

Meeting of the Council

**Monday, 3rd March, 2025 at 6.15pm
in the Council Chamber
The Council House, Priory Road, Dudley**

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council for the purpose of transacting the business set out in the numbered agenda items listed below.

Agenda - Public Session (Meeting open to the public and press)

1. Apologies for absence
2. To receive any declarations of interest under the Members' Code of Conduct
3. Mayor's Announcements
4. To receive reports from meetings as follows:

Meeting of the Cabinet dated 12th February, 2025

Councillor P Harley to move:

(a) Feasibility study into a Town Council (Pages 7 - 9)
5. Petition for Debate – Keep DB Leisure a Public Service

Continued...

6. Notices of Motion

- (a) To consider the following notice of motion received from Councillor E Cobb on 12th December, 2024:

Motion on Protecting Public Leisure Services in Dudley Borough

This Council notes:

1. Leisure provision across Dudley borough plays an essential role in the health and well-being of all residents.
2. Residents highly value the services provided by DB Leisure.
3. It is vital for facilities to be accessible across the borough to ensure children can learn the critical life skill of swimming.

This Council further notes with concern:

- The invitation for private providers to run the borough's leisure services would, in effect, privatise the service.

This Council believes:

1. Maintaining leisure centres in Dudley, Halesowen, Stourbridge, and Brierley Hill is essential for supporting the health and well-being of all residents.
2. DB Leisure, as a public service, is best equipped to serve the public interest and operate solely for the benefit of the citizens it serves.
3. Privatisation risks introducing a profit motive, which could negatively impact:
 - a. Staff terms and conditions.
 - b. Prices paid by residents.
 - c. The public purse.
4. Residents most in need must retain discounted access to leisure facilities.
5. Staff at DB Leisure should receive fair treatment, including equitable pay and pension benefits comparable to other council employees.
6. Council taxpayers should not be burdened with an expensive 10- or 15-year contract that enables an external organisation to profit from leisure services.

This Council resolves to recommend that the Cabinet should:

1. Retain DB Leisure as a service directly managed and run by the local authority.
2. Ensure leisure provision continues to include:
 - a. A swimming pool in Dudley, Halesowen, and Stourbridge.
 - b. A running track in Brierley Hill.
3. Terminate the current contract procurement process and stop further expenditure of time and money on it.

- (b) To consider the following notice of motion received from Councillor A Tromans on 1st February, 2025:

Motion Calling on the West Midlands Pensions Fund (WMPF) to make Ethical Investments

The West Midlands Pension Fund (WMPF) is one of the largest of its kind with thousands of members drawn from seven local authorities and more than 800 employers delivering public services in the region.

By investing its member's contributions ethically, the WMPF can be an agent for change through divestment away from arms manufacturers and fossil fuels.

This Council notes that:

- The West Midland Pension Fund (WMPF) currently invests over £231 million in companies as identified in Wolverhampton Pension Committee's Responsible Investment Activities Report of June 2024. Some of these companies profit from arms sales to regimes which breach international law and carry out human rights abuses.
- There are many conflict zones in the world at present such as Yemen, Palestine and Sudan. One of the most impactful measures residents of this borough, and the West Midlands region, can take to contribute towards peace is demanding that their pension funds no longer invest in arms manufacturing and sales.

This Council also notes that:

- A motion, passed unanimously by members of this authority in October 2019, called on WMPF to divest from fossil fuels and one year later declared a climate emergency.

This Council resolves to:

Step up divestment:

The Chief Executive to write to WMPF on behalf of the Council urging WMPF to:

- Develop a clear and targeted plan to divest from fossil fuels and arms sales within 12 months vis-a-vis proactive escalation, time-limited targeting, and exclusion.
- Align with the West Midlands's Combined Authority to make produce net zero emissions by 2041
- Commit to divesting the millions it invests in companies involved either directly or indirectly in arms production, including exploring LGPS Central pool for the creation of an ethical fund with robust exclusions, amending WMPFs existing "sustainable" funds to exclude complicit companies and the regular routine opportunities to restructure private equity and Index portfolios.

Ensure Transparency:

Request WMPF to implement robust and transparent reporting mechanisms, including annual updates on:

- Investments in fossil fuels, arms, and companies operating in occupied territories as defined in international law.
- Progress towards divestment.

Promote Ethical Reinvestment

- Work with WMPF to explore reinvestment in industries aligned with more ethical and environmental priorities, such as renewable energy, social housing and sustainable infrastructure.

Empower Representation:

- Mandate Dudley Council's representative on WMPF to advocate for divestment from fossil fuels and arms providing regular updates to this Council on progress.
7. [Composition and Membership of Committees \(Pages 10 - 12\)](#)
 8. Questions from Members under Council Procedure Rule 11
 9. To consider any business not on the agenda which by reason of special circumstances the Mayor is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972

Distribution: All Members of the Council



Interim Chief Executive

Dated: 21st February, 2025

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Meeting of the Council - 3rd March, 2025

Report of the Interim Chief Executive

Feasibility Study into a Town Council

Purpose of report

1. To seek the Council's approval to undertake a feasibility study to establish a town council in Cradley and to confirm the allocation of funds for the feasibility study to be undertaken.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended:-
 - That the Council approves a feasibility study into the creation of a town council in Cradley being undertaken and confirms the allocation of the sum of £75,000 from the contingency fund in order to carry out the feasibility study.

