

TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes and report to Council of the meeting of the Committee held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Station Road East, Oxted on the 31st January 2023 at 7.30pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Langton (Chair), Crane (Vice-Chair), B.Black, Botten, Caulcott, Cooper, S.Farr, Groves (substitute in place of Bloore), Jones, Pursehouse and Sayer (substitute in place of Gillman)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Allen, C.Farr and N.White

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors Bloore, Gillman and Hammond

224. ALISON BOOTE

Councillor Sayer paid tribute to Alison Boote (Executive Head of Communities) who had left the Council earlier in the day. Councillor Sayer thanked Alison for her professionalism and dedication to the job which had made her such a highly valued member of staff. All those present joined Councillor Sayer in a round of applause for Alison.

225. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 1ST DECEMBER 2022

These minutes were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

226. INVESTMENT SUB-COMMITTEE – 20TH JANUARY 2023

RESOLVED – that the minutes of this meeting, attached at Appendix A*, be received.

COUNCIL DECISION
(subject to ratification by Council)

RECOMMENDED – that, in respect of Item 4 of the Sub-Committee's minutes, the Capital, Investment and Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24 be approved.

227. WELLBEING PRESCRIPTION CONTRACT 23-24

The Wellbeing Prescription service allowed GPs and other local services to refer residents to a trained adviser to help improve their health and wellbeing. The service was funded by grants from the Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care System (ICS) and covered the Tandridge and Reigate & Banstead council areas. The current contract between the Council (as the employing authority) and the ICS was due to expire at the end of March 2023.

A report was presented with additional information about the service, including performance monitoring and example cases, and a proposal to extend the current contract for a further year. This confirmed that all costs, including the estimated support cost budget for 2023/24 (£161,000) would be funded from a reserve of prior years' accumulated underspends of ICS grants, with no cost implications for the Council's General Fund. Contracts for 2024/25 and beyond would require grants to cover 100% of support costs (e.g. for HR, IT support, office services and finance functions) as well as the direct costs of staffing, equipment, training and specialist software etc. It was also envisaged that the next contract term will be for a minimum of three years.

Members conveyed their appreciation of Officers' efforts to ensure that the continuation of this valued service would not impact on the Council's budgets. However, the need for a more robust performance monitoring regime was acknowledged, including measures to assess the impact of the service upon initial reasons for referral. Officers also explained ongoing efforts to make the service as accessible as possible and confirmed that future provision was not dependent upon the continued availability of specific physical venues.

RESOLVED – that:

- A. the extension of a one-year contract with Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Partnership, until 31st March 2024 be agreed; and
- B. the future work of the wellbeing prescription service be supported to develop an East Surrey Place Social Prescribing development plan, including Primary Care, District and Boroughs, health and social care providers (this will then inform a new contract proposal to be implemented from April 2024).

228. STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 2023/24 DRAFT GENERAL FUND BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

A proposed draft 2023/24 revenue budget and capital programme for services falling under the remit of the committee, together with a revenue budget for corporate items, was presented. The Chief Finance Officer highlighted the principles on which the Council's budget had been based, including avoiding the use of General Fund reserves, and a strategy to:

- grow contingency, given that repeats of the Local Government Financial Settlement for 2023/24 could not be guaranteed in subsequent years; and
- allocate unused contingency to increase reserves

The report confirmed that the £1.1m savings target for the Committee's services and corporate items represented approximately 18% of the Council's net budget, which reflected a desire to target savings towards support services wherever possible and maintain the delivery of front-line services to residents.

Discussion focused on the £230k provision for a staff pay award. While that sum would enable a 3% salary increase for all staff, it was explained that the Chief Executive (in consultation with Staff Conference) had discretion to apply variable percentage increases according to grades, subject to the total cost being contained within the £230k budget.

