

FULL COUNCIL

8 FEBRUARY 2023

Present: Councillors Bacon (Chair), O'Callaghan (Deputy Chair), Arthur, Barnett, Batsford, Beaney, Beaver, Bishop, Cannan, Carr, Collins, Cooke, Edwards, Evans, Fernando, Foster, Haffenden, Hay, Hilton, Jobson, Marlow-Eastwood, Patmore, Pragnell, Rankin, Rogers, Sinden, Turner, Webb and Williams.

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

294. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

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

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 15th December 2022 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record of the proceedings.

296. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor	Item	Interest
Marlow-Eastwood	300. Motion	Prejudicial – Is a member of the East Sussex Fire Authority
Cannan	Cabinet – 495. Housing Acquisition Proposal (Part 1)	Personal – Works for the Seaview Project which supports homeless individuals
Foster	300. Motion	Personal – Family member is an active Fireman at the Ridge Fire Station

297. ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR AND LEADER

The Mayor presented three Mayoral Civic Awards. Andrew Colquhoun received an award in recognition of his years of voluntary service as Chair of the Grants Advisory Panel. Jenny and Donna Bloomfield were recognised for organising an annual Christmas tree festival for the community in Hollington.

Councillor Barnett noted the upcoming one-year anniversary of the terrible war in Ukraine on 24th February and confirmed the Council will be supporting the local Ukrainian community by attending a vigil at the Stade and by flying the Ukrainian flag on the Town Hall.

FULL COUNCIL

8 FEBRUARY 2023

298. QUESTIONS (IF ANY) FROM:

298a) Members of the Public under Rule 11

No questions from the public were received.

298b) Councillors under Rule 12

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

In a supplementary question Councillor Edwards asked when will the first tenants be moving into York Buildings? Councillor Evans replied that there are regulatory issues which are holding things up. The Council does not yet have the required certifications and systems in place as a registered housing provider, and the Council is therefore in negotiations with another registered provider to temporarily manage the building.

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

In a supplementary question Councillor Haffenden asked, in light of the cost of agency staff, why is there not an adequate street cleansing service in Hastings, particularly in Tressell Ward where street cleansing is far less frequent compared to other parts of the Borough? Councillor Roark was not present to reply and a written answer will be provided.

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

In a supplementary question Councillor Jobson asked, in light of the recent flooding in Bulverhythe following a burst sewer pipe, can we update the 2015 Hastings flood plan to take account of flood incidents in this area? Councillor Barnett replied that the flood plan will be updated.

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

In a supplementary question Councillor Foster asked in what document, if any, is the intention of the e-bike charging motion captured so that when exploring potential regeneration schemes officers are prompted to consider e-bike charging infrastructure opportunities? Councillor Roark was not present to reply and a written answer will be provided.

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

FULL COUNCIL

8 FEBRUARY 2023

In a supplementary question Councillor Hilton asked Councillor Barnett to ensure the Council has a robust measurement system in place for the embedded carbon impact of Town Deal projects. Councillor Barnett replied that he would consider the resources Councillor Hilton outlined. However, although the Council would like to go beyond government standards it would not be able to insist on that as all contracts have to be approved through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

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

In a supplementary question Councillor Cooke asked if Councillor Roark had considered meeting with local cycling groups to see if they have any ideas on alternative routes that could be put forward to East Sussex County Council? Councillor Roark was not present to reply and a written answer will be provided.

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

In a supplementary question Councillor Carr asked Councillor Rogers if she agreed that every time the Council cuts community safety funding the town gets less safe for residents? Councillor Rogers replied that a lot of the community safety funding comes from the Police and Crime Commissioner and Safer Streets funding. Councillor Rogers asked Councillors to feedback on ideas for the next round of Safer Streets funding. The town centre CCTV is still operational and is being used by the police.

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, as plants of the rose family are particularly vulnerable to brown tailed moths will the Council consider replanting Warrior Square gardens with more sustainable species, perhaps supplied by the nurseries at Great Dixter? Councillor Roark was not present to reply and a written answer will be provided.

