

Minutes of a meeting of the
Worthing Cabinet
1 February 2023
at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Dr Beccy Cooper (Chairman)
Councillor Carl Walker (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Rita Garner
Councillor Martin McCabe
*Councillor Helen Silman
Councillor Emma Taylor

Councillor John Turley
Councillor Vicki Wells
*Councillor Rosey Whorlow

*=
absent

WCAB/1/22-23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

WCAB/2/22-23 Public Questions

There were no questions from the public.

WCAB/3/22-23 Members Questions

There were no pre-submitted questions from Members.

WCAB/4/22-23 Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions

An urgent item was agreed to be considered by the Leader who made the following announcement

'There has been an urgent matter brought forward for consideration at tonight's meeting. I have agreed to accept the item in accordance with the appropriate Section of the Local Government Act 1972, by reason of special circumstances.

I propose that we shall consider the urgent item as the last item of business on tonight's agenda'.

WCAB/5/22-23 Investing in our Places - Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2025/26

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital, Sustainability and Resources, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as Item 6.

This report before Cabinet recommended the investment programmes for Worthing Borough Council which supported both the strategic ambition of the Council and the vital regular investment toward the upkeep and improvement of our public assets.

Members were asked to improve the new schemes for 2023/24. The report recommended schemes for inclusion in the programme for 2023/24 and an indicative list for schemes for 2024/25.

Cabinet was informed of the resources available for future capital investment, and updated Members about the financing of the proposed programmes.

Members welcomed the report and discussed specific projects within the plan

Decision

That the Cabinet

- a) Considered the General Fund Capital Investment Programmes for 2023/24 and confirmed the schemes to be included as detailed in Appendix 2 and 3;
- b) Recommended the full programme detailed at Appendix 3 for approval by Council on the 21st February 2023;
- c) Noted the amendments and additions to the reserve lists as detailed in Appendix 5.

Reason for Decision

To protect and maintain the Borough's Assets

Alternative options considered

As outlined in the report.

Call In

The call-in deadline for this decision is Monday 13 February 2023 at 5.00pm.

There is no call in for b) as it is a decision for Council

WCAB/6/22-23 Budget Estimates 2023/24 and setting of the 2023/24 Council Tax

Before the Committee was a report by the Director for Digital, Sustainability and Resources, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as Item 7.

The report before members was the final budget report of the year, the culmination of the annual budgeting exercise, and asked members to consider: final revenue estimates, an updated outline 5-year forecast and the provisional level of Council Tax for 2023/24 prior to its submission to Council for approval.

The report outlined the medium term financial challenge through to 2027/28, discussed the impact the current high inflation was having on the budget over the next year, and set

out performance in the key strategic areas of commercialisation, digital transformation and strategic asset management. This had been updated to include the latest information regarding the impact of the inflation on the Council's financial position. The current budget strategy was having a significant effect on how the Council would be funded in the future with increasing income generated from commercial income and rents. Following the delay to the fairer funding review, the challenge still remained significant for 2024/25, however the delivery of the budget strategy would ensure that this was met.

These budgets reflected the Council's ambitions set out in the JSC Sub-Committee report 'New Priorities for Worthing', supported by 'Our Plan' and agreed savings proposals contributing to the financial sustainability of the Councils.

The major points raised within the report included:

- A full update on the impact of settlement. The Council should prepare itself for a continuation of the reduction in Government resources for 2023/24 and beyond (see section 4);
- Highlighted the proposed funding for initiatives to support the Councils' ambitions;
- Details the proposals to invest in services outlined in Appendix 2;
- The Executive would need to consider whether to increase Council Tax by 2.99% or by a lower amount (section 5.10).

The budget was analysed by Cabinet Member portfolio. In addition, the draft estimates for 2023/24 have been prepared, as always, in accordance with the requirements of the Service Reporting Code of Practice for Local Authorities (except in relation to pension costs adjustments that do not impact either on the Budget Requirement or the Council Tax Requirement).

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had been informed that the referendum criteria for this year was an increase of £15.00 per Band D property which would be equivalent to an increase of 6.67% and a further £10.00 in 2024/25. The proposed 2023/24 budget was due to be considered by the Sussex Police and Crime Panel (PCP) on 27th January 2023. If the proposals were vetoed by the PCP, revised proposals would be considered by the Panel on the 20th February 2023 at which point the Commissioner will be in a position to confirm the Council Tax for 2023/34 in time for Council on the 21st February 2023.

The draft Local Government Settlement allowed Councils to increase core Council Tax by up to 2.99%. Those Councils with responsibility for Adult Social Care could increase Council Tax by up to a further 2%. Therefore a Council Tax increase of 4.99% for Councils with social care responsibilities was allowed for 2023/24.

The precept for West Sussex County Council had not yet been finalised and will not be confirmed until 17th February 2023. The formal detailed resolution setting the overall Council Tax for next year would be presented directly to the Council Meeting on 21st February 2023.

