

Full Council

Minutes of meeting held in Council Chamber, County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1UE on 21 February 2022 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Christine Brett (Chair).
Councillors Adrian Ross (Vice-Chair), Sam Adeniji, Graham Amy, Robert Banks, Nancy Bikson, Matthew Bird, Liz Boorman, Roy Burman, Julie Carr, Roy Clay, Chris Collier, Sharon Davy, Johnny Denis, Lynda Duhigg, Stephen Gauntlett, 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, Richard Turner, Steve Saunders, Christoph von Kurthy and Linda Wallraven.

Officers in attendance:

Robert Cottrill (Chief Executive), Homira Javadi (Chief Finance Officer), Simon Russell (Head of Democratic Services), Joanne Stone (Solicitor, Planning), Sarah Lawrence (Senior Committee Officer) and Ola Owolabi (Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Corporate Finance)).

66 Minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2021

RESOLVED – To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2021.

67 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Davis, Jones and Rutland.

Councillor Peterson had indicated that he needed to leave the meeting after agenda Item 9c and gave apologies for the remainder of the meeting.

Councillor Adeniji and O'Keeffe had advised that they would arrive slightly late.

68 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

69 Announcements

The Chair advised that a list of her engagements as Chair of the Council held since the last meeting were set out in the agenda. She advised that the last item listed 'Opening of Landport Community Café had had to be cancelled.

70 Urgent items

There were no urgent items to consider.

71 Questions from members of the public

No questions had been received from members of the public.

72 Petitions

No petitions had been received.

73 Urgent decisions taken by the Cabinet or Cabinet members

In accordance with the Policy and Performance Procedure Rule 17, the Council received details of two decisions which had been taken by the Leader of the Council under special urgency procedures, the 'Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant Scheme' on 14 January 2022 and the 'Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund Scheme' on 31 January 2022.

74 Recommendations from Cabinet, Committees and Other Council bodies**74a Council Budget and Setting of the Council Tax 2022/23**

Councillor Nicholson moved and Councillor MacCleary seconded the recommendations set out in the agenda, in relation to the Council Budget and setting of the Council Tax for 2022/23. This incorporated recommendations from Cabinet on 3 February 2022 regarding the General Fund Revenue Budget 2022/23 and Capital Programme, Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators 2022/23, Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue Budget and Rent Setting 2022/23 and HRA Capital Programme 2021-25.

Councillor Linington moved and Councillor Turner seconded the following amendment as set out in an addendum tabled at the meeting:

“To allocate funds from the Regeneration and Planning budget to employ an additional Enforcement Officer. The post to be initially for two years with a view to making it a permanent post, subject to a review of effectiveness and availability of funding. The timing of appointment and source of funding to be at the discretion of the Director of Regeneration and Planning in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer.”

Councillor Nicholson then spoke to the budget proposals. She reflected on the impact on the impact of Covid 19, the energy crisis, and the cost of living crisis on the community and on the Council. She thanked Council directors and managers for their hard work in delivering on savings plans and continuing to provide excellent services to residents in extraordinary times and confirmed that this was a balanced budget. Councillor Nicholson highlighted how the budget

was focused on supporting the most vulnerable in the community, on community wellbeing, on improving green spaces and play spaces, improving biodiversity, and on a green recovery. She confirmed that she was happy to support the opposition amendment for the employment of an additional enforcement officer.

Councillor Linington responded on behalf of the opposition to the budget and her amendment. She highlighted the importance of funding an additional enforcement officer. She highlighted that although there was a lot in the budget the opposition group could support, there was much that they could not. In particular, it was felt that it would be better to have had a zero Council Tax rise which would be to the benefit of all, rather than supporting a smaller number of people through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The Council then debated the budget and amendment together. The Council received advice from the Council Solicitor that the first vote would be on the budget with the amendment and would be a named vote in accordance with legislation, and if carried there was no need for a further vote in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules.

Prior to moving the vote, Councillor Nicholson was given the opportunity to sum up.

The motion with the amendment was then put to a recorded vote and declared carried by 20 votes to 0 with 16 abstentions.

