

## Full Council

**Minutes of meeting held in Court Room at Eastbourne Town Hall, Grove Road, BN21 4UG on 5 March 2025 at 6.00 pm.**

### **Present:**

Councillor Candy Vaughan (Mayor).

Councillors Amanda Morris (Deputy Mayor), Nick Ansell, Kathy Ballard, Margaret Bannister, Colin Belsey, Daniel Butcher, Penny di Cara, Andy Collins, Ali Dehdashty, Peter Diplock, Christina Ewbank, Nigel Goodyear, Stephen Holt, Jane Lamb, Jim Murray, Hugh Parker, Pat Rodohan, Teri Sayers-Cooper, Kshama Shore, Alan Shuttleworth, David Small, Robert Smart, Colin Swansborough and Jenny Williams.

### **Officers in attendance:**

Ian Fitzpatrick (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning), Homira Javadi (Director of Finance and Performance (Section 151 Officer)), Simon Russell (Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer) and Sarah Lawrence (Committee Team Manager).

### **39 Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2024**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 20 November 2024 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

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### **40 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) by members as required under Section 31 of the Localism Act and of other interests as required by the Code of Conduct (please see note at end of agenda).**

Councillor Holt declared a personal interest in agenda item 8a Council Budget and Setting of the Council Tax for 2025/26 as a leaseholder for Eastbourne Homes.

Councillor Bannister declared a personal interest in agenda item 8a, Council Budget and Setting of the Council Tax for 2025/26, as a trustee of the Towner.

Councillor Holt declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 8e, Approval of Licensing Fees 2025/26 as the organisation he worked for would be making comments on licensing fees. He left the room for the duration of this item.

Councillor Ansell declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in item 8e, Approval of Licensing Fees 2025/26, as the matter related to his employment. He left the room for the duration of this item.

#### **41 Mayor's announcements.**

The Council received a list of all the Mayor's engagements carried out since the last Full Council meeting.

Of her events, the Mayor highlighted in particular the range of Christmas events, the Trees of Light Dedication Service, Hall and Woodhouse Community Chest Awards in Offham, Eastbourne Carnival Entrants Event planning, the Holocaust Memorial Day Event and the new Range store opening.

Later in the meeting the Opposition Leader on behalf of his group thanked the Mayor for the excellent way in which she had represented Eastbourne in her civic role during this year.

#### **42 Notification of apologies for absence.**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Mayes and Councillor Maxed.

#### **43 Public right of address.**

The Mayor advised that the following public speakers had registered to speak during the meeting and would be called at the start of the relevant agenda item:

- Sarah Turner on behalf of the lead petitioner had 5 minutes to speak on Agenda Item 7 under the Council's petition scheme.
- Jon Whitmore and Serena Stallard had 3 minutes each to speak on item 10b as public speakers, and the Mayor used her discretion to permit more than one public speaker on this item.

#### **44 Order of business.**

As it was a busy agenda with a number of important items for decision, the Mayor advised that she would proceed with the first half of the agenda as it was, with the Petition as the first item for discussion. However, in recognition of the public speakers attending for the Motion at Item 10b, she would take that agenda item ahead of the Motion at Item 10a.

#### **45 Petition - Sovereign Centre**

A petition signed by 2,388 people had been received in relation to the Sovereign Centre. In accordance with the Council's petition scheme, Sarah Turner (on behalf of the petition organiser) attended and spoke for 5 minutes to

present the petition.

Councillor Holt spoke and confirmed he would follow up after the meeting with the public speaker to ensure that the questions that had been asked at the Cabinet meeting received a response.

Councillor Holt thanked all who had contributed to the petition and consultation and acknowledged the strength of feeling on this issue and set out the context for the decisions made. He advised that the Council would be undertaking a full public consultation on the provision of leisure in Eastbourne, including the Sovereign Centre to take place from June and to report back to Council and to residents.

Accordingly, in response to the petition, Councillor Holt proposed and Councillor Bannister seconded:

‘That the Council endorses a public consultation including a range of engagement activities including public events attended by Councillors and Senior Officers to engage with members of the public on the long-term provision of leisure, and the Sovereign Centre’.

Councillor Shore welcomed the actions being proposed but expressed her concern that action had not been taken earlier. Councillor Smart referenced support that had been provided by the Government for pools and asked if the Motcombe Pool would be reopened. In response, Councillor Diplock advised that the Motcombe Pool would reopen under the management of a CIC made up of local residents.

The proposal was put to vote and approved.

