

PUBLIC

MINUTES of a meeting of **COUNCIL** held on Wednesday, 14 February 2024 at Council Chamber, County Hall, Matlock.

PRESENT

Councillor T Ainsworth (in the Chair)

Councillors B Lewis, S Spencer, K S Athwal, R Ashton, D Allen, N Atkin, J Barron, B Bingham, J Bryan, S Burfoot, A Clarke, C Cupit, A Dale, C Dale, J Dixon, R Flatley, M Ford, E Fordham, M Foster, R George, A Gibson, K Gillott, N Gourlay, L Grooby, C Hart, A Hayes, A Haynes, G Hickton, S Hobson, N Hoy, R Iliffe, J Innes, T Kemp, T King, G Kinsella, W Major, R Mihaly, P Moss, D Muller, D Murphy, P Niblock, R Parkinson, J Patten, L Ramsey, C Renwick, P Rose, J Siddle, P Smith, A Stevenson, A Sutton, S Swann, D Taylor, J Wharmby, D Wilson and J Woolley.

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillor S Bull, D Collins, A Foster, D Greenhalgh, G Musson, J Nelson, B Woods and M Yates.

Officers present: Emma Alexander (Managing Director), Helen Barrington (Director of Legal and Democratic Services), Alec Dubberley (Head of Democratic and Registration Services), Linda Elba-Porter (Service Director), James Gracey, Simon Harvey (Acting Consultant in Public Health), Chris Henning (Executive Director - Place), Mark Kenyon (Director of Finance and ICT) and Jen Skila.

1/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Athwal, Bull, Collins, A Foster, Greenhalgh, Musson, Nelson, Woods and Yates.

2/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3/24 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman expressed congratulations to Childrens Services staff responsible for children in care or at risk of harm for the attainment of 'good' in all five gradings of the key areas in a recent inspection.

On a sadder note, he referred to the death of ex-councillor David Bookbinder in December 2023. Tributes were received and a period of reflective silence was observed.

Finally he informed the meeting that he had agreed to vary the order of

business and confirmed that the Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel would be heard as the first item of business after Petitions.

4/24 **MINUTES**

On the motion of Councillor B Lewis, duly seconded, it was

RESOLVED:

To confirm, as a correct record, the minutes of the meetings of Council held on 29 November and 7 December 2023.

5/24 **REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

The Leader expressed his thanks to the staff for their hard work and commitment over the December and January period in response to the various storms and weather events in Derbyshire.

There had been ten named storms now through the county and each one had brought its own particular impacts on infrastructure and people's lives and their homes and these members of staff along with colleagues at the Districts and Boroughs and the emergency services should be commended for their continued hard work and dedication.

No questions were raised.

6/24 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Question from Mr D Ingham to Councillor S Spencer, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Budget

"I'm acutely concerned regarding the Council's finances and Council Tax increase proposals for many people. All steps should be taken to secure increased Central Government funding where appropriate.

I'm uncertain if Council quarterly performance metrics are taken into account externally for such decision making. Many of the current performance metrics (Quarter 2) are recorded as "Strong" or "Good". However, after reviewing past reports, outcomes in numerous cases are because targets have been lowered. If adjusted back to originally set targets, current actual performance would actually fall below these levels.

It would appear to those on the outside targets are currently being

exceeded, but only because certain targets have been lowered. Wouldn't the case for increased Government funding be better supported and served by reversing those previously lowered targets, in order to demonstrate the reality of current underperformance despite all best intent, which will be underfunding related in many cases?"

Councillor Spencer responded as follows:

"I just want to assure you that over recent months Councillor Lewis at a national level has been campaigning for further funding from Central Government on behalf of this Authority and the wider local authorities across the country as the Vice-Chairman of the CCN and the financial spokesman and I likewise have been doing the same locally. That will continue and will be the case moving forward.

With regard to the performance information you mentioned, well let me start with the local government mechanism for funding local authorities. I think it is widely recognised, Mr Ingham, that the mechanism is out of date and not now fit for purpose. I think there needs to be an ongoing debate with representatives of the CCN and Local Government Authority on that particular issue and that will continue. We for many years have been campaigning for multi-year settlements and a consistent way of budgeting moving forward.

