



Council Meeting

**Wednesday, 22nd
November, 2023**

HASTINGS BOROUGH COUNCIL

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Hastings Borough Council to be held at the Council Chamber, Muriel Matters House, Breeds Place, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 3UY, on Wednesday, 22nd November, 2023 at 6.00 pm at which meeting the business specified below is proposed to be transacted.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Legal Officer

Muriel Matters House
Breeds Place
Hastings

14 November 2023

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Announcements from the Mayor and Leader
5. Questions (if any) from:
 - a) Members of the public under Rule 11
 - b) Councillors under Rule 12
6. Motion (Rule 14)
Councillor Barnett to propose:

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

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

And that male councillors are encouraged to become White Ribbon Ambassadors and speak out against violence against women and girls.

7. Membership of Committees

To give effect to any request received from a political group for a change in their representation on committee(s).

8. Reports of Committees

- a) To resolve that the public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of any items considered while the public were excluded by the relevant committee because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in the respective paragraphs of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 referred to in the minutes of the relevant committee.

- b) To receive and consider the recommendations and any decisions of the following committees.

Minute No.	Subject	Cabinet Member / Chair
CABINET – 2 OCTOBER 2023		
5. (C)	Reserves Policy 2023-24	Barnett
6.	Overview and Scrutiny: Call in recommendations	Barnett
7.	Southern Water Update	Roark
8.	New Countryside Stewardship Grant Aid for Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve 2024-2034	Roark
CABINET – 6 NOVEMBER 2023		
13a.	Hastings Town Deal Programme Update – Overview and Scrutiny Recommendations	Evans
13b.	Hastings Town Deal Programme Update	Evans
14.	Financial Monitoring Report	Barnett
15.	Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	Barnett
16. (C)	Interim Review of Polling Places and Polling Districts 2023	Rogers
17.	Home Adaptation Support Service (HASS) Contract Tender	Rogers

(C) = Full Council decision

Notes:

1. The Mayor will call over the minutes and members will rise and indicate those items which they wish to have discussed.
 2. No discussion shall take place at this stage upon part II minutes covered by the resolution 8a) above. Any such discussion shall be deferred to item 9 on the agenda.
9. To consider the recommendations and decisions of committees (if any) which the Council has resolved should be discussed after the exclusion of the public from the meeting.

Note: Nothing contained in this agenda or in the attached reports and minutes of committees constitutes an offer or acceptance of an offer or an undertaking or contract by the Borough Council

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Agenda Item 2

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FULL COUNCIL

20 SEPTEMBER 2023

Present: Councillors O'Callaghan (Chair), Bishop (Vice-Chair), Bacon, Barnett, Batsford, Beaney, Beaver, Cannan, Carr, Collins, Cooke, Edwards, Evans, Foster, Haffenden, Hay, Hilton, Jobson, Patmore, Roberts, Rogers, Sinden, Turner, Webb, and Williams

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

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Councillors Roark, Willis, and Fernando.

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

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 19th July 2023 be signed by the Mayor as a correct record of the proceedings.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

23. ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR AND LEADER

There were no announcements from the Mayor or the Leader.

24. QUESTIONS (IF ANY) FROM:

24a) Members of the Public under Rule 11

A written question was received from Becca Horn and a written answer supplied by Councillor Roark.

A written question was received from Michael Wharton and a written answer supplied by Councillor Roark.

A written question was received from Anna Sabin and a written answer supplied by Councillor Batsford.

In a supplementary question Anna Sabin asked if Councillor Batsford would commit to working with East Sussex County Council to allocate road space in Hastings for cycling? Councillor Batsford replied that officers have put in a lot of time and effort working closely with East Sussex County Council. Even if the Alexandra Park cycle route was approved funding for road schemes was unfortunately poised to be scrapped by the county council.

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24b) Councillors under Rule 12

Councillor Edwards submitted a written question to Councillor Barnett, a written response was received and published on the Council's website.

In a supplementary question Councillor Edwards asked what can the Council do to incentivise Orbit to develop the site at Harrow Lane? Councillor Barnett replied that the site needs to be developed as fast as possible and that is what Orbit want as well. We can expect to see something come forward in the New Year.

Councillor Hilton submitted a written question to Councillor Roark, a written response was received and published on the Council's website.

In a supplementary question Councillor Hilton asked if the cabinet will be supporting cycling routes in Hastings in the future? Councillor Barnett replied that these are extraordinary times and until there is financial security there will be projects that have to be paused. However, conversations with Sustrans will continue.

Councillor Jobson submitted a written question to Councillor Roark, a written response was received and published on the Council's website.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jobson asked if signage can be put up near Old Roar Gill to warn residents as dogs are still becoming ill from the water? Councillor Evans replied that she had already requested safety signs to be put up.

Councillor Collins submitted a written question to Councillor Roark, a written response was received and published on the Council's website.

In a supplementary question Councillor Collins asked the cabinet to commit to address the issues at the Burton memorial without delay. Councillor Barnett replied that once Councillor Roark has had time to look into the matter, she will respond to Councillor Collins.

Questioner	Question	Reply given by
Councillor Patmore	<p>St Mary in the Castle has been closed for nearly a year, and the White Rock Theatre is coming up for closure in January. Does the Leader have any news on these venues?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett gave a personal commitment to the venues remaining open and successful. There is a tender process ongoing for both venues. The White Rock Theatre will not close in January, there will be another operator in place to take over.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Hilton	We had a schedule of cross-party working groups to look at the Local Plan, which have since been cancelled. Can you give	Councillor Rogers

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	<p>an assurance that those workshops will take place as soon as possible?</p> <p>Councillor Rogers gave an assurance that there will be time for all councillors to view the draft Local Plan and for the workshops to take place.</p>	
Councillor Turner	<p>Can you give us an update on the programme of improvements to local sporting facilities?</p> <p>Councillor Batsford replied that key areas for improvement are Hollington and Broomgrove. Work is underway to look into installing a Multi-Use Games Area in Hollington. Shared prosperity funding will support infrastructure improvements for young people in the Broomgrove area. There will also be redevelopment of the beach playground at Pelham.</p>	Councillor Batsford
Councillor Carr	<p>A report on St Mary in the Castle was promised for this meeting. Can you tell us when we will see this report and how much it is costing the Council to maintain the venue?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett replied that negotiations are ongoing, and a report cannot come forward until this process has been completed. Councillor Barnett said he would investigate the costs and write to Councillor Carr with the figure.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Roberts	<p>Can you tell us about the new tennis courts in Alexandra Park?</p> <p>Councillor Batsford replied that the tennis courts are a real success and well used. Annual membership is only £35, making them accessible to all communities. There are also free community tennis sessions for young children.</p>	Councillor Batsford
Councillor Collins	<p>There is a consultation underway regarding expanding permitted development rights. The deadline for responses is 25th September. Has the Council responded to</p>	Councillor Rogers

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	<p>this consultation?</p> <p>Councillor Rogers said she would check and write back to Councillor Collins.</p>	
Councillor Jobson	<p>With World Car Free Day coming up, what actions can the Council take to tackle air pollution?</p> <p>Councillor Batsford replied that there is a cross-party group committed to low traffic neighbourhoods. The Council wants to make Hastings a safe place to be a pedestrian.</p>	Councillor Batsford
Councillor Sinden	<p>At the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting we received answers to questions on the Finance Peer Review. The Committee also met the new Head of Housing. Do you wish to add anything on either of those items?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett replied that he thought there was a good discussion with up-to-date figures that were very helpful to demonstrate progress on housing initiatives.</p>	Councillor Barnett

25. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

No changes to membership of committees were proposed.