**RESOLVED (by 18 for, 0 against with 7 abstentions)** – That the Council endorses a public consultation including a range of engagement activities including public events attended by Councillors and Senior Officers to engage with members of the public on the long-term provision of leisure, and the Sovereign Centre.

**46 Matters referred from Cabinet or other council bodies.**

**46a Council Budget and Setting of the Council Tax for 2025/26**

Councillor Butcher moved and Councillor Holt seconded the recommendations set out in the agenda in relation to the Council Budget and setting of the Council Tax for 2025/26. This incorporated recommendations from Cabinet regarding the General Fund Revenue Budget 2025-26 and Capital Programme, Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators 2025-26, Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 2025-26.

Councillor Small moved and Councillor Smart seconded the following amendment:

“To resolve to accept the budget proposals as set down in the officer

recommendations subject to the following adjustments:

**On Income:**

**Revenue budget (£90,000 saving) -**

£25,000 saving from Tourism Department staffing budget

£25,000 saving from the communications budget

£4,000 financing saving from IT Capital Changes (with a £20,000 revenue saving for 26/27 onwards)

£36,000 additional income target for Airborne Sponsorships

**On Capital Budget (-£80,000) -**

Remove:

£50,000 from IT block allocation (30% of budget)

£30,000 from IT laptop refresh (30% of budget)

**Additional Spending (+£90,000)**

£40,000 to reinstate free downland parking for residents of the Borough

£50,000 Fun Pool reserve (available to GLL to cover any hypothetical loss operating the Fun Pool until the end of the 2025/26 financial year)."

Councillor Butcher (Portfolio Holder for Finance) thanked the Chief Finance Officer, deputy Chief Finance Officer and their team for preparing the budget and work throughout the year. He presented the budget and set out the context of the funding of Councils, choices to change the ways in which services were delivered, and the tripling of the costs of statutory housing and homelessness provision. He confirmed that the Government had granted additional borrowing in recognition of the tripling of that cost. He highlighted the reduction in council debt by 19 million in the last year and compared this to debt held by other Councils. He then highlighted the plans for delivery for the Council for the year including on Council housing, on the seafront and on the Sovereign Centre.

Councillor Small (the Shadow Portfolio Holder for Finance) responded to the budget on behalf of the opposition, criticising the administration for the management of the budget and its level of debt and its record over the last few years. He recognised that the Council had the very best homelessness team in the country but expressed concern over the level of debt.

The Council then debated the proposals and the amendment together.

In accordance with legislation, the amendment proposed by Councillor Small was put to a recorded vote and lost as follows:

For (8): Councillors Ansell, Belsey, di Cara, Goodyear, Lamb, Shore, Small and Smart.

Against (17): Councillors Ballard, Bannister, Butcher, Collins, Dehdashty, Diplock, Ewbank, Holt, Morris, Murray, Parker, Rodohan, Sayers-Cooper, Shuttleworth, Swansborough, Vaughan and Williams.

Abstentions: none

The budget as proposed by Councillor Butcher and set out in the agenda papers was put to a recorded vote as follows and carried:

For (17): Councillors Ballard, Bannister, Butcher, Collins, Dehdashty, Diplock, Ewbank, Holt, Morris, Murray, Parker, Rodohan, Sayers-Cooper, Shuttleworth, Swansborough, Vaughan and Williams.

Against (8): Councillors Ansell, Belsey, di Cara, Goodyear, Lamb, Shore, Small and Smart.

Abstentions: none

**RESOLVED** (by 17 votes for, 8 against, 0 abstentions):

To approve:

1. The recommendations as detailed in the reports from the Chief Finance Officer to Cabinet on 12 February 2025.

Section 1.19 of the report confirmed that the Council had made a request to Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for a further round of capitalisation of £2m in 2025/26. On 20 February 2025 MHCLG agreed in principle to allow the capitalisation request.

- (i) To approve the General Fund budget for 2025/26. An increase in the Council Tax for Eastbourne Borough Council of 2.99% resulting in a total Band D charge for of £286.04 for 2025/26.
- (ii) To approve the rates of Fees and Charges as recommended by Cabinet and contained within Appendix 6 to the Cabinet report, to apply from 1 April 2025 and to implement changes to statutory fees and charges for services shown within Appendix 6 to the report as and when notified by Government, subject to a change to the following item contained with the Fees and Charges Schedule (Appendix 6 to the budget report) as follows:
  - Recovery Action - The Summons Cost Charge has been amended to £80.00, and the Liability Order Cost Charge has been amended to £15.00.

