

Minutes



Council

Date: 24 January 2023

Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors C Reeks, S Cocks, E Stowell-Corten, J Harris, A Screen, L James, T Harvey, M Howells, P Bright, J Peterson, A Pimm, D Batrouni, D Jenkins, P Drewett, B Davies, S Adan, M Pimm, C Baker-Westhead, J Reynolds, R Howells, A Sterry, G Horton, J Cleverly, P Cockeram, D Davies, M Al-Nuaimi, M Evans, D Fouweather, D Harvey, M Kellaway, M Linton, D Mayer, R Mogford, M Spencer, C Townsend, T Watkins, K Whitehead, J Clarke, P Hourahine, J Hughes, J Jordan, L Lacey, S Marshall, W Routley, A Morris, F Hussain and B Perkins

Apologies: Councillors J Jones, J Mudd, K Thomas and Y Forsey

1. Preliminaries

1.i Apologies

The Presiding Member will report any apologies.

1.ii Declarations of Interest

1.iii Presiding Member's Announcements

Councillor Cockeram led a minute's silence for former councillors David Hando and Paul Hannon.

Councillors Morris, Davies, Evans, Whitehead and Harvey took the opportunity to say a few words of condolence for the former Councillors.

Councillor Harvey had promised David Hando that he would be invited to cut the first sod for the new visitor centre at the Newport Transporter Bridge. With this in mind, and as Cabinet Member for Community and Wellbeing it would be fitting to put a plaque in the visitor centre to commemorate David Hando's contribution and hard work.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of 22 November 2022 were accepted as a true record.

3. Appointments

To consider the proposed appointments set out in the report

Councillor Clarke moved the appointments set out in the Report, as agreed by the Business managers, subject to the additional appointments set out below.

Councillor Fouweather seconded the report.

Resolved: That the following appointments be agreed.

Governing Body Appointments

Organisation	Nominations Received	Number of Vacancies/Replacements
Llisbury Primary School	Appointment	Andrew Sterry

4. Police Issues

The Presiding Member welcomed Superintendent Vicki Townsend, who provided council members with an update on Police issues within East, West and Central Newport.

The Presiding Member invited the Deputy Leader to address Superintendent Townsend.

The Deputy Leader thanked Supt Townsend for attending full council and specifically wanted to thank the Police on behalf of all council colleagues, in particular Chief Inspector John Davies for the information he shared with councillors at the beginning of the New Year. The newsletter that he provided outlined the geographical priorities within wards which was informative and helpful. What was especially welcomed was his staged intent to meet with all councillors in person in February and a key opportunity for councillors to raise residents' concerns and to work with police to reduce crime in the local areas. It was good to know that these meetings would be held quarterly going forward and would strengthen relationships with elected members and their local police team.

The report also referred to the sterling work of the Council's Trading Standards Team who worked closely with the police and received some positive outcomes which needed applauding and noting.

Questions to the Police raised by Councillors:

- § Councillor M Evans referred to the 20mph enforcement across the city and asked would police resources be affected by maintaining this. The Superintendent assured Councillor Evans that front line officers would not be redirected from other duties to dealing with new speed enforcement issues.
- § Councillor Al Nuaimi also passed on thanks to city centre inspectors who engaged in regular meetings and also expressed his best wishes to Sean Conway who left the role and welcome Hannah Welty. Councillor Al-Nuaimi asked the Superintendent about the Knife Angel project and for feedback onto the effectiveness of the instalment in the city centre. The Superintendent outlined the positive feedback on the Knife Angel and how well it was received from a community perspective. The overarching work was being managed by Matt Edwards, a police officer who worked in the police head quarters who was looking at the wider impacts, however it was still early to report at this stage but an update on the findings of the report could be provided at the next meeting.
- § Councillor M Howells, as a member of the Planning Committee noted the lack of feedback from the police in relation to planning applications. In addition to this, when speaking to local police officers, they are often not aware of these applications and felt that they could make a contribution. Cllr Howells questioned how the council and police could therefore work together to ensure better communication for the future, in particular, applications relating to Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The Superintendent agreed that the police would like to be part of the consultation for planning applications; unfortunately

opportunities had been missed and suggested that she and Councillor Howells arrange a separate meeting to discuss a way forward.

