

Full Council

Minutes of meeting held remotely on 22 February 2021 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Adrian Ross (Chair).

Councillors Christine Brett (Vice-Chair), Sam Adeniji, Graham Amy, Robert Banks, Nancy Bikson, Matthew Bird, Roy Burman, Julie Carr, Roy Clay, Chris Collier, Phil Davis, Sharon Davy, Johnny Denis, Lynda Duhigg, Stephen Gauntlett, Tom Jones, Isabelle Linington, Jim Lord, Sylvia Lord, James MacCleary, Sean MacLeod, Imogen Makepeace, Milly Manley, Ron Maskell, William Meyer, Joe Miller, Zoe Nicholson, Emily O'Brien, Laurence O'Connor, Ruth O'Keeffe, Nicola Papanicolaou, Julian Peterson, Keira Rigden, Christine Robinson, Geoff Rutland, Steve Saunders and Christoph von Kurthy.

Officers in attendance:

Robert Cottrill (Chief Executive), Sarah Lawrence (Senior Committee Officer), Oliver Dixon (Head of Legal Services), Simon Russell (Head of Democratic Services), Homira Javadi (Chief Finance Officer) and Andrew Clarke (Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Financial Planning)).

52 Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that it was being held remotely in accordance with published government regulations.

53 Introductions and apologies for absence

The Chair invited members to introduce themselves for those watching the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Liz Boorman.

54 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made in relation to the items on the agenda.

55 Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2020.

Resolved – To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2020.

56 Announcements

The Chair advised that a list of his engagements as Chair of the Council since the last meeting were set out in a supplement to the agenda and these were noted.

57 Urgent items

There were no items to be considered as a matter of urgency.

58 Questions from members of the public

No questions had been received from members of the public.

59 Petitions

No petitions had been received.

60 Urgent decisions taken by the Cabinet or Cabinet members

In accordance with the Policy and Performance Committee Procedure Rule 17, the Council received details of three decisions which had been taken by the Leader of the Council under special urgency procedures, in relation to Grant Schemes and made on 16 November, 19 November and 24 December 2020.

61 Recommendations from Cabinet**61a Council Budget and Setting of the Council Tax 2020/21**

Councillor Nicholson moved and Councillor MacCleary seconded the the recommendations set out in the agenda, in relation to the Council Budget and setting of the Council Tax for 2021/22. This incorporated recommendations from Cabinet regarding the General Fund Budget 2021/22 and Capital Programme, Housing Revenue Account Revenue Budget and Rent Setting 2021/22 and HRA Capital Programme 2020-24, the Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators for 2020/21, Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy.

Councillor Nicholson (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets) spoke to the recommendations in detail, setting out the choices being made including to invest in the environment, economy and target support to those who really needed it. She offered sympathy to all those who had lost loved ones due to Covid, and paid tribute to the response from staff, public sector, the community and voluntary sector. She thanked the Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer and their teams in achieving £1.4m in savings, to enable a balanced budget to be presented.

Councillor Miller as chair of the Policy and Performance Committee responded first on behalf of the opposition, and highlighted that Cabinet had chosen not to accept the recommendations of the Committee to freeze Council tax, and believed this should have been supported for the benefit of local residents. Councillor Burman as shadow portfolio holder for finance joined with Councillor Miller in thanking officers for preparing the budget, he indicated his support for many of the recommendations for investing locally, but advised he could not support the budget as a whole due to the Council tax rise proposed.

The budget was then debated in full by the Council, and Councillor Nicholson was given the opportunity to sum up at the end.

The Chair advised that by legislation the Council would take a recorded vote in respect of this report.

The recommendations were put to the vote and declared carried by 21 votes to 16, with 1 abstention, and the voting recorded as follows:

For: Councillors Amy, Banks, Bird, Brett, Carr, Clay, Collier, Denis, Gauntlett, MacCleary, Macleod, Makepeace, Manley, Meyer, Nicholson, O'Brien, O'Connor, O'Keeffe, Robinson, Ross and von Kurthy (21).

Against: Councillors Adeniji, Bikson, Burman, Davis, Davy, Duhigg, Jones, Linnington, J Lord, S Lord, Maskell, Miller, Papanicolaou, Peterson, Rigden and Rutland (16).

Abstention: Councillor Saunders (1).