The following issues were clarified in response to issues raised during the debate:

- Heads of Service had been leading service reviews and had proposed the budgeted savings, having assessed the need to maintain the quality of key services
- it was hoped that customer services costs could be reduced by more residents 'self-serving' via digital channels (however, some Members expressed concern at the prospect of disadvantaging those without internet access or who did not wish to engage via the Council's website)
- robust governance processes were in place to monitor the risks of savings targets not being delivered
- there was a need to be clear (not least to staff) about what the Council was seeking to achieve as a result of the proposed transformation plans, hence the intention to develop a corporate plan (in consultation with stakeholders) to inform both future service planning and a new staff appraisal regime which rewarded good performance
- the setting of fees and charges sat within policy committees' powers 'to resolve', although those already agreed by the Community Services, Housing and Planning Policy Committees, along with those approved by Strategy & Resources, would be included in the Council Book for the 9th February Full Council meeting (as appendices to the respective minutes) and could then be debated
- a review of legal services was currently underway, partly to assess whether an appropriate balance was being struck between expenditure on specialist external legal advice and the provision of services (by the Council's legal team) to third parties - the outcome of the service review would be reported to the Committee
- the under-recovery of court costs in 2022/23 (expected outturn of £86,000 against a budget of £139,770) may reflect a reduction of court cases caused by the pandemic, but the Chief Finance Officer would investigate this further.

ACTION:

Action	Responsible Person	Deadline
Clarification regarding the reason for the under recovery of court costs in 2022/23 against budget	Mark Hak-Sanders	17.02.23

RESOLVED – that:

- A. the Strategy & Resources Committee’s proposed revenue budget for 2023/24 of £6.080m, as shown in Appendices B* and C* (taking account of the pressures and savings) be agreed and it be noted that further allocations will be made to distribute an amount equal to the agreed Council pay award, subject to approval at Full Council;
- B. the fees and charges for the Strategy & Resources Committee, as set out in Appendix D*, be agreed;
- C. the Strategy & Resources Committee’s final capital programme for 2023/24, in the sum of £1.822m for 2023/24, as shown in Appendix E*, be agreed;
- D. the ‘Corporate items draft revenue budget’ for 2023/24 of £0.685m, as shown in Appendices B* and C* be agreed, while noting that the amount set aside for a pay award is £230k, the equivalent of a 3% increase, and will ultimately be distributed to committee budgets; and
- E. the subjective revenue budgets in Appendix C*, showing movements from 2022/23 to 2023/24 and an estimated movement to 2024/25, be noted.

229. FINAL BUDGET 2023/24 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY INCLUDING FUTURE TANDRIDGE PROGRAMME UPDATE

A report was presented with a proposed Council-wide budget for 2023/24 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2024/25. This followed consideration by the other policy committees of their respective elements of the budget and included:

- progress to date in delivering service reviews as part of the Future Tandridge Programme, with updates on key developments since the draft budget was considered by the Committee on the 1st December 2022
- proposals on the level of Council Tax (the precept) to be set by the Council
- the Council’s ‘Section 25’ report, providing confirmation on the robustness of estimates and the adequacy of reserves
- a Future Tandridge Programme Risk Register.

The Chair thanked officers and Members for their work in developing a complex but deliverable budget in the face of considerable cost and funding pressures.

The issue of fees and charges was raised again in the context of whether the increases determined by the other policy committees were equitable. Officers reiterated that the Council Book for the 9th February Full Council meeting would contain all four schedules of the charges (i.e. one for each policy committee).

The proposed 'budget accountability statement' was well received, although Members also identified the need for a transparent scheme of delegation to define the upper limits of amounts which budget managers were authorised to sign off. It was confirmed that this matter would be reported to the Committee in due course as part of a review of Financial Regulations.

Attention was drawn to the fact that the Disabled Facility Grants reserve had grown during 2021/22 and had not been drawn upon during 2022/23. The Chief Finance Officer agreed to discuss this matter with the Head of Housing.

A discussion took place regarding income from car parking charges and, specifically, the intention to introduce a new payment system for the Ellice Road car park in Oxted. The Chief Finance Officer also confirmed that the budget line for on-street parking had been removed following a decision by Surrey County Council to deliver the service (for which they have responsibility) through a county-wide contract. The Chief Finance Officer undertook to discuss the arrangements for off-street parking with the Head of Service and clarify to committee members. He would also investigate the way in which on-street parking charges were agreed now that Surrey County Council's Local Committees had been abolished.