- § Councillor Whitehead referred to antisocial behaviour in Bettws which he considered was usually the same offenders. Cllr Whitehead queried whether there was an escalation process for police to make home visits. The Superintendent advised that there was always an escalation process in place with a raft of civil options available which have been used successfully in the past. Superintendent Townsend recommended that the councillor raise these issues at the monthly police meetings, if they were not already reported to the police, as this would help them put together a civil order or criminal investigation, whichever might be appropriate in the circumstances.
- § Councillor Morris asked for an update on E-bikes. The Superintendent confirmed that the Road Policing Support Special Operations (RPSSO) were running a special E-scooter operation across Gwent including Newport, but was not sure on the figures for Newport. However, there had been a number of seizures, including three from one specific arrest in the Maesglas area. The Superintendent reflected that, unfortunately, the E-scooters were difficult to deal with as they were not cars on the road and were not fast enough to stop on foot. However, the RPSSOs had a different set of skills to be able to deal with them and the Superintendent would look into the statistics and make sure they were available on social media platforms such as Twitter.
- § Councillor Batrouni thanked the Superintendent for all the hard work carried out by Newport police. Councillor Batrouni mentioned the potential that the amazing work done locally could be undermined by Metropolitan Police, and asked if there were any repercussions arising as a result of this. Secondly, Cllr Batrouni questioned whether the culture of protection of officers particularly in relation to the accounts of women, being taken advantage of by the police could also be happening in Gwent. The Superintendent advised that the recommendations and actions arising from what happened in the Metropolitan Police demonstrated lessons to be learned, and these should be embedded regardless of the current position from a Gwent perspective, in order to reassure public confidence. It was also important to remember that it was an investigation specific to the Met Police.
- § Councillor Marshall referred to the police's support in tackling online fraud. A few years ago, Councillor Marshall raised concerns about people being scammed through phone and text, not on social media, and asked if the police could also include mail drops to warn against scammers using these other methods. Superintendent Thomas confirmed there had been a recent meeting within the police held by Chief Inspector Davies on how to identify the most vulnerable residents in relation to scammers, and the appropriate response to take action against this. The Superintendent stated that this requires support from a partnership perspective, and any thoughts on how to collaborate on this would be gratefully received. The Superintendent reflected that whilst social media is a great tool for communication there is a risk that some people within the community would be missed from this, therefore any contribution to additional approaches would be welcome.

5. **Treasury Management Six Monthly Report - 2022/23**

The Deputy Leader presented the report, which highlighted, as at 30 September 2022, that borrowing was £140.6m, a decrease of £1.5m in comparison to 2021-22 outturn levels.

This decrease was predominantly caused by the Equal Instalments of Principal (EIP) loans, which paid back principal over the life of the loan (and so incurred less interest costs), as an alternative to the Council's maturity loans where the principal was repaid on the final day of the loan.

Officers have indicated that as interest rates increased, the likelihood that our Lender Offer Borrower Offer (LOBO) loans would be called in also increased. This meant that the lenders asked to amend the rates of these facilities upwards; in response, the borrower (the Council) either accepted that increased rate or redeemed the debt.

No such recall requests were made in the first half of 2022-23, but should they be made in the second half of the year, officers were anticipating they would be replaced with more traditional borrowing in due course, unless there was a sufficient incentive to accept the change in interest rate,

The current capital expenditure forecast involved a degree of slippage, so it was not expected that there would be a need to undertake further long-term borrowing this financial year. However, this did not exclude external borrowing being considered if the situation was advantageous in acting as a hedge to manage interest rate risks, recognising that the Council still had a longer-term borrowing necessity. Any such decision to do this would be made in line with advice from the Council's treasury advisors and only where there was a clear financial benefit in doing so.

The level of investments at 30 September 2022 was £50m, which decreased by £8.2m since outturn 2021-22, as the Council uses up such resourcing as a more cost effective alternate to arranging new external borrowing.

