

# Public Document Pack CABINET

12 FEBRUARY 2024

Present: Councillors Hilton (Chair), Haffenden (Vice-Chair), Barnett and Willis

In attendance: Jane Hartnell (Chief Executive), Kit Wheeler (Chief Finance Officer), Mary Kilner (Chief Legal Officer). Councillors Sinden, Collins, Beaney, Patmore, and Turner. In attendance remotely: Chris Hancock (Head of Housing).

## 37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Councillor Roark.

## 38. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None received.

## 39. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> January be approved as a true record.

## 40. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (30 MINUTES)

No questions were received.

## 41. REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25, AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25 TO 2026/27

The Chief Finance Officer presented the draft revenue budget for 2024/25 and capital programme budget for 2024/25, to 2026/27.

The Chief Finance Officer thanked all of those involved in the budget setting process and explained that the financial situation had changed quite dramatically since the Medium Term Financial Strategy was presented to cabinet in November 2023. The general reserve was previously forecast to be exhausted over the next couple of years, but this was before any savings were agreed late last year. Financial settlement figures were received from the government in December and January. Additionally, there has been a thorough review of the budget and the use of earmarked reserves as well as a reduction in the capital programme. In all, this has resulted in an improved financial position to that previously forecast.

Financial restrictions brought in last year have also contributed to the improvement in the council's financial position, although these are only a temporary measure.

The report proposes that council tax is increased by the maximum allowed without holding a referendum. There are also additional council tax charges being brought forward following changes to legislation in relation to second homes and empty homes.

## CABINET

12 FEBRUARY 2024

Over the course of the Medium Term Financial Strategy the general reserve balance is now forecast to remain at around £4 million which is the recommended minimum level.

Councillor Patmore asked why no savings from the housing acquisitions programme had been identified beyond 2024/25. The Head of Housing replied that the current allocation for the programme is coming to an end and officers are looking at opportunities for extending the programme. Although officers are confident that there will be further savings going forward it is difficult to determine what they will be at this stage.

Councillor Barnett proposed approval of the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Willis subject to the following amendments:

Amendment 1. Add the following words to paragraph 104:

A special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was held last week to discuss the budget report. It was suggested there that the savings package agreed at Full Council in December was in danger of not being delivered. In fact, the changes made to Appendix K since December are as a result of reprofiling of some savings over a longer period, and so for example the Transformation savings agreed in December will be achieved over five years rather than three, and additional income being identified (so for example £224k more for fees and charges in 24/25, and £6.8m more from capital programme savings over the next three years). The overall impact of these revisions is significantly beneficial to the council's overall financial position.

Amendment 2. Appendix K/2b: amend 2-3 year programme to 5 year programme.

Amendment 3. Appendix K – add savings of £310,542 from the housing acquisition programme for 2025/26

### **RESOLVED (unanimously):**

**Subject to the agreed amendments above, cabinet recommends that Full Council:**

**(i) Approve the draft 2024/25 revenue budget (Appendix B)**

**(ii) Approve a 2.99% increase in the Borough Council's part of the Council Tax (Appendix C).**

**(iii) Approve the detailed recommendations in Appendix C, which relate to the setting of Council Tax in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Act 1992 (Appendix C – to be provided/updated for full Council).**

**(iv) Approve the Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27 (Appendix E) and that any marked with an asterisk can proceed without further reference to Cabinet or Council.**

**(v) Approve the proposed use of Reserves as detailed in Appendix I that can proceed without further reference to Cabinet or Council.**

## CABINET

12 FEBRUARY 2024

(vi) Approve that the budget be amended as necessary to reflect the final grant figures including Disabled Facility Grants - once received.

(vii) Full Council adopt the existing Council Tax Support Scheme subject to amendments to allowances in line with any national changes. Determination of the allowances to be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer in line with prior year practice.

(viii) The application of the current premium of 100% for all dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (empty dwellings) from a period of one year with effect from 1st April 2024.

(ix) The application of a premium of 100% for all dwellings which are unoccupied but substantially furnished (second homes) with effect from 1st April 2025; and

(x) That the Section 151 Officer is given delegated powers to implement the policy in line with the Council's requirements and any guidance given by the Secretary of State or regulation.

Reasons:

1. The Council has a statutory responsibility to set a balanced Budget and Council Tax in advance of the start of the new financial year.
2. The report identifies that a balanced budget in 2024/25 can only be achieved by using £700k of General reserve funding.
3. The level of grant funding, Council Tax increases and income from fees and charges is insufficient to meet the annual increases in costs e.g. inflation, pay increases, demand pressures, in particular the costs of meeting our statutory homelessness.
4. The Council is only able to increase Council Tax by a maximum of 2.99% without a referendum.
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.
6. The Council needs to manage its Capital Financing requirements carefully to avoid unnecessary and costly interest charges. Therefore, it has been necessary to reduce the aspirations for the Capital Programme accordingly, and the council will need to continue to maximise any potential Capital receipts.

## **42. CABINET APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

The Chief Legal Officer presented a report to confirm appointments to cabinet committees, working groups and external boards.

## CABINET

12 FEBRUARY 2024

Councillor Hilton gave an update on the committees of cabinet which were announced at Full Council. They will now be referred to as working groups to clarify their advisory status, and no allowances will be paid. Membership of the working groups is not yet finalised, but they have started to meet and political groups are welcome to put forward members.

**RESOLVED (unanimously):**

- 1. To appoint councillors to Cabinet committees, working groups, partnerships and representative bodies for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year as set out in appendix A and;**
- 2. To appoint the Chair and Vice Chair of Charity Committee as listed in appendix A.**

Reasons:

Councillors are required to serve on the committees, working groups, partnerships and representative bodies to which Cabinet appoints.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.10pm)

**HASTINGS BOROUGH COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS  
TO CABINET COMMITTEES,  
JOINT COMMITTEES  
AND WORKING GROUPS**

Cabinet Committees	Seats	Allocation to political groups				Nominations for 2023/24				Notes
		CON	HIG	LAB	GRN	Conservative	Hastings Independent	Labour	Green	
Charity Committee  Page 1	3 (and a reserve member)		1		2		1. Ali Roark (Chair) 2. Paul Barnett (Reserve member)		1. Julia Hilton 2. Glenn Haffenden (Vice-Chair)	Chair is a non-portfolio holder member of Cabinet
Discretionary Rate Relief Appeal Panel	Dependent on size of cabinet		3		1		1. Paul Barnett 2. Ali Roark 3. Simon Willis		1. Glenn Haffenden	All Members of Cabinet, excluding the Leader, to be appointed to the Panel

Licensing Committee (Scrap Metal Dealers)	Dependent on size of cabinet		3		1		1. Paul Barnett 2. Ali Roark 3. Simon Willis		1. Glenn Haffenden	All Members of Cabinet, excluding the Leader, to be appointed to the committee. Functions relating to the licensing of Scrap Metal Dealers as set out in the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 or by virtue of any amending or consolidating legislation and any regulations made under the Act as such amending or consolidating legislation.
<b>Joint Committees</b>	<b>Seats</b>	<b>Nominations for 2023/24</b>								<b>Notes</b>
		<b>CON</b>	<b>HIG</b>	<b>LAB</b>	<b>GRN</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Hastings Independent</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Green</b>	
Joint Waste Committee	2				2				1. Julia Hilton 2. Glenn Haffenden	Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Environment
<b>Working Groups etc</b>	<b>Seats</b>	<b>Nominations for 2023/24</b>								<b>Notes</b>
		<b>CON</b>	<b>HIG</b>	<b>LAB</b>	<b>GRN</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Hastings Independent</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Green</b>	
Working Arrangements Committee	5	2	1	1	1	1. Andy Patmore 2. Peter Pragnell	1. Simon Willis	1. Judy Rogers	1. Julia Hilton (Chair)	Opposition member is Vice-Chair

Member Training and Development Group	4	1	1	1	1	1. Mike Edwards	1. Ali Roark (Vice-Chair)	1. Judy Rogers	1. Glenn Haffenden (Chair)	Lead Member is chair
Hastings Country Park Management Forum	5	2	1	1	1	1. Mike Edwards 2. Alan Hay	1. Simon Willis (Vice-Chair)	1. Heather Bishop	1. Glenn Haffenden (Chair)	Lead Member is chair
Order of 1066  Page 3	5	1	1	2	1	1. Sorrell Marlow-Eastwood	1. Andy Batsford	1. Mayor - Cllr O'Callaghan (ex officio) 2. Deputy Mayor - Cllr Bishop (ex officio)	1. Claire Carr	To comprise Mayor, Deputy Mayor & 1 member from each other Political Group
Personnel Consultative Group	4	1	1	1	1	1. Paul Foster	1. Paul Barnett	1.	1. Glenn Haffenden	

**HASTINGS BOROUGH COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS TO  
EXTERNAL BOARDS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Partnerships	Seats	Allocation to political groups				Nominations for 2023/24				Notes
		CON	HIG	LAB	GRN	Conservative	Hastings Independent	Labour	Green	
Stade Partnership	2			1	1			1. James Bacon	1. Julia Hilton	Old Hastings ward members
Joint Advisory Committee for the High Weald AONB	1				1				1. Julia Hilton	
Safer Hastings and Rother Partnership	1				1				1. Glenn Haffenden	Relevant Lead Member
Combe Haven Community Interest Company	1	1				1. Karl Beaney				Ward Councillor (West St Leonards)
Optivo Hastings Area Panel	1						1. Simon Willis			Relevant Lead Member
Police and Crime Panel	1							1. Judy Rogers		



East Sussex Health Overview & Scrutiny Panel	1						1. Mike Turner			Needs to be a non-executive Member.
East Sussex Community Safety Partnership	1			1				1. Judy Rogers		Needs to be either the Chair of the Safer Hastings Partnership or a member of the Sussex Police and Crime Panel.
Hastings and Rother Transport Action Group					2				1. Amanda Jobson 2. Julia Hilton	
Hastings Overseas Student Advisory Council	3					1. Sorrell Marlow-Eastwood	2. Andy Batsford			
External Boards	Seats	Allocation to political groups				Nominations for 2023/24				Notes
		CON	HIG	LAB	GRN	Conservative	Hastings Independent	Labour	Green	
Hastings Week Committee	5					1. Rob Cooke	1. Nigel Sinden	1. Mayor - Cllr O'Callaghan (ex officio) 2. Deputy Mayor - Cllr Bishop (ex officio)	1. Julia Hilton	Mayor and Deputy Mayor ex-officio members

Court of the University of Sussex	1						1. Mike Turner		
Magdalen & Lasher	3					1. Peter Pragnell		1. James Bacon	

Representative Bodies	Seats	Appointments for 2023/24
Health & Wellbeing Board	1 (not to be the Health Overview and Scrutiny Member)	Glenn Haffenden
Local Government Association - National Body	1	Julia Hilton
Local Government Association - Urban Commission	1	Julia Hilton
Local Government Association - Coastal Issues Group	1	Julia Hilton
South East England Councils	1	Julia Hilton