The change will marginally impact the total value of the General fund budget in 2025/26 but does not result in a change to the overall Council Tax Requirement set out in the general fund budget report.

- (iii) To approve the revised General Fund capital programme 2025/26.
- (iv) To note the Section 151 Officer's sign off as outlined in the Cabinet Report and at Appendix 1.
- (v) To approve the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy for 2025/26.
- (vi) To approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement for 2025/26.

- (vii) To approve the Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2025/26 to 2027/28.
- (viii) To approve the Capital Strategy 2024/25.
- (ix) To approve the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) income and expenditure proposals, and revised HRA budget for 2024/25 and the budget for 2025/26, rents and service charges and the HRA Capital Programme, including:
- An increase of 2.7% to social and affordable rents (including Shared Ownership) with effect from 7 April 2025 in line with government policy.
  - That, when social rented supported accommodation properties are relet to new tenants, the applicable rent will be increased by 10% above target rent with effect from 7 April 2025 in line with government policy.
  - That when affordable rented properties are relet to new tenants, the applicable rent is reset to a maximum of 80% of market rent (inclusive of Service Charges) with effect from 7 April 2025 in line with government policy.
  - That the revised service charges as set out in paragraph 2.4 and appendix 3 of the Cabinet Report are implemented with effect from 7 April 2025.
  - That garage rents are increased by 10% with effect from 7 April 2025.
  - To grant delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio holder for Finance and Resources and the Chief Finance Officer to devolve the relevant Management Fee from now the former Eastbourne Homes Limited (EHL) to services inside the HRA.
  - To note that £2.227m of Major Works capital expenditure be profiled over 4 years between 2024/25 to 2027/28 is being 50% matched funded by grant, subject to government grant bids. The government scheme aims to improve EPC ratings in HRA properties.
2. That delegated authority is given to the Chief Finance Officer to amend the budget for any presentational changes ensuring the Council Tax Requirement at 6 below remains unchanged.
3. That it be noted, that since the Cabinet meeting on 12 February the Business Rates return to the Government (NNDR1) has been finalised with no changes to the previous net budget assumptions.
4. That consequent upon a General Fund budget of £10,303,104 and other matters, the basic amount (Band D) of Council Tax for the Borough Council's functions will be £286.04 (representing an increase of 2.99%) calculated as follows:

	£'000	£'000
<b>Gross Expenditure:</b>		
General Fund		105,205
HRA		20,578
Business Rates Tariff payable and deficit		13,185
		<u>138,968</u>
<b>Less Income:</b>		
Service Income	-107,865	
Interest on HRA Balances	-113	
Other Government Grants	-5,093	
Business Rates income	-13,552	
Additional EA/TA Funding	-2,000	
Collection Fund Surplus (Council Tax)	-42	
		<u>-128,665</u>
<b>COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT</b>		<u><u>10,303</u></u>
<b>Band 'D' Council Tax</b>		<b>£286.04</b>

The statutory resolutions relating to this matter are given at paragraphs 5 and 6 below.

5. That it be noted that at its meeting on 11 December 2022 the Cabinet agreed the Council Tax Base of 36,019.8 for Band 'D' equivalent properties for the year 2025/26 (Item T in the formula in section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended).
6. Calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2025/26 as £10,303,104.
7. That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2024/25 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended:

(a)	£138,967,773	being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.
(b)	£128,664,669	being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
(c)	£10,303,104	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)	£286.04	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).

8. To note that East Sussex County Council, the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner and the East Sussex Fire Authority 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.
9. That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the table below as the amounts of Council Tax for 2025/26 for each of the categories of dwellings.

#### COUNCIL TAX 2025/26 – BY AREA AND VALUATION BAND

MAYOR PRECEPTOR	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
East Sussex Fire Authority (ESFA)	74.99	87.49	99.99	112.49	137.49	162.49	187.48	224.98
Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner (SPCC)	177.94	207.60	237.25	266.91	326.22	385.54	444.85	533.82
East Sussex County Council (ESCC)	1,244.70	1,452.15	1,659.60	1,867.05	2,281.95	2,696.85	3,111.75	3,734.10
Eastbourne Borough Council	190.69	222.48	254.26	286.04	349.60	413.17	476.73	572.08
<b>Total Council Tax Requirement</b>	<b>1,688.32</b>	<b>1,969.72</b>	<b>2,251.10</b>	<b>2,532.49</b>	<b>3,095.26</b>	<b>3,658.05</b>	<b>4,220.81</b>	<b>5,064.98</b>

10. Determine that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2025/26 is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended.
11. As the billing authority, the Council has **not** been notified by a major precepting authority that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2025/26 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.

