

FULL COUNCIL

15 FEBRUARY 2023

Present: Councillors O’Callaghan (Chair), Arthur, Barnett, Batsford, Beaney, Beaver, Bishop, Cannan, Carr, Collins, Cooke, Edwards, Evans, Foster, Haffenden, Hay, Hilton, Jobson, Patmore, Pragnell, Rankin, Roark, Roberts, Rogers, Sinden, Turner, Webb, Williams and Willis.

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

302. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Councillors Bacon, Fernando, and Marlow-Eastwood.

303. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor	Item	Interest
Patmore	304. Draft Corporate Plan update 2023/24	Personal – Member of the National Residential Landlords Association
Webb	305. Revenue Budget 2022/23 Revised and 2023/24, plus Capital Programme 2023/24 2025/2026	Personal – East Sussex County Councillor

304. DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN UPDATE 2023/24

The Deputy Mayor proposed suspending Rule 16.6b of the Council’s Constitution, seconded by Councillor Beaver.

RESOLVED that council suspends Rule 16.6b of the Constitution to permit the original motion and any proposed amendments to be on the table and open for discussion at the same time.

Councillor Hilton proposed five amendments to the draft Corporate Plan update, seconded by Councillor Carr, as follows:

1. To add the following to paragraph 20:

Investigate how a levy can be created on parking charges to fund active travel initiatives including secure bike storage on council owned land.

2. To add the following to paragraph 21:

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Complete our work on our Local Plan engaging our citizens and partners to help set how the borough will shape up for the future especially responding further to the challenges of the climate emergency. Ensure the Local Plan

- *complies with Age Friendly principles*
- *requires developers to carry out whole life cycle carbon assessments of any new buildings*

Bring a report within six months on how we can ensure zero carbon building methods on our own land

3. To amend paragraph 27 to read:

Set up a cross party working group to support climate emergency work, with specialist officer support at least equivalent to a full-time post to focus on bringing in funds for partnership working with the third and business sector, tapping into the huge skill resource available in the town and establishing a local environment commission to shape policy.

4. To amend paragraph 43 to read:

Support work of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and Local Strategic Partnership, to strengthen promotion and delivery of equalities for staff and residents, including the involvement of residents from communities especially impacted by inequality.

5. To add a new paragraph (paragraph 44), to read:

To reaffirm our commitment to Hastings as an Age Friendly Community we will make older people a specific considered demographic by creating a target tracker for all reports. We will actively work with our third sector partners so that Hastings continues towards WHO Age Friendly status.

Councillor Barnett, Leader of the Council, accepted the amendments and proposed a motion, seconded by Councillor Rogers, to approve the draft Corporate Plan update as amended.

Councillor Rankin, Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group spoke in relation to the Corporate Plan, followed by Councillor Carr, Deputy Leader of the Green Group.

RESOLVED (by 14 votes for, to 10 against, with 5 abstentions):

Subject to the agreed amendments:

- 1. Full Council approve the draft annual update to the corporate plan 2020-24 including the amendments made at Budget Cabinet.**

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2. That delegated authority be given to the Managing Director, after consultation with the Leader of the Council to make further revisions as is considered necessary.

Reasons:

1. The council needs to approve the annual update to the corporate plan as its statement of strategic direction for the period 2020 - 2024, mindful of the views received as part of the public consultation.

305. REVENUE BUDGET 2022/23 REVISED AND 2023/24. PLUS CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24-2025/26

The Deputy Mayor proposed suspending Rule 16.6b of the Council's Constitution, seconded by Councillor Beaver.

RESOLVED that council suspends Rule 16.6b of the Constitution to permit the original motion and any proposed amendments to be on the table and open for discussion at the same time.

Councillor Carr proposed an amendment to the 2023/24 revenue budget, seconded by Councillor Hilton, to remove the proposed £5,000 reduction to the Community Safety budget. Councillor Willis accepted the amendment.

Councillor Willis, Finance and Equalities Portfolio Holder, proposed a motion, seconded by Councillor Batsford, to approve the Revenue Budget 2022/23 Revised and 2023/24, plus Capital Programme 2023/24-2025-2026, as amended.

Councillor Willis thanked the finance team for their work on the budget

Councillor Patmore, Leader of the Conservative Group, spoke in relation to the budget and capital programme, followed by Councillor Hilton, Leader of the Green Group.

The proposals as amended were agreed by 13 votes for, to 10 against, with 5 abstentions.

