

Cabinet
23 NOVEMBER 2023

Present: Councillors: Martin Boffey (Leader), John Milne (Deputy Leader), Mark Baynham, Colette Blackburn, Ruth Fletcher, Jay Mercer, Sam Raby and James Brookes

Apologies: Councillors: Jon Olson

Also Present: Emma Beard, Philip Circus, Paul Clarke, Tony Hogben, Lynn Lambert, Richard Landeryou, Dennis Livingstone and Belinda Walters

EX/47 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 28 September were approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

EX/48 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

EX/49 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Jay Mercer, Cabinet Member for Environmental Health, Recycling & Waste, stated that the Government had made its announcement on the standardisation of recycling and the introduction of food waste. The Council already met the dry mixed recycling collection requirements mandated for March 2026. With regards to food waste collection, the Council had already started planning the logistics for introducing this service by the 2026 deadline. One major challenge was that all 261 local authorities which do not currently collect food waste would need to introduce the service by the same deadline, putting pressure on the supply chain for the delivery and manufacture of vehicles and caddies. The cost of introducing this service was unknown, given that the Government had not indicated the amount of financial support it would provide, but it was estimated to be up to £1.8m per annum.

Councillor Sam Raby, Cabinet Member for Housing, Communities & Wellbeing, announced that the Council was providing Horsham Matters with family cinema ticket vouchers to distribute with every Christmas food parcel that they deliver over the Christmas period. More people in the district were being affected by the Cost of Living crisis and this was a way to help people have fun, with a visit to The Capitol, during what can be an extremely difficult time financially.

EX/50 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No questions had been received.

EX/51 **UPDATE OF THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL POSITION IN 2023/24 AND
MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE 2024/25 TO 2029/30**

Councillor Mark Baynham, Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources, introduced the report on the Council's financial position in 2023/24 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy. He summarised the reasons for continuing economic pressure and uncertainty, as set out in the report, and stated that a modest overspend at Month 6 was largely due to the larger than anticipated pay settlement and inflationary pressures. The anticipated revenue cost of up to £1.8m per year for introducing food waste collections was an area of uncertainty that could not be confirmed until the level of Government transitional funding was announced.

The Cabinet Member stated that Capital expenditure for the year was forecast to reach 87% of budget (£14.8m), largely due to HDC's Housing purchases. This was a significant improvement on the 43% achieved last year. He also alluded to refurbishments and repairs to assets, including The Capitol and three of the four leisure centres, and the cost implications of the commitment to decarbonisation.

The Cabinet Member concluded that, although it was hard to forecast for the Medium Term, there was an assumption of a steadily worsening bottom line and, when working towards future budgets, finding ways to tackle this would be a key consideration.

In response to comments regarding the Business Rates Pool, Councillor Martin Boffey, Leader of the Council, stated there were benefits in being in the scheme with other Sussex local authorities, and agreed to brief Members on the Business Rates Pool's spending strategy that was being developed.

In response to concerns regarding the anticipated £11m cost of refurbishing The Capitol, the Leader stated that the refurbishment was necessary and the cost was proportionate, given that the previous refurbishment cost £7m approximately 20 years, which was a higher cost when taking inflation into account.

Councillor Jay Mercer, Cabinet Member for Environmental Health, Recycling & Waste, agreed to look at the potential of introducing green waste collection charges as a rolling programme, as was the practice at some local authorities, rather than having an annual subscription date.

RESOLVED

- (i) To note the changes detailed in this report in the Council's financial position in 2023/24 and medium-term financial strategy.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

- (ii) That the charges from 1 April 2024 for the garden waste subscription service are increased from £49 for the first bin to £54 and charge this price for any subsequent bins too.
- (iii) To increase the price of the multi-storey car park day pass tariffs from 1 February 2024 from £5.50 to £8.80 at Piries Place and £7.30 at Swan Walk, and from £3.95 to £5.60 at the Forum car parks.
- iv) Subject to Council approval, support those of working age on Council Tax Support with up to £195 in 2024/25, funded from any 2024/25 Funding Guarantee grant, or reserve and ask Council to approve that this is reflected in the 2024/2025 budget accordingly.
- (v) Subject to the scheme status quo remaining and a similar settlement to 2023/24,
 - (i) approve that the Council remains in the West Sussex Business Rates pool in 2024/25 and
 - (ii) to delegate authority to the Director of Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources to (a) agree the operational details of the pooling arrangements with participating authorities, and, (b) enter into any required documentation to give effect to this proposal.

REASON

- (i) The Council needs to acknowledge the effects that high levels of inflation will have on its financial position both in the short and medium-term. Deficits are predicted unless action is taken on fees and charges. Given the level of uncertainty in the projections, the economy and proposed Government action, the report does not recommend direct action to drastically reduce expenditure at this stage, but does recommend not worsening the revenue position now.
- (ii) and (iii) Council is required to approve fees and charges, and expenditure as per the constitution.
- (iv) Cabinet must approve any such support schemes.
- (v) Remaining in the West Sussex business Rates pool should benefit the County and therefore the district by retaining locally generated business rates, using it to further support the economic regeneration of the wider West Sussex area.

EX/52 **HILLS CEMETERY LODGE REFURBISHMENT AND DECARBONISATION PROJECT**

Councillor Ruth Fletcher, Cabinet Member for Local Economy & Place, advised that the Hills Cemetery Lodge was no longer required operationally and, given its sensitive location, it was not appropriate for temporary housing. This

attractive building would be adapted into a sustainable, accessible residence to provide accommodation not readily available on the market. Additional budget was required to adapt the building to a high quality.

