



Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford

Contact Jim Dean
Direct Dial 01785 619209

Email jdean@staffordbc.gov.uk

Dear Members

Cabinet

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held on **Thursday 9 March 2023** at **6.30pm** in the **Craddock Room, Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford** to deal with the business as set out on the agenda.

Please note that this meeting will be recorded

Members are reminded that contact officers are shown at the top of each report and members are welcome to raise questions etc in advance of the meeting with the appropriate officer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "I. Curran".

Head of Law and Administration

CABINET - 9 MARCH 2023

Chair - Councillor P M M Farrington

AGENDA

- 1 Minutes of 9 February 2023 as circulated and published on 10 February 2023
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Councillors' Question Time (if any)
- 4 Proposals of the Cabinet Members (as follows):-

Page Nos

(a) **RESOURCES PORTFOLIO**

- | | | |
|------|---|---------|
| (i) | Committee Cycle 2023/24 | 3 - 18 |
| (ii) | Revenues and Benefits Collection Report
Quarter 3 - PART CONFIDENTIAL | 19 - 39 |

Report contains information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual and information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information).

Membership

Chair - Councillor P M M Farrington

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| P M M Farrington | - Leader |
| F Beatty | - Economic Development and Planning Portfolio |
| J M Pert | - Deputy Leader and Community Portfolio |
| J K Price | - Climate Change Portfolio |
| R M Smith | - Resources Portfolio |
| C V Trowbridge | - Leisure Portfolio |
| M J Winnington | - Environment Portfolio |

Agenda Item 4(a)(i)

Cabinet Date:	9 March 2023
Contact Officer:	Jim Dean
Telephone Number:	01785 619209
Ward Interest:	Nil
Report Track:	Cabinet 09/03/2023 (Only)
Key Decision:	No
Submission by:	Councillor R M Smith, Resources Portfolio

Committee Cycle 2023/24

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider the proposed Committee Cycle for 2023/24.

2 Proposal of Cabinet Member

- 2.1 That the Committee Cycle for 2023/24 as submitted be approved.

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Committee Cycle for 2023/24 has been produced on the basis of the current committee structure, and a similar basis to 2022/23. It also provides for the process leading to the 2024/25 budget.
- 3.2 Once again, timing of the Scrutiny Committees has been arranged in order to coincide with the production of performance and budgetary information. This enables the Scrutiny Committees to look at more current information with a view to taking more timely action, where necessary.

4 Relationship to Corporate Business Objectives

- 4.1 The Committee Cycle will assist the Council to support all Corporate Priorities

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 The suggested Committee Cycle for 2023/24 is attached as an **APPENDIX**

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

Nil

6.2 Legal

Nil

6.3 Human Resources

Nil

6.4 Human Rights Act

Nil

6.5 Data Protection

Nil

6.6 Risk Management

Nil

6.7 Community Impact Assessment Recommendations

Impact on Public Sector Equality Duty:

N/A

Wider Community Impact:

N/A

7 Previous Consideration

Nil

8 Background Papers

File available in Democratic Services

Yearly Committee Cycle

2023 - 2024



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Please Note: All meetings start at 6.30pm unless otherwise indicated

2023

May

Monday	1	May Day Bank Holiday
Tuesday	2	Cabinet
Wednesday	3	
Thursday	4	Borough and Parish Elections
Friday	5	
Saturday	6	

Sunday	7	
Monday	8	Bank Holiday
Tuesday	9	
Wednesday	10	
Thursday	11	
Friday	12	
Saturday	13	Council (Mayor Making) (10.30am)

Sunday	14		
Monday	15	Council (Appointments) (7.00pm)	
Tuesday	16		Call-in Ends
Wednesday	17	Planning Committee	
Thursday	18		
Friday	19		
Saturday	20		

Sunday	21	
Monday	22	
Tuesday	23	
Wednesday	24	
Thursday	25	
Friday	26	
Saturday	27	

Sunday	28	
Monday	29	Spring Bank Holiday
Tuesday	30	
Wednesday	31	

June

Thursday	1	
Friday	2	
Saturday	3	

Sunday	4	
Monday	5	
Tuesday	6	
Wednesday	7	Planning Committee
Thursday	8	Cabinet
Friday	9	
Saturday	10	