With regard to the targets we are far more transparent and have been over the last two years than we ever have been before with regard to targets, information which is set aside with regard to the financial position of the Council and the detail that supports that with performance targets. We set those performance targets in line with neighbouring authorities and data that is provided for us at a national level and they are adjusted accordingly. They change and they are monitored throughout the year, Mr Ingham, please be assured, as you know because you have been attending those meetings so please have my assurances those will continue to be monitored and we will continue to lobby for further funding from Central Government with regard to the challenges the Authority faces."

Mr Ingham asked the following supplementary question:

"Having looked at the reports again and given targets appear sort of centred around what Council considers it can deliver and what is considered to be appropriate rather than what is actually an ideal situation with adequate funding etc, I just wonder if I can ask yourself and Councillor Lewis, who I know are both actively involved in doing everything you can for this Council, and Councillor Lewis's over budget strategy, between yourselves whether or not with the combined support

of all members in this room cross-Party can ensure that when the 2024-25 targets are agreed they are actually set in all cases to the levels that the Council aspires to to deliver within Derbyshire?

I personally have no issue with reported Council underperformance if it is based against correct high bars rather than strong performance based on low bars. I don't believe Derbyshire should settle on being an average performing Council based upon the lowest common denominator to assess performance and I do feel like this open change of approach could really demonstrate where funding gaps exist and to aid securement for this Council?"

Councillor Spencer responded as follows:

"If I understand you correctly, Mr Ingham, what we need to do is set targets that are achievable, sustainable and inspire our staff and our organisation to deliver. As I have already said earlier on in the meeting we set those targets based on our neighbouring Authorities' performance and all national data on all aspects of Council delivery.

You are right to say that we should aspire to be the best we can be and that will always be the case with Derbyshire County Council as long as I am here and responsible for those statistics. I do genuinely believe that in the face of challenging circumstances our Council continues to deliver; our staff continue to deliver and we perform to the best ability we can with the resources we have available to ourselves."

7/24 **PETITIONS**

None received.

8/24 **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

Mr Peter Clay, Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel introduced a report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting, that presented the annual report of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel following its consideration by the Governance, Ethics and Standards Committee.

On the motion of Councillor S Spencer, duly seconded it was

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel and accept the recommendations contained in the report;

- 2) Agree to:
 - (a) The application of the pay award in relation to Members' Allowances for 2023/24 as detailed in the report and approves the amended schedule of Members' Allowances for 2023/24 as attached at Annex A to the Independent Remuneration Panel's report;
 - (b) The schedule of Members' Allowances for 2024/25 as attached at Annex B to the Independent Remuneration Panel's report;
 - (c) The introduction of a new rate of special responsibility allowance to be paid to co-opted Independent Members of the Audit Committee to be set at £2,000 per annum; and
 - (d) Make various changes to the wording of the Members Allowances Scheme for 2024/25 as detailed at Annex C to the Panel's report.
- 3) Authorise the Monitoring Officer to make appropriate amendments to the Constitution to reflect any changes to the Members' Allowances Scheme agreed.

9/24

RESERVES POSITION AND RESERVES POLICY

The Director of Finance and ICT introduced a report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting, that requested Council to note the current and forecast positions for both General and Earmarked Reserves and the updated Reserves Policy.

On the motion of Councillor S Spencer, duly seconded it was

RESOLVED to note:

- 1) The current position on Earmarked Reserves;
- 2) The details of the amounts to be released from Earmarked Reserved balances to the General Reserve;
- 3) That the £31.803m released from Earmarked Reserves is expected to be fully required to mitigate the forecast 2023-24 overspend, with the balance being funded from the Revenue Contributions to Capital Expenditure Earmarked Reserve held to support revenue budget management, and so ensure that the General Reserve balance remains at a minimum level; and

- 4) The updated Reserves Policy at Appendix Five to the report.

10/24 **BUDGET CONSULTATION RESULTS**

The Director of Finance and ICT introduced a report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting, that enabled Council to consider the outcome of the Council's budget consultation exercises in the formulation of its budgetary proposals in relation to the Revenue Budget for 2024-25.

On the motion of Councillor S Spencer, duly seconded it was

RESOLVED

To note the views of consultation respondents in relation to the Revenue Budget for 2024-25.

11/24 **REVENUE BUDGET REPORT 2024-25**

The Director of Finance and ICT introduced a report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting, that proposed a Revenue Budget and Council Tax for 2024-25.