Councillor Sam Raby, Cabinet Member for Housing, Communities & Wellbeing, stated that there was a shortage of accessible living homes and spoke of his wholehearted support for the proposal.

RESOLVED

- (i) To award the contract for the building works to the highest scoring bidder on the terms contained in Appendix A Page 31 Agenda Item 7
- (ii) To delegate authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, to finalise the terms of and enter into the building contract.

REASON

- (i) To comply with the Council's constitutional requirements for approvals.
- (ii) To enable building works to be carried out to Hills Cemetery Lodge.

EX/53 **CREATION OF A NEW HEAD OF SERVICE POST**

Councillor Martin Boffey, Leader of the Council, reminded Members that Council had declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency and that 'Inspiring Greener Futures' was one of the four key priority themes in the Council Plan. Within that priority there was a commitment to HDC being net zero by 2030 and for the district as a whole to be net zero by 2050. Much work had already been undertaken towards these targets and the district-wide Climate Action Strategy would be coming to Cabinet in January for approval.

The Leader stated that, whilst there was a good team of officers leading this work, it was important to have a Head of Service clearly responsible for delivering the Council's priorities for Climate Change and Nature Recovery.

The creation of the post required a slight budgetary increase within the current financial year. It was noted that should further budget changes be necessary they would be considered during the annual budget process.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

That funding of £2,680 be included in the 2023/24 Revenue Budget for the new position of Head of Sustainability and Green Spaces.

REASON

- (i) To ensure that the management of the organisation is best structured to achieve the Council's objectives.
- (ii) Full council is required to approve expenditure outside of the budget.

EX/54 **SHELLEY MEMORIAL PARTNERSHIP**

Councillor James Brookes, Deputy Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture & Green Spaces, stated that the Shelley Memorial Project was a local community interest company whose aim was to create a lasting public memorial to the poet Shelley, who had grown up at Field Place, Warnham.

HDC had been working with the Project for several years, providing a site and helping them find a suitable artist. This support had been on an ad hoc basis and the proposed Memorandum of Understanding, agreed with the Partnership, would clarify the arrangements between the parties, making it more streamlined and efficient. HDC had already committed £10,000 of funding towards the project, provided the Project achieved its funding targets.

RESOLVED

- (i) To agree the formation of a partnership between Horsham District Council (HDC) and The Shelley Memorial Project Community Interest Company (SMP).
- (ii) To delegate authority to the Director of Communities, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, to finalise the terms of and enter into any required documentation to give effect to the partnership and the subsequent transfer of the memorial to HDC.

REASON

To enable HDC to support the SMP, enabling the group's vision of a lasting memorial to the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley to be realised. To provide a location within Horsham Park for the resulting sculpture and to take on ownership of the artwork once it is installed.

EX/55 **QUEEN STREET PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS**

Councillor Ruth Fletcher, Cabinet Member for Local Economy & Place, introduced the report on the proposed improvements relating to the pedestrianised forecourt on the corner of Queen Street (A281) and Queensway. It would create a more attractive gateway into the town and address issues caused by parking on the footway associated with take-away outlets.

The works were included in the Council's Annual Plan and the cost of £70,000 would be vired from alternative unspent capital budgets.

The Cabinet Member expressed her disappointment that a proposed change to parking restrictions to allow for a scooter bay with changed hours of operation had been rejected by WSCC. However, the planting of trees, relocating of bollards and seating would improve the area and prevent cars parking on the pavement.

RESOLVED

- (i) To approve the works described in the report.
- (ii) To delegate authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, to agree contractual terms and award the contract to the winning contractor.

REASON

- (i) To improve infrastructure to stop vehicles from driving on the pedestrian area in around the parade of shops
- (ii) To install sustainable green landscaping by changing out large planter boxes with planted trees.

EX/56

SWAN WALK CAR PARK WORKS - CONTRACT AWARD AND BUDGET ALLOCATION

Councillor Ruth Fletcher, Cabinet Member for Local Economy & Place, explained that a further capital budget was needed so that the works to the top deck of Swan Walk carpark could be completed. After the September Cabinet meeting, when it was agreed to award a contract for the urgent works, removal of the top deck membrane had exposed an unexpectedly large area of screed in need of repair. The previously approved budget was no longer sufficient for the amount of work required. A contract needed to be awarded to the winning bidder so that further work could be carried out quickly to prevent further deterioration of the substrate and possible deterioration of the concrete structure.

The Cabinet Member and Leader of the Council both thanked officers for briefing Members in advance of the meeting to answer a number of questions that had been raised at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Paul Clarke, Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, fully supported the proposal because of the need to deal with the problem as quickly as possible to limit the damage to the structure.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

- (i) That a further capital budget amount of £298,845 is approved to enable the contract to be awarded to the winning bidder.

RESOLVED

Subject to Council's approval of (i) above:

- (ii) To approve the award of the contract to the winning bidder (in relation to the Swan Walk car park top deck works), subject to Council approving the allocation of funds for this award
- (iii) To delegate authority to the Director of Resources in consultation with the Head of Legal & Democratic Services to finalise the terms and conditions of and enter into the Contract on the terms contained in Appendix 1 ("the Contract")

REASON

- (i) To enable the award of the contract to the winning bidder which will facilitate the completion of the Works.
- (ii) It is expected that the total value of the project will be £648,845 and therefore, Council approval is required to award this contract.

EX/57 **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

There were no matters currently outstanding for consideration.

EX/58 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan was noted.

EX/59 **TO CONSIDER MATTERS OF SPECIAL URGENCY**

There were no matters of special urgency to be considered.

The meeting closed at 6.20 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN