

FULL COUNCIL

22 NOVEMBER 2023

Present: Councillors O’Callaghan (Chair), Bishop (Vice-Chair), Arthur, Bacon, Barnett, Batsford, Beaney, Beaver (until 8.49pm), Cannan, Carr, Collins, Cooke, Edwards, Evans, Fernando, Foster, Haffenden, Hay, Jobson, Marlow-Eastwood, Patmore, Pragnell, Roark, Rogers, Sinden, Turner, Webb, Williams, and Willis.

In attendance: Jane Hartnell (Chief Executive), and Mary Kilner (Chief Legal Officer).

27. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Councillors Hilton, Rankin and Roberts.

28. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Councillors Arthur and Pragnell asked that the minutes of the meeting on 20th September 2023 be amended to show that they were present.

RESOLVED that, subject to the amendment above, the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 20th September 2023 be signed by the Mayor as a correct record of the proceedings.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor	Meeting	Item	Interest
Roark	Cabinet, 2 nd October 2023	7 – Southern Water Update	Personal – Grew up in one of the houses that was recently flooded
Bishop	Cabinet, 2 nd October 2023	7 – Southern Water Update	Personal – Employed by the Environment Agency but not in a role related to flooding.

30. ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR AND LEADER

No announcements were made.

31. QUESTIONS (IF ANY) FROM:

31a. Members of the public under Rule 11

FULL COUNCIL

22 NOVEMBER 2023

A written question was received from Max Hewitt and a written response supplied by Councillor Barnett.

A written question was received from Chris Hurrell and a written response supplied by Councillor Roark. Chris Hurrell submitted a supplementary question in writing and Councillor Roark said she would respond in writing.

A written question was received from Myriam Lengline and a written response supplied by Councillor Rogers. Myriam Lengline was presented and in a supplementary question asked how often the Council will revisit the development sites around Harrow Lane to make sure that water drainage plans are put in place and that other conditions are followed. Councillor Rogers said that she would discuss this with officers to make sure that regular visits are made.

A written question was received from Richard Price and a written response supplied by Councillor Roark. Richard Price was present and in a supplementary question asked Councillor Roark to clarify if the Local Nature Reserve is still designated as an Urban Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat. Councillor Roark said she would need to discuss with officers before responding in writing.

A written question was received from Andrew Cordle and a written response supplied by Councillor Rogers. Andrew Cordle was present and in a supplementary question asked how residents with limited mobility and limited digital access are meant to be aware of planning notices? Councillor Rogers replied that this is reviewed on a regular basis and these issues are taken into account, but with current budget pressures it is too expensive to send letters.

31b. Councillors under Rule 12

Questioner	Question	Reply given by
Councillor Patmore	<p>In Sept we were told the Premier Inn development was a done deal and we deferred a decision on increasing the capital budget. We have had no further information. Can you give us an update on the situation?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett replied that this was discussed last week, and he had said that negotiations are continuing. When they are concluded a report will be presented on the outcome.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Haffenden	<p>I previously asked about a review of the rules that tenants in temporary accommodation must abide by. Can we have an update on that review?</p> <p>Councillor Willis replied that a full housing and homelessness review is about to begin, the aim is to have a draft coming to Full Council next July following consultation.</p>	Councillor Willis
Councillor	Can you give an update on Orbit housing	Councillor Willis

FULL COUNCIL

22 NOVEMBER 2023

Turner	<p>association delivering sustainable homes at Harrow Lane?</p> <p>Councillor Willis replied that there is good progress. Building is expected to start in February with first completions in January 2025. Orbit are committed to the sustainable modern methods of construction as originally proposed.</p>	
Councillor Beaver	<p>Will you give residents the same guarantee for Bulverhythe Recreation Ground as you gave for Tilekiln Playing Fields, that ‘our priority has to be to protect and invest in our green spaces...’?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett replied that there have been discussions with the Friends of Combe Valley CIC and those discussion continue. Councillor Barnett said he would be meeting with the CIC to hear their proposals for the recreation ground.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Collins	<p>The area around Starsky and Hatch in Bottle Alley has been blighted by late night raves leaving litter, bottles, broken glass, needles and human waste. There were plans and funding in place for CCTV. Will you investigate the delay and see that the cameras are installed as planned?</p> <p>Councillor Rogers replied that that police have increased patrols in the area. The issue is that there is a low ceiling in Bottle Alley and CCTV is not suitable as it is likely to get vandalised.</p>	Councillor Rogers
Councillor Fernando	<p>Some of the services provided by East Sussex County Council have fallen below our expectations, will you push for Hastings to become a unitary authority so we can deliver for our residents?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett replied that he would welcome Hastings Borough Council becoming a unitary authority as long as it was run by Hastings.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Jobson	<p>There are almost 32,000 unlicensed houses in multiple occupation (HMO) in England with 159,340 tenants. Do you have figures for local unlicensed HMOs in Hastings?</p> <p>Councillor Willis replied that he shared Councillor Jobson’s concerns, and he would reply in writing with the figures for Hastings.</p>	Councillor Willis
Councillor Pragnell	<p>Are you aware of the recent death of former Councillor Ray Marchant and will you join me in</p>	Councillor Barnett