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

In a supplementary question Councillor Patmore asked Councillor Willis to ask Cabinet members not to espouse the amount of money being made from capital assets until we actually know how much money they make. Councillor Willis was not present to reply and a written answer will be provided.

FULL COUNCIL

8 FEBRUARY 2023

Questioner	Question	Reply given by
Councillor Patmore	<p><u>York Buildings</u> – In 2017 we first talked about renovating York Buildings and six years later we still don't have tenants in the building. Can you ask officers to make sure we have all the regulatory issues resolved when we come to buy property under the housing acquisition scheme?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett replied that York Buildings was a project only the Council wanted to take on because it was a difficult and expensive building to renovate and it took some time to get the funding in place.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Carr	<p><u>St Mary in the Castle</u> – Will you back the campaign to see St Mary in the Castle listed as an asset of community value, and will you commit to any decision on its future being brought to Full Council?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett replied that he hadn't seen the application for St Mary in the Castle to be a listed as a community asset but the application will be determined by officers based on legal advice. If the application does meet the criteria for a community asset it will go to a panel of Councillors and the decision of the panel cannot be prejudged.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor O'Callaghan	<p><u>Southern Water</u> – Have we had any explanation from Southern Water regarding the recent town centre flooding?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett replied that the recent flooding has raised questions about how the town centre is used and designed. It is a priority for the Council to ensure that action is taken in response to the flooding. East Sussex County Council is the local flood authority and they have agreed to commission an independent expert to undertake an investigation into the flood. This is likely to take two months. It is too early to jump to conclusions and we need to wait for the results of the independent investigation.</p>	Councillor Barnett

FULL COUNCIL

8 FEBRUARY 2023

Councillor Beaver	<p><u>Armed Forces Covenant</u> – A new Armed Forces covenant passed into law last year which places a statutory obligation on local government to provide fair treatment to all serving military personnel and veterans. Can you explain why Hastings Borough Council has not been attending the East Sussex Civil Partnership board meetings or South East regional military briefings?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett said he would reply in writing.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Haffenden	<p><u>Graffiti</u> – Can you update us on what the Council will be doing to address graffiti within the town?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett replied that there needs to be a distinction between graffiti that is criminal damage and artwork which is trying to make the town look better. Councillor Barnett said he would write to Councillor Haffenden about what is being done to tackle graffiti in Hastings.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Webb	<p><u>Health Improvements Initiative</u> – Can you update us on this initiative?</p> <p>Councillor Batsford replied that some of the work currently being undertaken is looking at improving interpreter access in healthcare settings and making GP surgeries more accessible for younger people. The focus at the moment is how to bring together the cultural, arts and sports sectors to address health inequalities in Hastings.</p>	Councillor Batsford
Councillor Jobson	<p><u>New Idea Form</u> – Some voluntary groups submitted an idea via the form back in October 2022. Their forms were lost but subsequently found. Can the process be made easier for local groups who have ideas for local projects?</p> <p>Councillor Rogers replied that this is what is being done. The new form is on the website and is much simpler. New ideas will go to a panel of Councillors for decision.</p>	Councillor Rogers

FULL COUNCIL

8 FEBRUARY 2023

Councillor Sinden	<p><u>Voter ID</u> – Can Councillors take application forms for voter ID certificates and return them to electoral services on behalf of residents?</p> <p>Councillor Rogers replied that the simplest option is to vote by post as this does not require ID. There will be a form available which Councillors can give to residents to complete in order for them to get a voter ID certificate.</p>	Councillor Rogers
Councillor Foster	<p><u>Housing Acquisitions</u> – Can you guarantee we won't have the same issues with new housing acquisitions as we have seen with York Buildings?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett replied that he can guarantee there won't be delays.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Collins	<p><u>Fly tipping</u> – This is a persistence challenge in the town. What does the Council propose to do to address this problem?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett replied that fly tipping needs to be reported in order to be dealt with. The Council has a good record of dealing with fly tipping on public land.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Pragnell	<p><u>Town Centre Flooding</u> – Can I suggest we arrange a Full Council forum where we can meet informally to get a briefing on this issue and have a full discussion.</p> <p>Councillor Barnett replied that he agreed and the appropriate time for a discussion would be after the independent investigation has completed.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Turner	<p><u>Healthcare</u> – Integrated Care Boards are now deciding who can and can't have surgery, and when and where it will take place. This undermines patient choice and GP autonomy. When you next meet local healthcare providers will you please raise this issue?</p> <p>Councillor Batsford replied that he would raise this important issue in future meetings.</p>	Councillor Batsford

FULL COUNCIL

8 FEBRUARY 2023

Councillor Edwards	<p><u>Graffiti</u> – Can the Council remove the graffiti under the bridge at Ebdens Hill on the A21? The Highways Agency have not been cooperative and the graffiti has now been there for six months.</p> <p>Councillor Barnett replied that it would be an expensive undertaking due to the health and safety requirements and Councillor Edwards should continue to make progress with the Highways Agency as they should be paying for the removal of the graffiti.</p>	Councillor Barnett
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299. **MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES**

No changes to membership of Committees were proposed.

300. **MOTION (RULE 14)**

Having declared a prejudicial interest Councillor Marlow-Eastwood left the Council Chamber for the duration of this item.

Councillor Barnett proposed a motion as set out in the agenda, seconded by Councillor O'Callaghan.

Councillor Beaver proposed an amendment to the motion, seconded by Councillor Patmore, to delete paragraphs 3, 4, 5 and 6. Councillor Barnett did not accept the amendment.

The Mayor proposed that the Council suspend Rule 16.6(b) of the Council's Rules of Procedure in order that the amendment and original motion be open for discussion at the same time. Councillor Batsford seconded the proposal, which was agreed unanimously.

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

A recorded vote was requested on the proposed amendment and Councillors voted as follows:

Councillors Beaney, Beaver, Cooke, Edwards, Fernando, Foster, Hay, Patmore, Pragnell and Williams voted for.

FULL COUNCIL

8 FEBRUARY 2023

Councillors Arthur, Barnett, Batsford, Bishop, Cannan, Carr, Collins, Evans, Haffenden, Hilton, Jobson, O'Callaghan, Rankin, Rogers, Sinden, Turner and Webb voted against.

The amendment was rejected by 10 votes for, to 17 against.

A recorded vote was requested on the original motion and Councillors voted as follows:

Councillors Arthur, Barnett, Batsford, Beaney, Beaver, Bishop, Cannan, Carr, Collins, Cooke, Edwards, Evans, Fernando, Foster, Haffenden, Hay, Hilton, Jobson, O'Callaghan, Patmore, Rankin, Rogers, Sinden, Turner, Webb and Williams voted for.

Councillor Pragnell abstained.

RESOLVED (by 26 votes for, with 1 abstention) that Full Council accepts the motion as set out below:

Following the severe flood and major fires in Hastings between January 16 – 21 2023, this Council would like to place on record its appreciation of the response from the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service.

The prompt, professional and caring way in which each incident was dealt with has met nothing but praise from all those affected.

So it is extremely concerning that in the same week, we heard of proposals from the East Sussex Fire Authority to downgrade Fire and Rescue services in Hastings. Local firefighters fear that the residents of Hastings, Rye and surrounding villages including Fairlight, Guestling, Pett, Winchelsea, Icklesham, Camber, Iden and Peasmarsh would face a long wait to be rescued overnight.

In many cases, as at all the major incidents here last week, more than one fire engine is required on the scene to mount a rescue or a response. Downgrading The Ridge Fire Station could drastically increase the time it takes for sufficient fire crews to be in place.

These proposed cuts come at a time when the demand on the Fire and Rescue Service is increasing, in part due to the more frequent extreme weather events. Additional heavy rainfall, fierce storms and extreme heat which brings the risk of wild fires as last summer all put our residents and those of Rother at greater risk, which downgrading the current service would significantly worsen.

This Council therefore calls upon the Fire Authority to withdraw these dangerous proposals and agree to maintain the current excellent service for Hastings.

FULL COUNCIL

8 FEBRUARY 2023

301. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7.35pm and the meeting reconvened at 7.49pm.