Resolved:

1. The recommendations as detailed in the reports from the Chief Finance Officer and the Director of Service Delivery to Cabinet on 4 February 2021 be approved as summarised below:
 - a) To approve the General Fund budget for 2020/21 (Revised) and 2021/22 (Original).
 - b) To approve an increase in the Council Tax for Lewes District Council of £5 resulting in a Band D charge for general expenses of £197.08 for 2021/22.
 - c) To approve the revised General Fund capital programme 2021/22.
 - d) To endorse the continuation of the Flexible use of Capital Receipts.
 - e) To approve the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy for 2021/22.
 - f) To approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement for 2021/22.
 - g) To approve the Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2021/22 to 2023/24.
 - h) To approve the Capital Strategy.
 - i) (viii) To approve the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) income and expenditure proposals, including revised HRA budget for 2020/21 and the budget for 2021/22, rents and service charges and the HRA Capital Programme.
2. That delegated authority is given to the Chief Finance Officer to amend the budget for any presentational changes ensuring the Council Tax Requirement remains unchanged.
3. That it be noted, that since the Cabinet meeting on 04 February the Business Rates return to the Government (NNDR1) has been finalised. As a result of the latest Business Rates position, it has been possible to add £384K to the General Fund reserve. This will subsequently be allocated to the specific reserves set out below, which were identified in the budget report, once the exact allocations have been determined:

- The creation of a capital programme acceleration reserve.
 - The creation of a commercial asset resilience planning reserve.
 - To top up those reserves used to fund Covid-19 reserve.
4. That the expenses incurred by the Council set out below be approved as Special Expenses chargeable to the residents of each of the Town/Parish areas indicated and that any other expenses (excluding local precepts) incurred by the Council be approved as general expenditure for the purposes of Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Town/Parish Area	Special Expense 2021/22 £
Lewes	340,114
Newhaven	135,210
Telscombe	56,790
Seaford	61,350
Peacehaven	41,360
Chailey	1,270
Ringmer	4,520
Total	640,614

5. That consequent upon a General Fund budget of £13,530,290 and other matters, the basic amount (Band D) of Council Tax for the Borough Council's functions will be £214.53 calculated as follows:

	General Expenses only	Total including special items
	£000's	£000's
Gross Expenditure:		
General Fund	54,624	
HRA	16,746	
Business Rates payable to Government	7,805	
Contributions to Reserves	1,478	
	80,653	80,653
Special expenses		641
Less Income:		
Service Income	(59,131)	
Other Government Grants	(3,168)	
Business Rates income	(10,997)	
Collection Fund Surplus (Council Tax)	(122)	
	(73,418)	(73,418)
COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT	7,235	7,876
Band D Council Tax	£197.08	£214.53

6. That it be noted that at its meeting on 04 February 2021 Cabinet approved the following calculations for the year 2021/22, being made in accordance with regulations made under Sections 31(B)(4) and 34(4) of the Local Government Act 1992, as amended:

(a) 36,711.4 being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of the Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as amended, as its Council Tax Base for the year) Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992).

(b)

Part of the Council's Area	Tax Base
Parish of Barcombe	635.50
Parish of Beddingham and Glynde	186.00
Parish of Chailey	1,292.70
Parish of Ditchling	1,113.10
Parish of East Chiltington	191.10
Parish of Falmer	66.70
Parish of Firle	125.00
Parish of Hamsey	274.30
Parish of Iford	89.90
Parish of Kingston	421.30
Town of Lewes	6,078.60
Town of Newhaven	3,697.90
Parish of Newick	1,101.30
Town of Peacehaven	4,805.00
Parish of Piddinghoe	129.00
Parish of Plumpton	664.40
Parish of Ringmer	1,883.30
Parish of Rodmell	213.50
Parish of St Ann Without	40.00
Parish of St John Without	25.70
Town of Seaford	9,457.90
Parish of Southease	22.60
Parish of South Highton	266.70
Parish of Streat	79.50
Parish of Tarring Neville	9.20
Town of Telscombe	2,493.50
Parish of Westmeston	159.00
Parish of Wivelsfield	1,188.70

Being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations, as amended, as the amounts of its Council Tax base for the year for dwelling in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

7. That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2021/22 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended:

