

Minutes of a meeting of the  
Adur Cabinet  
2 February 2023  
at 6.30 pm

Councillor Neil Parkin (Chairman)  
Councillor Angus Dunn (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Carson Albury  
Councillor Emma Evans

Councillor Kevin Boram  
Councillor Steve Neocleous

**A CAB/1/22-23      Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**A CAB/2/22-23      Public Questions**

There were no questions from members of the public.

**A CAB/3/22-23      Members Questions**

A Member asked the following question

*£5.6m has been budgeted for Adur Homes, which this year has been increased to accommodate projects which need to be urgently progressed.e.g asbestos removal , inner rooms, fire safety and now damp and mould in response to Rochdale. The issues needing to be addressed are all critical for resident health and safety.*

*A historic backlog of maintenance and repairs cannot be cleared quickly. Our housing transformation programme is at last being rolled out.*

*Is it possible to (even further) increase the spend on repair and maintenance of AH properties over the next two financial years? This would both improve residents living conditions in the short term and reduce the time properties are void on tenancy change over. Raising the overall condition of the stock fits with the invest to save agenda and reduces expenditure in the long run.*

**Response**

The HRA revenue budget has not the financial capacity to increase spend within the capital programme over the next two years as it cannot accommodate the cost of borrowing any further funds.

That said, the programme is currently reprofiled and if delivered as expected, the Council intends to spend £14.2m on improving HRA properties in 2023/24 which includes the £5.6m for new schemes.

In relation to the repairs service, the improvement work underway is considering how these improvements can be made focusing on the effectiveness and efficiency of the

service. This work is considering steps needed in order to do this beyond simply increasing the budget.

A Member asked the following question

*Why does the main budget report not detail the implications, both positive and negative, or a greater increase in council tax, up to the referendum limit?*

## **Response**

The report represents the Cabinet's budget proposals and the current policy is to keep tax increases to a minimum to benefit our local residents. The original MTFs was based on a 2% and the Council can set a balanced budget at this planned increase without recourse to a higher rate. Consequently, the modelling looks at 2% or lower in line with the current Cabinet's policy.

A Member asked the following question

*Vehicle replacement programme (£345,000) Replacement of the vehicle fleet and working towards electric equivalence. Can the Leader, update us on the ongoing discussions about the proposed hydrogen hub at Shoreham Port and how this might impact the decision on whether to replace waste and recycling lorries with Battery electric Vehicles, rather than Hydrogen fuel cell engines, as they come up for replacement by 2026? What are the cost and environmental implications of these two options? How do the potential local jobs and training opportunities created for the hydrogen scheme affect the decision?*

## **Response**

While it is clear that we need to move away from fossil fuels for our fleet, it is still unclear what the best available alternative technology will be for our large fleet in future.

Both electric and hydrogen technologies are evolving quickly, and it is anticipated that both will improve and costs will come down over the next few years.

We have just commissioned a fleet strategy which will help answer your questions:

- What technology or combination of technologies is likely to be best meet our needs, eg in relation to the size and geography of our collection rounds
- What are the infrastructure requirements to run different fleets (eg charging infrastructure or hydrogen refuelling infrastructure)
- What are the whole life costs of different options likely to be when compared to diesel vehicles
- As part of the strategy work our consultants will be engaging with partners leading on the hydrogen hub at Shoreham Port with who we are working closely together.
- What interim measures can we take to reduce our carbon emissions whilst these options are evaluated and the technology matures

Development of the strategy will start in March and take 3-4 months to complete and I look forward to sharing the details in due course.

A Member asked the following question

*Parks improvement £1.58m budgeted over next 4 years. That is a lot of money.*

*Have Cabinet members and relevant officers considered community partnerships, sponsorship from local employers, use of s106 money's, community share issues and other types of fundraising schemes to help pay for and maintain new equipment and refurbishments in parks and leisure facilities during this time of austere budgets?*

## **Response**

The budget amount shows our continued commitment to provide high quality play equipment across the district. Equipment is very expensive.

We actively encourage and support the formation of community 'friends of groups' most recent of which are Buckingham Park and The Meads. Constituted groups open up lots of funding opportunities outside of those that the council can use. Recently Larkfield Park has benefitted not only from new equipment but also from benches and other bits and bobs funded by the community group.

We do have a funding officer within the council who is available to help and advise community groups. So in short yes there are outside funding opportunities, and in addition we will continue to fund play opportunities for families across the district.

## **A CAB/4/22-23      Items Raised Under Urgency Provisions**

There were no items raised under urgency provisions.

## **A CAB/5/22-23      Investing in our Places - Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2025/26**

The Cabinet had before it a report from the Director for Digital, Sustainability and Resources, attached to these minutes as item 6.

The report recommended the investment programmes for Adur District Council which supported both the strategic ambition of the Council, and the vital regular investment toward the upkeep and improvement of our public assets and the delivery of services.

Members are now asked to approve the new schemes for 2023/24. This report recommends:

- the schemes for inclusion in the overall Capital Investment Programmes for 2023/24; and
- an indicative list of schemes for 2024/25 which will be confirmed next year

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

Members discussed the report and specific programmes therein. The recommendations were unanimously supported.

## **Decision**

The Cabinet:

- a) Considered the General Fund Capital Investment Programmes for 2023/24 and confirms the schemes to be included as detailed in Appendix 2 and 3;
- b) Recommend the full programme detailed at Appendix 3 for approval by Council on the 23rd February 2023;
- c) Notes the amendments and additions to the reserve lists as detailed in Appendix 5 approved the Housing Revenue Account estimates for 2022/23 as set out in Appendix 1;

### **Reason for Decision**

To protect and maintain the District's Assets

### **Alternative options considered**

As outlined in the report.