Sunday	11	
Monday	12	
Tuesday	13	
Wednesday	14	
Thursday	15	
Friday	16	
Saturday	17	

Sunday	18		
Monday	19		
Tuesday	20	Audit and Accounts Committee	Call-in Ends
Wednesday	21		
Thursday	22	Resources Scrutiny Committee	
Friday	23		
Saturday	24		

Sunday	25	
Monday	26	
Tuesday	27	
Wednesday	28	Planning Committee
Thursday	29	
Friday	30	

July

Saturday	1	
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Sunday	2	
Monday	3	
Tuesday	4	Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday	5	
Thursday	6	Cabinet
Friday	7	
Saturday	8	

Sunday	9	
Monday	10	
Tuesday	11	
Wednesday	12	
Thursday	13	
Friday	14	

Saturday	15		
<hr/>			
Sunday	16		
Monday	17		
Tuesday	18	Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	Call-in Ends
Wednesday	19		
Thursday	20	Planning Committee	
Friday	21		
Saturday	22		

Sunday	23		
Monday	24		
Tuesday	25	Council (7.00pm)	
Wednesday	26		
Thursday	27		
Friday	28		
Saturday	29		

Sunday	30		
Monday	31		

August

Tuesday	1		
Wednesday	2		
Thursday	3	Cabinet	
Friday	4		
Saturday	5		

Sunday	6		
Monday	7		
Tuesday	8		
Wednesday	9	Planning Committee	
Thursday	10		
Friday	11		
Saturday	12		

Sunday	13		
Monday	14		
Tuesday	15		Call-in Ends
Wednesday	16		
Thursday	17	Resources Scrutiny Committee	
Friday	18		
Saturday	19		

Sunday	20		
Monday	21		
Tuesday	22		
Wednesday	23		
Thursday	24	Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee	

Friday 25
Saturday 26

Sunday 27
Monday 28 **Summer Bank Holiday**
Tuesday 29
Wednesday 30 **Planning Committee**
Thursday 31

September

Friday 1
Saturday 2

Sunday 3
Monday 4
Tuesday 5 **Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee**
Wednesday 6
Thursday 7 **Cabinet**
Friday 8
Saturday 9

Sunday 10
Monday 11
Tuesday 12 **Council (7.00pm)**
Wednesday 13
Thursday 14
Friday 15
Saturday 16

Sunday 17
Monday 18
Tuesday 19 **Call-in Ends**
Wednesday 20 **Planning Committee**
Thursday 21
Friday 22
Saturday 23

Sunday 24
Monday 25
Tuesday 26
Wednesday 27
Thursday 28
Friday 29
Saturday 30

October

Sunday	1	
Monday	2	
Tuesday	3	
Wednesday	4	
Thursday	5	Cabinet
Friday	6	
Saturday	7	

Sunday	8	
Monday	9	
Tuesday	10	
Wednesday	11	Planning Committee
Thursday	12	
Friday	13	
Saturday	14	

Sunday	15	
Monday	16	
Tuesday	17	Call-in Ends
Wednesday	18	
Thursday	19	
Friday	20	
Saturday	21	

Sunday	22	
Monday	23	
Tuesday	24	
Wednesday	25	
Thursday	26	
Friday	27	
Saturday	28	

Sunday	29	
Monday	30	
Tuesday	31	

November

Wednesday	1	Planning Committee
Thursday	2	Cabinet
Friday	3	
Saturday	4	

Sunday	5	
Monday	6	
Tuesday	7	Resources Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday	8	
Thursday	9	

Friday 10
Saturday 11

Sunday 12
Monday 13
Tuesday 14

**Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee
Call-in Ends**

Wednesday 15
Thursday 16
Friday 17
Saturday 18

**Audit and Accounts Committee
Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee**

Sunday 19
Monday 20
Tuesday 21
Wednesday 22
Thursday 23
Friday 24
Saturday 25

Planning Committee

Sunday 26
Monday 27
Tuesday 28
Wednesday 29
Thursday 30

Council (7.00pm)

