

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Full Council** held in the Civic Suite, Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, NG24 1BY on Tuesday, 13 February 2024 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor C Brooks (Chair)
Councillor J Hall (Vice-Chair)

Councillor N Allen, Councillor L Brazier, Councillor I Brown, Councillor R Cozens, Councillor S Crosby, Councillor L Dales, Councillor D Darby, Councillor P Farmer, Councillor A Freeman, Councillor S Forde, Councillor P Harris, Councillor S Haynes, Councillor R Holloway, Councillor R Jackson, Councillor K Melton, Councillor S Michael, Councillor D Moore, Councillor E Oldham, Councillor P Peacock, Councillor C Penny, Councillor M Pringle, Councillor P Rainbow, Councillor N Ross, Councillor S Saddington, Councillor T Smith, Councillor M Shakeshaft, Councillor M Spoons, Councillor P Taylor, Councillor L Tift, Councillor T Thompson, Councillor T Wendels and Councillor T Wildgust

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor A Amer, Councillor A Brazier, Councillor J Kellas, Councillor J Lee and Councillor K Roberts

61 NOTIFICATION TO THOSE PRESENT THAT THE MEETING WILL BE RECORDED AND STREAMED ONLINE

The Chair advised the Council that the meeting was being recorded and streamed online in accordance with usual practice.

62 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

The Council noted the interests previously declared by Members in Agenda Item No. 13 – Minutes for Noting.

63 MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2023

AGREED that that minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

64 COMMUNICATIONS WHICH THE CHAIR, LEADER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OR PORTFOLIO HOLDERS MAY WISH TO LAY BEFORE THE COUNCIL

The Chair announced the winners of the ‘Serving People – Improving Lives’ Awards for staff in 2023. The winners were invited to the Full Council to have their awards represented by the Chair and to celebrate their success with Members.

Team of the Year – Community Development Team
Manager of the Year – Jill Baker
Colleague of the Year – Stacey Carter
Apprentice of the Year – Anthony Whyton
Chief Executive’s Award – Brian Rawlinson

The Portfolio Holder for Housing informed the Council that the Council's ICT team had been highly commended at the recent Housing Technology awards in the Digital Transformation and Cyber Security category.

65 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCIL

In accordance with Rule No. 3.3.2 one question had been submitted by a member of the public to the Council. Details of the questions put forward and the responses given by Councillor L Brazier are attached as Appendix A to the minutes.

66 COUNCIL TAX EMPTY HOMES PREMIUM

The Council considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director – Resources which provided an update on the current position relating to the Council Tax empty homes premium, and a proposal to change the trigger date for charging the empty home premium from two years to one year.

The proposal, recommended by the Cabinet, was to change the date on which the Council Tax long-term empty home premium becomes due from two years to one. This proposal would support the Council and Government policy in helping to reduce the number of empty homes by giving the highest incentive to owners to bring the properties back into use, by either selling or renting the property. The element of the total Council Tax liability which related to the District Council's income, would increase by £114,500 to £229,000.

The Council welcomed the change, noting the discretionary element in applying the policy where homes have been left empty for a wide range of reasons.

AGREED (unanimously) that the proposal to increase the long-term empty home premium as set out in paragraph 2.7 of the report, effective from 1 April 2024, be approved.

67 2024/25 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND RENT SETTING

The Council considered the joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive, Director – Resources and Section 151 Officer and Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing which set out the proposed income and expenditure on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for the 2024/25 financial year, provided indicative amounts of income and expenditure for the 2025/26 to 2027/28 financial years; and sought approval for rent levels and service charges for 2024/25 (with effect from the first Monday in April 2024) as detailed in Appendices A, B and C to the report.

The Cabinet, at their meeting held on 23 January 2024, recommended approval of the HRA budget for 2024/25, with an increase of 7.7% on rents of all properties in the HRA, and service charges as detailed.

Councillor L Brazier moved and Councillor P Peacock seconded the recommendations as set out in the report, which reflected the recommendations made by the Cabinet.