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the recommendations as detailed in the reports from the Chief Finance Officer to Cabinet on 3 February 2022 as summarised below:
 - (i) To approve the General Fund budget for 2021/22 (Revised) and 2022/23 (Original). An increase in the Council Tax for Lewes District Council of £5 resulting in a Band D charge for general expenses of £202.08 for 2022/23.
 - (ii) To approve the revised General Fund capital programme 2022/23.
 - (iii) To endorse the continuation of the Flexible use of Capital Receipts.
 - (iv) To note the Section 151 Officer's sign off as outlined in the Cabinet Report and at Appendix 1.
 - (v) To endorse Cabinet's agreement for £350k being earmarked from General Fund reserves to create a Hardship Fund to support households with the energy and cost of living pressures.
 - (vi) To approve the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy for 2022/23.
 - (vii) To approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement for 2022/23.

- (viii) To approve the Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2022/23 to 2024/25.
- (ix) To approve the Capital Strategy.
- (x) To approve the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) income and expenditure proposals, including revised HRA budget for 2021/22 and the budget for 2022/23, rents and service charges and the HRA Capital Programme, including:
- That social and affordable rents (including Shared Ownership) be increased by 4.1% in line with Government policy;
 - That private sector leased property rents are increased by 4.1% (CPI+1%);
 - That garage rents are increased by 4.86% (RPI); and
 - That £150k be earmarked from the HRA reserve to create a Hardship fund to support households with their energy and cost of living pressures.
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 3 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 2022/23 £
Lewes	343,000
Newhaven	134,940
Telscombe	57,720
Seaford	58,590
Peacehaven	41,100
Chailey	1,120
Ringmer	4,410
Total	640,880

5. That consequent upon a General Fund budget of £8,062,598 and other matters, the basic amount (Band D) of Council Tax for the Borough Council's functions will be £219.53 calculated as follows:

	General Expenses only	Total including special items
	£000's	£000's
Gross Expenditure:		
General Fund	56,437	
HRA	18,090	
Business Rates payable to Government	7,805	
Contributions to Reserves	80	
	82,412	82,412
Special expenses		641
Less Income:		
Service Income	(59,147)	
Other Government Grants	(3,378)	
Business Rates income	(12,017)	
Collection Fund Surplus (Council Tax)	(448)	
	(74,990)	(74,990)
COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT	7,422	8,063
Band D Council Tax	£202.08	£219.53

The statutory resolutions relating to this matter are given at paragraphs 6 and 7 below.

6. That it be noted that at its meeting on 3 February 2022 Cabinet approved the following calculations for the year 2022/23, being made in accordance with regulations made under Sections 31(B)(4) and 34(4) of the Local Government Act 1992, as amended:
- (a) 36,726.6 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)

<u>Part of the Council's Area</u>	<u>Tax Base</u>
Parish of Barcombe	634.40
Parish of Beddingham and Glynde	182.30
Parish of Chailey	1,385.10
Parish of Ditchling	1120.20
Parish of East Chiltington	196.50
Parish of Falmer	67.60
Parish of Firlie	124.30
Parish of Hamsey	279.10
Parish of Iford	89.60
Parish of Kingston	424.60
Town of Lewes	6049.60
Town of Newhaven	3638.40
Parish of Newick	1103.60
Town of Peacehaven	4752.60
Parish of Piddinghoe	126.10
Parish of Plumpton	677.70
Parish of Ringmer	1950.40
Parish of Rodmell	214.20
Parish of St Ann Without	39.60
Parish of St John Without	27.10
Town of Seaford	9406.70
Parish of Southease	22.90
Parish of South Highton	255.40
Parish of Streat	80.20
Parish of Tarring Neville	9.70
Town of Telscombe	2498.80
Parish of Westmeston	160.50
Parish of Wivelsfield	1,209.40

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 2022/23 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended:
- (a) £87,617,418 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.
- (b) £74,990,302 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.

- (c) £12,627,116 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) £343.81 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) £5,205,398 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
- (f) £202.08 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 area:
- | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|-----------------|--------|
| Barcombe | 252.82 | Piddinghoe | 289.05 |
| Beddingham and Glynde | 267.10 | Plumpton | 296.35 |
| Chailey | 252.26 | Ringmer | 271.47 |
| Ditchling | 300.42 | Rodmell | 271.17 |
| East Chiltington | 242.39 | St Ann Without | 202.08 |
| Falmer | 209.48 | St John Without | 202.08 |
| Firle | 286.55 | Seaford | 319.40 |
| Hamsey | 267.34 | Southeast | 202.08 |
| Iford | 204.87 | South Heighton | 255.51 |
| Kingston | 319.84 | Streat | 269.60 |
| Lewes | 467.02 | Tarring Neville | 202.08 |
| Newhaven | 398.37 | Telscombe | 329.82 |
| Newick | 263.87 | Westmeston | 283.08 |
| Peacehaven | 355.30 | Wivelsfield | 285.72 |