Councillor Hilton announced that Councillor Haffenden was replacing Councillor Carr as Deputy Leader of the Green group. Councillor Hilton thanked Councillor Carr for her support in her time as Deputy Leader.

26. 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:

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Meeting	Minute
Cabinet, 7 th August 2023	20 – Finance Peer Review
Cabinet, 7 th August 2023	21 – Land and Property Disposal Programme
Cabinet, 7 th August 2023	22 – Treasury Management Update
Cabinet, 4 th September 2023	29 – Cornwallis Street Hotel (Part 1)
Cabinet, 4 th September 2023	32 – Cornwallis Street Hotel (Part 2)

Minute 22 of Cabinet on 7th August, Treasury Management Update, was a decision requiring Full Council approval. The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Barnett, seconded by Councillor Batsford.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

To note the report, the treasury activity and recommend approval of any changes to the prudential indicators.

Reasons:

To ensure that Members are fully aware of the activities undertaken in the last quarter, that Codes of Practice have been complied with and that the Council's strategy is effective and doesn't currently need revising. Under the Code adopted the Full Council are required to consider the report and any recommendations made. There will be a further report forthcoming on Treasury Management for 2023/24 including the Mid-year Review, Quarter 3 Treasury Management Update Report and Outturn Report.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting for a comfort break at 7.04pm and the meeting resumed at 7.16pm.

Councillor Barnett proposed a motion without notice to adjourn debate on minutes 29 and 32 of Cabinet on 4th September 2023 as the financial details in the report need to be revised. Councillor Roberts seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED (by 18 votes for, to 11 against):

Discussion of minutes 29 and 32 of Cabinet on 4th September be adjourned to a future meeting.

(The Mayor declared the meeting closed at 7.19pm)

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Agenda Annex Document Pack

CABINET

2 OCTOBER 2023

Present: Councillors Barnett (Chair), Batsford, Cannon, Roark, Rogers and Willis

In attendance: Jane Hartnell Chief Executive, Victoria Conheady Deputy Chief Executive, Kit Wheeler Chief Finance Officer, Mary Kilner Chief Legal Officer, Murray Davidson Environment and Natural Resources Manager, Coral Harding Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Councillor Evans.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING 04/09/23

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 4th September 2023 be approved as a true record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (30 MINS)

A question was asked regarding Southern Water and if an infrastructure investment plan and a map of the sewage system have been received? Also asked was if Southern water had explained the high levels of faecal bacteria measured at Bulverhythe? Councillor Barnett confirmed there has been no response to the measurement taken at Bulverhythe. There has also been no map of the sewage system supplied. Councillor Barnett confirmed the investment plan had just arrived but he hasn't had time to review it. The headline of the document is that residents will have to pay 44% extra for the investment.

A question was asked regarding the pollution in Old Roar Gill. What will happen if Southern Water refuse to pay for an ecological survey? Councillor Barnett answered that Southern Water have been asked to pay for the survey and the issue being that they keep denying pollution there when we know there is.

A question was asked when will signs be installed by Old Roar Gill. Councillor Barnett answered that there are signs in the park that show no swimming is allowed. Cllr.Roark added that other signs say dogs should not go in any of the water courses in Alexandra Park

A question was asked regarding Alexandra Park, does the Council stand by the statement in the water management plan for Alexandra Park 2016 to 2026, that the foul sewer running the length of the Gill needs replacing because it's hydraulically

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failing and if so, will the Council be compelling Southern Water to replace the sewer? Has the water management plan ever been followed? Councillor Barnett explained that HBC could not compel Southern Water but that there was a project by Southern Water 10 years ago to renew the sewage pipe in Old Roar Gill and they have been asked to provide information on this.

A question was asked about the West Hill Café. Councillor Barnett answered the Council now has possession of the West Hill Café. A report will come forward to a future Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Batsford read a written question regarding the water courses in Alexandra Park and what measures are Hastings Borough Council taking to establish that the water courses in the park are pollution free and will HBC be carrying out independent testing when pollution incidences are reported to them, rather than relying on Southern Waters tests? Councillor Batsford answered that an investment plan has been requested and the Environment Agency have agreed to help us define a baseline of what we would expect to find in water courses like the Old Roar Gill. He added that when we have this baseline, a discussion will happen with all parties about a testing regime.

A question was asked regarding St Mary in the Castle and improvements to the road surface outside. Councillor Barnett answered that officers are reviewing the water proofing and other improvement work to Pelham Crescent. Councillor Batsford confirmed conversations are ongoing regarding a new tenant for St.Mary in the Castle.

The Chair then asked to hear the Southern Water Update item first.

5. RESERVES POLICY 2023-24

The Chief Finance Officer presented a report that updates the Council's approach to Reserves in preparation of its Medium Term Financial Strategy and as part of the budget setting process for 2024-25. The recommendation is that the minimum General Reserve balance be reduced from £6m to £4m. This would continue to be reviewed. If risks increase a revision will be brought forward.

Councillor Haffenden asked why the guidance has changed from £6m. The Chief Finance Officer explained the £6m was a previous calculation. The new calculation is £4m.

Councillor Batsford asked regarding risks. The Chief Finance Officer answered there are earmarked reserves.

The Councillors debated and highlighted the need to keep to the £4m reserve balance and how a full review of all reserves is underway.

Proposed by Councillor Barnett and seconded by Councillor Willis

RESOLVED (unanimously):

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1) Cabinet recommends that Full Council agrees the updated Reserves Policy.

2) Cabinet recommends to Full Council 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 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.

6. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY: CALL IN RECOMMENDATIONS

The Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Officer presented the report and explained the procedure that followed the call in.

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Councillor Sinden as the Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny was asked by Councillor Batsford how the recommendations assist with speeding up decisions. Councillor Sinden explained overview of reports would speed up the decisions.

Councillors debated and gave thanks to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Barnett and seconded by Councillor Batsford

RESOLVED (unanimously):

- 1. Overview and Scrutiny recommend that future reports regarding land and asset disposal contain the following information;**
 - a. As recommended at recent training conducted by CIPFA that reports concerning capital strategy contain the following or an explanation if not relevant;**
 - Legal power for a scheme to be undertaken
 - Evidence of robust option appraisal work
 - Consideration/quantification of sensitivity analysis outcomes
 - Impact on revenue budget and balance sheet resources
 - Section 151 Officer to vouch for skill-sets of external consultants
 - Councillors to be adequately briefed on any material risks
 - b. Before the asset management strategy is completed, future reports should contain a top level assessment against the current RAG system the council uses.**
 - c. That the report demonstrates in line with the Local Government Act 1972 it requires that land and asset disposals be evaluated against 'best consideration'. The definition of this needs to be contained within the report or an appendix.**
 - d. Costs of disposal need to be made explicit and should include an estimate for Officer time to reflect true costs.**
 - e. Any impact on future borrowing costs should include within the report an estimate on the councils MRP as part of the revenue budget.**
 - f. If the loss of land or assets impacts the objectives of the Corporate Plan.**

Reasons

Overview and Scrutiny recognise the council's financial situation and the need for land and asset disposal. Any proposed land and/or assets for disposal must be identified through a robust process and decisions must be made with clear information for both Councillors and the public to view.

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7. SOUTHERN WATER UPDATE

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report on Southern Water issues and recommended action going forward. The report includes strategic work around bathing water quality and misconnections and the more reactionary work which we undertake in responding to issues in our parks and gardens, our beaches and major flood events. East Sussex County Council are the local lead flood agency for Hastings.

Councillor Haffenden asked if Hastings Borough Council have the capacity to take legal action against Southern Water. The Deputy Chief Executive answered that legal action will continue to be reviewed. Councillor Haffenden asked if a cross party working group is going to be set up. The Deputy Chief Executive will discuss this with officers. Councillor Barnett answered that for 2 years Southern Water have meant to be setting up open meetings for organizations and residents.

Councillor Batsford asked regarding making assessment of the health of Old Roar Gill. The Deputy Chief Executive answered that this will be discussed with officers.

Councillors debated and noted officers requested to Southern Water to complete a full ecological impact and assessment of the sewage incidents at Old Roar Gill and for a detailed impact analysis on the waterway and ecology of the water bodies and streams in Alexandra Park.

Councillor Barnett highlighted that issues have continued with Southern Water weekly for over 2 years and the privatised culture of Southern Water is a serious concern.

Proposed by Councillor Roark and seconded by Councillor Cannon

RESOLVED (unanimously):

Discussions continue with Southern Water (SW), and the Environment Agency (EA), to ensure that the needs of Hastings are understood and, where possible, met. It is imperative that trust is restored.

SW are pressed to provide input to East Sussex County Council Report on town centre flooding, to enable publishing of the report as a matter of urgency

SW are asked to publish detailed plans for all current infrastructure investment taking place in Hastings; to produce a comprehensive plan for the protection of Old Roar Gill; and to provide regular updates on these plans.

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SW are asked to continue developing their communications with local residents in conjunction with Hastings Borough Council's communications team.

SW are asked to financially compensate the council for the infrastructure failures which have had a significant impact on the reputation of Hastings as a tourist destination.

If a satisfactory response is not received by 31st December consider what action might be taken, to include the consideration of legal action.

Reasons

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It is imperative that trust is restored between Southern Water, Hastings Borough Council and the town's residents and visitors.

8. NEW COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP GRANT AID FOR HASTINGS COUNTRY PARK NATURE RESERVE 2024-2034

The Environment and Natural Resources Manager outlined the process for transferring to a new 10-year Countryside Stewardship grant for Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve from 1st January 2024. The report includes appendices 2 and 3 which outline the scarce and nationally important habitats at the reserve, and the broad principles for managing them over the next 10 years. The report included a management strategy review by an independent consultant which highlights the success the Council has achieved in restoring and managing habitats over the last 20 years and presents the Council with a blueprint for the future management.

Councillor Haffenden asked about a park ranger position for the reserve funded from the grant. The Environment and Natural Resources Manager answered the potential for funding of an additional post has been discussed with senior management and Councillors.

Councillor Batsford asked the Environment and Natural Resources Manager to give an example of the work on the Country Park. The Environment and Natural Resources Manager explained the key items are identified in the management strategy but to take back the tenancy of the farm has been a huge example of how local authorities have responsibility and can utilize that responsibility to manage the natural environment.

Councillor Barnett asked regarding the grant allocation and how it compares to past settlements. The Environment and Natural Resources Manager explained the anticipated grant amount is broadly similar to previous grants.

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Councillors discussed the report and highlighted the management priorities and principles are set by Natural England and their priority for Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve is the restoration and management of nationally rare and declining habitats through conservation grazing. Regarding point 29 in the report Councillor Roark proposed to transition to a new 10-year agreement and continue the long-term habitat and biodiversity management of Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve.

Councillors also emphasised the importance of seeking other grant funding so that access for all to the Country Park could be improved.

Proposed by Councillor Roark and seconded by Councillor Willis

RESOLVED (unanimously):

- 1. Cabinet agrees to secure the future management of Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve through a new 10-year Countryside Stewardship grant aid commencing in January 2024.**
- 2. Cabinet delegates authority to the Chief Legal Officer in consultation with the Lead Member for the Environment to sign the new Countryside Steward Agreement 2024-2034, on behalf of Hastings Borough Council at the time of grant offer.**
- 3. Cabinet extends thanks to all the partners and volunteers who have made and continue to make Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve an award winning example of successful sustainable management and habitat restoration.**

Reasons

1. The current 10-year Higher Level Stewardship Agreement at Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve terminates at the end of 2023.
2. A new 10-year Countryside Stewardship Agreement would start on 1st January 2024.
3. The 10-year Countryside Stewardship grant aid is the only funding mechanism open to the council to manage Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve.
4. There is no specific date by which we will receive the new grant for signature, other than before 1st January 2024. Waiting until we receive the grant before arranging a Cabinet decision would potentially delay the start of the grant with the consequential loss of grant income.
5. The grant income is worth between £700,000 and £1,000,000 over the life of the grant period

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 7.49 pm)

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Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 2 October 2023

Report Title: Reserves Policy 2023-24

Report By: Kit Wheeler
Chief Finance Officer

Key Decision: Yes

Classification: Open

Purpose of Report

An essential part of the financial planning process for Hastings Borough Council is a robust and modern policy on the level and nature of reserves.

The policy document attached updates the Council's approach to Reserves in preparation of its Medium Term Financial Strategy and as part of the budget setting process for 2024-25.

Recommendations

- 1) Cabinet recommends that Full Council agrees the updated Reserves Policy.**
- 2) Cabinet recommends to Full Council that the minimum General Reserve balance be reduced from £6m to £4m.**

Reasons for Recommendations

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 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.

Introduction and Background

5. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) released a paper on the 25th July 2023 stating the following:

'Reserves are an important part of the resourcing available to local authorities and are held for a variety of purposes. Some reserves are held as a general cushion against uneven cashflows and a contingency against unexpected expenditure; these are referred to in the revenue outturn as unallocated reserves.

Other reserves are earmarked by an authority for specific purposes, such as to mitigate specific risks or to build up funds for known or anticipated future expenditure. These are known as earmarked reserves. The extent to which earmarked reserves can be made available for other purposes varies depending on the reasons a particular reserve is being held. Some reserves are ringfenced by accounting practice or statute and are not available for spend elsewhere.'

6. There is currently no recommended statutory minimum level of General Fund (unallocated) reserves or Earmarked Reserves, and is the responsibility of each authority to determine for themselves individually.

7. Despite there being no specific recommended guidance around reserve balances, the Councils external auditors Grant Thornton produced a public report in 2021 entitled 'lessons from public interest reports' which discussed the issue of reserve balances within the public sector.

In our view, those councils who have, throughout the period of grant reduction, recognised and been committed to maintaining adequate reserves, have not only continued to provide strong services but have also put themselves in a position to ride out the current pandemic storm.

This, we believe, is the absolute and fundamental lesson from the PIRs issued in the last few months. Maintaining sound reserves is absolutely vital and a key indicator of sound financial governance. It should be at the heart of all medium-term financial plans.

In our view, general fund reserves (including earmarked general fund reserves) should be a minimum of 5% of net spending and arguably should be somewhere between 5 and 10%. This level of reserves will provide councils with a vital cushion.

8. Hastings Borough Councils current policy has an agreed minimum level of General Reserve set at **£6m**. This is calculated as follows:

- (i) 15% downturn in income (sales, fees, rents, etc) - £2m (Projection)
- (ii) 5% over run in expenditure (including capital) - £2m
- (iii) Unforeseen events/losses - £2m

9. Having considered the above historical approach and the current financial and economic environment the Council is faced with at present, any number of permutations could be calculated.
10. However, given that the above calculation was made with an expectation of a downturn in Income trends, set at a time when the impact of the Covid pandemic was still largely unknown, and 5% over run in Expenditure in addition to any other unforeseen events and losses. It could be argued that this was correct and prudent at the time but now that there is less uncertainty around some of those areas that this could, and should be potentially reduced.
11. There is also the consideration of the ongoing issue and one of the biggest financial risks to the Council at the present time being around increasing Homelessness costs, something not a factor when originally considering the levels of recommended General Reserve.
12. The 2023/24 budget that was agreed by Full Council in February 2023 showed an expected budget for Net Expenditure to be **£17.8m**. **10%** contingency based on this figure would be **£1.8m**.
13. Given the current and well documented issues the Council is having in relation to tackling the Housing Crisis, an additional provision should be set aside to mitigate these financial demands. The 2023/24 Homelessness budget was set at **£5.2m**. **20%** contingency based on this figure would be **£1.04m**.
14. Included within the 2023/24 budget of **£17.8m** net expenditure, the Council already provides a provision for contingency for unexpected and unforeseen events within the revenue budget which accounts for **£300,000**. Therefore, excluding that contingency figure as well as the already separately accounted for Homelessness risk of **£5.2m** above, the remaining net cost is **£12.3m**. **10%** of this figure is **£1.2m**.
15. Therefore, the re-calculated Minimum General Fund Reserve balance should be as follows:
 - £1.8m (10% contingency of total Net Expenditure based on 2023/24 Budget)
 - £1.04m (20% Homelessness costs fluctuations)
 - £1.2m (Other unexpected / unforeseen events)

Total = £4.04m (say **£4m**).

It is therefore recommended that the minimum level of General Reserve balance is reduced from **£6m** to **£4m**.

Reserves Protocol

16. For each earmarked reserve held by a local authority there should be a clear protocol setting out:
- The reason for/purpose of the reserve;
 - How and when the reserve can be used;
 - Procedures for the reserve's management and control; and
 - A process and timescale for review of the reserve to ensure continuing relevance and adequacy.

Balance of Reserves

17. At the 31st March 2023 the General Reserve balance was **£7.59m** and the Earmarked Reserves balance was **£13.44m**.

Reserves to be released

18. As per the attached Reserves policy, each year all Reserves and their use will be reviewed as part of the budget setting process and if considered no longer necessary or required at the level previously held will be released back into the General Fund.

Conclusion

19. A robust Reserves Policy enables the Council to achieve its Corporate Priorities and Programmes of work. The amending of the General Reserve Balance is due to re-evaluation of, and reflection of the current risks facing the Council.

Timetable of Next Steps

Please include a list of key actions and the scheduled dates for these:

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Cabinet	Approve Report and Recommendations	2 nd October 2023	Chief Finance Officer / Lead Member for Finance
Full Council	Approve Report and Recommendations	22 nd November 2023	Lead Member for Finance

Budget Cabinet	Approve Report and Recommendations	29 th January 2024	Chief Finance Officer / Lead Member for Finance
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Wards Affected

All

Policy Implications

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	Yes
Environmental Issues & Climate Change	No
Economic/Financial Implications	Yes
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	Yes
Local People's Views	No
Anti-Poverty	No
Legal	No

Additional Information

Appendix 1 – Reserves Policy

Officer to Contact

Kit Wheeler
kit.wheeler@hastings.gov.uk

Report Title: 2023/24 Reserves Policy

Report By: Kit Wheeler

Chief Finance Officer

Purpose of Policy

An essential part of the financial planning process for Hastings Borough Council is a robust and modern policy on the level and nature of reserves.

The policy document attached updates the Council's approach to Reserves in preparation of its Medium Term Financial Strategy and as part of the budget setting process.

Reserves Policy

1. Setting the level of reserves is one of several related decisions in the formulation of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
2. In establishing and approving the Medium Term Financial Strategy, "the Council will ensure that it maintains a prudent level of reserves in line with best practice and relevant guidelines".
3. Any surplus reserves will be considered in the light of the budget forecast and the risks associated with that forecast.

Financial Planning

4. The starting point will always be the minimum level of General Reserve balance and this is calculated as follows:
 - £1.8m (10% contingency of total Net Expenditure based on 2023/24 Budget)
 - £1.04m (20% Homelessness costs fluctuations)
 - £1.2m (Other unexpected / unforeseen events)

Total = £4.04m (say **£4m**).

It is therefore recommended that the minimum level of General Reserve balance is **£4m**.

5. This base figure will be subject to Annual Review by the Chief Finance Officer in the light of risks within the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
6. In making a recommendation as to the level of reserves which should be maintained, the Chief Finance Officer considers carefully:-
 - The overall financial standing of the authority (level of borrowing, debt outstanding, council tax collection rates, etc.);
 - The authority's track record in budget and financial management including the robustness of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy;
 - The authority's capacity to manage in-year budget pressures;
 - The strength of the financial information and reporting arrangements;
 - The adequacy of the authority's insurance arrangements to cover major unforeseen risks.

7. The Council will not hold significant balances above those required by the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
8. The level of earmarked reserves will be reviewed in the preparation of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and again as part of the Closure of Accounts process. The creation of any new earmarked reserves will be subject to Member approval.
9. At the 31st March 2023 the General Reserve balance was **£7.59m** and the Earmarked Reserves balance was **£13.44m**.

Reporting

10. Any recommended changes to the level of reserves held will be reported within the Medium Term Financial Strategy or in the consideration of the Annual Accounts and will take account of the strategic, operational and financial risks facing the authority at that time.
11. In making any recommendation the Chief Finance Officer, will provide Members, (in line with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003) with an opinion on the robustness of the budget estimates and on the adequacy of the Council's reserves.
12. Any changes to this Policy will require approval by Lead Portfolio Holder for Finance.

Ear Marked Reserves

13. Earmarked reserves are a means of voluntary and prudently building up funds to meet known future or predicted liabilities. When establishing reserves the Council must adhere to the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting (the CODE) and in particular the need to distinguish between reserves (set aside for future liabilities) and provisions (mandatory set asides for actual liabilities existing).
14. In approving any new earmarked reserves the Council needs to identify the purpose of the reserve, the protocol for its use and the procedures for its management and control.
15. These will be reviewed as part of the budget setting process and any considered no longer necessary will be highlighted for release back into the General Fund and any in need of amending will be agreed through the proper procedures.

Reserve Levels

	Opening Balance at 1 April 2023 £'000
(1) General Reserve	(7,599)
(2) Capital Reserve	(150)
(3) Renewal and Repairs Reserve	(1,656)
(4) Risk Management Reserve	(315)
(5) Information Technology Reserve	(274)
(6) On-Street Car Parking Surplus Reserve	(40)
(7) Section 106 Reserve (Revenue)	(426)
(8) Revenues & Benefits Reserve	(255)
(9) Countryside Stewardship Reserve	(28)
(10) Monuments in perpetuity	(46)
(11) Ore Valley Reserve	(250)
(12) Invest to save and efficiency Reserve	(87)
(13) Resilience and Stability Reserve	(900)
(14) Redundancy Reserve	(565)
(15) Safer Hastings Partnership Reserve	(98)
(16) Disabled Facilities Grant	(1,374)
(17) Housing Licensing reserve	(277)
(18) Community Housing Reserve	(11)
(19) Controlling Migration	(116)
(20) Towns Fund	(236)
(21) Section 31 - Grant Reserve	(6,336)
Total	<u>(21,039)</u>

1. The General Reserve is used to support revenue spending.
2. The Capital Reserve is earmarked to support capital spending.
3. The Renewal and Repairs Reserve is maintained for the purchase of vehicles, plant, equipment and the repair and redecoration of property.
4. The Risk Management Reserve is used to cover excesses on claims and certain small risks. The object is to minimise insurance premiums providing sufficient cover. It is also a reserve in respect of future MMI insurance liabilities.
5. The Information Technology Reserve is for the purpose of financing the purchase of computing equipment and computer systems required by the Council.
6. On-street car parking surpluses are shared with East Sussex County Council. Shares will be spent on traffic management and transportation issues within the borough.
7. Section 106 Reserve – these are the developers’ contributions to be used to finance various projects.
8. Revenues and Benefits Grants as part of New Burdens.
9. Countryside Stewardship Reserve – is money set aside for the protection and stewardship of the Countryside park in relation to received grant.
10. The Monuments in Perpetuity reserve has been set up to maintain burial plots at the Cemetery.
11. Ore Valley reserve has been set up to fund activity in the area.
12. Invest to save Reserve - To provide future funding for projects which will delivery savings but require upfront funding.
13. Resilience and Stability Reserve- To cushion the impact of fluctuations in business rates income and costs of Council tax reduction scheme.
14. Redundancy Reserve - sum put aside to help meet expected redundancy costs arising in future years.
15. Safer Hastings Partnership - is specifically earmarked to reduce crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods and on the streets.
16. Disabled Facility Grant - Funding for disabled adaptations
17. Housing Licensing - To smooth the impact of non-refundable license income received up-front but covering several years.
18. Community Housing – Government grant for us over more than one year. Controlling Migration – To support the impact of migration.
- 19 – Controlling Migration – Funding for Migration Control.
20. Towns Fund – To fund and support the Towns Deal.
21. Section 31 Grant Reserve – Grant received that will be needed in future years to fund deficits on the Collection Fund caused by government policy changes granting new reliefs.

Additional Information

N/A

Officer to Contact

Kit Wheeler

kit.wheeler@hastings.gov.uk

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Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 6 November 2023

Report Title: Interim Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2023

Report By: Natasha Tewkesbury, Head of Community and Regulatory Services

Key Decision: Y

Classification: Open

Purpose of Report

To report the findings and evaluation of the recent interim review of Polling Places and the (Acting) Returning Officer's subsequent recommendations.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. To recommend that 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 for Recommendations

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.

Introduction

1. The Electoral Administration Act 2006 (Section 16, EAA 2006) introduced a duty for all UK parliamentary polling districts and polling places to be reviewed by the end of 2007 and thereafter to be fully reviewed every 5 years .
2. The council's last full review under the legislation was completed and approved in October 2019.
3. Due to the recent completion of the Boundary Commission for England's review of parliamentary constituencies, it was advised to undertake a short, interim review now with a full review taking place in 2024.
4. Although there have been no changes to the Hastings & Rye constituency boundaries within our own register area, we deemed it an appropriate time to review our polling districts and polling places prior to a potential UK parliamentary election in 2024.
5. The council must seek to ensure that, until the next full review, all electors within the borough boundary of the Hastings and Rye parliamentary constituency, have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances, and to ensure that, as far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places are accessible to all electors, including those with disabilities and specific needs.
6. The same arrangements made for UK parliamentary elections are also used at other elections.
7. The final recommendations will be reported to Full Council on 22 November 2023. Assuming these are agreed, the revised electoral register will be published on 1 December 2023.
8. The Electoral Commission has no role in the review process itself. However, it can consider comments if people do not think the review has met the reasonable requirements of electors or taken sufficient account of the needs of electors.
9. The following are not covered by the review:

Boundaries of UK parliamentary constituencies;

Borders and names of local authorities and electoral areas within local authorities; and

Electoral ward boundaries

Local people's views

10. The public consultation has actively sought comments from people who have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability, or accessibility needs. Any elector within the Hastings and Rye parliamentary constituency may make representations. Although not specifically required in law, the consultation carried out by the council has included local political parties and elected representatives.

Equalities and community cohesiveness

11. Electoral Services staff have visited every polling place to carry out an access audit, taking account of the needs of disabled voters. Questionnaires were also issued to each polling place

under consideration, in order to provide us with a detailed overview of facilities and accessibility.

The interim review process

12. The timetable for the interim review is set out as:

Notice of start of review: 2 October 2023

(Acting) Returning Officer's representations published: 2 October 2023

Closing date for representations: 22 October 2023

Final recommendations heard by Cabinet: 6 November 2023

Recommendations considered and decision made by Full Council: 22 November 2023

Revised electoral register published: 1 December 2023

13. The council consulted the (Acting) Returning Officer, Jane Hartnell, who is also the Returning Officer for all other elections and referenda.

Conclusion of the review / publishing stage

14. The (Acting) Returning Officer is recommending to keep the existing polling place arrangements in place and to make changes only where exceptional circumstances require. The changes in venues are:

Polling district N2

The Bridge Community Centre, Priory Road to Calvert Church Hall, Mount Pleasant Road.

The Bridge Community Centre is no longer available. Calvert Church Hall was used successfully in 2022 elections with no reduction in turnout.

Polling district O2

West St Leonards Primary Academy, Harley Shute Road to West St Leonards Community Centre, Bexhill Road.

West St Leonards Primary Academy is no longer available. The community centre was used successfully in 2021 and 2022.

15. Throughout the interim review, any documentation, correspondence, etc. have been available for public inspection through the Electoral Services office at Muriel Matters House. All relevant items (correspondence, representations etc.) will be published when the review has been completed.

16. Once Full Council have agreed the recommendations they will be published on the council's website.

The (Acting) Returning Officer's representations and other representations, including risk management

17. In addition to contacting the various stakeholders, the council consulted the (Acting) Returning Officer for the Hastings & Rye constituency. They are required to make representations to the council and in doing so must include information as to the location of polling stations (existing or proposed) within polling places (existing or proposed). Rother District Council has consulted the (Acting) Returning Officer in respect of those wards that fall within Rother but form part of

the Hastings and Rye constituency. Rother District Council will make a decision in respect of these.

18. The (Acting) Returning Officer must also take account of the following:

The council must seek to ensure that all electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.

The council must seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place is accessible to electors who are disabled.

Ideally, the polling place should be in its own polling district.

Ideally, no polling place should be shared by two wards.

Where possible, "natural" boundaries should be used, e.g. railways, major roads, etc.

All properties in a minor road or estate should, ideally, be in the same polling district.

Polling places should be "logical"; that is, electors should not have to pass another polling place to get to their own polling place.

19. Appended to this report is a summary of the (Acting) Returning Officer's comments and recommendations to the council.

20. Each polling district has one or more polling places allocated to it and the polling place is the premises, including the exterior access points, in which polling stations are situated. During this interim review, the majority of existing polling places were found to be satisfactory.

21. The paragraphs below highlight areas where concerns have been identified or about which comments have been received. In each case every effort has been made to identify an alternative location or to resolve the problem.

22. In N2 polling district (Tressell ward), one of the ward councillors raised concerns over the location of the new proposed polling place at Calvert Church Hall as it was not as well located as the previous venue. They asked that we investigate using The Bridge Community Centre, should it become available again. Officers attempted to contact the venue to discuss this on several occasions, without success. As such, it was agreed with the (Acting) Returning Officer to proceed with the proposal to move the polling place to Calvert Memorial Hall.