December

Friday 1
Saturday 2

Sunday 3
Monday 4
Tuesday 5
Wednesday 6
Thursday 7
Friday 8
Saturday 9

Cabinet

Sunday 10
Monday 11
Tuesday 12
Wednesday 13
Thursday 14
Friday 15
Saturday 16

Sunday	17		
Monday	18		
Tuesday	19		Call-in Ends
Wednesday	20	Planning Committee	
Thursday	21		
Friday	22		
Saturday	23		

Sunday	24		
Monday	25	Christmas Day	
Tuesday	26	Boxing Day	
Wednesday	27		
Thursday	28		
Friday	29		
Saturday	30		

Sunday 31

2024

January

Monday	1	New Year's Day	
Tuesday	2		
Wednesday	3		
Thursday	4		
Friday	5		
Saturday	6		

Sunday	7		
Monday	8		
Tuesday	9	Resources Scrutiny Committee	
Wednesday	10		
Thursday	11	Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee	
Friday	12		
Saturday	13		

Sunday	14		
Monday	15		
Tuesday	16	Community Scrutiny Committee	
Wednesday	17	Planning Committee	
Thursday	18	Cabinet	
Friday	19		
Saturday	20		

Sunday	21		
Monday	22		
Tuesday	23		
Wednesday	24		
Thursday	25		

Friday 26
Saturday 27

Sunday 28
Monday 29
Tuesday 30
Wednesday 31

Council (7.00pm)

Call-in Ends

February

Thursday 1
Friday 2
Saturday 3

Sunday 4
Monday 5
Tuesday 6
Wednesday 7
Thursday 8
Friday 9
Saturday 10

**Planning Committee
Cabinet**

Sunday 11
Monday 12
Tuesday 13
Wednesday 14
Thursday 15
Friday 16
Saturday 17

Sunday 18
Monday 19
Tuesday 20
Wednesday 21
Thursday 22
Friday 23
Saturday 24

Audit and Accounts Committee

Call-in Ends

Sunday 25
Monday 26
Tuesday 27
Wednesday 28
Thursday 29

**Council (7.00pm)
Planning Committee**

March

Friday 1
Saturday 2

Sunday 3
Monday 4

Tuesday	5	Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday	6	
Thursday	7	Cabinet
Friday	8	
Saturday	9	

Sunday	10	
Monday	11	
Tuesday	12	
Wednesday	13	Resources Scrutiny Committee
Thursday	14	
Friday	15	
Saturday	16	

Sunday	17		
Monday	18		
Tuesday	19	Audit and Accounts Committee	Call-in Ends
Wednesday	20	Planning Committee	
Thursday	21	Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	
Friday	22		
Saturday	23		

Sunday	24	
Monday	25	
Tuesday	26	
Wednesday	27	
Thursday	28	
Friday	29	Good Friday
Saturday	30	

Sunday	31	
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April

Monday	1	Easter Monday
Tuesday	2	
Wednesday	3	
Thursday	4	
Friday	5	
Saturday	6	

Sunday	7	
Monday	8	
Tuesday	9	Cabinet
Wednesday	10	Planning Committee
Thursday	11	
Friday	12	
Saturday	13	

Sunday	14	
Monday	15	
Tuesday	16	Council (7.00pm)
Wednesday	17	
Thursday	18	
Friday	19	
Saturday	20	

Sunday	21	
Monday	22	
Tuesday	23	Call-in Ends
Wednesday	24	
Thursday	25	
Friday	26	
Saturday	27	

Sunday	28	
Monday	29	
Tuesday	30	

May

Wednesday	1	Planning Committee
Thursday	2	Police Fire and Crime Commissioner Election
Friday	3	
Saturday	4	

Sunday	5	
Monday	6	May Day Bank Holiday
Tuesday	7	Cabinet
Wednesday	8	
Thursday	9	
Friday	10	
Saturday	11	Council (Mayor Making) (10.30am)

Sunday	12	
Monday	13	Council (Appointments) (7.00pm)
Tuesday	14	
Wednesday	15	
Thursday	16	
Friday	17	
Saturday	18	

