be written off.

D Irrecoverable Housing Benefit overpayments amounting to £44,919.84 be written off.

89. **CABINET APPOINTMENTS**

RESOLVED that the Cabinet appointments be approved as appended to the minutes.

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

None.

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

None.

92. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Cabinet – 15 January 2024

Questions from Councillors

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

At the Full Council meeting on 21 September Councillor Dunne asked a follow up to his question on 20 July which mentioned his concerns about the concerns about the number 9 bus route being cut, which was and still does, mean that bus users are forced to cross a very dangerous road to get an alternate bus.

Can I ask if the council has had any success in writing to Arriva and Essex County Council to resolve this situation and what further action, if any, they are able to take to ensure bus users in Harlow get the service they deserve?

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

We are still working to put pressure on Arriva and Essex County Council and unfortunately, at present, there is no progress to report, except that I will ensure that the ward councillors are invited to the meeting I am organising with these parties on this matter. I remain absolutely committed to ensuring that we restore the number 9 bus route.

Supplementary question from Councillor Vince:

When will the meeting be held?

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

The meeting will be held in January.

2 Councillor Chris Vince to Councillor David Carter (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing):

How much money has been spent on external contractors to 'clear the backlog' of outstanding council house repairs acquired over the last 2 years?

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

The total spend on external contractors to 'clear the backlog' of outstanding council house repairs acquired over the last 2 years was £1,825,208.05 up to the end of November 2023.

Supplementary question from Councillor Chris Vince:

What checks are there on external contractors?

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

All works are post-inspected and are followed up with a phone call to ensure residents are happy with the works.

Changes in bold

Cabinet Appointments 2023/24

Shareholder Sub Committee (7)	
Dan Swords (c)	
David Carter (vc)	
Tony Edwards	
James Leppard	
Nicky Purse	
Lanie Shears	
Nancy Watson	
HTS Group Ltd (3)	HTS (Property and Environment) Board of Directors (3)
Jodi Dunne	Jodi Dunne
Eddie Johnson	Eddie Johnson
Matthew Saggars	Matthew Saggars
HTS (Housing and Regeneration) Board of Directors (3)	Harlow Local Highways Panel (4)
Colleen Morrison	David Carter
Kay Morrison	Tony Edwards
Clive Souter	Kay Morrison
	Lanie Shears
Housing Standards Board (3)	Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Board (1+1 sub)
David Carter (c)	Dan Swords
Tony Edwards	Michael Hardware (sub)
Matthew Saggars	
Growth Board (2)	Essex Flood Partnership (1+1 Sub)
Michael Hardware	Nicky Purse
Dan Swords	John Steer (sub)
Harlow Health and Wellbeing Board (1)	UK Innovation Corridor (1+1 Officer)
John Steer	Michael Hardware
Digital Innovation Corridor (1)	North Essex Parking Partnership (1+1 Sub)
Michael Hardware	Nicky Purse
	John Steer (sub)
Harlow Bus Users Group (1)	
Simon Carter	