23. In O2 polling station (West St Leonards ward), one of the ward councillors objected to the use of West St Leonards Community Centre as a dual polling station with O1. Reasons for this included that the proposals would mean that ward would only have one polling place, and poor public transport links to the proposed polling place from Harley Shute Road and surrounding areas. They suggested siting a mobile polling station within the polling district in order for voters in the area to more easily cast their vote. Having explored this option previously in the area, the costs of a portable unit far exceeds the polling station budget, and there were challenges in finding a suitable and secure site to locate a mobile station together with a power supply (most likely a generator). In light of these challenges, the (Acting) Returning Officer agreed to proceed with the proposal to move the polling place to West St Leonards Community Centre. The (Acting) Returning Officer has directed that officers continue to seek suitable venues within O2 polling district and if one were to be identified, the (Acting) Returning Officer would use delegated powers to change the polling station.

24. Any risk associated to changing a polling district boundary, polling place or polling station has been taken into account as part of the review and the (Acting) Returning Officer has been

consulted at each stage of the process. None of the proposals offered within this are considered high risk in the context of the review and its remit.

Challenging the outcome of the review

25. Following the conclusion of the local authority's review, certain persons have a right to make representations to the Electoral Commission. There are only two grounds on which a representation may be made. These are that the local authority has failed to meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency and that insufficient account of accessibility to disabled persons of the polling station(s) within a polling place has been made.
26. More detailed information is available on the Electoral Commission website - www.electoralcommission.org.uk

Timetable of Next Steps

27. Please include a list of key actions and the scheduled dates for these:

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Incorporate any agreed changes to polling district boundaries to electoral register	Publication of revised electoral register	1 December 2023	Katrina Silverson

Wards Affected

(All Wards);

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	Y
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	N
Risk Management	Y
Environmental Issues & Climate Change	N
Economic/Financial Implications	N
Human Rights Act	N
Organisational Consequences	N
Local People's Views	Y
Anti-Poverty	N
Legal	Y

Additional Information

Proposal document, including (Acting) Returning Officer recommendations
Interactive Map [Consultation Interim Polling Place Review 2023 \(hastings.gov.uk\)](http://Consultation Interim Polling Place Review 2023 (hastings.gov.uk))

Officer to Contact

Katrina Silverson, Electoral Services Manager
ksilverson@hastings.gov.uk
01424 451747



Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations in Hastings

**Consultation document for interim review
held in October 2023**

Consultation period runs from

2 to 22 October 2023

Contents:

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Contact information:

Information on who can make representations and where to address representations is given on page 5 of this consultation document.

If you want to talk to someone about this review, please contact:

Katrina Silverson
Electoral Services Manager
Hastings Borough Council
Muriel Matters House
Breeds Place
Hastings
TN34 3UY

Telephone (01424) 451747

E-mail: electoralservices@hastings.gov.uk

If you would like to receive this consultation document in an alternative format, such as large print, please let us know by contacting Electoral Services:

- E-mail: electoralservices@hastings.gov.uk
- Telephone: (01424) 451087

1. Background to this review

The council must regularly review the division of its area into polling districts and the places where electors are asked to vote. Full reviews must be started and completed within the period of 16 months that starts on 1 October of every fifth year after 1 October 2013.

The relevant legislation can be found in section 16 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006, the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006. Guidance is also published by the Electoral Commission.

The Council's last full review under the legislation was carried out in 2019. Due to the recent completion of the Boundary Commission for England's review of parliamentary constituencies, we have decided to undertake a short, interim review now with a full review taking place in 2024.

Further information about the procedures for making representations is given later in this paper and the detailed proposals, including proposals for change, are set out in the appendix.

2. Definitions

“Parliamentary constituency”. This cannot be changed by the review. It is the division of the constituency into polling districts and places that is the subject of the review. It should be noted that only the parts of the Hastings and Rye constituency that falls within the Borough of Hastings is being reviewed by the Council. The area of the constituency that lies outside the Borough (Rye and Eastern Rother and Brede Valley and Marsham) will be reviewed separately by Rother District Council.

“Polling district”. The area created by the division of a constituency or ward into smaller parts, within which a polling place can be determined which is convenient to the electors.

“Polling place”. The building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer.

“Polling station”. The actual area where the process of voting takes place. This must be located within the polling place and designated for the particular polling district. This function is the responsibility of the (Acting) Returning Officer.

3. The review process

As part of the review process the Council must:

- Seek to ensure that all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
- Seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable the polling places are accessible to those who are disabled, and
- When considering or reviewing the designation of a polling place, have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons.

The council is required to publish notice of the holding of a review. Information about the review is made available on the council’s website and can also be obtained in person from the Electoral Services Office at Muriel Matters House, Breeds Place, Hastings TN34 3UY.

The consultation document will also be sent to the local Member of Parliament, Borough Councillors, County Councillors and local political parties. It will also be sent to organisations who have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have alternative accessibility needs.

The consultation period for this review will last for approximately 3 weeks.

The timetable for this review is set out below:

Publication of notice and consultation document.	Monday 2 October 2023
Closing date for representations.	Sunday 22 October 2023
Final proposals heard by Cabinet.	Monday 6 November 2023
Final proposals published (as part of the agenda papers for the Council meeting to be held on 22 November 2023). These will be available on the Council’s website.	Tuesday 14 November 2023
Council approves scheme.	Wednesday 22 November 2023
Revised electoral register 2024 published.	Friday 1 December 2023

4. The role of the (Acting) Returning Officer

The Council is required to consult the (Acting) Returning Officer for every Parliamentary constituency that is wholly or partly within its area. This consultation document already includes any proposals made by the (Acting) Returning Officer.

5. Proposals

The appendix to this consultation document sets out details of current polling district and polling places for each of the 16 wards in the Borough of Hastings and details of proposed changes.

6. Making representations

Any elector in the whole of the Hastings and Rye constituency (whether they live in the Borough or not) may make representations to the Council.

Representations will also be considered from individuals or organisations who have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have alternative accessibility needs.

We would encourage anyone making representations to suggest alternative polling districts/places to those proposed where appropriate and to give reasons for the alternative. This is especially relevant to those polling stations that are situated outside of a polling district or are currently in use as a dual polling station.

Any representations must be received by Sunday 22 October 2023.

You can email your representations (with the words “Polling Places Review” in the subject line) to electoralservices@hastings.gov.uk

If you prefer, you can write to us with your representations. These should be addressed to:

Polling Places Review
Electoral Services
Hastings Borough Council
Muriel Matters House
Breeds Place
Hastings
TN34 3UY

All representations received will be available for viewing, by appointment, at our offices. Even if you have already commented on the proposals, you may make further submissions in response to other representations. Any further submissions must be received no later than the consultation closing date on 22 October 2023.

7. Completion of the review

The final proposals will be submitted to the Full Council meeting on 22 November 2023. This report will be published on 14 November 2023. Councillors will be asked to consider the proposals and representations received and make a final decision. The Council is required to give reasons for its decisions in respect of the designation of both polling districts and polling places.

A revised electoral register will be published on 1 December 2023.

In addition, the council must publish:

- all correspondence sent to the (Acting) Returning Officer in connection with the review and all correspondence sent to any person who the council thinks has particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability;
- all representations made by any person in connection with the review;
- the minutes of any meetings held by the council where details of the review have been considered;
- details of the actual designations of polling districts and polling places agreed as a result of the review; and
- details of where the results of the review have been published.