(a)	£85,636,736	being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.		
(b)	£73,417,570	being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.		
(c)	£12,219,166	being the amount by which the aggregate at 5(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 5(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).		
(d)	£332.84	being the amount at 6(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (5 above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including local precepts).		
(e)	£4,984,080	being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.		
(f)	£197.08	being the amount at 6(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 6(e) above by the amount at 4(a) above (Item T), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates,		
(g)	Parts of the Council's area:			
	Barcombe	247.23	Piddinghoe	282.10
	Beddingham and Glynde	258.95	Plumpton	290.66
	Chailey	250.97	Ringmer	269.00
	Ditchling	285.94	Rodmell	266.40
	East Chiltington	235.86	St Ann Without	197.08
	Falmer	204.58	St John Without	197.08
	Firle	277.45	Seaford	307.62
	Hamsey	263.48	Southease	197.08
	Iford	199.86	South Heighton	245.81
	Kingston	315.76	Streat	255.26
	Lewes	452.72	Tarring Neville	197.08

Newhaven	379.70	Telscombe	319.61
Newick	259.00	Westmeston	278.84
Peacehaven	339.03	Wivelsfield	282.18

Being the amounts given by adding the amount at 5(f) above, the amounts of the special items or items relating to dwelling in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 5(B) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

(h) Parts of the Council's area

Council Tax Valuation Bands								
	A 6/9 £	B 7/9 £	C 8/9 £	D 9/9 £	E 11/9 £	F 13/9 £	G 15/9 £	H 18/9 £
Barcombe	164.82	192.29	219.76	247.23	302.17	357.11	412.05	494.46
Beddingham and Glynde	172.63	201.41	230.18	258.95	316.49	374.04	431.58	517.90
Chailey	167.31	195.20	223.08	250.97	306.74	362.51	418.28	501.94
Ditchling	190.63	222.40	254.17	285.94	349.48	413.02	476.57	571.88
East Chiltington	157.24	183.45	209.65	235.86	288.27	340.69	393.10	471.72
Falmer	136.39	159.12	181.85	204.58	250.04	295.50	340.97	409.16
Firle	184.97	215.79	246.62	277.45	339.11	400.76	462.42	554.90
Hamsey	175.65	204.93	234.20	263.48	322.03	380.58	439.13	526.96
Iford	133.24	155.45	177.65	199.86	244.27	288.69	333.10	399.72
Kingston	210.51	245.59	280.68	315.76	385.93	456.10	526.27	631.52
Lewes	301.81	352.12	402.42	452.72	553.32	653.93	754.53	905.44
Newhaven	253.13	295.32	337.51	379.70	464.08	548.46	632.83	759.40
Newick	172.67	201.44	230.22	259.00	316.56	374.11	431.67	518.00
Peacehaven	226.02	263.69	301.36	339.03	414.37	489.71	565.05	678.06
Piddinghoe	188.07	219.41	250.76	282.10	344.79	407.48	470.17	564.20
Plumpton	193.77	226.07	258.36	290.66	355.25	419.84	484.43	581.32
Ringmer	179.33	209.22	239.11	269.00	328.78	388.56	448.33	538.00
Rodmell	177.60	207.20	236.80	266.40	325.60	384.80	444.00	532.80
St Ann Without	131.39	153.28	175.18	197.08	240.88	284.67	328.47	394.16
St John Without	131.39	153.28	175.18	197.08	240.88	284.67	328.47	394.16
Seaford	205.08	239.26	273.44	307.62	375.98	444.34	512.70	615.24
Southease	131.39	153.28	175.18	197.08	240.88	284.67	328.47	394.16
South Highton	163.87	191.19	218.50	245.81	300.43	355.06	409.68	491.62
Streat	170.17	198.54	226.90	255.26	311.98	368.71	425.43	510.52
Tarring Neville	131.39	153.28	175.18	197.08	240.88	284.67	328.47	394.16
Telscombe	213.07	248.59	284.10	319.61	390.63	461.66	532.68	639.22
Westmeston	185.89	216.88	247.86	278.84	340.80	402.77	464.73	557.68
Wivelsfield	188.12	219.47	250.83	282.18	344.89	407.59	470.30	564.36

Being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 6(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the

number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

8. To note that East Sussex County Council, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Authority and Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended, for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the table below.

Council Tax Valuation Bands								
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Precepting Authorities								
East Sussex County Council	1,029.36	1,200.92	1,372.48	1,544.04	1,887.16	2,230.28	2,573.40	3,088.08
Sussex Police Authority	143.27	167.15	191.03	214.91	262.67	310.43	358.18	429.82
East Sussex Fire Authority	64.95	75.78	86.60	97.43	119.08	140.73	162.38	194.86
Aggregate of Council Tax Requirements	1,237.59	1,443.85	1,650.12	1,856.38	2,268.91	2,681.43	3,093.98	3,712.76

9. That having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 6(h) and 7 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2021/22 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Council Tax Valuation Bands								
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Barcombe	1,402.40	1,636.14	1,869.87	2,103.61	2,571.08	3,038.55	3,506.01	4,207.22
Beddingham and Glynde	1,410.21	1,645.26	1,880.29	2,115.33	2,585.40	3,055.48	3,525.54	4,230.66
Chailey	1,404.89	1,639.05	1,873.19	2,107.35	2,575.65	3,043.95	3,512.24	4,214.70
Ditchling	1,428.21	1,666.25	1,904.28	2,142.32	2,618.39	3,094.46	3,570.53	4,284.64
East Chiltington	1,394.82	1,627.30	1,859.76	2,092.24	2,557.18	3,022.13	3,487.06	4,184.48
Falmer	1,373.97	1,602.97	1,831.96	2,060.96	2,518.95	2,976.94	3,434.93	4,121.92
Firle	1,422.55	1,659.64	1,896.73	2,133.83	2,608.02	3,082.20	3,556.38	4,267.66
Hamsey	1,413.23	1,648.78	1,884.31	2,119.86	2,590.94	3,062.02	3,533.09	4,239.72
Iford	1,370.82	1,599.30	1,827.76	2,056.24	2,513.18	2,970.13	3,427.06	4,112.48
Kingston	1,448.09	1,689.44	1,930.79	2,172.14	2,654.84	3,137.54	3,620.23	4,344.28
Lewes	1,539.39	1,795.97	2,052.53	2,309.10	2,822.23	3,335.37	3,848.49	4,618.20
Newhaven	1,490.71	1,739.17	1,987.62	2,236.08	2,732.99	3,229.90	3,726.79	4,472.16
Newick	1,410.25	1,645.29	1,880.33	2,115.38	2,585.47	3,055.55	3,525.63	4,230.76
Peacehaven	1,463.60	1,707.54	1,951.47	2,195.41	2,683.28	3,171.15	3,659.01	4,390.82
Piddinghoe	1,425.65	1,663.26	1,900.87	2,138.48	2,613.70	3,088.92	3,564.13	4,276.96
Plumpton	1,431.35	1,669.92	1,908.47	2,147.04	2,624.16	3,101.28	3,578.39	4,294.08
Ringmer	1,416.91	1,653.07	1,889.22	2,125.38	2,597.69	3,070.00	3,542.29	4,250.76

Council Tax Valuation Bands								
	A 6/9 £	B 7/9 £	C 8/9 £	D 9/9 £	E 11/9 £	F 13/9 £	G 15/9 £	H 18/9 £
Rodmell	1,415.18	1,651.05	1,886.91	2,122.78	2,594.51	3,066.24	3,537.96	4,245.56
St Ann Without	1,368.97	1,597.13	1,825.29	2,053.46	2,509.79	2,966.11	3,422.43	4,106.92
St John Without	1,368.97	1,597.13	1,825.29	2,053.46	2,509.79	2,966.11	3,422.43	4,106.92
Seaford	1,442.66	1,683.11	1,923.55	2,164.00	2,644.89	3,125.78	3,606.66	4,328.00
Southease	1,368.97	1,597.13	1,825.29	2,053.46	2,509.79	2,966.11	3,422.43	4,106.92
South Highton	1,401.45	1,635.04	1,868.61	2,102.19	2,569.34	3,036.50	3,503.64	4,204.38
Streat	1,407.75	1,642.39	1,877.01	2,111.64	2,580.89	3,050.15	3,519.39	4,223.28
Tarring Neville	1,368.97	1,597.13	1,825.29	2,053.46	2,509.79	2,966.11	3,422.43	4,106.92
Telscombe	1,450.65	1,692.44	1,934.21	2,175.99	2,659.54	3,143.10	3,626.64	4,351.98
Westmeston	1,423.47	1,660.73	1,897.97	2,135.22	2,609.71	3,084.21	3,558.69	4,270.44
Wivelsfield	1,425.70	1,663.32	1,900.94	2,138.56	2,613.80	3,089.03	3,564.26	4,277.12

10. To determine that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2021/22 is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended.

As the billing authority, the Council has **not** been notified by a major precepting authority that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2021/22 is excessive and that the billing authority is not required to hold a referendum in accordance with Section 52ZK Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended.

62 Recommendation from Committees and Other Council Bodies

62a Approval of Licensing Fees

Councillor Macleod moved and Councillor Robinson seconded the recommendation of the Licensing Committee to approve the Licensing Fees for 2020/21, set out in the agenda and agenda supplement.