Background

3. A report titled "Proposal to undertake a feasibility study to establish a Town Council" was approved at the Cabinet meeting on 12th February 2025. The full report to the Cabinet is available on the [Council's website](#). The report to the Cabinet sets out the background to this matter.
4. The funding referred to in this report is for the feasibility study only and will not be used in respect of the Community Governance Review referred to in the report to the Cabinet.
5. There have been no consultations undertaken. The feasibility study will include details of the level of consultation that is required.

Finance

6. The financial implications are set out in the report to the Cabinet. In line with the Cabinet decision, the Council is recommended to confirm the allocation of a sum of £75,000 from the contingency fund to carry out the feasibility study.

Law

7. The legal implications relating to the creation of a town council are set out in the report to Cabinet. If the Council is required to enter into any contracts in order for the feasibility study to be undertaken these will need to be procured and approved in a compliant manner.

Risk Management

8. In undertaking a feasibility study the Council is not committing to creating a town council and there should therefore be no additional risk to the Council in allocating this funding beyond the risks identified in the report to Cabinet concerning the proposal to undertake a feasibility study.

Equality Impact

9. There are no equality impacts from this report, however individual projects or work areas that contribute to this report will carry out their own assessments regarding equality.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

10. Human Resources (HR) involvement in town councils is critical to ensuring that the municipal workforce operates efficiently, effectively, and in alignment with the council's objectives. Town councils are local government bodies that oversee the delivery of public services and the management of community resources, and HR plays a central role in managing the people who carry out these services, including recruitment, training, upskilling.

Commercial/Procurement

11. The commercial and procurement issues are set out in the report to Cabinet. The Council will ensure that any contracts necessary for the feasibility study are procured in a compliant manner.

Environment / Climate Change

12. Town and parish councils can play a crucial role in the success of environmental initiatives by being visible champions for environmental projects and facilitating community engagement.

Council Plan

13. The implications relating to the Council Plan are set out in the report to Cabinet.



Interim Chief Executive

Report Author: Tom Senior – Interim Lead for Law and Governance (Interim Monitoring Officer)
Telephone: 01384 816543
Email: Tom.Senior@dudley.gov.uk

Background Document

[The Report titled “Proposal to undertake a feasibility study to establish a Town Council” which was approved at Cabinet on 12th February 2025](#)

Meeting of the Council – 3rd March, 2025

Report of the Interim Lead for Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Composition and Membership of Committees

Purpose of Report

1. To report on revisions to the composition and membership of Committees for the remainder of 2024/25 municipal year.

Recommendation

2. That the Council consider and determine revisions to the composition and membership of Committees in accordance with the relevant political balance requirements of Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Background

3. At the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council on 30th January, 2025, the Council approved the composition and membership of Committees based on the political balance of the Council at that time.
4. On 6th February, 2025, the Monitoring Officer was advised that Councillor S Edwards was no longer a Member of the Labour Group and would be serving as an Independent Councillor.
5. There are now 3 political groups represented on the Council:-

Conservative Group (35 seats)

Labour Group (31 seats)

Unity Group (4 seats) – comprising 3 Liberal Democrat Councillors and 1 Independent Councillor.

There are two other independent Members. The proportionality Regulations provide that a political group is constituted where two or more Members of the Council give notice that they wish to be treated as a group.

6. Under Sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Council is required to provide for political balance on Committees. A review of the composition and membership of Committees is required as a result of the change in the overall political balance of the Council.
7. Prior to 6th February, 2025, Councillor S Edwards was appointed to seats allocated to the Labour Group on the Fit for the Future Select Committee and the Adult Social Care Select Committee. Councillor Edwards was elected by the Council in May, 2024 to serve as the Chair of the Fit for the Future Select Committee.
8. In view of the change to the overall political balance of the Council, the Conservative Group is now entitled to one additional Committee seat which was previously allocated to the Labour Group. The Leader will make a recommendation at the Council meeting concerning proposed revisions to the membership of Committees.

Finance

9. The financial implications arising from the maintenance of the Council's Constitution and the implementation of the Council's governance arrangements are met from existing resources.

Law

10. Relevant statutory provisions regarding the Council's Constitution and the appointment of Committees are contained in the Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000, together with any Regulations, Orders and Statutory Guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
11. The power to appoint Committees and to delegate functions to Committees and Officers is set out in Sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972.
12. The political proportionality arrangements that apply to the allocation of seats on Committees is set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.

13. The political balance 'rules' provide that political groups are entitled to be allocated seats on Committees in accordance with the proportion of seats they hold on the Council.
14. Section 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 authorises the Council to approve different arrangements (eg: not reflecting political balance) provided that no Member of the Council votes against them.

Risk Management

15. There are no material risks arising from this report that need to be reflected in the Council's Risk Management Framework.

Equality Impact

16. The Council's Constitution sets out the arrangements made by the Council for the proper discharge of all its powers, duties and functions, including those relating to equality and diversity and in respect of children and young people.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

17. There are no direct implications arising from this report.

Commercial/Procurement

18. The Constitution includes the Council's Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

Environment/Climate Change

19. The Constitution and associated governance arrangements reflect the Council's commitment to the environment and climate change. The Council has adopted an Environmental Policy and the Dudley Climate Change Action Plan.

Council Plan

20. The Council's Constitution and associated governance arrangements underpin the delivery of the Council Plan objectives.



Tom Senior
Interim Lead for Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)