

Minutes of the Cabinet
Thursday 29th January 2026 at 4.00pm
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

Present:

Cabinet Members

Councillor P Harley (Leader - Chair)

Councillor P Bradley (Deputy Leader - Vice-Chair)

Councillors P Atkins, I Bevan, S Clark, D Corfield, A Goddard, E Lawrence, W Little and S Phipps.

Opposition Group Members nominated to attend the Cabinet

Labour Group: Councillors A Aston, S Ali, J Cowell, Q Mughal, S Ridney and P Sahota.

Reform UK Group: Councillor S Keasey

The Black Country Party: Councillor P Lowe

Observer

Councillor B Collins.

Officers

B Heran (Chief Executive), A Razzaq (Director of Legal, Compliance and Assurance - Monitoring Officer), L Kitto (Interim Director of Resources - Section 151 Officer), K Jones (Group Director - Housing and Assets), N McGurk (Group Director – Communities and Growth) and H Mills (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

Together with other officers and members of the public.

52 **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence received for this meeting.

53 **Declarations of Interest**

No Member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

54 **2026/27 Housing Review Account (HRA) Medium Term Financial Plan and Rent Setting**

Following advice from the Monitoring Officer, it was moved by the Leader (Councillor P Harley), and seconded by Councillor I Bevan, for the item on 2026/27 Housing Review Account Medium Term Financial Plan and Rent Setting to be withdrawn from the agenda.

The decision was based upon the proposed recommendations seeking approval of HRA rent setting from Full Council, however, the decision was solely within the scope of the Cabinet. Withdrawal of the item would allow the opposition to have further opportunity to put forward any recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet. The Chair of the relevant Scrutiny Committee would be invited to consider any recommendations in advance of the next scheduled Cabinet meeting.

Resolved

That the report on 2026/27 Housing Review Account Medium Term Financial Plan and Rent Setting, be withdrawn.

55 **Council Tax Base 2026/27**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Interim Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) on the Council Tax Base for 2026/27 financial year.

The recommendations, as set out in paragraph 2 of the report, were moved by the Leader (Councillor P Harley) and seconded by Councillor P Bradley.

Resolved

- (1) That a Council Tax Base for Dudley of £98,517.83 Band D equivalent properties, for 2026/27, as calculated in Appendix 1 to the report submitted, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, be approved.
 - (2) That it be noted that the Tax Base, once formally determined, cannot subsequently be altered and will be used when the Council sets the Council Tax for 2026/27.
-

56 Review of Winter Maintenance

The Cabinet considered an updated report from the Director of Economy and Infrastructure on the strategic review of the winter maintenance programme following Storm Goretta. The report set out the scope of the review and the Council's intended approach to community engagement and future winter weather preparedness.

In presenting the report, the Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure (Councillor S Phipps) acknowledged and expressed appreciation for the work undertaken by the service to keep the Borough moving during the severe weather, although recognised that a number of issues had been identified despite their best efforts. It was noted that grit bins and gritting services could not be provided for every road in the Borough, and that focus would be on prioritising areas of greatest need. The review would take into account feedback from Elected Members, the public, major healthcare organisations and other key infrastructure organisations to ensure that the Council had a robust service that met the needs of the Borough.

The recommendations, as set out in paragraph 2 of the report, were moved by Councillor S Phipps and seconded by Councillor P Bradley.

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure (Councillor S Phipps) responded to questions from Opposition Group Members regarding the impact of the 2025/26 budget on winter maintenance funding and the need for assurances that resources would be available to support any recommendations or outcomes arising from the review. Questions were also raised regarding support for vulnerable residents and ensuring carers had the continued ability to access patients; the costs associated with the removal of grit bins; what had happened to the removed bins and any potential additional costs should replacements be required; and opportunities to engage with Community Champions or volunteers to support with essential work within the Community.

Concerns were raised by an Opposition Group Member regarding the handling of the removal of certain grit bins, which they had witnessed, and the resulting damage to bins that could otherwise have been reused.

Members also discussed the importance of acknowledging the efforts of Community Volunteers who had gone above and beyond to support their communities during Storm Goretti. It was suggested that such individuals be nominated to receive a Mayor's Award at the Mayor's Ball.

Resolved

That the Council conduct a full strategic review of the Winter Maintenance Programme, as outlined in the report submitted, to include:

- Assessment of primary and secondary gritting routes.
- Review of grit bin usage, bin locations and refill protocols.
- Review of winter maintenance equipment and stock.
- Assessment of communications.
- Analysis of enquiry responses and customer feedback.

57 **Dudley Local Plan – Main Modifications and Consultation**

The Cabinet considered an updated report from the Director of Economy and Infrastructure on the progress of the Dudley Local Plan (DLP), which had undergone an Examination in Public.

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure (Councillor S Phipps) welcomed the report and expressed his gratitude to the team for the work undertaken on the DLP during challenging and changing circumstances.

It was noted that the DLP had almost been fully endorsed by the Inspector, with the final stage requiring the Council to review the main modifications requested by the Inspector and include these within a public consultation. The modifications were still being drafted and agreed with the Inspector at this stage.