On the motion of Councillor S Spencer, duly seconded and in accordance with the Local Authority (Standing Orders)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2014 a recorded vote was taken as follows:

For the motion:

Councillors Ainsworth, Ashton, Atkin, Barron, Cupit, A Dale, Flatley, Ford, M Foster, Gourlay, Grooby, Hart, Hickton, Hobson, Iliffe, Kemp, King, Lewis, Major, Moss, Murphy, Parkinson, Patten, Renwick, Siddle, Smith, Spencer, Sutton, Swann, Taylor, Wharmby, Wilson and Woolley.

Against the motion:

Councillors Bingham, Burfoot, Fordham, Kinsella, Niblock and Rose.

Abstentions:

Councillors Allen, Bryan, Clarke, C Dale, Dixon, George, Gillott, Hayes, Haynes, Innes, Mihaly and Ramsey.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the details of the Autumn Statement 2023, Local Government Finance Settlement and other announcements as outlined in sections 3.3 and 3.4 of the report;
- 2) Note the Government's expectations about Council Tax levels for 2024-25 outlined in section 3.5 of the report;
- 3) Approve the precepts as outlined in Section 3.5 and Appendix Four of the report;
- 4) Approve that billing authorities are informed of Council Tax levels arising from the budget proposals as outlined in Section 3.5 and Appendix Four of the report;
- 5) Approve the contingency to cover non-standard inflation as outlined in Section 3.7 of the report and that the contingency be allocated by the Director of Finance & ICT, as S151 Officer, once non-standard inflation has been agreed;
- 6) Approve the service pressure items identified in Section 3.8 and Appendix Five of the report;
- 7) Approve the increase to budgets for undeliverable prior year savings proposals as outlined in Section 3.9 of the report;
- 8) Approve the level and allocation of budget savings as outlined in Section 3.10 and Appendix Six of the report;
- 9) Note the comments of the Director of Finance & ICT, as S151 Officer, about the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of the reserves as outlined in Section 3.11 of the report;
- 10) Note the details of the Council's consultation activity as outlined in Section 4 of the report;
- 11) Approve the Council Tax requirement of £410,111,128 which is calculated as follows:

	£
Budget Before Non-Inflationary Pressures and Budget Reductions	705,047
Plus Service Pressures – ongoing	6,391
Plus Adult Social Care Precept	7,816
Plus Service Pressures - one-off	17,287
Less Budget Reductions	-40,068

Increase in Debt Charges - ongoing	9,845
Increase in Debt Charges – one-off	1,423
Increase in Risk Management Budget	6,111
Decrease in Interest and Dividend Receipts	916
Net Budget Requirement	714,769
Less Top-Up	-101,908
Less Business Rates	-21,020
Less Revenue Support Grant	-16,755
Less New Homes Bonus	-843
Less General Grant	-142,649
Less PFI Grant	-10,503
Less Use of Earmarked Reserves	-10,976
Balance to be met from Council Tax	410,116

- 12) Approve the use of the Revenue Contributions to Capital Expenditure Earmarked Reserve to provide one-off support to the 2024-25 Revenue Budget; and
- 13) Authorise the Director of Finance & ICT, as S151 Officer, to allocate cash limits amongst Cabinet portfolios; Executive Directors will then report to Cabinet on the revised Service Plans for 2024-25.

12/24 **CAPITAL PROGRAMME APPROVALS, TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND CAPITAL STRATEGIES FOR 2024-25**

The Director of Finance and ICT introduced a report , which had been circulated in advance of the meeting, that sought approval for proposals in relation to the Capital Starts Programme and the Treasury Management, Investment and Capital Strategies.

On the motion of Councillor S Spencer, duly seconded it was

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Approve the new Capital Starts Programme as set out in Appendix Two of the report and approve the procurement and award of contracts which support the delivery of the Capital Programme. All contract awards will then be subject to approval by Executive Directors (via an Executive Director Report) under the relevant Departmental Scheme of Delegation;
- 2) Approve the detailed Planned Asset Maintenance Programme for 2024-25 as set out in Appendix Three of the report;
- 3) Adopt the Treasury Management Strategy for 2024-25 as set out

in Appendix Four of the report;

- 4) Adopt the Investment Strategy for 2024-25 as set out in Appendix Five of the report;
- 5) Adopt the Capital Strategy for 2024-25 as set out in Appendix Six of the report;
- 6) Adopt the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement for 2024-25 as set out in Appendix Seven of the report; and
- 7) Adopt the application of financing up to 4% of disposal costs associated with land from capital receipts as set out in paragraph 3.7 of the report.

13/24 COUNCIL PLAN 2024-25

The Managing Director introduced a report, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting, that sought approval of the authority's Council Plan 2024-25.