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:

Meeting	Minute	Councillor
Cabinet, 3 rd January 2023	493 – Portfolio Organisation Funding 2023-26	Bishop
Cabinet, 3 rd January 2023	495 – Housing Acquisition Proposal (Part 1)	Hilton
Cabinet, 30 th January 2023	Draft Annual Treasury Management, Annual Investment Strategy and Capital Strategy 2023/24	Hilton

Minute 495, Housing Acquisition Proposal (Part 1), was a matter requiring Full Council approval. Under rule 16.7 of the Council's rules of procedure Councillor Evans proposed an alteration to the recommendations as follows:

Recommendation 2 is altered to reduce the capital budget from £11,865,400 to £11,800,000 and now reads:

'that a capital budget for £11,800,000 is established to meet the cost of the acquisitions with revenue costs met by the Temporary Accommodation budget'

A 4th recommendation is added, to read:

'that a cross-party Housing Acquisition Review Group is established to monitor the programme outcomes.'

Reason 3 is altered to reflect a 50-year loan period instead of 40 years and now reads:

'In addition to the revenue cost savings to be achieved, the Council will be obtaining capital housing assets with no outstanding debt on the properties at the end of a 50-year loan period.'

FULL COUNCIL

8 FEBRUARY 2023

The Council accepted the alterations. Councillor Evans proposed the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Batsford.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

The Full Council approves:

- 1. An acquisition programme to acquire up to 50 homes for temporary accommodation use;**
- 2. that a capital budget for £11,800,000 is established to meet the cost of the acquisitions with revenue costs met by the Temporary Accommodation budget; and**
- 3. that delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director, Housing & Built Environment, and the Chief Finance Officer, to complete the acquisitions, including any associated procurement;**
- 4. that a cross-party Housing Acquisition Review Group is established to monitor the programme outcomes.**

Reasons:

1. The Council urgently needs to find more suitable placements for many of the homeless households who the council are required to accommodate whilst arranging access to longer term and more settled accommodation.
2. A programme of acquiring up to 50 homes will provide a better solution for those owed such a duty by the council and will also have a significant positive impact upon the council's temporary accommodation costs.
3. In addition to the revenue cost savings to be achieved, the Council will be obtaining capital housing assets with no outstanding debt on the properties at the end of a 50-year loan period.

Minute 502 of Cabinet on 30th January 2023, Draft Annual Treasury Management, Annual Investment Strategy and Capital Strategy 2023/24, was a matter requiring Full Council approval. Councillor Batsford proposed approval of the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Barnett.

Councillor Hilton proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor Collins, to amend paragraph 97 of the Capital Strategy to read:

This Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management Strategy will be reviewed and updated when we review the Asset Management Strategy to ensure we understand

FULL COUNCIL

8 FEBRUARY 2023

the value of our capital assets and the potential for funding our capital projects from assets sales, not more borrowing.

Councillor Batsford accepted the amendment.

RESOLVED (by 15 for, to 13 against):

Subject to the agreed amendment:

- 1. The Council approve the Treasury Management Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy, Annual investment Strategy and the Capital Strategy.**
- 2. The strategies listed are updated as necessary during 2023/24 in the light of changing and emerging risks and the Council's evolving future expenditure plans.**

Reasons:

1. The Council seeks to minimise the costs of borrowing and maximise investment income whilst ensuring the security of its investments. The Council continues to make substantial investments in property, housing and energy generation initiatives, and this will continue to involve the Council in taking on additional borrowing.
2. The sums involved are significant and the assumptions made play an important part in determining the annual budget. The CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, previously adopted by the Council, has been revised to take account of the more commercialised approach being adopted by councils and the enhanced levels of transparency required. The Code has represented best practice and helps ensure compliance with statutory requirements.
3. The Council has the ability to diversify its investments and must consider carefully the level of risk against reward against a background of historically very low interest rates. Investments can help to close the gap in the budget in the years ahead and thus help to preserve services, assist in the regeneration of the town, provide additional housing and enhance the long-term sustainability of the town. However, over reliance on such income streams would involve taking unnecessary risks with the future of the Council and its ability to deliver statutory services.

Councillors debated minute 493, Portfolio Organisation Funding 2023-26. This item did not require Council approval.

(The Mayor declared the meeting closed at 8.35pm)