It was emphasised that no changes had been requested to greenbelt allocations, which was seen as a vindication of the Council's Greenbelt Policy maintained over recent years. However, due to changes in Government Planning Policy, it was expected that the DLP would need to be reviewed immediately rather than within the usual five-year timeframe, and that the plan would need to be updated in accordance with the latest national legislation, which made the protection of countryside areas increasingly difficult.

The recommendations, as set out in paragraph 2 of the report, were moved by Councillor S Phipps and seconded by Councillor P Bradley.

The Leader (Councillor P Harley) concurred with the comments of Councillor S Phipps and expressed his appreciation to the team for their tireless work in advancing the Dudley Local Plan. He also stressed the need for continued support from all Political Groups and local MPs to protect Dudley's greenbelt particularly in light of recent recommendations from the Housing Minister.

Resolved

- (1) That the update on the progress of the Dudley Local Plan (DLP) Examination in Public and the Inspector's correspondence, be noted.
 - (2) That the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure, be authorised to approve the proposed Main Modifications to the Plan and their publication for a six-week consultation.
-

58 **Infrastructure Funding Statement 2025**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Economy and Infrastructure on the Infrastructure Funding Statement 2025 and received an update on available Community Infrastructure Levy monies.

The recommendations, as set out in paragraph 2 of the report, were moved by Councillor S Phipps and seconded by Councillor P Bradley.

While the report was welcomed by Opposition Group Members, further information was requested on the location of some of the projects.

In referring to Appendix 2 to the report submitted, Councillor S Ali referred to the project identified as Central Clinic in Dudley Town Centre, proposed as an NHS Health and Wellbeing Centre. It was noted that work had progressed at stakeholder level to realise the Government announcement of 250 neighbourhood health centres, and it was considered an ideal opportunity for the Council to work collaboratively with stakeholders to deliver the project and unlock funding through the CIL mechanism. It was further suggested that this funding stream could act as a lever to secure additional Government funding. It was emphasised that a cross-party approach, alongside support and collaborative working with stakeholders, MP's and the Towns Board was required to move the project forward.

In responding, the Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure (Councillor S Phipps) welcomed the comments and suggested that a meeting be arranged with the Director for Economy and Growth to discuss the project further.

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure (Councillor S Phipps) also supported comments made by an Opposition Group Member requesting analysis and mapping work to identify where spend and investment had been allocated over recent years, to ensure that the whole Borough was benefiting from the funding stream and to highlight any gaps.

Resolved

- (1) That the Infrastructure Funding Statement 2025, be approved.

- (2) That the available Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies, be noted.
 - (3) That the Neighbourhood CIL funding in 2024/25 financial year, be noted.
-

59 **Procurement of a Flexible Learning Support Framework for Young People in Dudley**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Children and Young People seeking approval to initiate the procurement and implementation of a new Flexible Learning Support Framework for children and young people across Dudley.

The recommendations, as set out in paragraph 4 of the report, were moved by Councillor W Little and seconded by Councillor P Bradley.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People (Councillor W Little) and the Section 151 Officer responded to questions raised by Opposition Group Members regarding the risks and implications associated with the implementation of the proposed model.

Resolved

- (1) That the procurement and implementation of a Flexible Learning Support Framework (FLSF) with an initial term of 3 years and extension options up to 5 years (a maximum of 8 years) to improve educational outcomes for children and young people across Dudley, be approved.
 - (2) That the Director of Children and Young People be authorised to award contracts via the framework under the evaluation criteria, as set out in the report submitted.
 - (3) That the Director of Children and Young People be authorised to approve subsequent extensions of the contract under the framework terms.
-

60 **Issues Arising from Scrutiny Committees**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

61 **Questions from Members to the Leader (Cabinet Procedure Rule 2.5)**

No questions were raised under this agenda item.

62 **Resolution to exclude the public and press**

Resolved

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the remaining items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information under Part I of Schedule 12A to Local Government Act 1972 relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

63 **Proposal to declare part of the former Coseley School surplus to requirements**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Group Director of Housing and Assets on proposals to determine part of the former Coseley School, Henne Drive, Coseley as surplus to Council needs in accordance with the Council's Constitution and the land disposal protocol.

Resolved

- (1) That the principle that part of the former Coseley School, as identified on the plan appended to the report, as surplus to Councils' requirements, be endorsed.
- (2) That the freehold value of the property on disposal presently estimated to be in excess of the threshold, thereby requiring Cabinet approval to be declared surplus as per the land disposal protocol, be noted.

- (3) That the Group Director of Housing and Assets, be authorised to finalise and agree the terms and conditions of the transaction and any other ancillary agreements to facilitate a disposal.
 - (4) That Legal Services be authorised to complete the necessary legal documentation to facilitate a disposal.
-

64 **Building Safety and Compliance Contract**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Group Director of Housing and Assets in relation to the Building Safety and Compliance Contract.

Resolved

- (1) That the direct award to a specialist contractor be approved.
- (2) That the requirement to respond within the specified time frames for the provision of technical building information, be noted.
- (3) That the Group Director of Housing and Assets, in consultation with the Council's Monitoring Officer, be authorised to approve the terms of the contract with the specialist contractor.

The meeting ended at 5.10 pm

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL