

## **Minutes of the proceedings of the Council**

**Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 at 6.00pm  
in the Council Chamber, The Council House, Priory Road, Dudley**

### **Present:**

Councillor A Goddard (Mayor)  
Councillor P Lee (Deputy Mayor)  
Councillors S Ali, A Aston, M Aston, P Atkins, C Bayton, D Bevan, I Bevan, H Bills, D Borley, S Bothul, P Bradley, R Buttery, K Casey, B Challenor, S Clark, J Clinton, Dr R Clinton, R Collins, D Corfield, J Cowell, T Creed, T Crumpton, A Davies, K Denning, P Dobb, P Drake, M Dudley, C Eccles, J Elliott, M Evans, J Foster, M Hanif, D Harley, P Harley, S Henley, A Hopwood, M Howard, L Johnson, S Keasey, I Kettle, E Lawrence, A Lees, K Lewis, W Little, P Lowe, J Martin, P Miller, N Neale, S Phipps, R Priest, A Qayyum, K Razzaq, C Reid, S Ridley, M Rogers, T Russon, P Sahota, D Stanley, A Taylor, E Taylor, L Taylor-Childs, A Tromans, M Webb, K Westwood and M Westwood together with the Chief Executive and other Officers.

### **Prayers**

The Mayor led the Council in prayer.

---

### **72 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors C Barnett, A Hughes, S Mughal, C Sullivan and Q Zada.

---

### **73 Declarations of Interest**

Declarations of interests, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, were made by the following Members:

Councillor A Aston – Pecuniary interest in any matters directly affecting his employment with West Midlands Ambulance Service.

Councillor M Evans and A Taylor - Any matters relating to Castle Hill development and all references to Dudley Zoo - Non-pecuniary interests as Members of Dudley and West Midlands Zoological Society Limited.

Councillors D Stanley and A Taylor - West Midlands Combined Authority – Transport Delivery Committee - Non-pecuniary interests as Members of the Committee.

Councillor P Miller - Any matters relating to adult social care – Non-pecuniary interest as his wife received care in a care home.

Councillor K Casey – Any references to West Midlands Combined Authority – Pecuniary interest in any matters directly affecting his employment with West Midlands Combined Authority.

Councillor I Bevan – Any references to Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust/Russells Hall Hospital – Pecuniary interest in any matters directly affecting his employment.

Councillors I Kettle and W Little – Any references to West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority - Non-pecuniary interests as Members of the Authority.

Councillor E Taylor - Non-pecuniary interest as her daughter was employed by Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust.

Councillor N Neale – Pecuniary interest in any matters directly affecting her employment with the Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust.

Councillor S Henley – Any references to matters affecting West Midlands Fire Service – Pecuniary interest in any matters directly affecting his employment.

---

74 **Mayor's Announcements**

There were no announcements at this meeting.

---

---

75 **Suspension of Council Procedure Rules**

It was moved by Councillor P Harley, seconded by Councillor P Bradley and

**Resolved**

That, under Council Procedure Rule 22.1, the time restriction of five minutes referred to in Council Procedure Rule 14.4, be suspended to enable the Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources and the Lead Spokespersons from the Political Groups to speak for longer than five minutes on Minute No. 76 below and to enable the Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources to speak for longer than five minutes to exercise the right of reply to the debate.

---

76 **Medium Term Financial Strategy and Council Tax Setting 2024/25**

A joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Legal was submitted, setting out recommendations concerning the deployment of General Fund revenue resources, a number of statutory calculations that had to be made by the Council and the Council Tax to be levied for the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2025.

Following a speech by Councillor S Clark (Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources) it was moved by Councillor S Clark, and seconded by Councillor P Bradley, that the recommendations set out in the report submitted to the meeting be approved and adopted.

Councillor S Ali addressed the meeting on behalf of the Labour Group.

Councillor M Westwood addressed the meeting on behalf of the Independent Group.

The original motion was then the subject of general debate by the Council.

The following amendment was moved by Councillor R Priest and seconded by Councillor S Keasey:-

“That in addition to the recommendations in the report submitted to Council, the Chief Executive be instructed not to review the scope of library services as part of the Total Operating Model as currently proposed in the report.”

The amendment was put to the vote and lost.

During further debate on the original motion, the following amendment was moved by Councillor S Keasey and seconded by Councillor M Westwood:-

“That in addition to the recommendations in the report submitted, the Council

- (1) Instructs the Chief Executive to instigate a review of the Members’ Allowances Scheme, including convening an Independent Remuneration Panel as required by the Local Authorities (Member Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, with a view to reducing the total amount of Members’ Allowances to save £120,000 and subsequently to create a pot of £120,000 for Community Forum grants (split equally between the 24 wards).
- (2) Recommends that, subject to the outcome of (1) above, an exception be made to any spending controls that are in place so that this funding can be distributed in line with recommendations from the Your Home, Your Forum Grant Panels.”

The amendment was debated by the Council. Councillor S Clark was then afforded and exercised the right of reply to the amendment pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 14.11(b).

The amendment was put to the vote and lost.

The original motion was then debated further by the Council.

At the conclusion of the debate, Councillor S Clark exercised his right to reply pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 14.9.

