

## Cabinet

**Minutes of meeting held in Room 209/210 on the Second Floor, The Marine Workshops, Railway Quay, Newhaven, East Sussex, BN9 0ER. on 1 February 2024 at 2.30 pm.**

**Present:**

Councillor Zoe Nicholson (Chair).  
Councillors Christine Robinson (Deputy-Chair), Chris Collier, Johnny Denis, Wendy Maples, Emily O'Brien, Laurence O'Connor and Mark Slater.

**Officers in attendance:**

Robert Cottrill (Chief Executive), Homira Javadi (Director of Finance and Performance (Section 151 Officer)), Becky Cooke (Director of Tourism, Culture and Organisational Development), Simon Russell (Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer), Kate Slattery (Head of Legal Services), Jo Harper (Head of Business Planning and Performance), Steven Houchin (Interim Deputy Chief Finance Officer (Corporate Finance)), Lynn Ingram (Interim Head of Financial Planning) and Ross Sutton (Head of Financial Reporting).

**Also in attendance:**

Councillor Julie Carr, Councillor Stephen Gauntlett (Chair of Audit and Governance Committee) and Councillor James MacCleary (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group).

Ms Debbie Twitchen (Tenants of Lewes District)

**44 Minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2023 were submitted and approved and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

**45 Apologies for absence**

An apology for absence was reported from visiting member, Councillor Brett.

**46 Declarations of interest**

None were declared.

**47 Urgent items**

Since publication of the agenda, the Cabinet were asked and agreed to formally approve the following appointment to outside bodies. The Head of Democratic Services would then make the appointment under delegated authority.

- Councillor Charlotte Keenan to replace Councillor Joa Saunders as a council representative on Wave Active Ltd Board

#### **48 General Fund Revenue Budget 2024/25 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.

The announcement of the recent Local Government Finance Settlement, equated to around £120,000 for the Council and this would be factored into the budget proposed to Full Council.

Debbie Twitchen (Tenants of Lewes District), addressed the Cabinet and thanked the Council for their work with TOLD in preparing the budget.

Cabinet expressed thanks to officers for their work in producing a balanced budget in difficult economic circumstances.

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee (PPAC), held on 25 January 2024 considered the report and were supportive of the officer recommendations in full. A budget briefing had also taken place for all Councillors to attend.

#### **Recommended to Full Council (Budget and policy framework):**

(1) To agree the General Fund Budget 2024/25 (original) and projected MTFS as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

(2) To agree the General Fund Budget 2023/24 (revised) as set out in Appendices 2 & 3 to the report.

(3) To agree an increase in the Council Tax for Lewes District Council of 2.99% resulting in a gross Band D charge (including Special Expenses) of £228.17 for 2024/25.

(4) To agree the revised General Fund & Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2024/25 as set out at Appendix 4 to the report.

(5) The rates of Fees and Charges proposed within Appendix 5 to apply from 1 April 2024 and to implement changes to statutory fees and charges for services shown within Appendix 5 to the report as and when notified by Government.

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

#### **Reason for decisions:**

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

**49 Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy, Capital Strategy and Prudential Indicators 2024/25**

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

Officers were thanked for their work in producing the report.

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee (PPAC), held on 25 January 2024 considered the report and were supportive of the officer recommendations in full.

**Recommended to Full Council (Budget and policy framework):**

(1) To approve the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy for 2024/25 as set out at Appendix A to the report;

(2) To approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement 2024/25 (as set out at Appendix A to the report);

(3) To approve the Prudential and Treasury Indicators 2024/25 to 2026/27 (as set out at Appendix A to the report)

(4) To Approve the Capital Strategy 2024/25 (as set out at Appendix B 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, Investment Strategy and Capital Strategy.

**50 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue Budget and Rent Setting 2024/25 and HRA Capital Programme 2023-28**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Finance and Performance, asking them to agree the detailed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget proposals, rent levels and service charges for 2024/25 and the HRA Capital Programme 2023-28 and recommend to Full Council.

Cabinet stated that those most impacted by the proposed changes and were not in receipt of benefits would be supported by the Exceptional Hardship Fund.

Thanks were expressed to Tenants of Lewes District (TOLD) for their collaborative working and also to officers for their work in applying for the Social Housing Decarbonisation grant funding in a limited timescale.

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee (PPAC), held on 25 January 2024 considered the report and were supportive of the officer recommendations in full.

**Recommended to Full Council (Budget and policy framework):**

(1) The HRA budget for 2024/25 and revised 2023/24 budget as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

(2) To agree that social and affordable rents (including Shared Ownership) are increased by 7.7% with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, in line with government policy issued in December 2022.

(3) To agree that, with effect from 1st April 2024, when social-rented properties are relet to new tenants, the applicable rent will be increased by 5% above target rent.

(4) To agree that the revised service charges as set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report are implemented with effect from 1st April 2024.

(5) To agree that garage rents are increased by 6.7%.

(6) To agree the HRA Capital Programme as set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

(7) To note that £5.691m of Major Works expenditure is shown in the Capital Programme in 2024/25 and 2025/26 to improve EPC ratings in HRA properties, this expenditure being the subject of a Government grant bid to secure 50% match-funding.

**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.

**51 Re-imagining Lewes District: Delivering the Vision 2024 - 2028**

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Executive, asking them to consider and recommend the draft 'Reimagining Lewes District: Delivering the Vision 2024-2028' plan to Full Council for adoption.

The Council received 122 responses to the consultation on the plan, with it being noted that some were submitted by organisations on behalf of a group of people. Thanks were expressed to all that contributed, and feedback received would be incorporated into the final plan that would be submitted to Full Council. It was also stated that detailed comments relating to climate and nature would be picked up as part of the Climate and Nature Action Plan, which was running parallel to this process.

Thanks were expressed to officers for their work in formalising the proposed plan.

Policy and Performance Advisory Committee (PPAC), held on 25 January 2024 considered the report and were supportive of the officer recommendations in full. It was acknowledged that in disseminating the final document, it was important to reach as many people in the community as possible and also continue work on engaging as many as possible for future consultations.

**Resolved (Key decision):**

(1) To consider the 'Reimagining Lewes District: Delivering the Vision 2024-2028' plan.

(2) That any final minor amendments arising from the consultation responses be delegated for amendment to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader.

**Recommended to Full Council (Budget and policy framework):**

(3) To adopt the plan as its overarching corporate policy document for the next 4 years.

**Reason for decisions:**

To enable the Council to set out its strategic vision, objectives and priority projects for the next four years and provide a firm basis for forward planning and performance management.

The meeting ended at 3.05 pm

Councillor Zoe Nicholson (Chair)