The Cabinet Member for Resources introduced the report to the committee and laid out the main points therein including the severe financial pressures being placed upon the

council. The Cabinet Member detailed the measures taken to meet the necessary savings, however there was some pressure placed on reserves which had been the case for previous years. It was the intention to strengthen the reserve position.

It was noted that the Local Government Settlement allowed Councils to increase core Council Tax by up to 2.99% from 1.99% the previous year. Due to the severe financial pressures it was recommended that the increase in Council Tax be 2.99% enabling the Council to meet its target of delivering high quality frontline services and supporting those in need. A 2.99% increase in Council tax amounted to a yearly increase of about £7 per year for a band D property and £6 for a Band C property.

Members discussed the issue and acknowledged the difficult position the Council was in. It was noted that just 12.4% of Council tax went to the Borough even though the Council provided essential services. Steps had been taken to lighten the load on those who faced financial hardship and programmes to address the cost of living emergency.

The Cabinet took a recorded vote on the individual recommendations before it

For: (recommendations a,b,c,d) - Councillors Cooper, Garner, McCabe, Taylor, Turley, Walker, Wells

Against: (0)

Abstentions: (0)

Decision

That the Cabinet

- a) Approved, the proposals to invest in services outlined in Appendix 2;
- b) Recommended to Council the draft budgets for 2023/24 and the transfer to Reserves leading to a net budget requirement of £14,188,940 which included provision for the proposals in Appendix 2, subject to any agreed amendments;
- c) Recommended to Council an increase of 2.99% in Council Tax, making Band D £259.92 per annum for Worthing Borough Council's requirements in 2023/24, as set out in paragraph 5.10; and
- d) Approved the Council Tax base of 39,364.6 for 2023/24 as set out in paragraph 12.3.

Reason for Decision

Statutory requirement to set a budget.

Alternative options considered

As outlined in the report.

Call-in

The call-in deadline for decision (a) and (d) will be 5.00pm on Monday 13 February 2023. There is no call-in for recommendations to Full Council, (b) or (c).

WCAB/7/22-23 Local Plan Adoption with Additional Modifications

Before the Committee was an urgent report and exempt annex by the Director for Economy, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes. Prior to hearing the item the Leader confirmed with members that they had received enough time to read and consider the report.

The report detailed that Worthing Borough Council must prepare a Local Plan to establish local planning policies for the Borough. After a number of years of preparation the Worthing Local Plan was entering the final stages towards adoption. The Local Plan was Submitted for Examination in June 2021, the Hearing Sessions were held in November 2021 and a Schedule of Modifications was consulted on during 2022.

The Local Planning Inspector issued his Report to the Council. This summarised the Inspector's key findings and his conclusion within the Report was that the Plan, as modified, was sound and legally compliant confirming the steps for formally adopting the local plan. The Local Plan was thereafter referred for adoption to the December 2022 Full Council Meeting.

Prior to Full Council, Officers became aware of a factual misrepresentation in the information that had been submitted to the Planning Inspector when considering his final report which is referred to in more detail at Paragraph 3 below. As result of the Misrepresentation the referral to Full Council for adoption in December was postponed to enable Officers to consider how best to resolve the Misrepresentation.

The Report

- Referenced under background papers the Report previously considered by The Joint Strategic Committee Sub-Committee on 8th November 2022 and approved for referral to Full Council;
- Repeated the Recommendations for adopting the Local Plan to be referred to Full Council subject to the additional modifications proposed within the Report

Decision

That the Cabinet

1. Approved the additional modifications referred to in this Report at Paragraph 5.1 (a) and delegated authority to the Director for the Economy to make the additional modifications to the Local Plan.
2. Referred the Local Plan together with the additional modifications to full Council for approval, repeating the recommendations from the November JSC Sub-Committee which read as follows:-

- a. Note the Inspector's Report containing the Inspector's main modifications to be made to the submitted Worthing Local Plan in order for it to be found sound (Appendix 1);
- b. Note the process of Sustainability Appraisal that has been followed and the likely significant effects of the Local Plan (together with Main Modifications);
- c. Note the schedule of Main Modifications (Appendix 2) to the Worthing Local Plan;
- d. Recommend to Full Council the adoption of the Worthing Local Plan and Policies Map (including main modifications and additional modifications relating to presentational improvements, factual updates, grammatical and typographical corrections at Appendix 3);
- e. Note that if the Local Plan is adopted a copy of the Final Sustainability Appraisal report, including a Sustainability Appraisal Post-Adoption Statement, will be made available for inspection alongside the Local Plan.
- f. To approve use of the Capacity Issues reserve to fund the additional £15,000 cost of the examination

Reason for Decision

Statutory requirement to set a Local Plan

Alternative options considered

As outlined in the report.

Call-in

The call-in deadline for decision (a) and (d) will be 5.00pm on Monday 13 February 2022. There is no call-in for recommendations to Full Council, 2 (a) to (e).

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 7.00pm, it having commenced at 6.30pm.

Chairman