The original motion was put to the vote and it was

## Resolved

- (1) That the Council note:-
  - (a) The actions of the External Auditors as set out in paragraphs 12 and 13 of the report.
  - (b) The forecast variances to budget in 2023/24 and progress with delivery of savings set out in paragraph 17 and Appendices C and D of the report.
  - (c) The advice of the Director of Finance and Legal on future saving measures and Council Tax as set out in paragraph 53 of the report.
- (2) That with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2025, for properties which have been unoccupied and unfurnished for between one and five years, an Empty Homes Premium of 100% be applied, resulting in a 200% Council Tax charge being payable in these circumstances, as set out in paragraph 32 of the report.
- (3) That with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2025, for properties that have been empty and furnished for more than one year, a premium of 100% be applied, resulting in a 200% Council Tax charge being payable in these circumstances, and that authority be delegated to the Director of Finance and Legal, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources, to approve a policy for exceptions to this premium as set out in paragraph 33 of the report.
- (4) That with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2025, discretionary business rates relief be limited to charities whose registered office is in and/or only provide services to people who live in the Dudley Borough and that authority be delegated to the Director of Finance and Legal, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources, to amend the policy to give effect to this change as set out in in paragraph 38 of the report.
- (5) That the budget for 2024/25, and Directorate allocations, including the Public Health budget, as set out in the report, be approved:

## Revenue Budget Allocations 2024/25

Directorate	£m
Adult Social Care	129.304
Children's Services	97.357
Health and Wellbeing	3.477
Chief Executive	0.252
Corporate and Treasury	15.225
Finance and Legal	6.544
Digital, Commercial and Customer Services	5.674
Environment	55.695
Housing and Community	3.007
Regeneration and Enterprise	15.907
<b>Total Service Budget</b>	<b>332.442</b>

- (6) That the statutory amounts required to be calculated for the Council's spending, contingencies and contributions to reserves; income and use of reserves; transfers to and from its collection fund; and Council Tax requirement, as referred to in Section 67(2)(b) be now calculated by the Council for the year 2024/25 in accordance with Sections 31A, 31B and 34 to 36 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 as follows:
- (a) £ 826.516m      being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act. *(The Council's spending, contingencies, contributions to reserves, and specified transfers from the general fund to the collection fund)*
- (b) £ 670.935m      being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Sections 31A (3) of the Act. *(The Council's income, use of reserves, and specified transfers from the collection fund to the general fund)*

(c) £ 155.581m being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year.

(d) £1,646.7067 being the amount at (c) above divided by the Council Tax base 94,480.09, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B (1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.

(e) Dudley Council Tax for each Valuation Band

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
<b>£</b>							
1,097.80	1,280.77	1,463.74	1,646.71	2,012.64	2,378.58	2,744.51	3,293.41

being the rounded amounts given by multiplying the amount at (d) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different bands.

(f) Precepts for each Valuation Band

That it be noted that for the year 2024/25, the major precepting authorities have issued the following amounts in precepts to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below:

	<b>A</b> £	<b>B</b> £	<b>C</b> £	<b>D</b> £	<b>E</b> £	<b>F</b> £	<b>G</b> £	<b>H</b> £
West Midlands Police	143.70	167.65	191.60	215.55	263.45	311.35	359.25	431.10
West Midlands Fire & Rescue	50.13	58.49	66.84	75.20	91.91	108.62	125.33	150.40

- (7) That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts in Appendix M, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992, agrees the following levels of Council Tax for 2024/25.

Valuation Bands

<b>A</b> £	<b>B</b> £	<b>C</b> £	<b>D</b> £	<b>E</b> £	<b>F</b> £	<b>G</b> £	<b>H</b> £
1291.63	1506.91	1722.18	1937.46	2368.00	2798.55	3229.09	3874.91

- (8) That the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as set out in the report, be approved.
- (9) That the Council determine that a referendum relating to Council Tax increases is not required in accordance with Chapter 4ZA of Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as set out in paragraph 50 of the report.
- (10) That the Cabinet Members, Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and Directors be authorised to take all necessary steps to implement the proposals contained in the report, in accordance with the Council's Financial Management Regime.

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 16.4 and under the provisions of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, the voting on the motion was recorded as follows:-

For (40)

Councillors P Atkins, D Bevan, I Bevan, D Borley, S Bothul, P Bradley, R Buttery, B Challenor, S Clark, Dr R Clinton, J Clinton, R Collins, D Corfield, T Creed, A Davies, P Dobb, M Dudley, J Elliott, M Evans, A Goddard, D Harley, P Harley, S Henley, A Hopwood, L Johnson, I Kettle, E Lawrence, P Lee, A Lees, K Lewis, W Little, N Neale, S Phipps, K Razzaq, M Rogers, T Russon, D Stanley, A Taylor, L Taylor-Childs and M Webb.

Against (27)

Councillors S Ali, A Aston, M Aston, C Bayton, H Bills, K Casey, J Cowell, T Crumpton, K Denning, P Drake, C Eccles, J Foster, M Hanif, M Howard, S Keasey, P Lowe, J Martin, P Miller, R Priest, A Qayyum, C Reid, S Ridney, P Sahota, E Taylor, A Tromans, K Westwood and M Westwood.

---

77 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business for consideration at this meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm

MAYOR