#### **46b General Fund Accommodation Programme**

Councillor Diplock moved and Councillor Holt seconded the recommendations of the report to Cabinet of 12 February 2024, to approve an initial allocation within the 2025/26 General Fund Capital Programme of up to £3.17m for the General Fund Accommodation Programme.

Councillor Diplock explained that the programme was focused on working with Boutique Modern to invest in additional high quality low-cost affordable accommodation. The programme was partnered with Prisoners Building Scheme (PBS), which meant that all up-front costs were covered by central government. In addition, it was noted that the houses would be energy efficient and so would save money for residents on running costs.

The proposals were debated and welcomed across the Council.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously) – To approve making an initial allocation within the 2025/26 General Fund Capital Programme of up to £3.17m.

#### **46c Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

Councillor Butcher moved and Councillor Holt seconded the recommendations in the report of the Cabinet held on 5 December 2024, to adopt the 2023/24 Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme as the 2025/26 scheme.

In moving the item, Councillor Butcher advised that the Council currently operates a maximum of 80% council tax reduction scheme, and it was still the Council's intention to increase this to 100% scheme in the next year, but that it did depend on the approval of the other preceptors including East Sussex County Council.

Councillor Butcher advised that he was having ongoing discussions with Eastbourne Foodbank who had raised questions on how people in the most need could be supported. He advised that there was a Hardship Fund and this could be used to meet the gap for some people in the interim.

The matter was put out for debate. Disappointment was expressed that Eastbourne was one of the few Councils not operating such a scheme locally, but a question was also raised as to whether a very minimum payment was more appropriate.

In response, Councillor Butcher advised that this had been considered but the cost of collecting a minimum amount was more than the payment itself. He extended an invitation to the shadow portfolio holder to attend the discussions with the Foodbank.

The recommendations were put to a vote and carried.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously) – To adopt the 2024/25 Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme as the 2025/26 scheme (attached at Appendix 1).

#### **46d Eastbourne Local Development Scheme**

Councillor Swansborough moved and Councillor Holt seconded the recommendations from the Cabinet on 12 February 2025, to adopt the Local Development Scheme. Councillor Swansborough highlighted that this was very much a point in time, as the Government was bringing forward rapid changes to the planning framework.

The Council debated the proposals. It was recognised that it was important to continue to develop the local plan and have plans in place ahead of the timetable for local government reorganisation, on which cross party working was welcomed.

The recommendations were put to a vote and carried.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously) -

(1) To adopt the Eastbourne Local Development Scheme as set out at Appendix 1 and thereafter be reported to Government.

(2) That delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Community Spaces and Planning to make on-going minor and technical updates to timetables within the Local Development Scheme where necessary.

(At the end of this agenda item the meeting at 8 pm the meeting was adjourned for 10 minutes for a comfort break.

#### **46e Approval of Licensing Fees 2025/2026**

(Councillor Ansell and Councillor Holt left the room for this item due to their interests)

Councillor Morris moved and Councillor Bannister seconded the recommendations of the Licensing Committee held on 27 January 2025 to approve the fees and charges to come into effect on 1 April 2025. Councillor Morris advised since the meeting the Lead for Regulatory Services had indicated that the new film classification fee had been added in error, so this had been removed from the schedule of fees at Appendix 1 for approval.

The matter was debated by the Council. Although it was recognised that the licensing fees by definition had to cover the costs of the service and could not make a profit, a question was raised at the large increase in the taxi fees. In particular, as part of the increase related to the costs of in vehicle CCTV which had been mandated by the Council.

Members of the Licensing Committee present confirmed that these issues had been discussed in full at the meeting, and the fees had received unanimous support. Councillor Morris advised that CCTV has been approved for the

protection of both the public and drivers, and had already been used as evidence by the Police where a driver had been attacked.

The recommendations were put to a vote and carried.

**RESOLVED** (By 19 for, 0 against, 3 abstentions) - To approve the Licensing Fees proposed within Appendix 1 to apply from 1 April 2025.

#### **46f Eastbourne Borough Council Statement of Gambling Principles**

Councillor Morris moved and Councillor Holt seconded the proposals recommended from the Licensing Committee on 17 December 2024 to approve the Statement of Gambling Principles.

Councillor Morris advised there had been a six-week public consultation on the recommended amendments to the Statement of Gambling Principles following the Licensing Committee. She confirmed that no additional changes had been needed to the document as a result of the consultation.

