

CABINET**Monday, 5th February, 2024**

Present:-

Councillor Gilby (Chair)

Councillors	Holmes	Councillors	Davies
	Sarvent		Staton
	Serjeant		Stone
	Baldauf-Good		

*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

**58 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS
RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

No declarations of interest were received.

59 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Innes.

60 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 16 January would be available for members to approve at the next scheduled meeting of the Cabinet, on Tuesday 20 February.

61 FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan for the four month period March, 2024 to June, 2024 was reported for information.

***RESOLVED –**

That the Forward Plan be noted.

62 **CULTURAL SERVICES REVIEW - HASLAND VILLAGE HALL,
ASSEMBLY ROOMS AND REVOLUTION HOUSE**

The Cabinet Member for Town Centres and Visitor Economy presented a report setting out detailed proposals to achieve financial savings relating to the operation of three cultural venues operated by the Council: Hasland Village Hall, Assembly Rooms, and Revolution House.

In the financial year 2022/23 Hasland Village Hall had operated with a financial deficit of approximately £32,000. The forecast deficit for the current financial year was £24,000.

Officers had reviewed in detail the Hall's operation and in order to reduce the financial deficit and ideally move to a position of full cost recovery, two approaches were proposed: reducing expenditure; and increasing income.

In order to reduce staffing costs, it was proposed that changes be made to the operating procedures for regular hirers. Regular hirers would be issued with a key for the Hall and would be given an induction on how to open and close the building. They would also be provided with an emergency telephone number if they had any operational issues. This change would negate the need for a caretaker to be on duty at the Hall at the time of such hires.

In order to increase income, it was proposed that fees and charges were increased to enable the council to recover the costs of provision. The recommended increases in fees and charges would be set out in the Cultural Services Fees and Charges 2024/25 report.

In the financial year 2022/23 the Assembly Rooms operated with a financial deficit of approximately £54,000. The forecast deficit for the current financial year was £55,000.

Officers had reviewed in detail the Assembly Room's operation and did not consider that substantive changes could be made to the current operating model that would lead to a significant reduction in the financial deficit in the near future. Therefore, it was proposed that the Assembly Rooms cease to be let to external parties for events from 30 June 2024, or earlier if that could be achieved.

In the financial year 2022/23 Revolution House operated with a financial deficit of approximately £8,000. The forecast deficit for the current financial year was £7,000.

Officers had reviewed in detail the House's operation in 2023. It was felt that there were limited opportunities to generate income from Revolution House as it was currently operated, and no real way of reducing expenditure apart from not opening to the public. In addition, Revolution House needed ongoing maintenance due to its age and the fact that it had a thatched roof.

It was therefore recommended that the Council sought interest from suitably qualified and experienced organisations to manage and operate Revolution House, in line with the desire to support the conservation of this significant historical asset for the benefit of the borough. The terms of any disposal would need to be worked through, whether it be a long lease arrangement or community asset transfer.

Councillor Holmes asked for his vote to be recorded against the Cabinet decision to dispose of Revolution House.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That alternative operational arrangements be devised for Hasland Village Hall so that the premises can be provided to the community without requiring an operational subsidy, and that the building can be let for certain uses without the requirement for a council employee to be on site.
2. That officers be authorised to progress with a community asset transfer process for Hasland Village Hall, including carrying out appropriate engagement activities with residents and community organisations as part of the process.
3. That the letting of the Assembly Rooms be ceased to external parties as from 30th June 2024, or earlier if that can be achieved, and that officers provide guidance about the availability of alternative facilities to the regular community hirers.
4. That officers be authorised to advertise the Assembly Rooms for commercial letting, and to develop heads of terms to establish

appropriate lease arrangements for the Assembly Rooms, in line with the desire to generate sufficient rental income to cover the costs of providing and maintaining the premises.

5. That the temporary closure of Revolution House be approved, as from 1st April 2024, until such time as a suitable alternative arrangement can be put in place to achieve budget savings.
6. That the disposal of Revolution House to a suitable organisation, be approved, in line with the desire to support the conservation of this significant historical asset for the benefit of the borough.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposals have been brought forward to respond to the savings targets identified in the Budget Strategy Implementation Plan, which was approved in November 2023. This will enable the Council to work towards developing a balanced 2024/25 budget and MTFP, which will support the Council to continue to deliver against the vision and priorities set out in the Council Plan.

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CULTURAL SERVICES FEES AND CHARGES 24/25

The Cabinet Member for Town Centres and Visitor Economy presented a report recommending changes to the fees and charges for lettings at Hasland Village Hall, the Market Hall Assembly Rooms and the meeting rooms at the Town Hall, and for miscellaneous Museum services for the financial year 2024/25.

In accordance with the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy, fees and charges were required to be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the cost of providing services were appropriately recovered..

The Hasland Village Hall currently had three main categories of hire fees, community charges, community concessionary charges and commercial charges. It was proposed that the fees be increased as detailed in Appendix A of the officer's report.

The Assembly Rooms had two main categories of hire fees, community charges and commercial charges. It was proposed that the fees be increased as detailed in Appendix B of the officer's report.