Councillor T Wendels moved and Councillor R Holloway seconded an amendment that Council approve:

- a) an increase of 6.7% in the 2024/25 rents of all properties in the HRA as at 31 March 2024 be applied from 1 April 2024;
- b) the 2024/25 service charges, as set out in Appendix C to the Report; and
- c) the HRA budget for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix A with the exception of the income which will be reduced by £244,100 due to the level of rent increase set out at a) above and funded by an equivalent reduction in the revenue contribution to the Major Repairs Reserve.

Members debated the proposed amendment, and in accordance with Rule 5.4 a recorded vote was taken as follows:

Councillor	Vote
Neil Allen	For
Lee Brazier	Against
Celia Brooks	Against
Irene Brown	For
Rowan Cozens	Against
Susan Crosby	Against
Linda Dales	For
Debbie Darby	Against
Phil Farmer	For
Simon Forde	Against
Andrew Freeman	Against
Jean Hall	Against
Peter Harris	Against
Simon Haynes	For
Rhona Holloway	For
Roger Jackson	For
Keith Melton	Against
Sylvia Michael	For
David Moore	Against
Emma Oldham	Against
Paul Peacock	Against
Claire Penny	Against
Mike Pringle	Against
Penny Rainbow	For
Neil Ross	Against
Sue Saddington	For
Maurice Shakeshaft	Against
Tom Smith	For
Matthew Spoons	Against
Paul Taylor	Against
Tina Thompson	Against
Linda Tift	Against
Tim Wendels	For
Tim Wildgust	For

The amendment was declared lost, with 13 votes for and 21 against.

The Council considered the substantive motion and it was AGREED with 21 votes and 13 against that the Council approve:

- a) the HRA budget for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix A to the report;
- b) an increase of 7.7% in the 2024/25 rents of all properties in the HRA as of 31 March 2024, to be applied from 1 April 2024; and
- c) the 2024/25 service charges, as set out in Appendix C to the report.

In accordance with Rule 5.4, a recorded vote was taken as follows:

Councillor	Vote
Neil Allen	Against
Lee Brazier	For
Celia Brooks	For
Irene Brown	Against
Rowan Cozens	For
Susan Crosby	For
Linda Dales	Against
Debbie Darby	For
Phil Farmer	Against
Simon Forde	For
Andrew Freeman	For
Jean Hall	For
Peter Harris	For
Simon Haynes	Against
Rhona Holloway	Against
Roger Jackson	Against
Keith Melton	For
Sylvia Michael	Against
David Moore	For
Emma Oldham	For
Paul Peacock	For
Claire Penny	For
Mike Pringle	For
Mrs Penny Rainbow	Against
Neil Ross	For
Sue Saddington	Against
Maurice Shakeshaft	For
Tom Smith	Against
Matthew Spoons	For
Paul Taylor	For
Tina Thompson	For
Linda Tift	For
Tim Wendels	Against
Tim Wildgust	Against

68 POLITICAL COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL AND ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO POLITICAL GROUPS

The Council considered the report of the Chief Executive which advised Members of the political composition of the Council following the resignation of Cllr Amer from the Independents for Newark & District to serve as an independent non-aligned Member. The change required an amendment to the allocation of seats to political groups on committees.

Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 required the Council to consider the political composition of the Council. This Act, together with the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, required the Council to allocate seats on committees on a proportional basis in accordance with the number of seats held on the Council by each political group. The proposed revised allocation of seats was set out in Appendix A to the report.

AGREED (unanimously) that the allocation of seats to Political Groups, as set out in Appendix B to these minutes, be approved.

69 CONSTITUTION UPDATE - PUBLIC SPEAKING AT PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Council considered the report of the Assistant Director Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer which sought approval of updates to the Council's Constitution to enable the Planning Committee to revise the Council's Protocol for Dealing with Planning Matters to allow for public speaking at Planning Committee.

The Audit & Governance Committee considered the potential introduction of public speaking at the Planning Committee at their meeting held on 27 November 2023 and recommended to Council minor amendments to the Constitution to enable the provision of public speaking. The proposed changes to the Constitution were set out in the appendix to the report. If approved, it would be for the Planning Committee to finalise arrangements and adopt if they chose to do so.