The recommendations were put to a vote and carried.

**RESOLVED** – (unanimously) To approve the Eastbourne Borough Council Statement of Gambling Principles 2025-2028 attached at Appendix 1.

#### **47 Calendar of Meetings 2025/26**

Councillor Holt proposed and Councillor Smart seconded acceptance of the draft Calendar of Meeting 2025/26. It was noted that the dates would be subject to final ratification at annual council in line with legislation

It was noted that a Full Council meeting would be needed in September and it was likely a couple of other dates would need to be changed so that the Council could consider Local Government Reorganisation ahead of the submission deadline. These would be updated at Annual Council or as soon as the approval route was known after that.

The recommendation was put to the vote and approved.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously) - To agree the draft Calendar of Meetings for 2025/26.

#### **48 Motions.**

##### **48a Motion - No confidence in the Cabinet**

Councillor Smart moved and Councillor Belsey seconded the motion as follows:

‘This Council has no confidence in the Cabinet of Eastbourne Borough Council due to past failings, lack of foresight, and current panic measures.’

Public speakers Jon Whitmore and Serena Stallard each spoke for 3 minutes.

Councillor Smart spoke to his motion and set out his reasons for bringing it including his concerns around the performance and decisions of the Cabinet.

The matter was debated across the Council. During the debate, Members of the Cabinet responded by setting out what they had achieved within their portfolios during the last year. Some opposition Councillors advised that this motion was a way to represent public views and to show that there was an opposition group within the Council.

In response to a specific comment, Councillor Holt spoke as a point of personal explanation, to confirm that he took declaration of interests very seriously and always declared and removed himself from decisions where he had a conflict of interest due to his employment.

Following the debate, the motion was put to a vote and defeated by 8 votes for, 17 against.

#### **48b Motion - Cross-Boundary Infrastructure**

Councillor Shuttleworth moved and Councillor Murray seconded the motion as follows:

‘Eastbourne Borough Council recognises that, with the update to the National Planning Policy Framework in December 2024 and reforms to the planning system in England, our area could see more new development on the Eastbourne Borough Council and Wealden District Council borders coming forward. This will undoubtedly lead to additional pressures on services and infrastructure across the area.

Eastbourne Borough Council will continue to seek to work collaboratively with neighbouring authorities to understand the cross-boundary infrastructure capacities and constraints, and how authorities can work together to address the issues going forward in a way that does not detrimentally impact our borough.’

The motion was then debated and received support from across the Council. It was recognised it was important to work collaboratively with other Councils, but also to flag now the importance of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) being used to fund services local to developments, ahead of local government reorganisation. A question was also raised, to be explored further, on how Town and Parish Councils could use CIL.

**RESOLVED that** (unanimously) -

Eastbourne Borough Council recognises that, with the update to the National Planning Policy Framework in December 2024 and reforms to the planning system in England, our area could see more new development on the

Eastbourne Borough Council and Wealden District Council borders coming forward. This will undoubtedly lead to additional pressures on services and infrastructure across the area.

Eastbourne Borough Council will continue to seek to work collaboratively with neighbouring authorities to understand the cross-boundary infrastructure capacities and constraints, and how authorities can work together to address the issues going forward in a way that does not detrimentally impact our borough.

#### **49 Discussion on minutes of council bodies.**

The minutes of the following Council bodies were submitted to the meeting for information:

- Planning Committee – 12 November 2024, 10 December 2024 and 11 February 2025
- Scrutiny Committee – 9 December 2024 and 10 February 2025
- Cabinet – 11 December 2024 and 12 February 2025
- Audit and Governance Committee – 12 December 2024
- Licensing Committee – 17 December 2024, 27 January 2025

Councillor Shore had registered to speak in relation to five minute items, but due to time constraints withdrew three of her requests and spoke in respect of: Minute 40 of the Scrutiny Committee on 9 December 2024 on 'Corporate Performance, Quarter 2 – 2024/25'.

Minute 32 of the Audit and Governance Committee on 12 December 2024 the 'External Auditor's Report on the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statement of Accounts (Backstop)'.

Councillor Holt responded on the questions raised in relation to call handling and the national context for the delay in external audit report.

Councillor Holt moved and Councillor Swansborough seconded acceptance of the minutes.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously) – That the minutes be accepted.

#### **50 Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 21 May 2025 at 6 pm.

The meeting ended at 9.42 pm

Councillor Candy Vaughan (Mayor)