Cabinet

28th July, 2025

PRESENT:-

Councillors Chambers, Dad, Dolman, Ieronimo, Pritchard, Quinn, Ross and Tock.

IN ATTENDANCE:-

M. Jukes (Chief Executive), I. Anderson (Director of Legal Services and Partnerships), D. Bell (Director of Finance and Transformation), P. Turner (Director of Children and Young People's Services), T. Meyerhoff (Statutory Director Adults Social Care (Non Exec)), L. Dixon (Assistant Director Legal Services and Governance), N. Howbridge (Assistant Director Property and Assets) and L. Hawkins (Democratic Services Officer).

M. Nearney (Assistant Director Neighbourhoods and Housing) minute 20, K. Ryan (Head of Transport and Traffic Management) and C. McKenzie (Operational Transport Manager) minute 21, and T. Parker (Assistant Director Finance and Transformation) minutes 22 and 23.

APOLOGIES:-

Councillor Drake Davis and Haines.

Minute No.	Description/Decision	Action By/Deadline
PROCEDURAL ITEMS		
17.	**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** No declarations were received in relation to the items that follow below.	
18.	**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23RD JUNE 2025** **Agreed –** that, the minutes of the meeting held on Monday,23rd June, 2025, be taken as read and correctly recorded and be signed by the Chair.	
19.	**PUBLIC QUESTIONS** No public questions were received.	
NON-EXEMPT ITEMS		
Key Decisions		
20.	**REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE POLICY**	

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The Director of Legal Services and Partnerships submitted a report which sought approval of the Repairs & Maintenance Policy.

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing explained that the proposed policy would provide clarity and accountability for landlords and tenants; that the policy would assist in the efficient allocation of resources for repairs and maintenance; that it would aid to deliver improved services, and that it complied with the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman.

The comments of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Commission held on 24th July 2025 were noted.

Moved by Councillor Ross and seconded by Councillor Dad

a. That Cabinet formally approves and adopts the Repairs and Maintenance Policy, and
b. That delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director Neighbourhoods and Housing, in conjunction with the designated Portfolio Holder for future revisions of the Repair & Maintenance Policy where required for legal or regulatory compliance or where required for operational efficiency and best practice in delivering the repairs service to council tenants.

Motion carried.

<u>Reasons for Recommendations</u>

- A Repairs and Maintenance policy is essential for several key reasons. Firstly, it provides clarity and accountability for landlords and tenants, ensuring that both parties understand their obligations. The policy should help drive tenant satisfaction, with regular communication with residents ensuring landlords continue to improve service quality and tenant relations.
- A well-defined repairs and maintenance policy helps ensure compliance with regulatory compliance and requirements, which can include property safety checks and timely repairs, as well as property condition and suitability of homes.
- By establishing clear processes and guidelines, the policy should aid in the efficient allocation of resources for repairs and maintenance. This is particularly important in the context of rising maintenance costs and the need for budget protection.
- In summary, a repairs and maintenance policy is crucial for social housing providers as it enhances clarity, ensures tenant satisfaction, maintains regulatory

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	compliance, preserves property conditions, and optimizes resource management. • The proposed Policy reflects existing / established processes and in the main does not bring any significant changes to current practices or tenant/landlord responsibilities as the Policy is reflective of the standard Tenancy Agreement which has been in place since 2011. • The Policy, includes existing service standards relating to Repairs and Maintenance. The key exception is the introduction of new repair category as part of improvements intended to reduce existing high levels of Emergency orders. Up until June 2025, all repairs reported fell into two repair categories – an Emergency Repair (within 24 hours) or a Routine Repair (within 28 calendar days). A refresh to the repairs system brings the introduction of a new 'Urgent Repair' category which was introduced on 2 June 2025, whereby Urgent Repairs are now undertaken within 5 working days. • Delegated authority to the Assistant Director Neighbourhoods and Housing in conjunction with the designated Portfolio Holder for future revisions is also being requested, since Neighbourhoods and Housing will have a number of planned changes to Repairs and Maintenance which will need to be reflected in this Policy. These changes include (but are not limited to): o A revised access procedure for the Repairs & Maintenance Service o A further review of repair timescales, including the introduction of a Planned Repairs Category o Improvements to how identified vulnerabilities will impact on repair timescales, and introduction of vulnerability risk factors/indicators o A review to include the requirements of Awaab's Law which is being brought into force in October 2025 o A review of repair related Risk Assessment processes o Revised Compliance and Monitoring Arrangements • There are no financial implications as a result of implementing this Policy.	
21.	**TAXI AND SMALL BUS SERVICES – OPEN FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT** The Director of Regeneration in consultation with Director of Children, Young People and Family Services submitted a report which sought a decision to let an open framework for the provision of home to school transport (Taxi and Small Bus Services). Members commented that it was important to have in place a flexible contract that was safe, efficient and reliable.	

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The comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 25th July 2025 were noted.