Sunday	19		
Monday	20		
Tuesday	21		Call-in Ends
Wednesday	22	Planning Committee	
Thursday	23		
Friday	24		
Saturday	25		

Sunday	26		
Monday	27		
Tuesday	28		
Wednesday	29		
Thursday	30		
Friday	31		

NOTE: School Holidays 2023-2024

- Monday 29 May - Friday 2 June 2023 (Half Term)
- Wednesday 26 July to Friday 1 September 2023 (Summer Holiday)
- Monday 4 September 2023 (Inset Day)
- Monday 30 October - Friday 3 November 2023 (Half Term)
- Monday 25 December 2023 - Friday 5 January 2024 (Christmas Holiday)
- Monday 12 February - Friday 16 February 2024 (Half Term)
- Monday 25 March - Friday 5 April 2024 (Easter Holiday)
- Monday 6 May 2024 (May Day)
- Monday 27 May - Friday 31 May 2024

Agenda Item 4(a)(ii)

Cabinet Date:	9 March 2023
Contact Officer:	Rob Wolfe
Telephone Number:	01543 464 397
Ward Interest:	Nil
Report Track:	Cabinet 09/03/2023 (Only)
Key Decision:	No
Submission by:	Councillor R M Smith, Resources Portfolio

Revenues and Benefits Collection Report - Quarter 3

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the performance of the Revenues and Benefits Service as regards:
 - collections of Council Tax during the first three quarters of the financial year.
 - collections of Business Rates during the first three quarters of the financial year.
- 1.2 To seek approval to the write off of the arrears listed in the **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDICES**.

2 Proposal of Cabinet Member

- 2.1 That the information regarding collections be noted;
- 2.2 That the arrears listed in the **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDICES** be written off.

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 Efficient collection of the Council's revenues is of major importance to the funding of Council services and those provided by our preceptors.
- 3.2 Council Tax due for the current year amounts to £94.9M, of which some **82.3%** was collected by the end of the December, which is slightly lower than the 83.1% collected in the same period last year.

3.3 Business Rates due for the current year amounts to £48.7M of which some **81.0%** was collected by the end of the December. This compares to 76.5% collected in the same period last year.

3.4 Whilst our collection rates are traditionally good, regrettably not all of the monies owed to the Council can be collected and this report contains a recommendation to write off bad debts which cannot be recovered.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

4.1 Not Applicable

5 Report Detail

Council Tax

5.1 Council Tax is collected on behalf of the District Council, Parish Councils and our Major Preceptors (Staffordshire County Council and Commissioner for Police, Crime, Fire and Rescue). The effect of the Collection fund arrangements means that Stafford Borough Council retains around 10% of the council tax collected.

5.2 Council Tax due for the current year amounts to £94.9M and we would hope to collect in the region of 98% within the year, as was the case prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The knock-on effect of underpayments during the past two years, the current economic climate and the need for Revenues staff to have managed Council Tax Energy Rebate awards, will add to the difficulty in achieving this target in the current year. Action will continue to collect arrears after the end of the financial year, with around 99% traditionally being recovered.

5.3 By 31 December, we had collected 82.3% of the year's charges, which is broadly in line with the corresponding period of the previous year (which was 83.1%).

5.4 In accordance with the Council's approved policies, all reasonable and lawful attempts are made to recover all amounts due. In the first instance this involves the issue of bills, reminders and final notices, followed by Summonses in the Magistrates Court where the warning notices are not effective. At all stages of this process, debtors are encouraged to engage in voluntary arrangements to repay their arrears, to prevent the need for formal action.

Where necessary and when Liability Orders are granted by Magistrates, the Council uses its powers to make deductions from earnings and benefits of debtors, where it can, and instructs Enforcement Agents where such deductions are not possible or appropriate.

In the most severe cases and for debts exceeding £5,000, the Council will consider personal bankruptcy action against individuals.

