

Meeting of the Council

**Monday, 15th July, 2024 at 6.00pm
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)

Prayers

1. Apologies for absence
2. To receive any declarations of interest under the Members' Code of Conduct
3. To confirm and sign the minutes of the annual meeting of the Council held on 16th May, 2024 as a correct record (Pages 9 - 25)
4. Mayor's Announcements
5. To receive reports from meetings as follows:

Meeting of the Cabinet dated 15th July, 2024

Councillor P Harley to move:

- (a) 2023/2024 Provisional Revenue and Capital Outturn and Medium Term Financial Strategy
(Pages 26 - 70)

Meetings of the Audit and Standards Committee dated 24th April and 8th July, 2024

Councillor K Denning to move:

(b) Annual Report of the Audit and Standards Committee 2023/24
(Pages 71 - 82)

(c) Treasury Management (Pages 83 - 92)

6. Constitution and Related Matters (Pages 93 - 97)

7. Notices of Motion

(a) To consider the following notice of motion received from Councillor S Phipps on 16th May, 2024:

Police Station Closures

In a report to the West Midlands Strategic Police and Crime Board on 24th October 2023, Police and Crime Commissioner, Simon Foster, proposed the closure of thirty police stations across the West Midlands, including two in the Dudley Borough: Brierley Hill and Halesowen.

This Council recognises that many members of the public wish to see neighbourhood police officers based in their local area and for them to be visible in our communities. Petitions have been collected to demonstrate opposition to the proposed closures, including a petition of over 600 names submitted to West Midlands Police by James Morris MP, and a petition of 870 names submitted by Councillors Adam Davies and Wayne Little.

The closure of Brierley Hill Police Station would also see the only publicly accessible front desk within the Dudley Borough moved to the borough's northern edge at Castlegate. This is far less accessible than the existing front desk which is located within the strategic centre of the borough and can be better accessed by people from Halesowen, Wordsley, Kingswinford, Stourbridge and Brierley Hill.

The Council notes the report states that Neighbourhood Policing Teams would be relocated in their local area when these police stations are closed. However, there has been no formal discussions with local stakeholders, including elected members, to establish how this will be achieved and when.

The Council notes that the record of successive Police and Crime Commissioner's to restore a base for the Stourbridge Neighbourhood Policing Team has been poor.

Whilst Stourbridge Police Station closed in 2017, a new base has only just been announced but no information has been released as to when this will open.

Therefore, this Council recognises the risk that both Brierley Hill and Halesowen police stations may close without Neighbourhood Policing Teams retaining an acceptable local base from which to work. This would mean officers are relocated away from our towns in far more remote bases to the communities they help to protect, and the public would have farther to travel to access a publicly accessible front desk amongst the majority of the south and west of the borough.

Additionally, this Council recognises the strategic placement of Brierley Hill Police Station within the strategic centre of Dudley Borough. The Council notes the work that has already been undertaken, prompted by the work of Councillors Adam Davies and Wayne Little, with regards to retaining the police station building as a facility for public sector workforces and services – including West Midlands Police Teams that serve the nearby geographic area.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- Instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Chief Constable of West Midlands Police requesting formal consultation with Dudley Council's Elected Members in the areas covered by both the Halesowen and Brierley Hill Neighbourhood Policing Teams, and Response Team in the case of Brierley Hill.
- Instruct the Leader of the Council to write to West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, Simon Foster, informing him of

this Council's resolve to ensure both Halesowen and Brierley Hill police stations remain open, unless a sufficient alternative base is found and only when the existing Neighbourhood and Response Policing Teams have been relocated should any existing stations close.

- Instruct the Deputy Chief Executive to continue her work with stakeholders to retain the Brierley Hill Police Station building for public sector use, including as a base for the Neighbourhood and Response Policing Team and a publicly accessible front desk, and writes to the Mayor of the West Midlands to request his support for this project through the One Public Estate programme.
 - Request the Chairs of the relevant Your Home, Your Forum meeting to include an agenda item to discuss the proposed station closures, and formally invite representatives from West Midlands Police to attend and present their proposals to the meeting.
- (b) To consider the following notice of motion received from Councillor S Keasey on 17th June, 2024:

Plan for Tackling Trees on Council Land Causing Extreme Nuisance

This Council instructs the Cabinet Member for Highways and Environmental Services to draw up a comprehensive plan for addressing trees on Council land that cause extreme nuisance. This plan should include:

1. A clear definition of what constitutes an 'extreme' nuisance in terms of trees.
2. Specific actions that can be taken to mitigate such nuisances.
3. A realistic assessment of the potential costs associated with implementing these actions.

Trees are undeniably a beautiful and integral part of our landscape, providing numerous environmental and aesthetic benefits. They enhance the visual appeal of our neighborhoods, improve air quality, and offer habitats for wildlife. However, it is also acknowledged that in certain situations, trees can become a source of significant nuisance to residents.

Examples of such nuisances include:

- Blocking natural daylight, thereby reducing the quality of life and increasing costs for those affected.
- Physical contact with properties, potentially causing damage or posing safety risks.
- Excessive leaf drop during autumn, leading to clogged drains, slippery paths, and increased maintenance requirements.

Currently, Council policy addresses trees that are dead, dying, or dangerous. While this policy is essential for managing immediate safety concerns, it does not adequately cover scenarios where trees cause extreme nuisance but do not fall into the aforementioned categories.

Expanding the policy to include trees causing extreme nuisance is necessary for the following reasons:

- **Quality of Life:** Prolonged reduction in daylight can lead to increased energy consumption and negatively impact mental health and well-being.
- **Property Damage:** Trees that physically touch or overhang properties can cause structural damage, potentially leading to costly repairs.
- **Maintenance and Safety:** Excessive leaf drop can create hazardous conditions on public pathways and increase the burden on municipal maintenance services.

Specific proposals are:

1. **Definition of Extreme Nuisance:** Develop a comprehensive definition that includes criteria such as the degree of daylight blockage, proximity to property and volume of leaf drop.
2. **Mitigation Actions:** Outline practical steps that can be taken to reduce the nuisance, such as pruning, crown thinning, or selective removal. Establish guidelines for prioritising actions based on the severity of the nuisance and the impact on residents.

3. **Cost Assessment:** Evaluate the financial implications of implementing these measures, including both initial costs and potential long-term savings from reduced maintenance and damage prevention.

By addressing these issues, the Council can balance the preservation of our natural landscape with the need to ensure a high quality of life for all residents.

Instructing the Cabinet Member for Highways and Environmental Services to develop this plan will demonstrate our commitment to proactive and responsive governance. It will ensure that our policies evolve to meet the changing needs of our community, safeguarding both our natural environment and the well-being of our residents.

The Council hereby approves this motion and instructs the Cabinet Member for Highways and Environmental Services to present the outlined plan at the next appropriate meeting.

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



Chief Executive

Dated: 5th July, 2024

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General

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