On the motion of Councillor B Lewis, duly seconded it was

RESOLVED to approve:

- 1) The authority's Council Plan for 2024-25 as recommended by Cabinet at the 1 February 2024 meeting; and
- 2) The Strategic Objectives Implementation Plan 2024-25 as recommended by Cabinet at the 1 February 2024 meeting.

14/24 ELECTED MEMBER QUESTIONS

Question from Councillor E Fordham to Councillor C Cupit, Cabinet Member for Highway Assets and Transport

“Given the emotional ties and investment from so many people over the bridge locks in Bakewell, can the Council give a public commitment that the solution to the dilemma will be sensitive, in close proximity to the bridge and will ensure no locks are disposed of? Can the council consider progressing a scheme that is comprised public metal framed hearts whereby existing locks can be affixed and to which future locks could be added?”

Councillor Cupit responded as follows:

“Both Highways’ officers and I fully recognise that this is a sensitive and emotive topic and that locks have been placed on the bridge sometimes in celebration but also sadly sometimes in commemoration of loved ones. We also recognise the huge importance of engaging and communicating with the public on these works that we have to do. Equally, I think as was recognised by a recent *Derbyshire Life* article the future of this issue does divide local opinion and we have received representations on both perspectives and about a variety of issues related to the bridge.

As many will know, but just for the benefit of the Chamber, we have to carry out maintenance works on the bridge which are planned for later this year now which will mean that the locks on the bridge do need to be removed and cannot be reattached. When the works have a confirmed date we have committed to provide several months’ advance notice of this and to communicate it as widely as we can so people can remove their locks if they do want to. Equally we will try and organise a storage period for the collection of any existing locks for any who wish to.

In terms of the future of any future locks that aren’t collected, as well as future ones, we are looking at the possibility of a lock tree or similar. Again I know there are mixed views on this but we are looking at the options and I am happy to reassure you of that. We will discuss these locally when it becomes clearer in terms of location possibilities, so whilst I can’t commit to a specific future scheme here today I hope this does reassure Councillor Fordham we will look at all the options. We will be clear on advance communications and updates because we do appreciate this is an emotive issue and we will engage with the local member, community and stakeholders on future options. I know it is something that I have already discussed with Councillor Sutton several times.

Councillor Fordham asked the following supplementary question:

“Having heard that answer this is a disproportionately emotive issue to those for whom it matters. I understand it is easy to dislike the locks, to hate the locks, to resent the locks, but for those who have placed them there in some context (and I have two constituents for whom this is literally a matter of life and death to them) can I just urge that in the removing of the locks and the “You can collect them period” an alternative will come forward that the timeframe is not over-extended, that there is some point at which it actually ends and the alternative gets put in place because I think if we remove the locks and place them in store to be claimed there is a real risk it will look like we have swept them all away. I don’t believe that all the people who placed locks

there will be watching Derbyshire's media strategies to see those sorts of announcements and I worry that it will just give the impression the Council has swept it away and put it in a shed and the alternative won't come forward. I would much rather we had a tree coming forward that would be implemented on such and such a date so as to remove that storage uncertainty."

Councillor Cupit responded as follows:

"I think the problem is that the manner by which, unless residents who placed the existing locks on the bridge remove them themselves we will have to cut them off because of the nature of it so therefore we wouldn't be able to place them on a new tree, I think was what you are asking Councillor Fordham wasn't it?"

Councillor Fordham responded as follows:

"If it is helpful I will have this dialogue outside the meeting."

**Question from Councillor E Fordham to Councillor C Cupit,
Cabinet Member for Highway Assets and Transport**

"The potholes across the County are only getting worse as storm after storm batters the country. Is the Council content that it has in place the correct materials, approach and workforce that is enabling an effective repair policy or does the Council recognise the concerns of many residents that the current quality of repairs is poor, botched, hasty and costing the authority excessive money in damage pay-outs and repeat repairs of many of the same potholes?"

Councillor Cupit responded as follows:

"I fully acknowledge, understand and share the frustrations of local residents at the current challenges we are facing with our highways. That is why last month, as many will know, I wrote an open letter to residents acknowledging the problems which we are facing and how we are trying to deal with them. We are in an exceptional period, as I think your question acknowledges, and we have been taking steps to manage this as best we can and to tackle the rise in potholes.