- 5.5 The recovery powers available to the Council are considerable but not completely infallible. There are occasions when bills are not paid and the debts cannot be recovered.
- 5.6 Statutory safeguards such as Debt Relief Orders, Individual's Voluntary Arrangements exist to protect debtors suffering hardship, to attempt to the expensive, stressful and sometimes ineffective process of personal bankruptcy. Where a debt is included in such an instrument, or when a debtor is bankrupt, our ordinary recovery powers cannot be used.
- 5.7 For any of our powers to be effective we need to know the whereabouts of a debtor and this is not always the case. Where debtors abscond we will use all reasonable endeavours to trace them and are often successful in doing so. Unfortunately, on occasions this is not so and we must submit a debt for write off.

Our trace procedures include;

- Checking our internal Council systems, and following any information which may help us to trace the debtor.
- Use of Transunion credit reference agency data.
- Trace and collect facilities offered by our Enforcement Agencies
- Visits to the last known address by the Council's Property Inspector and use of external tracing agents.

Unfortunately, legislation does not currently permit access to DWP or HMRC records to trace Council Tax debtors or their employers, though a Cabinet Office project is currently reviewing this.

Data protection legislation allows us to receive information as to a debtor's whereabouts but we cannot disclose information to other creditors. Reciprocal arrangements with utility companies and similar are not therefore workable.

- 5.8 1 Irrecoverable council tax debt in the sum of £2,549.33 are listed in the **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX** to this report.

Business Rates

- 5.9 Business Rates due for the current year amounts to £48.7M of which some **81.0%** was collected by the end of December. This compares to 76.5% collected in the same period last year and so would appear to reflect some upturn in the economy following the pandemic. The collection rate for the same period in 2019 was 83.4% and so it would appear that it will take some time to return to pre-pandemic level.

- 5.10 The recovery powers available to us are again contained in the Council's approved policies and are used in full. Those powers and our procedures are similar to the council tax powers described above, with the exception that deductions from individuals' benefits and earnings are not permissible, even if the debtor is an individual.
- 5.11 Where rates are owed by an individual, similar safe guards exist for the debtors and trace facilities are used by the Council for absconding debtors, as described above.
- 5.12 Additionally, in the case of business rates, as has been reported to Cabinet previously, our collection efforts are sometimes frustrated by weaknesses in legislation. Rates are due from the occupiers rather than the owners of property and where the occupier is a company, we can only recover from that company. Some proprietors will strip a company of its assets, or dissolve the company before we have had an opportunity to implement our recovery procedures. A new company is then formed in a similar style, to trade from the same premises.

Central Government has previously undertaken to review the loopholes that exist in rating and company legislation, though no changes have yet been received. Officers continue to actively monitor these issues.

- 5.13 15 irrecoverable business rate debts in the sum of £526,494.75 are listed in the **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX** to this report.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

Council Tax write offs are losses to the Collection Fund and, as such, form part of the cost of collection incurred by this Council. The Council Tax write offs on this report total £2,549.33. This represents 0.003% of the outstanding collectable debit for the current year.

The cost of collecting the debts has been considered as part of the decision to put them forward for write off. If further information does come forward about the whereabouts of any of the individual debtors the Council will pursue recovery action.

Cabinet are asked to write off the debts as they are considered to be irrecoverable for the reasons given in the appendices. The debts remain legally due to the Council and should the circumstances causing the write off in any particular case, subsequently change, recovery action may be recommenced.

6.2 Legal

Cabinet are asked to write off the debts as they are considered to be irrecoverable for the reasons given in the appendices. The debts remain legally due to the Council and should the circumstances causing the write off in any particular case, subsequently change, recovery action may be recommended.

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Human Rights Act

None

6.5 Data Protection

The appendices to this report contain personal information and are therefore not published.

6.6 Risk Management

The risk issues contained in this report are not strategic and therefore should not be included in the Strategic Risk Register.

6.7 Community Impact Assessment Recommendations

The Borough Council considers the effect of its actions on all sections of our community and has addressed all of the following Equality Strands in the production of this report, as appropriate:-

Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

Impact on Public Sector Equality Duty:

Nil

Wider Community Impact:

Nil

7 Previous Consideration

Nil

8 Background Papers

None