It was also proposed to introduce new fees, as detailed in Appendix C of the officer's report, for the use of Town Hall committee rooms by external parties from 1 April 2024. The proposed fees had been based on those charged at other Council venues.

It was noted that most museums, which hold archaeological archives, charge for the deposition and future care of archaeological items and were supposed to include this cost in their charges to the landowner / developer. It was proposed that the deposition charges be increased as detailed in Appendix D of the officer's report.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the changes to the room hire charges, equipment hire and staffing charges at Hasland Village Hall be approved from 1 April 2024, as detailed in Appendix A of the officer's report.
2. That the changes to the room hire charges, equipment hire and staffing charges at the Assembly Rooms be approved from 1 April 2024, as detailed in Appendix B of the officer's report.
3. That the introduction of room hire charges for the meeting rooms at the Town Hall be approved from 1 April 2024, as detailed in Appendix C of the officer's report.
4. That the changes to miscellaneous charges for the provision of Museum services be approved from 1 April 2024, as detailed in Appendix D of the officer's report.
5. That authority be delegated to the Service Director for Leisure, Culture and Community Wellbeing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Town Centres and Visitor Economy, to apply appropriate negotiated fees and charges for new activities and opportunities that are introduced during the period covered by the officer's report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Council continues to face significant financial challenges. The sustained period of austerity since 2010, the ongoing risks and

uncertainties over future funding arrangements, the budgetary impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and a sustained period of exceptionally high inflation, have all impacted on the Council's financial position.

2. The Council's budget strategy is to deliver a balanced and sustainable budget. Given the forecast budget deficits it is important that all potential increases to income streams are implemented as soon as possible to help mitigate these pressures.

64 SPORT AND LEISURE FEES AND CHARGES 24/25

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing presented a report seeking Cabinet approval for the setting of sports and leisure fees and charges for the period 2024/25. These fees and charges related to various activities and facilities provided at Queen's Park Sports Centre and Staveley Healthy Living Centre.

In accordance with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, fees and charges were required to be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the costs of providing services were appropriately recovered.

In setting sports and leisure fees and charges for 2024/25, a range of factors had been considered. These included:

- The need to generate additional income to work towards lowering the level of Council subsidy currently required to operate the sports centres.
- The levels of fees and charges applied by other sports and leisure providers within the Chesterfield area and the potential impact of local competition on centre usage and membership.
- The Council's Concessions Policy, which aims to promote health and address health inequalities in our communities.
- The need to continue to meet customer expectations and develop and deliver new activities and services to encourage more of the Borough's residents to engage in regular physical activity.
- To enable the Council to continue to invest in its sports and leisure centres.

It was proposed to keep the current legacy prices for existing fitness suite members in 2024/25 to aid the retention of what is currently a very strong membership base.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the proposed fees and charges for sports centre activities, as set out in Appendix 1 of the officer's report, be approved with effect from 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2025.
2. That the proposed fitness membership fees for new customers, as set out in Appendix 1 of the officer's report, be approved with effect from 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2025, whilst the fitness membership fees for existing members be held at their current levels.
3. That approval be given to remove racket sports from the current Fitness Membership package and replace this with a racket only membership fee.
4. That authority be delegated to the Service Director – Leisure, Culture and Community Wellbeing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, to apply appropriate fees and charges to new activities that are introduced during the period covered by the officer's report.
5. That authority be delegated to the Service Director – Leisure, Culture and Community Wellbeing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, to make changes to the approved fees and charges, if required to stimulate usage, support the retention of customers, develop income and /or to respond to external forces.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To comply with the Council's Budget Strategy for recovering fees and charges to contribute to the costs of service delivery.
2. To balance the need between competitive pricing and maximising income alongside wider community wellbeing priorities.

3. To continue discretionary pricing to support the most vulnerable and given the range of current pressures maintaining existing concessions is an appropriate method of targeting support.

65 **HOUSING SERVICES COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Leader of the Council presented a report on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Housing describing the Housing Service's Complaints Performance for the first three quarters of the financial year 2023/24.

It was noted that in order to comply with the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code, it was important that the Council's performance in relation to housing complaints was reported to an appropriate governing body.

The Council had changed its complaints handling policy and introduced a new ICT - enabled complaints system on 8 November 2022. The new ICT system allowed for a much more visual presentation of data on performance as well as the ability to interrogate individual complaints. A summary of complaints performance for Quarters 1, 2 and 3 of 2023/24 was shown in the table at paragraph 4.13 of the officer's report.

The number of complaints had increased to 46 per month, from an average of 25 per month in 2022. The main reasons for this were that the repairs service had necessarily prioritised emergency repairs, landlord compliance activity and repairs involving damp and mould, meaning that less urgent repairs were taking longer to complete, alongside dealing with the legacy effects of the significant backlog of repairs that had been generated during the term of the pandemic when Housing Property Services staff couldn't enter tenants homes. It was also noted that around 3,000 repairs were completed each month.

It was also noted that there had been a reduction in the average number of days taken to respond to complaints, from 40 days in August 2023, to 12 days by the end of December 2023.