FULL COUNCIL

22 NOVEMBER 2023

	<p>wishing condolences to his family?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett thanked Councillor Pragnell for bringing this to his attention and proposed a minute's silence.</p> <p>The Mayor asked all present to stand and the meeting observed a minute's silence.</p>	
Councillor Bacon	<p>Can you update us on the latest with the Stade Hall?</p> <p>Councillor Cannan replied that the agreement with East Sussex College comes to an end in January 2024 and they didn't wish to renew. After seeking Expressions of Interest 3 strong bids were received. After an evaluation process the winning bid was Spun Glass Theatre.</p>	Councillor Cannan
Councillor Edwards	<p>The Council owns a property in Wellington Square and there were ambitious plans to refurbish it from top to bottom. It is now being used as temporary accommodation and is in bad condition. What are your plans to repair the property?</p> <p>Councillor Evans replied that she understands that the property has been refurbished and it is not in the state it formerly was. The funding for the project will be redirected elsewhere for dwellings in the town centre.</p>	Councillor Evans
Councillor Carr	<p>I met with representatives from Southern Water and our MP after the floods in the town centre. Southern Water asked if Councillor Barnett would be able to join a subsequent meeting. Will you commit to scheduling a meeting for us all to debate Southern Water?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett replied that it was good to see so many local councillors working on the flood response. There were multiple areas of attention over the weekend, and he was working with local residents to secure a visit from UK Power Networks to get power restored.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Bishop	<p>Can you provide an update on the West Hill Café?</p> <p>Councillor Batsford said the Expressions of Interest for proposals to redevelop the Café have been warmly received and conversations so far</p>	Councillor Batsford

FULL COUNCIL

22 NOVEMBER 2023

	have been very positive and exciting.	
Councillor Sinden	<p>I understand we now have bleed cabinets situated around the town, can you update us on these?</p> <p>Councillor Rogers thanked Councillor Carr for bringing the project to her attention. Bleed cabinets contain items to help someone suffering from a severe blood trauma. Cabinets have been positioned in local hotspots and there will be training for local businesses on how to use them.</p>	Councillor Rogers
Councillor Webb	<p>Can you update us on progress to ensure Summerfields Leisure Centre is more sustainable in its energy use?</p> <p>Councillor Batsford replied that the Council have worked with Summerfields and Freedom Leisure to ensure the swimming pool can remain open. The Council has been successful in securing £100,000 of Sport England grant funding to support the cost of gas and electricity through the winter period. A capital bid has also been submitted to support eco-friendly energy use for the swimming pool.</p>	Councillor Batsford

32. **MOTION (RULE 14)**

Councillor Barnett proposed a motion as set out in the agenda, seconded by Councillor Cannan.

Councillor Beaver proposed an amendment as follows, seconded by Councillor Carr:

Amend the second to last paragraph to read:

Encourage all Councillors to become White Ribbon Ambassadors and speak out against violence against women and girls.

Add the following paragraph to the end:

Call on all Councillors to invite those who have suffered abuse to tell their stories so that others may gain the confidence to do so too and seek the help they may need.

The amendment was accepted, and Councillors debated the substantive motion as amended.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that Full Council accepts the motion as set out below:

Violence against women and girls is a longstanding and shameful part of British society.

FULL COUNCIL

22 NOVEMBER 2023

Many initiatives have been taken over the last sixty years to eliminate this unacceptable behaviour.

The women's rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s successfully campaigned for refuge provision for women subject to domestic abuse.

Significant investment was made in this, and also in training and support for women, throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

However it was only in 1991 that White Ribbon Day was established to provide a focus on the fact that men are the main perpetrators of violence against women and girls.

Men have been encouraged to become Ambassadors for White Ribbon Day and councillors nationally have signed up for this, including some in this Council.

White Ribbon Day this year is on November 25th and a national programme of activities will promote the importance of sustained action to stop further violence.

