

CABINET

Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Tuesday, 24th January, 2023 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor Jason Zadrozny in the Chair;

Councillors Samantha Deakin, David Hennigan, Tom Hollis, Rachel Madden, Sarah Madigan, David Martin, Matthew Relf, Helen-Ann Smith and John Wilmott.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Ruth Dennis, Robert Docherty, Tammy Fox, Theresa Hodgkinson, Peter Hudson, Paul Parkinson, Chris Stephenson, Antonio Taylor, Ross Twinn and Shane Wright.

In Attendance: Housing Peer Challenge Team
Councillor Ian Stephen, Martin Hughes, and Shane Dooner.

CA.46 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non-Registrable Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

CA.47 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 December 2022, be received and approved as a correct record.

CA.48 Social Housing White Paper

Cabinet was provided with a summary update of actions undertaken as a result of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Social Housing White Paper.

As the report was for information purposes only, there were no alternative options for Members to consider.

RESOLVED

that the following be received and duly noted:

- a) the key implications and priorities for Ashfield District Council arising from the then Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Social Housing White Paper and the resulting identified actions;

- b) the progress of the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill through the House of Commons and the House of Lords;
- c) progress against the reported action plan;
- d) the confirmation of the introduction of an 'Ofsted style' inspection regime by the Regulator of Social Housing;
- e) the requirement of the Authority to comply with the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022;
- f) the requirement of the Authority to collect and report the findings of Tenant Satisfaction Measures from 01 April 2023.

Reason:

To update Elected Members on how Ashfield District Council meets the Regulatory regime for Council Housing and complies with the expectations of the Regulator, the Council's progress towards meeting the statutory and regulatory requirements and progress of the development of the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill.

(During consideration of this item and in accordance with the Council's Constitution and the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor Sarah Madigan declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in respect of this matter and agenda item 6 [Housing Rent Setting 2023/24]. Her interest was due to the fact that she was currently a tenant of the Authority but in accordance with Appendix C, part (i) of the Members' Code, she stayed in the meeting and took part in the discussion and voting thereon.)

CA.49 Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Forecast 2022/23 - 2026/27

Cabinet received an update on the forecast financial position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the next five years.

As the report was for information purposes only, Members did not have any alternative options to consider.

RESOLVED

that the impact of the five-year financial forecast and the inherent financial risks within, as presented, be received and noted.

Reason:

To provide Cabinet with an up-to-date medium term financial forecast for the HRA.

CA.50 Housing Rent Setting 2023/24

Cabinet Members received information on the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) rent level and other HRA accommodation related charges for Council tenants for the financial year 2023/24. A request was made that

should delegated authority be granted to the Director of Housing and Assets in respect of this matter, any decisions should also be made in conjunction with the Executive Lead Members for Council and Social Housing and Finance, Revenues and Benefits.

Members considered the alternative option of declining to increase the level of rents and charges as proposed for 2023/24.

RESOLVED

that the following be received and approved:

- a) to set an average rent increase of 7% for all Council house rents for 2023/24;
- b) to set a garage and plot average rent increase of 7% for 2023/24;
- c) to set a weekly amenity charge increase of 7% for all relevant council house properties for 2023/24;
- d) to set an increase to the service charges of 7% to 9 sheltered schemes and 21 blocks of general needs flats;
- e) to set an increase to the communal heating charges of 38% for 2023/24 and to grant delegated authority to the Director of Housing and Assets, in conjunction with the Chief Finance Officer, Executive Lead Member for Council and Social Housing and Executive Lead Member for Finance, Revenues and Benefits, to re-evaluate the charges should the Government extend the Energy Bill Relief Scheme beyond March 2023;
- f) to set an increase for water charges at Brook Street Court of 7.1% for 2023/24;
- g) to set an increase for service charges for the properties at Hawkers Place of Retail Price Index (RPI) at December 2022 for 2023/24.

Reason:

To raise rents and charges in line with Government recommendations and to cover increasing costs as required.

CA.51 Proposed Fees and Charges 2023/24

Cabinet was requested to review its fees and charges as part of setting its annual budget and having considered levels of service demand, inflation and how fees and charges in Ashfield compare with neighbouring councils. In relation to the proposed 5% increase for pre HMO visits and licences, it was suggested that a more appropriate charge would be in the region of 10% or the rate of inflation, whichever is the higher.

Members considered the alternative options as presented in the report for each service area.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Fees & Charges for 2023/24, as outlined at Appendix 1, be approved subject to the percentage increase for pre HMO visits and licences being raised by 10% as opposed to the proposed 5% increase as presented;
- b) all applicable increases to take effect as soon as practically possible after 1 April 2023.

Reasons:

Additional income generated will help towards meeting the inflationary costs of service provision, as well as contributing towards the Council's saving targets and continuing to support the financing of a range of services to Ashfield residents and businesses. In addition, an annual review of Fees and Charges is part of sound financial management practice and a requirement of the Council's Financial Regulations.

CA.52 Council Tax Discounts and Premiums

Cabinet was requested to review and determine the level of Council Tax discounts to be applied for empty properties by the Council with effect from 1 April 2023, the new proposed increases to Council Tax Premiums from April 2024 and to agree the Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme for the new financial year.

Members considered the alternative option of recommending approval of the Council Tax discounts and premiums to Council but declined to enable consideration of a more detailed report.

RESOLVED

that the item be deferred to the February 2023 meeting of Cabinet for further consideration.

Reason:

To ensure the report presented at the next meeting includes detailed information outlining the 12-month consultation arrangements including possible advantages and disadvantages of adopting the proposed changes.

CA.53 Outdoor Sports Booking Policy

Cabinet was asked to approve the draft Outdoor Sports Bookings Policy as identified as being required in the Outdoor Recreation Audit.

Members considered the alternative option of declining to approve the new Policy as presented.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Outdoor Sports Bookings Policy, as presented, be approved and adopted;

- b) delegated authority be granted to the Executive Lead Member for Leisure, Health and Wellbeing, to make any minor changes to the Policy as and when required.

Reason:

Following the 2021 Outdoor Recreation Audit, the recommendations from the auditors included the production of an Outdoor Sports Bookings Policy to ensure clear procedures, processes, terms and conditions for the hiring of Ashfield District Council pitches and facilities was in place.

CA.54 Public Spaces Protection Order 2023 - Proposal

Following conclusion of the consultation exercise to determine if it was satisfied that the provisions of section 59 to 65 of the Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (the Act) were met, Members received a report outlining the outcome of the consultation and inviting Cabinet to recommend to Council that the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) is approved.

Members considered the alternative option of declining to approve the PSPO which would result in the general public continuing to have access to the said areas resulting in the anti-social behaviour issues continuing.

RESOLVED that

- a) it be noted that the consultation exercise has been undertaken on the new proposed Public Spaces Protection Order and acknowledged that the consultation responses, as outlined in the report, largely supported the proposed Order;
- b) Council be recommended to approve the proposed Order, as set out in the draft Order appended to the report, with the PSPO coming into force on 1 March 2023.

Reason:

Cabinet has powers under The Anti-Social Behaviour Crime & Policing Act 2014 to enact a PSPO, and consultation with local residents and statutory consultees has shown significant support for the introduction of barriers to restrict public access in order to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in the target areas.

The meeting closed at 12.20 pm

Chairman.