### **Call In**

The call in deadline for this decision is Tuesday 14 February 2023 at 5.00pm.

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

### **A CAB/6/22-23      Housing Revenue Account: 2023/24 Budget**

The Cabinet had before it a report from the Director for Digital, Sustainability and Resources, attached to these minutes as item 7.

The report set out the current and future financial prospects for the Housing Revenue Account and requested that Members agree to set the rent levels and service charges for 2023/24 as set out in the report. The report also considered some of the strategic challenges facing the Housing Revenue Account over the next few years and the impact that these would have over the next 30 years.

Members noted that the rent limitation announced in 2015/16 had significantly affected the financial viability of the Housing Revenue Account for the past few years which had been in deficit for five years. However, the Council was now permitted to increase rents on social rent properties by up to the September CPI +1% each year from 2020. It was the Government's intention that this arrangement should remain in place for a period of at least five years although for 2023/24 the rent increase will be limited to 7% as part of the measures to support the community through the cost of living crisis.

A Member asked a question regarding the use of right to buy receipts for the provision of affordable homes. Officers explained that the scheme only enabled the Council to fund 30% of a replacement unit from the right to buy receipts. In the case of street purchases or buying back, the actual amount the Council could apply was lower, at about 7%. As a

result, street purchases didn't offer best value as they had to be funded predominantly through borrowing.

The recommendations in the report were unanimously supported.

## **Decision**

The Cabinet:

- i. Approved the Housing Revenue Account estimates for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 1;
- ii. Approved that the rents of Council Dwellings (excluding sheltered accommodation) will increase by 7.0% for 2023/24 increasing the average council dwelling rent by £6.94 to £106.10 per week (average rent currently £99.16 per week) – (Paragraph 6.2);
- iii. Approved the increase to the rents of Sheltered Accommodation of 11.1%.
- iv. determine the level of associated rents and charges with effect from week one of 2023/24:
  - a) Rents of Council garages – agree an increase of 10.0% to £12.29. (currently £11.17 per week, plus VAT for non-Council tenants) (Paragraph 6.7)
  - b) Service Charges - delegate to the Head of Housing and Chief Financial Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Customer Services, the setting of the service charges (paragraph 9.2)
- v. Approved the HRA Treasury Management Strategy contained in Appendix 3.

## **Reason for Decision**

To set the rent level for 2023/24.

## **Alternative options considered**

As outlined in the report.

## **Call In**

The call in deadline for this decision is Tuesday 14 February 2023 at 5.00pm.

## **A CAB/7/22-23 Budget Estimates 2023/24 and setting of the 2023/24 Council Tax**

The Cabinet had before it a report from the Director for Digital, Sustainability and Resources, attached to these minutes as item 5.

The report was the final budget report of the year, the culmination of the annual budgeting exercise, and asked members to consider:

- The final revenue estimates for 2023/24 including any adjustments arising from settlement;
- An updated outline 5-year forecast; and
- The provisional level of Council Tax for 2023/24, prior to its submission to the Council for approval on the 23rd February 2023. This will be subject to any proposals to change the draft revenue budget following the consideration of the budget by the Cabinet.

The report outlined the medium term financial challenge through to 2027/28, discussed the impact of 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 investment. 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 2023/24, 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 'Priorities for Adur District Council' 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);
- Highlights the proposed funding for initiatives to support the Councils' ambitions set out in Our Plan;
- Details the proposals to invest in services outlined in Appendix 2;
- The Cabinet will need to consider whether to increase Council Tax by 2.00% or by a different amount (section 5.10).

The budget was analysed by Cabinet Member portfolio. In addition, the draft estimates for 2023/24 had been prepared, in accordance with the requirements of the Service Reporting Code of Practice for Local Authorities (except in relation to pension costs adjustments that did 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 is 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 would be in a position to confirm the Council Tax for 2023/34 in time for Council on the 23rd 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 can increase Council Tax by up to a further 2%. Therefore a Council Tax increase of 4.99% for Councils with social care responsibilities is allowed for 2023/24.

The precept for West Sussex County Council had not yet been finalised and would 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 23rd February 2023.

Members thanked Officers for the report and noted that the budget would become increasingly resilient over the next 5-10 years.

A recorded vote was taken, the results of which, are set out below:-

For: (6) - Councillors C Albury, K Boram, A Dunn, E Evans, S Neocleous and N Parkin

Against: (0)

Abstentions: (0)

### **Decision**

The Cabinet:-

- a) approved the proposals to invest in services outlined in Appendix 2;
- b) recommended to Council the draft budgets for 2023/24 at Appendix 6, as submitted in Cabinet Member Portfolio order, and the transfer to Reserves leading to a net budget requirement of £10,611,720 which included provision for the proposals in Appendix 2; and
- c) recommended to Council an average increase of 2% in Council Tax, making the average Band D £324 for Adur District Council's requirements in 2023/24, as set out in paragraph 5.10;
- d) recommended to Council that special expenses of £26.28 per Band D equivalent, to be charged in all areas of the District except Lancing;
- e) approved the Council Tax base of 21,937.3 for 2023/24 as set out in paragraph 12.3.

### **Reason for Decision**

Statutory requirement to set a budget.

### **Alternative options considered**

As detailed in the report.

### **Call In**

The call-in deadline for decision (a) and (e) will be 5.00pm on the 14th February 2023.

There is no call-in for recommendations to Full Council, (b), (c) and (d).

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The meeting ended at 7.15 pm