The Council's Housing Service was taking the following steps to address the underlying causes of complaints:

- Conducting a fundamental review of its repairs and maintenance services.

- Recruiting two additional officers to deal with repairs complaints to reduce response times.
- Conducting a deep dive into the causes of housing management complaints.
- Introducing manager level complaints performance reports for tier 4 housing managers, to enable them to review individual complaints directly with their teams.
- Continuing to work with tenants on scrutiny reviews and use their feedback to inform future service development improvements.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That it be noted that the Council's Housing Service currently complies with the Housing Ombudsman's code of practice, as evidenced in the self-assessment provided in Appendix 1 of the officer's report.
2. That the Housing Service's complaints handling performance for the first three quarters of the financial year 2023/24 be noted.
3. That the measures proposed at paragraph 4.22 of the officer's report be endorsed to bring about immediate improvements to the Housing Service's complaints handling performance.
4. That officers be asked to prepare an end of year performance report for the financial year 2023/24 and to provide regular performance reports throughout the financial year 2024/25.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important for the Council to receive feedback from tenants who are not satisfied with the performance of the service and to make improvements as a result. Monitoring complaints and reporting activity is required in order to meet the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman and the Social Housing Regulator.

66 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED –

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

67 CHANGES TO CARELINE AND INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICE

The Service Director – Housing presented a report setting out the impact on the Council’s Careline service of Derbyshire County Council’s (DCC) decision to alter its commissioning arrangements for assistive technology, falls recovery and independent living services.

The Careline Service currently delivers assistive technology and falls recovery services for DCC, however, these contracts were due to come to an end on 31 March 2024.

It was recognised that the service provided significant levels of support to elderly and vulnerable people across the borough and extensive analysis had been undertaken to establish how the Council could continue to deliver these vital services.

The loss of DCC income would have a significant impact on the future financial viability of the Council’s Careline Service. However, if the Council were to discontinue the Careline service from 1 April 2024, there would be a range of consequential impacts. These included:

- The loss of well-regards falls recovery service to Careline customers.
- Additional burdens on the NHS and ambulance service.
- The risk that not all of the DCC funded customers could be transitioned to a new telecare provider in time for the 31 March 2024 cut-off date.
- Significant risks of redundancy for the Council’s valued careline staff.
- The need to commission a new out of hours calls handling service for other Council services.

Significant analysis had been carried out to consider the options and risks associated with the Council continuing to provide the service and the following strategy was proposed:

- Increase the number of customers through a robust marketing strategy and action plan.
- Make changes to the current fees and charges structure.
- Invest £120,000 in transferring the remaining customers who remain on analogue equipment to digital equipment.
- Invest £30,000 in the development and implementation of a new marketing promotions strategy.
- Reshape the service to maximise the efficiency of the staffing resources.
- Apply an appropriate level of Housing Revenue Account contribution to the service costs.
- Include a revenue contribution from other council services who rely on the Careline service for their out of hours call out arrangements.
- Maximise other income opportunities.

The estimated expenditure and financing plans for the new Careline operating model were detailed in Table 1 and paragraph 6.4 of the officer's report.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the information set out in the report regarding changes to the Careline Service, as a result of Derbyshire County Council ending contracts and removing funding be noted.
2. That the information provided with regards to the risk to Council customers and employees if the service is discontinued, and the risks associated with the Council continuing to provide the service be noted.
3. That continuation of the Careline Service be approved, as a 24 hour calls and falls response service, with a view to it being provided on a cost-neutral basis, in recognition of the critical role it plays in supporting vulnerable customers and the wider health and social care system.
4. That the new service strategy set out in paragraph 4.8 of the officer's report, be approved, including the changes to the charging structure for the service, for existing and new customers, as set out in paragraph 4.8b of the officer's report.

5. That authority be delegated to the Service Director – Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to review and make changes to the detailed schedule of additional charges, as and when appropriate.
6. That the allocation of £150k from General Fund budget reserves, to fund new digital equipment, for existing customers, including any who are seeking to transfer from DCC provision, and the development of a marketing strategy to drive the estimated growth in customer numbers, be approved.
7. That officers be authorised to commence a reshape of the Careline service to reflect the new delivery model, in line with the Council's Human Resources policies and procedures.
8. That a contribution from the Housing Revenue Account reflective of the proportion of Careline customers who are council tenants, be approved, in recognition of the important role Careline plays in helping people to sustain their tenancies.
9. That the establishment of a £300,000 Careline budget risk reserve to recognise the financial risk that the Council will be taking in 2024/25, in striving to establish a cost-neutral position, be approved.
10. That it be noted that there will be frequent and regular reviews of service operations and the financial standing of the Careline Service throughout 2024/25, and that if sufficient progress is not being made towards the achievement of a cost neutral position, officers be authorised to develop options to reconsider the future of the service, including bringing the service to an end.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To ensure that services to our most vulnerable residents are protected, and to mitigate risks to our Careline employees who deliver vital services.
2. To ensure that Members are aware of the risks of continuing with the service, and to put in place mitigating action to manage the potential financial risk of the service not achieving a cost neutral position in 2024/25.