Councillors Arthur, Barnett, Batsford, Bishop, Cannan, Evans, Roark, Roberts, Rogers, Sinden, Turner, Webb, and Willis voted for.

Councillors Beaney, Beaver, Cooke, Edwards, Foster, Hay, Patmore, Pragnell, Rankin, and Williams voted against.

Councillors Carr, Collins, Haffenden, Hilton, and Jobson abstained.

RESOLVED (by 13 votes for, to 10 against, with 5 abstentions):

- (i) Approve the draft 2023/24 revenue budget, subject to the agreed amendment

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- (ii) Approve a 2.99% increase in the Borough Council's part of the Council Tax.**
- (iii) Approve the Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2025/26 (Appendix D).**
- (iv) Approve the proposed expenditure from the Renewal and Repairs Reserve, and Information Technology Reserve (Appendices J and I respectively) and those items from other reserves shown in Appendix H that can proceed without further reference to Cabinet or Council.**
- (v) Approve that the use of the limited monies in the budget and Reserves for "Invest to Save" schemes be determined by the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the lead member for Finance and Chief Executive.**
- (vi) Agree once again that the Council does not seek to undertake any capital project/scheme purely for yield that would prevent the Council from borrowing either commercially or from the PWLB to fund its Capital programme.**
- (vii) Approve the revised Land and Property Disposal Programme (Appendix F) and agree that disposals can be brought forward if market conditions make it sensible to do so and as part of the future Capital Asset Strategy.**
- (viii) Agree that where a Capital scheme involves a net increase in overall revenue costs to the Council, or where any guarantee is to be provided which does, or could, incur costs for the Council, such decisions continue to be made by full Council.**
- (ix) Agree that no Council properties or land be disposed of, either by sale or lease, at less than market value without further express approval by Full Council - except where the lease is no longer than 5 years and the difference is less than £5,000 p.a. in which case Cabinet will have the authority to determine.**
- (x) Agree that schemes marked with an asterisk in the Capital Programme can proceed without further reference to Cabinet or Council.**
- (xi) Approve the detailed recommendations in Appendix M, which relate to the setting of Council Tax in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Act 1992 (Appendix M – to be provided/updated for full Council).**
- (xii) Approve that the budget be amended as necessary to reflect the final grant figures including Disabled Facility Grants - once received.**
- (xiii) Full Council adopt the existing Council Tax Support Scheme subject to amendments to allowances in line with national changes. Determination of the**

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allowances to be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer in line with prior year practice.

(xiv) It is recommended that the Council reviews the affordability of the Council Tax Support Scheme during 2023/24 in order for a consultation exercise to be undertaken.

Reasons:

1. The Council continues to be under severe financial pressure. It is facing increased costs, particularly from inflation and homelessness, it has large Capital projects in the pipeline and must by law set a balanced budget. It has had to use large elements of its reserves to fund the cost pressures and to balance the budgets in each of the last few years and will need to do so again in 2023/24 and 2024/25.
2. A major overhaul of the funding mechanism for local authorities has again been postponed and when combined with a Spending Review that continues to underfund disadvantaged councils will leave the Council with little option but to cut services to the statutory minimum. The Council is able to increase Council Tax by a maximum of 2.99% without a referendum against a background of inflation currently running at above 9%.
3. Despite identifying Priority Income and Expenditure Review (PIER) savings of over £1.4m for 2023/24 these are insufficient to balance the budget without the further use of Reserves. Once again further significant savings need to be found during 2023/24 to reduce the call on the Reserves, achieve a balanced budget in future years, and to try and ensure that reserve levels can be maintained at above the minimum recommended level.
4. The Council needs to be in a position to match its available resources to its priorities across the medium term and to maintain sufficient reserves and capacity to deal with potentially large and unexpected events in addition to fluctuations in income and expenditure levels – as highlighted by the Covid-19 crisis and one-off expenditure items such as dangerous structures, cliffs and reservoir works. The increased in-year spend on temporary housing accommodation necessitates a much greater degree of service reductions elsewhere in the Council.
5. The Council remains exposed to a much greater degree of volatility in terms of its income from Non Domestic Rates and expenditure in terms of Council Tax Support claims – the cost falling directly on the Council and the preceptors.

306. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

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Minute 510 of Cabinet on 6th February 2023, Draft Corporate Plan and Budget consultation feedback, was not called for discussion.

(The Deputy Mayor declared the meeting closed at 7.52pm)