It was anticipated that investment levels would continue to reduce during 2022/23 as an alternative to borrowing until a minimum balance of £10m was ultimately reached, which would remain invested for compliance with Markets in Financial Instruments and Derivatives Directive (MiFIDII).

Market expectations were for interest rates to start to revert to more traditional levels in the last quarter of 2022-23, and so it was prudent to avoid making any long-term borrowing decisions in the short term whilst rates were perceived to be higher than they are likely to be in the following year.

This approach is a cornerstone of effective internal borrowing; even in an environment of increasing interest rates, the cost of new borrowing was still more expensive than any increasing returns on investments. Therefore, it continues to make sense to use the Council's existing surplus cash balances as an alternative to arranging new borrowing.

The final aspect considered was the Prudential Indicators. The Authority measured and managed its exposures to treasury management risks using various indicators which could be found in Appendix B. The report confirmed that the Council continued to comply with the Prudential Indicators set for 2022/23, other than one particular metric designed to highlight the risk to levels of interest receivable from investments, should interest rates collectively fall by 1%.

Officers explained in the report that the purpose of that particular indicator is to highlight how much the Council budgeted income levels would be adversely affected by any reduction in interest rates.

The deviation was more significant than the target due to an increased level of investments being made. This created a false impression as interest rates were currently experiencing a rising trend. However, should those interest rates revert to historic levels, there would still be no risk to the Council's finances in this financial year, as the current income target for interest receivable was being exceeded. Officers were aware that the risk would need to be closely monitored heading into 2023/24, if both investment levels and interest rates were to reduce.

Councillor Batrouni seconded the report.

Resolved:

Council endorsed that the treasury management activities undertaken during the first half year period of 2022-23 were consistent with the 2022-23 Treasury Strategy framework agreed by Members. Council had gained a comfort that those Strategy practices remained prudent to apply to second half year given the unanticipated volatility in interest rates and international economic circumstances.

6. **Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

The Deputy Leader presented the Council Tax Reduction Scheme report to Council.

Unlike in England, there was one all-Wales scheme that provided a framework for assessing applications and removed the postcode lottery that could result from individual schemes.

The all-Wales scheme, along with some discretionary areas had to be approved annually by Council for the scheme to operate.

The report today sought Council's approval for the scheme to be adopted for 2023-24. The report also laid out some technical amendments to the scheme.

The technical amendments were relatively minor in nature and covered the annual uprating of personal allowances and non-dependant deductions, as well as some technical regulation changes as detailed in the report.

There were areas where the Council had discretion in the operation of the scheme, namely:

1. Discretion to extend council tax reduction for those starting work.
2. Discretion to increase the amount of War Disablement Pensions and War Widows Pensions which was to be disregarded when calculating income of the claimant.
3. Discretion to enhance the process for notification of decisions above the minimum requirements.
4. Discretion to backdate the application of council tax reduction beyond the standard period of three months.

If the scheme in the report was not formally adopted, the discretionary areas would be lost and the default standard all-Wales scheme would apply instead.

Councillor Harvey seconded the report.

Resolved:

Council approved the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2023/24 in accordance with the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Schemes) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 ("the Prescribed Requirements Regulations") exercising its local discretions as indicated in the report.

7. **Director of Social Services Annual Report**

The Deputy Leader introduced the report, informing colleagues that the Strategic Director, as the designated Director for Social Services, had a statutory duty under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and as amended by the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 to produce an annual report to the Council.

The report set out the Council's Director of Social Services personal assessment of performance of delivering its social care functions during the preceding 12 months. The

report also covered the period 2021/22 and was laid out in the format prescribed in the guidance.

During this period the Council had seen a restructuring of its Senior Management team and the appointment of a permanent Director of Social Services. The delivery of social care during 2021 and 2022 was profoundly impacted firstly by covid and the restrictions of the pandemic closely followed by the beginning of the emerging cost of living issues.

In light of the particular strictures of 2021-22 the report reflected the challenges and changes of the period. Despite the significant issues faced, the Director of Social Services was satisfied that the Council continued to comply with its statutory duties.