Moved by Councillor Ieronimo and seconded by Councillor Tock

a. That the proposal to run further competitions within the open framework agreement on a basis of 100% price be supported. Quality checks are completed prior to obtaining a license, this depends on the size of the vehicle and undertaken by the licensing department or VOSA. Ongoing Quality checks are undertaken by the transportation team through the duration of the contract via the contract management process, which involves communication and feedback from service users and schools, corporate feedback team and regular spot checks;
b. That the framework agreement is flexible and allows for increase/ decrease in costs such as fuel increases, national emergency cases;
c. For the passengers with the most complexity of need, that the Team have discretion as and when necessary to utilise a named driver for continuity and safety;
d. That the Operational Transport Manager has delegated authority to enter in to calloff contract agreements through the framework;
e. That the open framework agreement is let for 8 years and opened bi-annually to allow any new entrants to apply to join the framework agreement. By providing suppliers with multiple opportunities to join, open frameworks are less likely to exclude smaller and newer suppliers. The hope is that this will make it easier for the Council to use the framework to procure from Sole Traders and Small Medium Enterprises, and
f. That the Combined Authority shall be able to call off from the framework agreement should the need arise.

Motion carried.

<u>Reasons for Recommendations</u>

- The existing Dynamic Purchasing System for Taxi and Small Bus provision was let with a contract period of 10 years. The Council's requirement for taxis and small buses is changing and will be developed through the Transport Savings Board, and it is believed that re-organising the original specification and re-letting the contract will generate efficiencies.
- In re-tendering the taxi and small bus framework contract the primary focus can be upon price to deliver cost

	efficiencies as any provider would need to be approved by the Licensing Services, Taxi Providers and VOSA (vehicle operator services agency), drivers would need to meet the "fit and proper person" requirements. • The framework will be set up so that suppliers will have to pass a Procurement Specific Questionnaire setting out pass/fail requirements to join the framework. Once joined, the award of contracts from the framework may be by way of direct award or mini competition. Mini competition shall be used for most cases. Direct award shall be used in exceptional circumstances. • The categories to be included are: o Category 1 Up to 8 seats (taxi) o Category 2 9 seats and above (minibus) o Category 3 16 seats and above (small coach) o Category 4 Adapted taxis o Category 5 Adapted minibus o Category 6 Adapted large vehicle • At present, these categories are procured through the DPS barring a category for 21 seats and above (large coach). The Council have decided to not include this category for the new framework due to adhering to the guidelines of the amount of time passengers should spend on the vehicles. It has also been proven over the last few years these size vehicles were not cost effective and there is little competition within the current transport market as currently there is only one contractor on the DPS who has these size vehicles within their fleet. The current DPS will expire on 4th November 2026.	
22.	**MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN – UPDATE REPORT** The Director of Finance and Transformation submitted a report which updated Members on the latest Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) projections for the period 2026/27 to 2028/29 and outline a financial strategy which would inform the detailed formal budget proposals later in the year. The Assistant Director Finance and Transformation explained that it was the first update report since the Budget had been agreed in February 2025 and that the detail of the fair funding consultation was not yet known which had led to a level of uncertainty. The comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 25th July 2025 were noted. **Moved by Councillor Dad and seconded by Councillor Ross** That Cabinet Members: a. Note the updated MTFP projections at section 7.	

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	b. Note the ongoing savings delivery programme alongside the proposed use of contingency funding and capitalisation flexibility over the planning period, as set out in the February 25 budget report; c. Note the forecast reserves position at Appendix A and the significant uncertainty faced by the Council as noted within the report, and d. Note the outline the future savings requirement underpinned by a twin track of the Council's best value framework and wider transformation schemes. **Motion carried.** <u>Reasons for Recommendations</u> The Council needs to ensure that it has an up to date and realistic plan for managing its finances in the medium term. That plan includes within it the resources that are available to provide or commission services, and also outlines the ongoing or new actions that are needed to ensure that financial viability is maintained.	
23.	**REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2025-26 – FIRST FORMAL REPORT** The Director of Finance and Transformation submitted a report which provided an update on the revenue budget monitoring position as at Period 2, explanations for material variances from Budget, year-end projections, and the management actions being taken where appropriate. The Assistant Director Finance and Transformation explained that the report was the first formal revenue budget update for the 2025/26 financial year; that a small overspend had been projected however it was early in the financial year and there was still a degree of uncertainty; that members were asked to note the pressures in Adult and Children's Social Care and the mitigating actions that were being taken, and that a balanced Housing Revenue Account position was being projected. The Director of Finance and Transformation informed the Cabinet that a pay award of 3.2% had been agreed; it was likely that staff would receive the increase and back pay at the end of August, and that the agreement provided some certainty. The comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 25th July 2025 were noted. **Moved by Councillor Dad and seconded by Councillor Ross**	

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	a. That members approve the variations to the original Children and Adult services budget set out in 1.4 and 1.5 and also note the projected overall overspend position; b. The members approve the updated savings programme for Children and Young People as outlined in Appendix B section 4.21 to 4.23; c. That Directorates continue to minimise costs throughout the year, in line with recommendations contained within the MTFP Update presented at July 2025 Cabinet; d. That members note the forecast in year deficit of £10.3m for the DSG, and then requirement for actions/funding to bring the cumulative position into balance in the medium term, and e. That members note the balanced position reported for the HRA. <u>Reasons for Recommendation</u> The Council needs to ensure that it is managing its resources effectively while ensuring that the public receive the benefits from the functions that it provides itself or commissions from other service providers.	

The above Executive Decisions will come into force and may be implemented on expiry of five working days after the publication of the decisions i.e. 7th August 2025, unless called in by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

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