The Hastings and Rother Community Safety partnership has prioritised action against violence against women and girls since 2020.

It is proposed that this Council agrees to:

Ensure that action against violence against women and girls remains a priority for Hastings Borough Council's community safety work

Encourage all Councillors to become White Ribbon Ambassadors and speak out against violence against women and girls.

Call on all councillors to invite those who have suffered abuse to tell their stories so that others may gain the confidence to do so too and seek the help they may need.

33. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

The Mayor adjourned the meeting for a comfort break at 7.36pm. The meeting reconvened at 7.50pm.

No changes to membership of committees were proposed.

34. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Mayor having called over the minutes set out in the agenda, the following minutes were reserved for discussion.

RESOLVED that under rule 13.3 the reports and minutes of committees set out in the agenda, including those items on which a council decision was required, be received, and agreed.

Only those items which were reserved were discussed as follows:

FULL COUNCIL

22 NOVEMBER 2023

Meeting	Minute	Councillor
Cabinet, 2 nd October 2023	7 – Southern Water Update	Roark
Cabinet, 2 nd October 2023	8 – New Countryside Stewardship Grant Aid for Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve 2024-2034	Edwards
Cabinet, 6 th November 2023	13b – Hastings Town Deal Programme Update	Sinden

The Mayor proposed that the meeting proceed as if in committee for the debate on item 7, seconded by Councillor Beaver.

RESOLVED that under Rule 16.14 of the Constitution the Council proceed as if in committee.

The Chief Executive provided an update and informed Councillors that her recent meeting with Southern Water had been the most positive in sometime. Southern Water have committed to undertake a hydraulic survey which will model the wastewater system in the town. There is a commitment from all stakeholders to work collaboratively moving forward.

The Mayor proposed the meeting return to Full Council mode.

RESOLVED that the meeting return to Full Council mode.

Item 5 of Cabinet on 2nd October 2023, Reserves Policy 2023-24, and item 16 of Cabinet on 6th November 2023, Interim Review of Polling Places and Polling Districts 2023, were matters requiring Full Council approval. Under Rule 13.3 of Part 4 of the Council's Constitution both were agreed without being called for debate.

RESOLVED:

1) Full Council agrees the updated Reserves Policy.

2) Full Council agrees that the minimum General Reserve balance be reduced from £6m to £4m.

Reasons:

1. Sections 31A, 32 42A and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 require billing and precepting authorities in England and Wales to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement.
2. Hastings Borough Council, like many others at the current time finds itself under considerable financial duress. To ensure that Councils do not fall fail of overcommitting themselves financially there are several safeguards in place to prevent this from occurring. These include;

- All Councils must set a balanced budget as set out in sections 31A, 42A of the Local

FULL COUNCIL

22 NOVEMBER 2023

Government Finance Act 1992, as amended.

- The Chief Finance Officers duty to report on the robustness of estimates and adequacy of Reserves (section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003) when the Council is considering its budget requirement.

- Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 states as part of the legislation that each Local Authority must make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and that the Chief Finance Officer / proper officer has responsibility for the administration of those affairs.

3. The above requirements are reinforced by Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 which requires the Chief finance Officer in England and Wales to report to Council if there is or is likely to be unlawful expenditure or an unbalanced budget. This would include situations where reserves have become seriously depleted and it is forecast that the authority will not have the resources to meet its expenditure in a particular financial year.

4. Within the existing statutory and regulatory framework, it is the responsibility of the Chief Financial Officer to advise the Council about the level and nature of reserves to be held. In assessing the adequacy of unallocated general reserves the Chief Financial Officer will take account of the strategic, operational, and financial risks facing the authority. The Chief Financial Officer will also ensure that there are clear protocols for their establishment and use.

RESOLVED:

1. Council adopts the (Acting) Returning Officer's recommendations (as appended to this report) and publish the results of the interim review

2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to amend any decisions made under this review with regard to polling places or polling stations, should there be an urgent or necessary need.

Reasons:

Due to the recent completion of the Boundary Commission for England's review of parliamentary constituencies, the council were advised to carry out an interim review of its polling districts and places.

The council must regularly review the division of its parliamentary constituency area (within the borough boundary) into polling districts and the places where electors are asked to vote. The council must comply with the requirements of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (Section 16, EAA 2006) and complete regular reviews of all polling districts and polling places. The council has a duty to ensure that the most suitable premises are used as polling places with regard to the needs of the electorate, subject to availability.

FULL COUNCIL

22 NOVEMBER 2023

(The Mayor declared the meeting closed at 9pm)