Staff across all Social Services continued to deliver the majority of provisions face to face while embracing the benefits of hybrid working in certain key areas. The benefits of this way of working continued to improve and enhance practice.

The Deputy Leader was pleased to note that despite the difficulties of 2021-2022 social services staff were able to look beyond the relentless demands and also delivered innovative and continued development of services.

Councillor Marshall seconded the report.

Councillor Comments:

- § Councillor Cockeram was cabinet member when the report for 2021/22 was completed. The team was led by Sally-Ann Jenkins and Chris Humphries before. Social Services had been going from strength to strength. There were however some issues being faced, such as the short fall in finances that was also seen in domiciliary care pay. The Presiding Member was disappointed that there were only four compliments that social services received in the whole year by comparison with other councils. There was a need to record compliments in the authority, and said that the lack of compliments was not a reflection on staff.
- § Councillor Hughes agreed with Presiding Member's views and joined the Director of Social Services for thanking Councillor Cockeram and the former Directors of Social Services, Chris Humphries who was hopefully enjoying her retirement. It was a difficult role to undertake, especially during the pandemic. Staff went above and beyond to provide care in the city. Staff had adapted quickly and continued to remain innovative in their responses and they continued to be under immense pressure. The Cabinet Member for Social Services thanked the Director of Social Services and officers for bringing the report to council.
- § Councillor Marshall reiterated the thanks for officers and their continued help, particularly coming out of covid. Staff maintained an excellent service on behalf of the council. The Cabinet Member for Social Services also joined his colleague in thanking Councillor Cockeram and officers for their hard work and contribution.

Resolved:

Council received the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services, 2021 to 2022.

8. Annual Safeguarding Report

The Deputy Leader presented the interim Annual Report for Safeguarding. This report was the evaluation of 2021/22 performance for the Local Authority by the Head of Corporate Safeguarding.

This was an interim report because of changes in Welsh Government guidance. A full report would be presented to Cabinet early next year in line with the new guidance.

Safeguarding and protecting children and vulnerable adults was of the highest priority for Newport City Council.

The Corporate Safeguarding Policy set out the Council's duty and commitment to safeguard and promote the health, wellbeing and human rights of adults and children at risk.

This report assessed the Council's proactive actions and responses to safeguarding, it was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 30 September 2022. There was a constructive and helpful discussion of the content.

The report noted the challenges across the Council in respect of safeguarding due to the pressures brought about by Covid and the restrictions of the pandemic.

The Safeguarding Hub for Children's Services saw a 13.9% increase in referrals during 2021/22. This reflected the issues arising in schools, early years and youth settings and for partner agencies. For children and their families an effective and robust safeguarding approach was vital and could be life changing.

Despite the pressures the outcome of the safeguarding self-assessment for all areas of the Council demonstrated a very high level of compliance with statutory requirements and a determination to continue to place the highest priority on safeguarding for all our citizens.

It was pleasing to note that the new Welsh Government Guidance for Corporate Safeguarding (March 2022) included Newport's Safeguarding Self-Assessment tool as a model of good practice. The guidance was published was based on similar themes coming from external audit and encouraged standardising some of the performance data to enable better measuring distance travelled as to benchmark with other Local Authorities.

The challenges of ensuring all staff, volunteers and Members were accessing and engaged with training for all areas of safeguarding were noted in the report. This was an area which would continue to require a focus and keen prioritisation over the coming year.

The Council was working to ensure safeguarding is maintained in all areas of service and would in the coming year work with the revised Guidance for Corporate Safeguarding to ensure continued compliance.

Councillor Marshall seconded the report.

Councillor Comments:

- § Councillor Cockeram considered that it was important for colleagues to note that Newport City Council's Annual Safeguarding Report was considered as a matter of good practice throughout Wales and thanked the officers involved for all their work.
- § Councillor Marshall reiterated that this was an issue that was considered to be one of the highest priorities for Newport. The report highlighted the efforts that the Council was undertaking as part of a duty to protect children and responsibility for their health and wellbeing. It was also positive that the Welsh Government was also using Newport City Council's self-referral tool. Moving forward, there were challenges to address. Members had a duty to report safeguarding concerns and were the eyes and ears of the community. Even if it was a question that may sound trivial, a situation could build up to a greater concern, therefore reporting small incidences could be saving lives. On this basis, Councillor Marshall therefore commended the report.