Councillor Macleod highlighted the key recommendations including a reduction in the majority of the fees, and an increase only in relation to market trader operators' fees.

Councillors welcomed the reduction in fees. Councillor Saunders asked a specific question as to the breakdown in the number of market operators in different towns in the district, what the impact of the increase would be for them, and how the level of increase was arrived at. Councillor Macleod agreed to arrange for a written response after the meeting.

Resolved –

To formally ratify the scale of licensing fees proposed within Appendix 1 to the report, to apply with effect from 1 April 2021.

63 Notices of motion.**64 Motion 1 - To support proportional representation**

Councillor Robinson moved and Councillor Denis seconded a motion in support of replacing the 'first past the post' voting system with proportional representation and to write to the Government and Local Government Association to ask for changes in electoral law.

Councillor Robinson set out the reasons for the motion which had been included in the agenda papers.

The motion was debated by the Council with views for and against expressed.

An amendment was moved by Councillor Linington and seconded by Councillor Burman to replace the words that 'the Council asks the Chief Executive to write', with 'the Council asks the Leader of the Council' to write.

The amendment was put to the vote and declared lost.

The original motion was put to the vote and declared carried.

Resolved:

To agree that a move to the use of proportional representation for local elections would boost turn-out, make the Council more representative of the political make-up of its residents, and improve the quality of its decision-making, thereby benefiting all Lewes District residents.

This Council therefore asks the Chief Executive:

- To write to the Government to request that it changes electoral law to permit such a move; and
- To contact the Local Government Association asking them to assess the Welsh policy and investigate the legal options for improving democracy and participation in local government in England.

65 Motion 2 - To support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill

Councillor Bird moved and Councillor Brett seconded a motion in support of the climate and ecological emergency (CEE) Bill.

Councillor Bird set out the reasons for the motion which had been included in the agenda papers.

The motion was debated by the Council, with views expressed for and against the Bill itself, but with broad agreement with the need for the Council to declare an ecological emergency.

Councillor Saunders proposed an amendment to replace the words that 'the Council asks Leader of the Council' with 'the Council asks the Chief Executive' to write, however this was not seconded.

The original motion was put to the vote and declared carried.

Resolved -

That the Council lends its support to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill that was presented to Government on the 2 September 2020 as follows:

1. To welcome and support the Bill and ask the Leader of the Council to write to all local MPs asking them to support the CEE Bill in Parliament and in public.
2. Where not already happening, to seek to align the Council's strategies (when new or reviewed) with the aims and goals of the CEE Bill.

(Note – at the end of this agenda item the Council took a 10-minute recess and returned at 8.30 pm. Councillor Manley left at this point and gave her apologies for the remainder of the meeting).

66 Motion 3 - To support ExcludedUK and those excluded from Covid Support Schemes.

Councillor Makepeace moved and Councillor Banks seconded a motion in support of ExcludedUK and those excluded from Covid Support schemes.

Councillor Makepeace set out the reasons for the motion which had been included in the agenda papers.

The motion was debated by the Council and had cross-party support.

The motion was put to the Council and approved.

Resolved -

1. To support the 'Excluded UK' campaign and its efforts to support 'the excluded';
2. To ask the Leader on behalf of the Council to sign ExcludedUK's open letter to the Chancellor that calls for such consideration, calling on the Government to address the disparities in support, to ensure that all can receive support they need at this time; and
3. To continue to promote the support available from organisations focused on financial inclusion and support in the District including by:
 - a) Requesting the Cabinet to consider what additional practical steps the Council can offer to support and advise whenever possible those affected; and.
 - b) Continuing to promote the Council's community hub that can assist with such matters as help with any support needs.

67 Calendar of Meetings 2021-22

Councillor Macleod moved and Councillor Brett seconded the adoption of the proposed Calendar of meetings for 2021/22. It was noted that this would be subject to approval at Annual Council.

Questions were raised as to the timing and frequency of the Planning Application Committee meetings, and implications for Town and Parish Planning meetings. Councillor O'Brien, Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure explained the reasons that officers had recommended a change in frequency in response to complaints received and in order to enable sufficient time for residents to be notified of meetings and to have the opportunity to register a speech. However, she advised that she had suggested to the Head of Planning First that a review be carried out after six months to assess the impact. Councillor Davy, Chair of the Planning Applications Committee, confirmed that these changes had been discussed, but asked for confirmation from Officers that the meeting would return to a 5 pm start when in-person meetings returned.

The Chair suggested that Democratic Services confirm the position on the Planning Applications Committee timings to the Chair and Councillor O'Brien after the meeting and this was confirmed by the Head of Democratic Services.

Resolved – To note the proposed Calendar of Meetings for 2021/22, with the final version to be approved at Annual Council.

68 Written questions from Councillors

Two written questions had been received in accordance with procedure rule 12, from Councillor Macleod and Councillor Banks both to the Leader of the Council, and notified to Councillors in an agenda supplement.

Question 1 – Councillor Macleod asked the following question:

" Would the Leader agree that, as we are facing a climate emergency, it is madness to progress the building of a new billion-pound dual carriageway between Lewes and Polegate? Would it not make more sense and be a lot cheaper to cut fares on the parallel railway and encourage drivers to switch from road to rail? Will he put on record his opposition to a new offline road through the Downs?"

Councillor MacCleary indicated his opposition to the proposal for a new offline dual carriageway between Lewes and Polegate, and then asked Councillor O'Brien to respond in full. Councillor O'Brien confirmed her opposition to the scheme, which ignored the vocal opposition from local villages and the impact on the countryside and would only marginally improve travel times. She felt that the money could be better spent on effective public transport and Wi-Fi infrastructure.

Councillor Macleod asked a supplementary question – "Could the Leader of the Council write to the MP Maria Caulfield to get a clear answer as to her view on the proposals, as she has expressed different views to different groups of residents?"

Councillor MacCleary responded that he was happy to write to the MP.

Question 2 – Councillor Banks asked the following question:

“We have all now seen the horrifying news that the number of dwellings Lewes District Council is being forced to find land for is set to more than double to 782 per year or 15,640 across a 20 year period. This would be devastating for our countryside and our open spaces across the district. Can the Leader of the Council provide an update on what the plans are to urgently lobby the government to stop this and revert to a lower number which reflects what our communities need?”

Councillor MacCleary asked Councillor O'Brien to respond in detail but confirmed his concern as to the numbers arising from the standard method calculation. Councillor O'Brien advised that she shared his great concern at the target of 15,000 new homes over 20 years, which would mean an increase of a third on the current number of houses in the District. She confirmed that a letter had been received from the Government (MHCLG) to confirm that the Council had calculated the target correctly. The Council was unable to appeal the target figure and algorithm, but would put forward the evidence to an future planning inspector as to why it could not be met and would continue to appeal to the Government to amend the target.

Councillor Banks asked a supplementary question ‘What are the plans to move the lobbying up a gear on this issue?’.

Councillor MacCleary advised that he would write to the Government to protest the calculation formula, and invited the Leader of the Opposition to join him, and would ask the local MP to lobby Government to revise the figure.

69 Questions to the Leader of the Council

No verbal questions had been received for the Leader of the Council.

70 Ward issues

No ward issues had been raised.

71 Reporting back on meetings of outside bodies

The following reports had been received on outside bodies set out in the agenda and agenda supplement:

- Team East Sussex – Cllr MacCleary and Cllr Nicholson
- Aspiration Homes – Cllr MacCleary and Cllr Nicholson
- Lewes Homes Investment Company Ltd – Cllr MacCleary and Cllr Nicholson
- Greater Brighton Economic Board – Cllr Nicholson
- Health and Wellbeing Board – Cllr Nicholson
- East Sussex Strategic Planning Group – Cllr O'Brien
- South East England Councils – Cllr O'Brien
- Seaford to Brighton Steering Group – Cllr O'Brien
- West Sussex and Greater Brighton Strategic Planning Board – Cllr O'Brien
- Impact Seaford – Cllr Brett
- Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ESCC) – Cllr Gauntlett

- Wave Leisure Trust – Cllr O'Connor
- Joint Action Group – Cllr Macleod
- Mental Health Champion – Cllr Macleod
- Citizens Advice Bureau – Cllr Makepeace
- South Downs National Park Authority and Planning Meetings – Cllr Meyer
- South East Coastal Group – Cllr Bird
- Upper Ouse Flood Protection and Water Retention Works Working Group – Cllr Bird

A question was asked as to why no Conservative Councillors had submitted reports. Councillor Linington responded that there were very few Conservative Councillors appointed to outside bodies, but she agreed to seek to bring back a report herself to the next meeting and other Conservative Councillors confirmed their intention to do so in future.

72 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting was the Annual Council Meeting on 27 May 2021 at 6 pm.

The meeting ended at 9.27 pm

Councillor Adrian Ross (Chair)