To take the key points of your question in turn, in terms of materials and equipment we are trying to increase hot tarmac and wider sectional resurfacing as well as bumping up with additional equipment and teams. Equally we are still scheduling our planned reactive materials trial for the spring that I have mentioned before to test out new technologies and make sure we are fully utilising them but also what

works for the different parts of our county and the different geography.

In terms of approach no one wants to see the same pothole need fixing twice. I think we all agree on this. Sometimes it is necessary just to make a pothole safe particularly under current weather conditions but we are trying to focus on permanent repairs or resurfacing as far as we can. This includes the sectional resurfacing programme I have previously mentioned which is rolling out to over 250 pothole hot spot sites to try to prevent these areas suffering issues with potholes. I understand that includes Newbold Road and Linacre Road in Councillor Fordham's patch in the near future.

To further boost this our reactive teams are being bolstered with additional teams who are carrying out sectional resurfacing in further hot spot areas as well on top of that. Given the weather, the issues and the scale of the county though we do have to do reactive maintenance and pothole repairs which on some occasions are temporary to make an area safe for drivers and pedestrians.

As a final point, and to cover the workforce point, I don't believe it is intended with the question but some of the strong language in your question, and mentioned earlier today again, could be considered a bit offensive to many of our Highways staff who are out in some of the toughest conditions we have seen in decades across the county, including during the storm after storm you mentioned in the many weather warnings we have had. They have been working each day of the week including over the Christmas period, so separate to your question, Councillor Fordham, I just want to note on record my support for our Highways workforce and to thank them for the relentless work that they are doing."

**Question from Councillor E Fordham to Councillor B Lewis,
Leader of the Council**

"Following the debate on anti-semitism, can the Leader give an update on measures he has undertaken to pro-actively liaise with groups and individuals associated with that debate across the County - and in Chesterfield in particular? The request follows the undertaking that he personally gave that he would look to such an approach to calm and aid positive community relations in the light of the Israel-Gaza conflict."

Councillor Lewis responded as follows:

"I looked at the verbatim minutes the last time that we had the discussion about this. I might have misunderstood what you said but the wording in there and my understanding of what you said at the time

led me to believe I would be undertaking some of this work with you or alongside you and hence I was quite glad to get that invitation at the Holocaust Memorial Day in Chesterfield the other Saturday and the ceremony that took place there, so very happy to have a further conversation with you offline about this.

We have had conversations internally with the Community Safety Team and myself and Councillor Hart looking at the situation with regard to issues like anti-Semitism/racism in Derbyshire. We are beginning now to get one or two contacts from residents in Derbyshire about such issues particularly around anti-Semitism as well.

Interestingly the information we have is there has been a 6.5% increase in reported religious hate crimes across Derbyshire in the period between January and December of last year so it is something we definitely need to keep an eye on.”

Councillor Fordham asked the following supplementary question:

“I am grateful to the Leader for his attendance and participation at the Holocaust event I organised in Chesterfield. He will be equally appalled, I am sure, to know I have had now annual complaints through my door, you know writing of green ink, reporting that I am standing up for foreigners.

Can I ask the Leader to reflect on the significance of the Holocaust Memorial Day and the role he has. When he says “Albanians should not come here” I would suggest he shows a lack of understanding on issues of religious persecution; of LGBT homophobia in Albania and a lack of awareness of the Greater Hitler Plan for Greater Albania leading to some of the Kosovo rebellions.

I am hoping he didn’t mean it in that way but I would ask him to reflect that demonising a race, a nation or a State is identified by the Holocaust Memorial Trust as the first step on the ladder of hatred that leads to genocide.”

Councillor Lewis responded as follows:

“Councillor Fordham, that is frankly ridiculous. I made those comments in the context of the situation with regard to boats coming over here and the Government and what they did around reducing those numbers of Albanians coming over here. If indeed they are coming over here because of persecution or anything else that is entirely different and they would be dealt with in that way in the asylum system, I am sure. That is not what was meant at all and I will not have that conflation of

my words. That is frankly disgusting.”

**Question from Councillor J Barron to Councillor J Patten,
Cabinet Member for Children and Families**

“Will the Cabinet Member please update the Council on the outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection of Children’s Social Care Services?”

The question was carried forward to the next Council meeting on 27 March 2024.

**Question from Councillor G Kinsella to Councillor S Spencer,
Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Budget**

“The Council’s current financial position will result in significant reductions in non-statutory services. Some of these planned service reductions can be mitigated by attracting external funding. However, cuts to staffing means the remaining staff will only have the capacity to deliver day to day operations. How does the Council propose that officers are given the capacity to carry out the work necessary to identify, bid and develop ‘oven ready’ schemes, attracting external funding?”