Resolved:

Council received the Annual Safeguarding Report (interim) by the Head of Corporate Safeguarding.

9. **Schedule of Meetings - 2023/24**

The proposed schedule of meetings aimed to facilitate the decision-making process through regular Council, Executive and Regulatory Committees. The schedule of meetings also set a pattern of meetings for Scrutiny Committees and other bodies.

The diary did not include dates for meetings of individual Cabinet Members as Cabinet Members would take a view on when they needed to meet to make decisions, rather than be bound by a diary of meetings. This would of course, not affect members' rights of consultation on proposed decisions or to request to meet the Cabinet Member before decisions were taken.

It was suggested that the dates, times and locations of all meetings other than the Council meeting were to be left to each individual committee. It was suggested that the needs of Councillors who had work or other commitments at any time during the day were taken into account by the various committees and groups.

The schedule would remain a guide, was subject to change and amended to meet the needs of the work programmes of each committee or other group.

The Deputy Leader seconded the report.

Resolved:

Council adopted the schedule of meetings as the basis for arrangements for May 2023 to May 2024, recognising it was subject to change and amendment to meet the needs of the work programmes of each committee or other group.

10. **Mayoral Nomination - 2023/24**

The Presiding Member invited the Leader to nominate the Mayor for 2023/24.

The Deputy Leader was delighted to formally move Councillor Watkins as the Mayor for 2023/24, which was also seconded by Councillor M Evans.

Resolved:

That Council nominated Councillor Trevor Watkins as Mayor for 2023/24.

11. **Democratic Services Committee Minutes: 13 December 2022**

The Presiding Member asked councillor colleagues to note the Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee for their information.

12. **Questions to the Leader of the Council**

The Presiding Member advised that due to the apologies of the Leader, a written response would be provided should members wish to submit a question.

Councillor M Evans understood that whilst there was no provision in the Standing Orders for the Deputy Leader to speak, his Conservative colleagues were of the view that the Deputy Leader could deputise for this item in the absence of the Leader.

Councillor Morris echoed the comments of Councillor M Evans and believed that questions had been covered by the Deputy Leader in the past.

The Presiding Member reminded colleagues that the former Leader, Councillor D Wilcox had introduced open questions to the Leader in 2016. Officers would refer to the Standing Orders to Democratic Services Committee as part of their remit in considering any proposed amendments to the council's constitution. Any proposed changes, whether recommended by the Democratic Services Committee or not, would have to be debated by full Council and required a majority vote of those members present and voting to be accepted.

13. Questions to the Cabinet Members

There were three written questions to the Cabinet Members:

Question 1: Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Regulation and Housing

Councillor Mark Howells:

As part of the planning committee since my election this year, it is evident that there is an increase in planning applications around conversion of properties HMOs.

I'm sure the Cabinet Member will agree that these are the most contentious applications that attract the most public criticism and if not carefully considered, can cause significant issues in local communities. Conflict often arises between the views of the public, Members views and considerations, and the views of the Council Officers in line with legislative constraints. Only this month an application came before the committee that was contentious and friction existed between Officers and Members on the right approach to take.

The current supplementary planning guidance on HMOs is not helping. It is dated 2017 and significantly out of date and has not kept pace with housing and planning law changes since that time. It does not represent the views of members generally and this is further supported by cross party support at planning committee on these issues.

I note the Cabinet report of 11 January around the timetables for delivery of the LDP as well as no real commitment to amend the SPG's due to time constraints. Given the issues around HMO's and the strong public feeling about them, It is my submission that the SPG for HMOs' cannot wait until after 2026 to be updated and should be looked at and consulted on urgently to provide a better framework for determining these applications that reflects the listening council we strive to be.

Will the Cabinet Member therefore commit to instructing Officers to update the SPG for how this council deal with conversion to HMOs urgently?

