

Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held in Court Room at Eastbourne Town Hall, Grove Road, BN21 4UG on 8 February 2023 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor David Tutt (Chair).

Councillors Stephen Holt (Deputy-Chair), Margaret Bannister, Alan Shuttleworth and Colin Swansborough.

Officers in attendance:

Robert Cottrill (Chief Executive), Homira Javadi (Director of Finance and Performance (Chief Finance Officer)), Ian Fitzpatrick (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning), Tim Whelan (Director of Service Delivery), Becky Cooke (Assistant Director for Human Resources and Transformation), Luke Dreeling (Performance Lead), Simon Russell (Head of Democratic Services), Kate Slattery (Solicitor), Ross Sutton (Head of Financial Reporting) and Mark Walker (Head of Financial Planning).

38 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2022 were submitted and approved and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

39 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was reported from Councillor Diplock.

40 Declaration of members' interests

None were declared.

41 Corporate performance - quarter 3 - 2022/23

The Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Finance and Performance, updating Members on the Council's performance against Corporate Plan priority actions, performance indicators and targets for the third quarter of the year 2022-23.

Thanks were conveyed to staff for their performance during this quarter, given the impact of Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis.

Resolved (Non-key decision):

To note the achievements and progress against Corporate Plan priorities for 2022-23, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

Reason for decision:

To enable Cabinet members to consider specific aspects of the Council's progress and performance.

42 General Fund Revenue Budget 2023/24 and Capital Programme

The Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Finance and Performance, seeking their recommendation to Full Council on the General Fund Budget 2023/24 and updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), together with the updated Capital Programme and Treasury Management position.

Councillor Holt presented the report and thanked officers for their work in producing a balanced budget, given the challenging economic context, without cutting front line services. He added that following the success of the Cost-of-Living Crisis fund, the Council would be increasing this fund by £0.1 million, to support the local voluntary and community sector with practical support for those in most need.

He advised that a correction was required to section 1.9 of report. The report was produced with the assumption of Government support for the Council's proposals for Levelling Up Fund Round 2 and referred to a planned capital expenditure of £63.9 million (and £146 million over the MTFS period). Given the Council was unsuccessful in its bid, the Council was now planning capital expenditure of £41.6 million (and £79.7 million over the MTFS period).

Following discussion, it was unanimously agreed to add a further recommendation to Full Council around capital receipts in the context of the Recovery and Stabilisation programme and this was detailed below.

Recommended to Full Council (Budget and policy framework)

(1) The General Fund Budget 2023/24 (original) and projected MTFS as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

(2) The General Fund Budget 2022/23 (revised) as set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

(3) An increase in the Council Tax for Eastbourne Borough Council of 2.99% (per annum) resulting in a Band D charge for general expenses of £269.68 (per annum) for 2023/24.

(4) The revised General Fund Capital Programme 2023/24 as set out at Appendix 6 to the report.

(5) The Council introduce from 1 April 2024 a new discretionary Council Tax premium on second homes of up to 100% and apply a premium of up to 100% on homes which have been empty for longer than 1 year following the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill becoming law.

(6) To note the Section 151 Officer's sign off as outlined in the report.

(7) To approve flexible use of capital receipts to fund its transformation and improvement plans, as included in its Recovery and Stabilisation phase 2 programme.

Resolved (Key decision):

(8) To give delegated authority to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet member for finance to make any late adjustments necessary following the announcement of final financial settlement, prior to Full Council submission.

Reason for decisions:

The Cabinet must recommend to Full Council the setting of a revenue budget and associated Council Tax for the forthcoming financial year by law.

43 Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators 2023/24, Capital Strategy & Investment Strategy

The Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Finance and Performance, asking them to recommend to Full Council, the Council's Annual Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy, together with the Treasury and Prudential Indicators.

Recommended to Full Council (Budget and policy framework):

(1) To approve the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy for 2023/24 as set out at Appendix A to the report.

(2) To approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement 2023/24 as set out at paragraph 8 of Appendix A to the report.

(3) To approve the Prudential and Treasury Indicators 2023/24 to 2025/26, as set out at paragraph 6 of Appendix A to the report.

(4) To approve the Capital Strategy set out at Appendix E to the report.

Reason for decisions:

It is a requirement within the budget setting process for the Council to review and approve the Prudential and Treasury indicators, Treasury Strategy, Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy.

44 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue Budget and Rent Setting 2023/24 and HRA Capital Programme 2022-26

The Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Finance and Performance, seeking a recommendation to Full Council for the detailed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget proposals, rent levels, service charges and heating costs for 2023/24, and the HRA Capital Programme 2022-26.

Councillor Holt in presenting the report, advised that a minor amendment was required to officer recommendation (8) to reflect that the proposed rent increase for garages was 7%.

Recommended to Full Council (Budget and policy framework):

(1) The HRA budget for 2023/24 and revised 2022/23 budget as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

(2) That social and affordable rents (including Shared Ownership) are increased by 7% in line with government policy.

(3) That the average General Needs Housing Benefit (HB) Eligible service charge will be £5.39 per week.

(4) That the average HB Eligible service charge for Retirement Housing will be £38.36 per week.

(5) That the Support charge for Retirement Housing will be £5.82 per unit.

(6) That the average Non-HB Eligible heating charges will be £3.73 per week.

(7) That the average non-HB Eligible water charges will be £3.56.

(8) That Garage rents are increased by 7%.

(9) To grant delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio holders for Financial Services and Direct Assistance Service and the Chief Finance Officer to finalise Eastbourne Homes' Management Fee and Delivery Plan.

(10) The HRA Capital Programme as set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

Reason for decisions:

The Cabinet must recommend to Full Council the setting of the HRA revenue and capital budget and the level of social and affordable housing rents for the forthcoming year.

45 Congress and Devonshire Park Theatres - Future Governance Arrangements

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Executive, updating it on the progress of the work of the cross-party Devonshire Park Governance Board and to propose changes to the governance arrangements for the Congress and Devonshire Park Theatres, in pursuit of cultural and financial benefits.

Resolved (Key decision):

(1) To note the update on work to date and to authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Tourism and Culture Services, to take all necessary actions in relation to the project to create the Local Authority Controlled Company including determining the terms of and authorising execution of all documentation.

(2) To develop further the plans for the creation of the charitable entity for a future decision by Cabinet.

(3) To agree provision of £50,000 to be made available to support the initial steps towards delivery of the new governance arrangement.

Reason for decisions:

The recommendations build on investment made to date which has enhanced the offer of the Congress and Devonshire Park Theatres and promote the future of the facilities and the cultural offer for Eastbourne. The proposed, new governance offer would introduce financial safeguards for the council while increasing opportunities for the theatres to raise funds and access funding streams unavailable to local authority-owned and operated facilities.

The meeting ended at 6.20 pm

Councillor David Tutt (Chair)