ACTIONS:

	Action	Responsible Person	Deadlines
1.	Provide clarification regarding the increase in Disabled Facilities Grant Reserve.	Mark Hak-Sanders / James Devonshire	TBA
2.	Provide clarification on the arrangements for off-street parking with the Head of Service and clarify to committee members.	Mark Hak-Sanders / Simon Mander	TBA
3.	Investigate the way in which on-street parking charges were agreed now that Surrey County Council's Local Committees has been abolished.	Mark Hak-Sanders	TBA

COUNCIL DECISIONS

(subject to ratification by Council)

RECOMMENDED – that:

- A. it be noted that, for the purpose of section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council formally determines that the increase in Council Tax is not such as to trigger a referendum (i.e. not greater than the higher of £5 or 2.99%);
- B. it be noted that the Local Council Tax Support Scheme is unchanged for financial year 2023/24;
- C. the Parish Councils' precept requirements for 2023/24 at Appendix F* be noted;

- D. it be noted that unavoidable external risks are mitigated through the retention of a general contingency of £0.445m per annum, increased by £327k from 2022/23 (held within the contingency is £74k, generated by the ability to raise Council Tax by 2.99% / £6.90 rather than the previous £5 limit, earmarked as a Cost of Living Fund, to ensure that the Council has an allocation to help residents in need with targeted support as required);
- E. the financial strategy to build the General Fund Reserves using unused contingency be noted, together with the fact that, prior to a decision from DLUHC on the capital dispensation, the General Fund balance at 31st March 2024 is projected to stand at to £2.8m (Appendix G*);
- F. the net revenue budget requirement be set at £11.935million (net cost of services after service specific government grants) for 2023/24 (Appendices H* and I*) subject to confirmation of the Final Local Government Financial Settlement;
- G. the final budget envelopes for each Committee, including the allocation of pressures and savings targets for 2023/24, at Appendices H* and I* be approved;
- H. the £40.4 million proposed three-year Capital Programme (comprising £7.1m General Fund, £1.2m Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and £32.1m Housing Revenue Account (HRA)) of which £19.2 million Capital Budget is for 2023/24 (Appendix J*) be approved;
- I. the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy for 2023/24 to meet the statutory guidelines for the use of such receipts to fund transformation (Appendix K*) be approved;
- J. the total Council Tax Requirement be set at £9.3 million for 2023/24 (this is based on a Council Tax increase of 2.99% to cover core Council services (Appendix L*);
- K. Tandridge District Council sets its precept for Band D Council Tax at £237.88, which represents a 2.99% uplift. (This is a total rise of £0.13p a week from the 2022/23 precept of £230.98. A full list of bands is as follows:

Valuation Band	Annual Amount (£)
A	158.59
B	185.02
C	211.45
D	237.88
E	290.74
F	343.60
G	396.47
H	475.76

230. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023/24

The Localism Act 2011 required Councils to publish annual pay policy statements. A proposed 2023/24 statement for Tandridge was submitted. The Chief Executive provided context on the proposals to link pay progression to performance and achievement of objectives in future.

COUNCIL DECISION
(subject to ratification by Council)

RECOMMENDED – that the Pay Policy Statement, as attached at Appendix M*, be adopted.

231. TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS FOR 2023/24

A proposed timetable of meetings for 2023/24 was submitted.

COUNCIL DECISION
(subject to ratification by Council)

RECOMMENDED – that, notwithstanding the scope for additional meetings to be convened in consultation with relevant committee chairs, the 2023/24 timetable of meetings, attached at Appendix N*, be agreed.

232. OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENTS - GATWICK AND HIGH WEALD AONB

The Committee addressed the need for the Council to make appointments to the outside body positions made vacant by the resignation of former Councillor Liz Lockwood, namely the three Gatwick consultative forums and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Advisory Committee.

COUNCIL DECISION
(subject to ratification by Council)

RECOMMENDED – that the following appointments be made for the remainder of the current municipal year to fill the vacancies arising from the resignation of former Councillor Liz Lockwood:

Outside Body	Councillor
Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee	Mick Gillman Sub: Nicholas White
Gatwick – Noise & Track Monitoring Advisory Group (NaTMAG)	Mick Gillman

Outside Body	Councillor
Gatwick Airport Noise Management Board (EXECUTIVE)	Mick Gillman
Gatwick Airport Noise Management Board (Community Forum)	Mick Gillman
High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Advisory Committee	Charlotte Swann

* Appendices not re-produced here

Rising 9.39 pm