Councillor James Clarke response:

It is acknowledged that planning applications for HMOs can often be contentious. Indeed, poorly managed and high concentrations of HMOs can potentially lead to issues affecting local residents and often the tenants themselves. However, we must also remember that well managed HMOs can integrate well with the local community and will often provide housing opportunities for a variety of people, including young professionals. Therefore, care must be taken not to tarnish all HMOs with the same brush.

In respect of the statement that there is an increase in planning applications for HMO's, I would like to confirm that this is not the case. Planning records show 30 applications were determined in 2020/21, 21 applications for 2021/22 and 16 applications in the current financial year. I think what Cllr Howells is seeing as a newly elected Member is a high number of referrals to Planning Committee and misconstruing this as an increase in actual applications.

As a former member of Planning Committee and now Cabinet Member responsible for Planning, I am very familiar with member concerns and their worries about the potential

issues that HMOs can cause. However, I believe that new or updated Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is not the solution, it's a tool to help make decisions and is for guidance only and is based on evidence of need and impact. It is certainly not a vehicle to reflect members' own views on a particular type of proposal which they personally don't like. It provides additional guidance on the main policy or policies within the Local Development Plan (LDP). As Councillor Howells is already aware from the detailed and ongoing training he has received as a Planning Committee member, all planning decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan. Policy H8 of the Development Plan is very clear on the criteria that proposals for HMOs need to satisfy, namely the need to ensure that there is no harm to the character of the building and locality, there is no over concentration of HMOs in one area, adequate noise insulation is provided, and adequate amenity is provided for future occupiers. We cannot refuse applications on the basis of "we just don't like them. There needs to be a measured and evidence based decision and personally I was pleased to see an open and lively debate between the Planning Committee and Officers at this month's Planning committee which was mostly evidence based.

In his question, Councillor Howells confirms that he is aware of the review of the LDP which is currently underway. I am pleased to confirm that we are at the growth options stage and Cabinet recently approved a report which you can find online that allows us to consult with our residents and stakeholders on how they would like to see Newport grow and thrive in the coming years. As part of the LDP review it is much more appropriate and effective for us to review policy H8 rather than produce more guidance.

You will be comforted to know that we are already working on this and the Council has commissioned a research piece which should be completed by this Summer. This work will start to build the evidence base we need to inform the policies in the new LDP. As we are all aware, any new LDP policy will be examined by an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Government and the evidence supporting any new policy, including a new HMO policy, will therefore need to be robust. We will also engage with partners such as Gwent Police and review complaints made to other Council services to gather all available evidence. Consultation with residents, Members and stakeholders is at the heart of the LDP review process and I would welcome Council Howell's engagement in the review of the HMO policy and any other policy which he feels does not give him the outcome he wants. We are happy to consider all suggestions and feedback.

In fact, I know there that there are a few councillors here today who have lived in HMOs. Therefore, care must be taken not to tarnish all HMOs with the same brush. In respect of the statement that there is an increase in planning applications for HMO's, I would like to confirm that this is not the case. Planning records show 30 applications were determined in 2020/21, 21 applications for 2021/22 and 16 applications in the current financial year. I think what Cllr Howells is seeing as a newly elected Member is a high number of referrals to Planning Committee and misconstruing this as an increase in actual applications.

As a former member of Planning Committee and now Cabinet Member responsible for Planning, I am very familiar with member concerns and their worries about the potential issues that HMOs can cause. However, I believe

Supplementary Question:

Whilst not a supplementary question, Councillor Howells wished to state that he was not against HMOs but felt that there should be appropriate guidance to determine HMOs within Newport and wanted this clarified for the record.

Question 2: Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Bio-diversity

Councillor Mark Howells:

Background:

In 2022 prior to the local council elections, the labour administration announced capital investment of 2.5m in Parks. I wrote to you by email in June 2022 requesting detail of how that money will be spent and you replied:

“We are in the process of arranging an all member seminar in relation to this service area. This will help to familiarise elected members with service level responsibilities and commitments. I believe that this will be particularly helpful to newly elected members. The administration previously agreed an increase in the maintenance budget in addition to the further capital investment of £2.5m agreed by Cabinet. Again, the seminar should help to provide a better understanding of context and priorities.