AGREED (unanimously) that the Council's Constitution be amended as set out in paragraphs 2.2 to 2.4 of the report (and as set out in the appendix to the report) to enable Planning Committee to make provision for public speaking if it resolves to do so.

70 NOTICE OF MOTION

Flooding in Newark and Sherwood

In accordance with Rule No. 3.4.3, Councillor P. Taylor moved and Councillor E. Oldham, seconded a motion to the following effect:

"Newark and Sherwood District has seen occurrences of three severe weather events over recent months. This has resulted in both serious flooding in locations that have a track record of flooding alongside new locations.

Understandably, the people of Newark and Sherwood are angry and concerned about the number of times their homes, communities and livelihoods have been impacted.

The consequences of this flooding has been:

- Homes repeatedly flooded and damaged.
- Businesses and farmland flooded.
- Roads closed.
- Impact on people's mental health.

These types of flooding incidents have been described as once in 100-year events. However, with the impacts of climate change escalating, we know flooding is harder to forecast and will become more commonplace.

As water levels start to reduce there is a danger that there will be a perception that Newark and Sherwood District Council is returning to business as usual.

We cannot go back to business as usual. We do not accept the level of pain and suffering so many of our residents across Newark and Sherwood have been through. Our thinking and future actions need to show an understanding that some degree of adaptation needs to be considered in relation to the impacts of Climate Change

We know that many people and businesses are still suffering from the impacts of the recent flooding, with their homes and lives devastated. For some, this is likely to be an ongoing issue for many months. Even after homes have dried out and been refurbished, many will be living with the fear that it will happen again. We cannot see these individuals abandoned.

As a Council we wish to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of so many people during the floods. The staff of this council who worked tirelessly, putting in long hours over and above their normal working hours to support residents.

We would like to thank all the Community Flood Wardens for all their expertise and hard work. Members of the emergency services, Police and Fire Brigade. We would also like to acknowledge the work of organisations who have statutory responsibility around flooding. The County Council as the Flood Authority, the Environment Agency and the Drainage Boards along with the water authorities. Our communities would have suffered even more had it not been for the efforts of volunteers and neighbours helping one another, along with community groups. We should also acknowledge supermarkets who donated provisions for those isolated.

As a council we have organised a debrief session with the above to learn the lessons from their perspective and we will continue to learn lessons as we further engage with our communities.

Moving forward

This Council proposes that we bring together local authorities and other agencies with a responsibility for flood alleviation across the Trent Valley to explore ways of addressing the continued threat of flooding. This will include a proposal to jointly commission a River Trent Valley Flood Alleviation Plan.

The plan should capitalise on the benefits of natural solutions, including restoring wetlands and floodplains, tree planting, creation of reed beds, and dedicated dredging.

Flood alleviation is the responsibility of;

- Central Government
- Environment Agency
- Nottinghamshire County Council (Flood Authority)
- Seven Trent Water
- Drainage Authorities

Other stakeholders

- Local Authorities the length of the Trent.

Ultimately, we will need Government support in order to implement any flood alleviation plan.

This Council therefore resolves to work tirelessly with those authorities with statutory responsibilities and other stakeholders to ensure the creation of a flood alleviation plan for the Trent Valley and its tributaries. This Council will then lobby Government for the resources to be made available to implement the plan as soon as possible”.

The motion, on being put to the vote the motion was agreed unanimously.

71 MINUTES FOR NOTING

72 CABINET - 5 DECEMBER 2023

73 CABINET - 19 DECEMBER 2023

74 CABINET - 23 JANUARY 2024

75 EXECUTIVE SHAREHOLDER COMMITTEE - 5 DECEMBER 2023

76 PLANNING COMMITTEE - 7 DECEMBER 2023

77 PLANNING COMMITTEE - 18 JANUARY 2024

77a POLICY AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE - 29 JANUARY 2024

Minute No. 64 – Information Sharing with Members Working Group Update

Councillor P Harris requested an update on the progress of the working group to date and how it was planned to share information to Members on Ward matters.

Councillor M Pringle advised that two meetings of the group had been held to date and agreed to feed in any additional matters where necessary.

Meeting closed at 8.15 pm.

Chair