Councillor Spencer’s written response was as follows:

“In developing the savings proposals, the County Council has gone through a vigorous process to first of all identify savings opportunities and then undertaken work to ensure they can be delivered. The resources to deliver against these proposals is an important factor and departments recognise the priority to deliver the proposals to maintain the financial standing of the organisation.

A programme management approach is therefore being adopted to support delivery of proposed savings and efficiencies in 2024/25 and provide transparency and assurance over delivery. This approach is designed to ensure that all significant proposals are underpinned by a delivery plan and risk assessment and ensure that Council resources are directed appropriately. The Portfolio Direction Group will oversee and monitor delivery of the savings, alongside financial monitoring. Fees and charges are applied where appropriate to recover the costs of the services provided this is in the line with the County Council’s charging policy.

In relation to capacity to develop projects and bids to attract external funding, we are confident that we have the ability to do this. Project lifecycles mean that officers are at different times able to change the

mix of their activity between delivery of current projects and securing funding for future projects. In addition, we will make best use of grants designed to support feasibility studies and capacity building across regeneration, sustainable travel, highways and climate change.”

Question from Councillor R George to Councillor N Hoy, Cabinet Member for Adult Care

“Please can the Cabinet Member explain why spending on private sector care homes has risen by £42 million a year in the last 5 years to £113.6 million, whilst almost 40% of the beds in Derbyshire’s own care homes are vacant?”

Councillor Hoy’s written response was as follows:

“The figures you have quoted for the spending on private sector care homes is the totality of the spend across residential care homes and nursing care homes for both older people and people of working age and as such any cross reference to vacancies in our directly delivered residential care homes is not relevant.”

Question from Councillor R George to Councillor C Cupit, Cabinet Member for Highways Assets and Transport

“Please can the Cabinet Member let me know when Whaley Bridge Footpath 105 Wharf Road will be fixed following the complaint last year from a lady with a disability who fell on the huge holes whilst 8 months pregnant?”

Councillor Cupit’s written response was as follows:

“I know this has been the source of concerns and complaints, and a previous question. I’m sorry to hear of the issues residents have had.

I understand this area is a private non-adopted road, but as footpath 105 runs through it, Derbyshire County Council have a responsibility to keep it accessible as a right of way. In this way, the County Council have, as I understand it, carried out repairs in May 2022 and March 2023 as two recent examples.

An inspector has recently attended the site, but no further defects have been raised at the current time. I’d be happy to discuss this further if that would be helpful.”

Question from Councillor R George to Councillor S Spencer, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Budget

“Please can the Cabinet Member explain why the Council have abandoned the custom and practice of many decades of engaging in collective consultation on redundancies being made across multiple departments?”

Councillor Spencer’s written response was as follows:

“In the spirit of the Trade Union Recognition Agreement, the organisation engaged the recognised trade unions early on its financial position, with discussions on the in-year position being held from September 2023. It is acknowledged that the organisation in previous years has undertaken collective consultation with the recognised trade unions at the respective team level and aligned to the scope of the review in question, irrespective of the scale of anticipated dismissals. However, our organisational context and landscape has significantly changed in the recent months and as a result of these pressures the organisation is required to deploy an increased scale and pace of change, to enable the effective delivery of a balanced budget both in-year and from 2024-25 onwards.

The organisation will continue to undertake collective consultation at the respective team level where it is anticipated that there will be more than 20 dismissals, aligned to our statutory obligation with our recognised trade unions, as opposed to applying this to all service redesigns/reviews. Where the organisation anticipates there will be fewer than 20 dismissals as a result of a service redesign within a particular team, our commitment remains that we will engage with recognised trade unions and impacted employees, as well as continuing to undertake individual consultation where required.

In addition, the organisation remains committed to its continued dialogue with recognised trade unions through ongoing organisational change meetings, Corporate Joint Committee (CJC), Departmental Joint Committee (DJC) and HR workstreams. At the last CJC in January 2024, recognised trade unions commended the work of officers for sharing the forward plan of change and deploying the policy forum which regularly meets to discuss changes to employment policies. Recognised trade unions have been offered a further meeting with both HR and departmental leaders to provide further details on the proposed budget savings, and to further outline the approach to both consultation and engagement within which joint trade unions will be involved.”

The meeting finished at 6.00 pm