



Minutes

Name of meeting	CABINET
Date and Time	THURSDAY 12 OCTOBER 2023 COMMENCING AT 5.00 PM
Venue	COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs D Andre, P Fuller, P Jordan (Chairman), K Lucioni and I Stephens
Also Present	Cllr C Jarman Sharon Betts and Wendy Perera
Also Present (Virtual)	Cllrs J Bacon and P Spink Christopher Potter and Natasha Dix

136. **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2023 be approved.

137. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

138. **Public Question Time - Maximum 15 Minutes for Written Questions and 15 Minutes for Oral Questions**

A written question was received from Simon Richards (PQ 39-23) in relation to the matter of surplus school places in the Island's primary schools. The question and the Cabinet Member's written response were read out by the Leader.

139. **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman reported that he had met with group leaders to investigate a proposal for cross-chamber working. Support to the Cabinet was sought from the other groups for the areas of Housing, Adult Social Care, Children's Services and the Budget/Finance. The proposal had been well received by those present and the new Conservative group leader would discuss them with the group. The Chairman indicated that he would move forward with the proposal and hoped that the Conservative group would join in due course.

140. **Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Finance**

140a **Housing Strategy 2020 – 2025 Action Plan Progress Report 2023**

The Cabinet Member gave an update on progress to date and highlighted the six strategic priorities. Affordable housing had been the focus and had proved challenging in the current economic climate. Although the target number of units had been achieved, the number on the housing register had still increased and cross-chamber assistance to address the issue would be welcomed. Going forward, the aim would be to increase the percentage of completed homes that were affordable and assist the most vulnerable out of bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet notes the Housing Strategy 2020-2025 Action Plan Progress Report 2023 contained at Appendix 1 to the report.

141. **Cabinet Member Announcements**

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health reported that as part of her new portfolio she had met with the ASC and PH teams and would bring some of her experience from her previous Children's Services portfolio to her new role. She was committed to helping the teams find short and long-term solutions to current issues being faced.

The Gouldings care home had been refurbished for 26 residents and should re-open at the beginning of November.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Enforcement reported that there was a lot of coastal protection work currently underway. He had attended a meeting of the Solent Forum where water quality was one of the issues discussed.

The Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services, Community Protection and ICT reported that she had attended a meeting with the Fire Authority, an information session for members regarding scams which members could pass on to their residents, and a night out with the police rapid response team. She was also working with stakeholders on a reset of the Community Safety Partnership, and was working with the police to investigate the reintroduction of manned CCTV on the Island.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Corporate Functions reported that he was familiarising himself with his new portfolio. Meetings were being set up as of the following week and it was hoped to engage with stakeholders across the education spectrum as the issue of surplus school places was high on the list of cabinet priorities.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Finance reported that he was looking forward to cross-chamber working and using the skills of councillors from other parties to

address the challenges being faced. He would report on achievements as they were completed.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure, Highways PFI and Transport Strategy, Strategic oversight and External Partnerships reported that the visit to the Islands Forum by the Chief Executive and Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Corporate Functions had been virtual, as due to cancellation of flights as a result of bad weather. Connectivity was one of the matters discussed.

The message was still being put across to the government regarding fair funding for the Island and evidence of the Island's case for an Island deal was continuing to be submitted.

142. **Consideration of the Forward Plan**

The items on the Forward Plan were noted.

143. **Members' Question Time**

Councillor Jarman referred to a response that had been received by Cllr Spink to an earlier question at Corporate Scrutiny regarding how the proposed Housing Affordability SPD would deliver housing affordable to residents on or below the average island wage. The response to Cllr Spink had been that the Housing Affordability SPD would not achieve that result.

Cllr Jarman therefore asked how the administration proposed to ensure the delivery of homes that islanders on an average wage or below can afford?

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Finance provided a response that he would review the formula used by officers to define 'affordability' and would arrange a session with the Director of Finance, the Housing Manager and Director of Adult Social Care and Housing Needs as soon as possible.

The Cabinet Member for Planning commented that dialogue with developers was important to make homes affordable, whilst accepting that the cost of house building had increased. The policy would be sharpened and included within the Island Plan.

Following a previous question by Cllr Jarman to the Audit and Governance Committee, the details of debt held by each Island school was circulated to members of that Committee. It identified the debt that would transfer to the IWC upon school closures. Cllr Jarman therefore asked what financial provision the administration had made for that potential liability?

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Finance responded that he had arranged a meeting with the Director of Finance and S.151 officer and would then provide a response.

It was noted that a school's debt would only transfer to the council if and when it was closed. There were detailed processes regarding how a school should manage

its debt, and a discussion would be held with the Director of Children's Services to ensure this was being monitored.

CHAIRMAN



Public Question time

To view any public questions that were put to this committee, they will be listed as an additional PDF document below the public question time section within the online minutes, an example is displayed below:

32. [Public Question Time](#) PDF 87 KB

Questions must be delivered in writing
later than 5pm on Friday, 15 January 20

Additional documents:

- [PQ 11-21](#)  PDF 85 KB
- [PQ 12-21](#)  PDF 90 KB

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Cabinet – 12 October 2023

Written question from Simon Richards to the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services and Corporate Functions

I welcome the Cabinet Member for Education and Corporate Services to their new role. Will the Cabinet Member publicly commit to collaborating with headteachers and chairs of governors on reducing the surplus of school places in the island’s primary school system, including the option to close schools, and agree to commence discussions at the earliest opportunity?

Response

I thank Mr Richards for his welcome. I am more than happy to publicly commit to working with stakeholders, including Headteachers and Governors, who represent the full range of views relevant to identifying the issues, and the means of addressing those issues, that face our local education system and the role and importance of our schools within our local communities. The issue of surplus school places is plainly one of the issues that needs to be addressed. I will be bringing together an appropriate group to pursue these discussions and to look at all viable options to deal with the issues that need to be addressed. These discussions will start as soon as practically possible.

It is also necessary to ensure that the issues are as widely understood as possible within the wider orbit of those who stand to be affected by measures that may need to be taken. As such public communication, engagement and interaction will also be key going forward and will be key to reaching the right decisions that support our Island and our children.

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