Should you have any further queries following on from the seminar I would be happy to arrange a meeting.”

To my knowledge, no such seminar has taken place.

In my question to you in September, and your written reply of 3rd October you informed me that *“the investment covers both play areas and cemeteries and that funding will be used to clear existing maintenance backlog over a 2-year period.”* This was the first I and other colleagues and members of the public had heard of this.

I wrote to again you following that response asking for a meeting to discuss the parks budgets but unfortunately you refused, in your email reply of 13 October 2022.

Further scrutiny of Cabinet reports and minutes notes.

In the Cabinet meeting of 13 July 2022 the Leader mentioned *“the importance of the 2.5m for parks and open spaces – in addition, £300k permanent funding over 2 years has been allocated to maintain play areas and equipment.”*

In the Cabinet meeting of 12 October a capital report was prepared and funding appears to now be split for the first time at £700k for parks for 22/23 and £500k for 22/23 to cemeteries. A further £900k earmarked for 23/24 for cemeteries and a £400k for parks.

In the budget papers for Cabinet in December 2022, it is confirmed that Cabinet added only £700k budget for parks improvements and the prediction is that only £46k spending will take place by the end 22/23 financial year. This is despite you informing me in reply to my question that most works are currently in the process of being tendered.

Question:

Is this Labour administration about investing in our green spaces and parks or was the announcement of £2.5m investment, conveniently made just prior to last council elections just a failed election pledge in disguise?

Why has no capital money been spent improving our parks in 2022 when the need is desperate and evident to Newport citizens?

Why are you now consulting on imposing parking charges to these areas which only discourage people from using them?

Will you now agree to meet with me and my ward colleagues to thrash out how we can spend some of the parks investment money on projects that will make a real difference to our constituents' lives locally?

Councillor Yvonne Forsey response:

As it was stated in my previous response to you, the £2.5M capital investment for parks and cemeteries agreed by Cabinet as a 2-year programme. Work is prioritised based on results of the annual inspection programme.

As it had been stated previously, engagement with residents is a key element of this work, to ensure the local community is suitably involved in any replacement work taking place. We have recently appointed an engagement officer and tendering for contractors is underway.

A meeting between Lliswerry ward members and the senior manager in charge of parks was agreed with you in November. The all-member seminar was held on 4th August 2022.

With the current unprecedented levels of inflation and budget pressures. The council must increase income to fund maintaining services in park open spaces and countryside sites. It helps support posts, activities, and services that the public rely on for formal and informal leisure and recreation.

The current proposal extends the charging scheme already in place in Belle Vue Park, Tredegar Park and Fourteen Locks, with no increase in charges from previous years, and which has proven successful to help maintain the assets.

Proposed fares are extremely low relative to the cost of operating a motor vehicle.

Question 3: Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Assets

Councillor Ray Mogford:

Once again Bishton and Langstone along with other parts of Newport East has experienced severe flooding over the weekend.

What is the Cabinet Member and this administration doing to ensure that this recurrent flooding, apparently linked to climate change, is once and all resolved from a strategic perspective?

Councillor Laura Lacey response:

From a strategic perspective, Newport City Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority for Newport and works closely with all key flood management authorities to manage local flood risk across the city.

Our Local Flood Risk Management Plan sets out how we manage flooding from local sources so that the communities most at risk benefit the most.

In doing so, the plan takes forward the objectives and actions set out in the authority's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

You will be aware that both the communities mentioned in your question are considered within the plan.

The sources of floodwater are not always within the management of Newport City Council as Lead Local Flood Authority. Therefore, we work closely with partners such as Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Water and local landowners who all have water management responsibilities within the east of Newport.

I can confirm that all the flooding recently experienced was impacted in some way by one or more third party asset owner and officers are reminding owners of their duties under flood management legislation and working with them to resolve the issues identified.

It is, however, important to be aware that there will always be a limit to the capacity of any drainage system, especially with the recent heavy rainfall, which was nationally experienced and likely to become more common due to climate change.