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 area:

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	168.55	196.64	224.73	252.82	309.00	365.18	421.37	505.64
Beddingham and Glynde	178.07	207.74	237.42	267.10	326.46	385.81	445.17	534.20
Chailey	168.17	196.20	224.23	252.26	308.32	364.38	420.43	504.52
Ditchling	200.28	233.66	267.04	300.42	367.18	433.94	500.70	600.84
East Chiltington	161.59	188.53	215.46	242.39	296.25	350.12	403.98	484.78
Falmer	139.65	162.93	186.20	209.48	256.03	302.58	349.13	418.96
Firle	191.03	222.87	254.71	286.55	350.23	413.91	477.58	573.10
Hamsey	178.23	207.93	237.64	267.34	326.75	386.16	445.57	534.68
Iford	136.58	159.34	182.11	204.87	250.40	295.92	341.45	409.74
Kingston	213.23	248.76	284.30	319.84	390.92	461.99	533.07	639.68
Lewes	311.35	363.24	415.13	467.02	570.80	674.58	778.37	934.04
Newhaven	265.58	309.84	354.11	398.37	486.90	575.42	663.95	796.74
Newick	175.91	205.23	234.55	263.87	322.51	381.15	439.78	527.74
Peacehaven	236.87	276.34	315.82	355.30	434.26	513.21	592.17	710.60
Piddinghoe	192.70	224.82	256.93	289.05	353.28	417.52	481.75	578.10
Plumpton	197.57	230.49	263.42	296.35	362.21	428.06	493.92	592.70
Ringmer	180.98	211.14	241.31	271.47	331.80	392.12	452.45	542.94
Rodmell	180.78	210.91	241.04	271.17	331.43	391.69	451.95	542.34
St Ann Without	134.72	157.17	179.63	202.08	246.99	291.89	336.80	404.16
St John Without	134.72	157.17	179.63	202.08	246.99	291.89	336.80	404.16
Seaford	212.93	248.42	283.91	319.40	390.38	461.36	532.33	638.80
Southeast	134.72	157.17	179.63	202.08	246.99	291.89	336.80	404.16
South Heighton	170.34	198.73	227.12	255.51	312.29	369.07	425.85	511.02
Streat	179.73	209.69	239.64	269.60	329.51	389.42	449.33	539.20
Tarring Neville	134.72	157.17	179.63	202.08	246.99	291.89	336.80	404.16
Telscombe	219.88	256.53	293.17	329.82	403.11	476.41	549.70	659.64
Westmeston	188.72	220.17	251.63	283.08	345.99	408.89	471.80	566.16
Wivelsfield	190.48	222.23	253.97	285.72	349.21	412.71	476.20	571.44

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.

- 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.

2022-23 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	1,075.56	1,254.82	1,434.08	1,613.34	1,971.86	2,330.38	2,688.90	3,226.68
Sussex Police Authority	149.94	174.93	199.92	224.91	274.89	324.87	374.85	449.82
East Sussex Fire Authority	66.25	77.29	88.33	99.37	121.45	143.53	165.62	198.74
Aggregate of Council Tax Requirements	1,291.75	1,507.04	1,722.33	1,937.62	2,368.20	2,798.77	3,229.38	3,875.24