8. Challenging the outcome of the review

Although the Electoral Commission has no initial role in the review process itself, it does have an important role in respect of considering representations and observations made that a Council has not conducted a review so as to:

- meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency, or a body of them (i.e. the reasonable requirements of a particular area of the authority have not been satisfactorily met); or
- take sufficient account of the accessibility to disabled persons of polling stations within a designated polling place.

9. Who may make a representation to the Electoral Commission?

The following may make representations to the Electoral Commission namely;

- not less than 30 registered electors in the constituency
- any person who made representations to the council when the review was being undertaken (except the (Acting) Returning Officer)
- any person who is not an elector within the constituency who the Electoral Commission feel has sufficient interest in the accessibility of disabled persons;

Also the (Acting) Returning Officer may make observations on any representations made to the Commission.

10. Review by the Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission is required to consider any such representations and observations, and after doing so, may direct the relevant council to make any alterations it sees necessary to the polling places designated by the review.

Should a council fail to make the alterations within two months of the direction being given, the Commission may make the alterations itself.



Appendix

Interim review of polling districts and polling places in Hastings
Interim review (October – November 2023)

Proposals document

Electorate as at **1 September 2023**

An interactive map of all polling stations can be found here

<https://maps.hastings.gov.uk/portal/apps/experiencebuilder/experience/?id=58e524b729a3471581ba45dc3517e5f7>

HASTINGS AND RYE CONSTITUENCY

Ashdown Ward

PD Letters	Polling Place	Electorate	Issues, Options and considerations	(Acting) Returning Officer/Local Authority Proposal	Reasons
A1	Hastings Centre, The Ridge, Hastings TN34 2SA	1,147	Situated outside of the polling district (as no suitable accommodation within). Good access. Free off-road parking for electors and excellent public transport links. Currently a dual polling station with polling district F1.	No change. Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked. If inclement weather, maximum of 2 tellers in alcove area in foyer.	Currently the most suitable venue within the immediate area. There are no issues with duality of this venue. No complaints have been made about the duality of this venue
A2	St Johns Church Room, Upper Church Road, St Leonards on Sea TN37 7BS	1,131	Situated within polling district. Satisfactory access. Unrestricted on-street parking and satisfactory public transport links.	No change. Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue.
A3	Bannatyne Spa Hotel (Montgomerie Suite), Battle Road, St Leonards on Sea TN38 8EA.	1,682	Situated just outside of the polling district. Free off-road parking for electors and satisfactory public transport links.	No change. Tellers' area: Outside main entrance. Maximum of four tellers in outer foyer area.	Currently the most suitable venue within the immediate area. No complaints have been made about this venue.

The polling district boundaries for this ward do not need to be reviewed.

Baird Ward

PD Letters	Polling Place	Electorate	Issues, Options and considerations	(Acting) Returning Officer/Local Authority Proposal	Reasons
B1	Elim Pentecostal Church, Elphinstone Avenue, Hastings TN34 2DJ	1,761	Situated within the polling district. Level access. Unrestricted on-street parking and public transport links nearby.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue
B2	Broomgrove Community Centre, Junction Malvern Way/Chiltern Drive, Hastings TN34 3PY	2,083	Situated within the polling district. Level access and good lighting. Unrestricted on-street parking.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue

The polling district boundaries for this ward do not need to be reviewed.

Braybrooke Ward

PD Letters	Polling Place	Electorate	Issues, Options and considerations	(Acting) Returning Officer/Local Authority Proposal	Reasons
C1	St Mark's United Reformed Church Hall, Hughenden Place, Hastings TN34 3TB	1,989	Situated within the polling district. Temporary lighting installed on polling day. Satisfactory access. Restricted on-street permit parking, but excellent public transport links.	No change Tellers' area: Raised patio area outside, ensuring access to venue not blocked.	No other suitable venue in polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue
C2	Amherst Tennis Club, Amherst Gardens, Hastings TN34 1TU	1,962	Situated within the polling district. Satisfactory access. Unrestricted on-street parking and public transport links in near vicinity.	No change Tellers' area: Outside venue, at the bottom of the entrance ramp ensuring access to venue is not blocked.	Currently the most suitable venue in polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue

The polling district boundaries for this ward do not need to be reviewed.

Castle Ward

PD Letters	Polling Place	Electorate	Issues, Options and considerations	(Acting) Returning Officer/Local Authority Proposal	Reasons
D1	His Place Church Hall, Robertson Street, Hastings TN34 1HL	1,686	Situated within polling district. Level access and good lighting. Within pedestrianised zone of town centre. Pay and display parking in the vicinity, but excellent public transport links.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance or within outer lobby, ensuring access is not blocked.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue.
D2	Quaker Meeting House, South Terrace, Hastings TN34 1SA	1,491	Situated within polling district. Level access and good lighting. Pay and display parking in the vicinity and excellent public transport links.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked. In inclement weather, maximum of 2 tellers in lobby area.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue.
D3	Mendham Memorial Hall, Vicarage Road, Hastings TN34 3LZ	1,534	Situated within polling district. Level access and good lighting. On-street parking and nearby public transport links.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked. In inclement weather, maximum of 3 tellers in lobby area by staircase.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue.

The polling district boundaries for this ward do not need to be reviewed.

Central St Leonards Ward

PD Letters	Polling Place	Electorate	Issues, Options and considerations	(Acting) Returning Officer/Local Authority Proposal	Reasons
E1	The Royal Victoria Hotel, Marina, St Leonards on Sea TN38 0BD	2,793	Situated within the polling district. Level access and good lighting. Pay and display parking opposite venue, allocated disabled parking and good public transport links.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked. If inclement weather, maximum of 3 tellers may stand at the back of the main reception area.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue
E2	Christ Church Parish Centre, 2 Christchurch Courtyard, London Road, St Leonards on Sea TN37 6GL	2,205	Situated within the polling district. Satisfactory access and good lighting. Limited parking in vicinity, allocated disabled parking on-site and excellent public transport links.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance in courtyard area, by memorial.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue

The polling district boundaries for this ward do not need to be reviewed.

Conquest Ward

PD Letters	Polling Place	Electorate	Issues, Options and considerations	(Acting) Returning Officer/Local Authority Proposal	Reasons
F1	Hastings Centre, The Ridge, Hastings TN34 2SA.	1,588	Situated within the polling district. Good access. Free off-road parking for electors and excellent public transport links. Currently a dual polling station with polling district A1.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked. If inclement weather, maximum of 2 tellers in alcove area in foyer.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about the duality of this venue
F2	St Peter and St Paul Church Hall, Parkstone Road, Hastings TN34 2QE	2,198	Situated within the polling district. Level access and good lighting. Unrestricted on-street parking, car park, and good public transport links.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue

The polling district boundaries for this ward do not need to be reviewed.

Gensing Ward

PD Letters	Polling Place	Electorate	Issues, Options and considerations	(Acting) Returning Officer/Local Authority Proposal	Reasons
G1	YMCA, The Y Sportscentre, St Paul's Road, St Leonards on Sea TN37 6RS	2,418	Situated within the polling district. Satisfactory access. Limited on-street parking. Public transport links in nearby vicinity.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked. If inclement weather, maximum of 2 tellers in foyer.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue
G2	St John's Parish Hall, Brittany Road, St Leonards on Sea TN38 0RD	2,194	Situated within the polling district. Level access and good lighting. Unrestricted on-street parking and public transport links in near vicinity.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue

The polling district boundaries for this ward do not need to be reviewed.