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	1,460.30	1,703.68	1,947.06	2,190.44	2,677.20	3,163.96	3,650.74	4,380.88
Beddingham and Glynde	1,469.82	1,714.78	1,959.75	2,204.72	2,694.66	3,184.59	3,674.54	4,409.44
Chailey	1,459.92	1,703.24	1,946.56	2,189.88	2,676.52	3,163.16	3,649.80	4,379.76
Ditchling	1,492.03	1,740.70	1,989.37	2,238.04	2,735.38	3,232.72	3,730.07	4,476.08
East Chiltington	1,453.34	1,695.57	1,937.79	2,180.01	2,664.45	3,148.90	3,633.35	4,360.02
Falmer	1,431.40	1,669.97	1,908.53	2,147.10	2,624.23	3,101.36	3,578.50	4,294.20
Firle	1,482.78	1,729.91	1,977.04	2,224.17	2,718.43	3,212.69	3,706.95	4,448.34
Hamsey	1,469.98	1,714.97	1,959.97	2,204.96	2,694.95	3,184.94	3,674.94	4,409.92
Iford	1,428.33	1,666.38	1,904.44	2,142.49	2,618.60	3,094.70	3,570.82	4,284.98
Kingston	1,504.98	1,755.80	2,006.63	2,257.46	2,759.12	3,260.77	3,762.44	4,514.92
Lewes	1,603.10	1,870.28	2,137.46	2,404.64	2,939.00	3,473.36	4,007.74	4,809.28
Newhaven	1,557.33	1,816.88	2,076.44	2,335.99	2,855.10	3,374.20	3,893.32	4,671.98
Newick	1,467.66	1,712.27	1,956.88	2,201.49	2,690.71	3,179.93	3,669.15	4,402.98
Peacehaven	1,528.62	1,783.38	2,038.15	2,292.92	2,802.46	3,311.99	3,821.54	4,585.84
Piddinghoe	1,484.45	1,731.86	1,979.26	2,226.67	2,721.48	3,216.30	3,711.12	4,453.34
Plumpton	1,489.32	1,737.53	1,985.75	2,233.97	2,730.41	3,226.84	3,723.29	4,467.94
Ringmer	1,472.73	1,718.18	1,963.64	2,209.09	2,700.00	3,190.90	3,681.82	4,418.18
Rodmell	1,472.53	1,717.95	1,963.37	2,208.79	2,699.63	3,190.47	3,681.32	4,417.58
St Ann Without	1,426.47	1,664.21	1,901.96	2,139.70	2,615.19	3,090.67	3,566.17	4,279.40
St John Without	1,426.47	1,664.21	1,901.96	2,139.70	2,615.19	3,090.67	3,566.17	4,279.40
Seaford	1,504.68	1,755.46	2,006.24	2,257.02	2,758.58	3,260.14	3,761.70	4,514.04
Southeast	1,426.47	1,664.21	1,901.96	2,139.70	2,615.19	3,090.67	3,566.17	4,279.40
South Highton	1,462.09	1,705.77	1,949.45	2,193.13	2,680.49	3,167.85	3,655.22	4,386.26
Streat	1,471.48	1,716.73	1,961.97	2,207.22	2,697.71	3,188.20	3,678.70	4,414.44
Tarring Neville	1,426.47	1,664.21	1,901.96	2,139.70	2,615.19	3,090.67	3,566.17	4,279.40
Telscombe	1,511.63	1,763.57	2,015.50	2,267.44	2,771.31	3,275.19	3,779.07	4,534.88
Westmeston	1,480.47	1,727.21	1,973.96	2,220.70	2,714.19	3,207.67	3,701.17	4,441.40
Wivelsfield	1,482.23	1,729.27	1,976.30	2,223.34	2,717.41	3,211.49	3,705.57	4,446.68

10. To determine that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2022/23 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.

11. To allocate funds from the Regeneration and Planning budget to employ an additional Enforcement Officer. The post to be initially for two years with a view to making it a permanent post, subject to a review of effectiveness and availability of funding. The timing of appointment and source of funding to be at the discretion of the Director of Regeneration and Planning in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer.

Recorded vote:

For: Councillors Amy, Banks, Bird, Brett, Clay, Collier, Denis, Gauntlett, Von Kurthy, MacCleary, Macleod, Makepeace, Manley, Meyer, Nicholson, O'Brien, O'Connor, Robinson, Ross and Saunders (20)

Against: None

Abstain: Councillor Adeniji, Bikson, Boorman, Burman, Davy, Duhigg, Linington, S. Lord, J. Lord, Maskell, Miller, Papanicolaou, Peterson, Rigden, Turner and Wallraven (16).

(**Note:** Councillor Adeniji arrived in the meeting at the start of this item and was therefore able to participate in the vote. Councillor Carr and O'Keeffe arrived at 18.52 and 18.59 respectively the end of the discussion and did not take part in the discussion or vote.)

74b Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the Working Age 2022/23

Councillor Nicholson moved and Councillor MacCleary seconded the recommendation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the Working Age 2022/23, subject to an additional recommendation circulated from the Director of Service Delivery on an agenda supplement. This amendment was required as a result of regulations made on 10 February 2022 under the Energy Rebate Scheme 2022, which required all local council tax support schemes to disregard Energy Rebate Scheme payments in determining a person's eligibility for a council tax reduction and the amount of any such reduction with effect from 1 April 2022.

The recommendations were debated by the Council in full and then put to a vote by show of hands and declared carried.

RESOLVED:

1. To agree the revised Local Council Tax Reduction (LCTR) Scheme for the working age for 2022/23, comprising the features proposed at paragraph 2.1 of the Cabinet report, to:
 - Calculate LCTR on 100% of a claimant's council tax liability.

- Not apply the minimum-income floor to self-employed claimants.
 - Not have a minimum award below which a claimant does not receive a reduction.
2. To continue the Exceptional Hardship Scheme in 2022/23; and
 3. To delegate authority to the Director of Service Delivery, in consultation with the Cabinet Member For Finance And Assets, to add provisions to the 2022/23 scheme, to comply with the Council Tax (Demand Notices and Reduction Schemes) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.

74c Arrangements for Appointing External Auditors

Councillor Peterson moved and Councillor Ross seconded the recommendation of the report of the Chief Finance Officer, to opt in to Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) national scheme for the appointment of the Council's External Audit arrangements post for the 2023/24 financial year onwards, in line with the recommendations of the Audit and Standards Committee.

In making these recommendations, as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee, Councillor Peterson and Ross expressed their disappointment that this was the only real option available to the Council due to the risks and anticipated costs involved in procuring an auditor directly. They confirmed that the Audit and Standards Committee had asked officers to write to the Secretary of State with concerns around the lack of a real choice in the current process, to continue to raise concerns with the PSAA over external audit delay and timeliness, and seek assurance that capacity, standards and quality would be managed through the procurement and contract management process. In addition, it was being requested that the Council would not be allocated the same auditor in future, but this was not guaranteed. They thanked the Chief Finance Officer and Deputy CFO for their work with Members on this matter.

The recommendations were debated, put to a vote and declared carried.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Council approves the Audit and Standards Committee's recommendation to accept the Public Sector Audit Appointments' (PSAA's) opt-in invitation into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors from 1st April 2023; and
2. That delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer to complete and submit the 'opt in' form (Appendix B) to PSAA by the deadline of the 11 March 2022.

(Note – Councillor Peterson left the meeting at the end of this item at 19:32)

74d Approval of Licensing Fees 2022/23

Councillor Macleod moved and Councillor Robinson seconded the recommendation of the Licensing Committee of 21 February 2022, to approve the licensing fees to apply from 1 April 2022. The fees were set out in Appendix 1 to the referral report, which had been updated to include an additional fee for

new taxi drivers in relation to English Language, disability and safeguarding training. Councillor Macleod confirmed the costs of training for existing drivers could be funded from ring-fenced licensing reserves, along with a new IT system. The proposals would keep the level of reserves to minimum operating levels.

The Council considered the recommendation, and it was put to a vote and declared carried.

RESOLVED:

To approve the licensing fees proposed within revised Appendix 1 to apply from 1 April 2022.

75 Notices of motion.

There were no motions notified.

76 Members' Allowances Scheme

The Council considered a report of the Head of Democratic Services, which recommended that the Council revisited the Independent Remuneration Panel's recommended changes to the Council's Allowances Scheme, in particular in relation to basic, special and IT allowances, as agreed in the Full Council resolution in November 2020. All other aspects of the report had been determined in November 2020.

Cllr Nicholson moved and Cllr MacCleary seconded a proposal set down on the agenda supplement as follows:

- “(1) Having considered the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, the Council is grateful to the Panel for its work and recognises the logic of the recommendations put forward, but is unable to accept them in full in light of the current financial challenges facing the Council whilst responding to the Covid 19 pandemic.
- (2) Further to (1), that all allowances to Members including Basic, Special Responsibility and IT allowances continue at the current levels subject to indexation in line with percentage increase in staff salaries up until 2024.
- (3) That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to make any necessary amendments to the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme each year in line with indexation changes backdated to 1 April 2021 when the percentage increase in staff salaries is known.”

Members discussed the recommendation and there was support across the Council for the allowances to remain unchanged given the current economic climate and financial pressures. However, there was broad support for an increase in allowances to be considered when next reviewed by an Independent Remuneration Panel, in recognition that the current levels of allowances were low compared to other similar sized Councils, and that an

uplift would be needed to attract a diversity of Councillors to the role.

The proposal was put to a vote and declared carried.

RESOLVED:

1. Having considered the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, the Council is grateful to the Panel for its work and recognises the logic of the recommendations put forward, but is unable to accept them in full in light of the current financial challenges facing the Council whilst responding to the Covid 19 pandemic.
2. Further to (1), that all allowances to Members including Basic, Special Responsibility and IT allowances continue at the current levels subject to indexation in line with percentage increase in staff salaries up until 2024; and
3. That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to make any necessary amendments to the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme each year in line with indexation changes backdated to 1 April 2021 when the percentage increase in staff salaries is known.

77 Calendar of Meetings 2022-23

Councillor MacCleary moved and Councillor Nicholson seconded that the proposed calendar of meetings for 2022-23 be agreed. It was noted that the dates would be subject to formal ratification at annual council in line with legislation.

RESOLVED – That the Calendar of Meetings 2022-23 be approved.

78 Written questions from Councillors

No written questions had been received from Councillors.

79 Questions to the Leader of the Council

The Chair advised that two questions had been notified prior to the start of the meeting from Councillor O'Connor and Councillor Adeniji.

- a) Councillor O'Connor asked the following question to the Leader:

"I note that East Sussex County Council Library service is currently arranging to move the Peacehaven and Telscombe library where it currently has a space of 970m² to a cupboard at the Joff Youth Centre with just 39m². In addition, the holding of books will reduce from 20,500 to just 4,500. This tremendous reduction in provision seems to be contrary to the aim of providing a decent service to residents of Peacehaven and Telscombe. The reasoning behind this is that the Meridian Centre, where the library is situated is about to be redeveloped whereas the site owners have not submitted any proposals. I would like

to ask the Leader to set out her view on this issue and does she think that Lewes District Council should be concerned about this potential move?"

Councillor Nicholson responded that this was a serious issue for the residents of Peacehaven and Telscombe, and confirmed that she had raised the issue of the lack of library service and the economic impact of moving out of Meridian Centre with the Leader of East Sussex County Council. She confirmed that the District Council would like to be part of the discussion on the future of the centre, the service for residents, and the potential for the District Council might be to use part of the centre for a touchdown space or residents help desk.

b) Councillor Adeniji asked the following question to the Leader:

"The scaffolding at Talland Parade Seaford is a blight on our lovely town. I have been made aware that Lewes District Council has tried "everything", including all possible legal actions, at resolving this issue.

Can the Leader advise if Independent Legal Counsel opinion and the support of the Local Government Association has been sought regarding this issue, as well as detailing to me in writing all legal steps and legal actions with dates that have been taken by the Council to address this issue as well as the outcome of the Independent Legal advice and the LGA's comment?"

Councillor Nicholson advised that she would respond in part to the question and would then ask Councillor Gauntlett (Cabinet member for planning and infrastructure) to provide additional details. Councillor Nicholson confirmed that it was a matter of great concern, and the Council had sought legal advice and written to the LGA, but the instruments available to the Council were limited. However, Councillor Adeniji would receive a detailed written response as requested. Councillor Gauntlett advised that he shared the concern and was asked about it on a daily basis. He confirmed that Officers had searched extensively on the potential options, and those available to the Council were either limited, cumbersome and ineffective. The main power would be to take away the right of the developer to complete the development, which would only prolong to scaffolding being in place. He confirmed that Officers would continue to seek a resolution, but that it might require a change in legislation to fully resolve the matter.

80 Standards Panel Decision

In accordance with the Council's adopted Code of Conduct Hearings Procedure, the Council received a copy of a decision of a Standards Panel held on 23 November 2021 for information.

81 Ward issues

There were no ward issues raised for discussion.

82 Reporting back on meetings of outside bodies

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

- Wave Leisure – Councillor O'Connor
- Impact Seaford – Councillor Brett
- Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Brett
- Armed Forces Champion update – Councillor Davy
- South Downs National Park Authority (SDNP) and other SDNP meetings – Councillor Meyer.

Councillor Davy paid tribute to the armed forces and their importance in the current climate. Councillor Macleod advised that in his role as Mental Health Champion, he was able to advise that a 'taxi-watch' pilot scheme was being rolled out to taxi drivers in Lewes, along with other areas of the country, to offer to them with suicide prevention training. He also apologised that he was unable to report back on the recent 3VA meeting due to a family emergency preventing him from attending.

83 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting was on 23 May 2022 at 6 pm.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm

Councillor Christine Brett (Chair)