Hollington Ward

PD Letters	Polling Place	Electorate	Issues, Options and considerations	(Acting) Returning Officer/Local Authority Proposal	Reasons
H1	Robsack Community Centre, Bodiam Drive, St Leonards on Sea TN38 9TW	1,304	Situated within the polling district. Level access and good lighting. Unrestricted parking and good public transport links.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue
H2	Tilekiln Community Centre, Tilebarn Road, St Leonards on Sea TN38 9PA	1,217	Situated within the polling district. Level access and good lighting. Unrestricted parking and good public transport links.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue
H3	Hollington Youth Club, 1 Wishing Tree Road North, St Leonards on Sea TN38 9LL	1,287	Situated within the polling district. Level access and good lighting. Unrestricted on-street parking and good public transport links.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue

The polling district boundaries for this ward do not need to be reviewed.

Maze Hill Ward

PD Letters	Polling Place	Electorate	Issues, Options and considerations	(Acting) Returning Officer/Local Authority Proposal	Reasons
I1	Arthur Easton Centre, St Michael's Hospice, 25 Upper Maze Hill, St Leonards on Sea TN38 0LB	1,648	Situated within the polling district. Level access and good lighting. Limited parking and public transport links in near vicinity.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance under covered area. Telling must not interfere with hospice activity.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue
I2	The Taplin Centre, Healey House, 3 Upper Maze Hill, St Leonards on Sea TN38 0LQ	2,135	Situated within the adjoining polling district (I1). Level access and good lighting. Unlimited on-street parking and public transport links in near vicinity.	No change. Tellers' area: Outside main entrance on sloped drive area, ensuring access to venue not blocked.	No other suitable venue found so far within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue

The polling district boundaries for this ward do not need to be reviewed.

Old Hastings Ward

PD Letters	Polling Place	Electorate	Issues, Options and considerations	(Acting) Returning Officer/Local Authority Proposal	Reasons
J1	All Souls Hall, Athelstan Road, Hastings TN35 5JE	1,860	Situated within the polling district. Satisfactory access and good lighting. Limited on-street parking and public transport links in near vicinity.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue
J2	All Saints Church Hall, All Saints Street, Hastings TN34 3BG	1,974	Situated within the polling district. Satisfactory access and good lighting. Restricted on-street parking and good public transport links.	No change. Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue

The polling district boundaries for this ward do not need to be reviewed.

Ore Ward

PD Letters	Polling Place	Electorate	Issues, Options and considerations	(Acting) Returning Officer/Local Authority Proposal	Reasons
K1	Salvation Army Hall, 418 Old London Road, Hastings TN35 5BB	2,139	Situated within the polling district. Level access and good lighting. Limited on-street parking and excellent public transport links.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue
K2	Downs Farm Community Centre, Crowborough Road, Hastings TN35 5EA	1,798	Situated within the polling district. Level access and good lighting. Unrestricted parking and public transport links in near vicinity.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked. Otherwise, a maximum of three tellers may convene in hallway area.	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue

The polling district boundaries for this ward do not need to be reviewed.

St Helens Ward

PD Letters	Polling Place	Electorate	Issues, Options and considerations	(Acting) Returning Officer/Local Authority Proposal	Reasons
L1	Christ Church Blacklands Church Hall, Laton Road, Hastings TN34 2ES	2,316	Situated at the very edge of the polling district. Satisfactory access (with ramp). Unrestricted on-street parking and public transport links in near vicinity.	No change Tellers' area: Maximum of 3 tellers in foyer area. No tellers to stand outside the entrance as access too narrow.	No other suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue.
L2	Hastings United Football Club, Pilot Field, Elphinstone Road, Hastings TN34 2AX	1,568	Situated at the very edge of the polling district. Level access, separate accessible entrance and good lighting. Unrestricted on-street parking and good public transport links.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance at bottom of ramp, ensuring access to venue not blocked.	No other suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue.

The polling district boundaries for this ward do not need to be reviewed.

Silverhill Ward

PD Letters	Polling Place	Electorate	Issues, Options and considerations	(Acting) Returning Officer/Local Authority Proposal	Reasons
M1	St Luke's United Reformed Church Hall, Alma Terrace, St Leonards on Sea TN37 6QT	2,105	Situated within the polling district. Level access and good lighting. Limited on-street parking and good public transport links.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about the duality of this venue.
M2	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 2 Ledsham Avenue, St Leonards on Sea, TN37 7LE	2,053	Situated within the polling district. Level access and good lighting. Off-street parking with satisfactory public transport links.	No change since 2021. Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked.	No other suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about the duality of this venue

The polling district boundaries for this ward do not need to be reviewed.

Tressell Ward

PD Letters	Polling Place	Electorate	Issues, Options and considerations	(Acting) Returning Officer/Local Authority Proposal	Reasons
N1	Christ Apostolic Church, 1 The Ridge (Entrance Clifton Road), Hastings TN34 2AA	1,314	Situated at the very edge of the polling district. Satisfactory access and good lighting. Limited on-street parking and public transport links in near vicinity.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue.
N2	Calvert Church Hall, Mount Pleasant Road, Hastings TN34 3SP	2,321	Situated within the polling district. Level access and good lighting. Limited on-street parking and good public transport links.	No change from 2022. The previous polling place was The Bridge Community Centre, 361 Priory Road, Hastings TN34 3NW. A change in leaseholder necessitated move to new polling place. Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked.	Currently the most suitable venue that is available within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue.

The polling district boundaries for this ward do not need to be reviewed.

West St Leonards Ward

PD Letters	Polling Place	Electorate	Issues, Options and considerations	(Acting) Returning Officer/Local Authority Proposal	Reasons
O1	West St Leonards Community Centre, 130 Bexhill Road, St Leonards on Sea TN38 8BL	2,028	Situated within the polling district. Level access and good lighting. Limited on-street parking and satisfactory public transport links.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked	No other suitable venue in polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue.
O2	West St Leonards Primary Academy, West St Leonards School, Harley Shute Road, St Leonards on Sea TN38 8BX Change to: West St Leonards Community Centre, 130 Bexhill Road, St Leonards on Sea TN38 8BL	1,573	Situated within the polling district. Level access and good lighting. Limited on-street parking and satisfactory public transport links.	Change of venue as shown. Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked	Previous polling place is no longer available. We have used the community centre as a dual station for the last two elections. Currently no other suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue.

The polling district boundaries for this ward do not need to be reviewed.

Wishing Tree Ward

PD Letters	Polling Place	Electorate	Issues, Options and considerations	(Acting) Returning Officer/Local Authority Proposal	Reasons
P1	Hollington Parish Room, 177 Wishing Tree Road, St Leonards on Sea TN38 9LD	2,045	Situated within the polling district. Level access. Limited on-street parking and satisfactory public transport links.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked. In inclement weather, maximum of 2 tellers in foyer area.	No other suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue.
P2	Four Courts Community Centre, Sydney Close, St Leonards on Sea TN38 9DD	2,161	Situated within the polling district. Level access and good lighting. On-site parking and satisfactory public transport links.	No change Tellers' area: Outside main entrance, ensuring access to venue not blocked	Currently the most suitable venue within the polling district. No complaints have been made about this venue.

The polling district boundaries for this ward do not need to be reviewed.

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