

Public Document Pack

Council 13 DECEMBER 2023

Present: Councillors: David Skipp (Chairman), Nigel Emery (Vice-Chairman), Tony Bevis, Martin Boffey, Colette Blackburn, James Brookes, Jon Campbell, Philip Circus, Paul Clarke, Mike Croker, Joy Dennis, Len Ellis-Brown, Victoria Finnegan, Claudia Fisher, Ruth Fletcher, Chris Franke, Nick Grant, Joan Grech, Kasia Greenwood, Warwick Hellowell, Alex Jeffery, Liz Kitchen, Lynn Lambert, Richard Landeryou, Dennis Livingstone, Alan Manton, Nicholas Marks, Jay Mercer, John Milne, Colin Minto, Roger Noel, Jon Olson, Josh Potts, John Trollope, Clive Trott and Belinda Walters

Apologies: Councillors: Mark Baynham, Emma Beard, Peter van der Borgh, Anthony Frankland, Tony Hogben, Joanne Knowles, Sam Raby, Jonathan Taylor, Mike Wood and Tricia Youtan

Absent: Councillors: Sam Bateman

CO/65 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 11 October, and the extraordinary meeting of the Council held on 23 November were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CO/66 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

CO/67 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Martin Boffey, Leader of the Council, announced that Councillor Chris Franke has been appointed as the Deputy Cabinet Member for Housing, Communities and Wellbeing.

On behalf of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Communities and Wellbeing, the Leader announced that the Low Income Family Tracker system (LIFT) had begun to have a positive impact on residents in the District. A number of individuals and households that had not been claiming disability payments and pension credits were identified. Action had been taken to ensure these payments are made and funding was claimed. Households who were eligible to apply for Southern Water's 'WaterSure' scheme had been written to, as well as families who may qualify for free school meals.

Councillor Jon Olson, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture & Green Spaces, announced the events that were due to take place in the town. The events in the current week included Museum Lates, a Christmas concert by Horsham Churches Together, and festive performances on the bandstand. On Christmas

Eve, the last market of the season would take place, as well as a free grotto for children to meet Santa and a disco at the bandstand.

Councillor Jay Mercer, Cabinet Member for Environmental Health, Recycling & Waste, announced that a new app would be launched that would allow residents to receive notifications about their bin collections. It was anticipated that the launch would take place next week, however there was a reliance on partners to enable the launch. The app would have further functionality, which would be investigated further in the coming year. Members were asked to share details of the app with residents.

Councillor John Milne, Cabinet Member for Planning & Infrastructure, announced that following the approval of the draft Local Plan for Regulation 19, the revised National Planning Policy Framework was due to be published in the current week. It was thought that it was unlikely that the publication would affect the Local Plan, however an explanatory note would be produced by the Strategic Planning team, if required.

CO/68 **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

No questions had been received.

CO/69 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET**

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

Councillor Martin Boffey, Leader of the Council, introduced the report. An overspend was anticipated for the current financial year, however steps had been taken to reduce it. This included a proposal to increase the charges for the garden waste collection service, as well as the car park day pass tariffs, that had not been increased for a number of years. An extension to the Council Tax Support payment for 2024/25 was proposed, to also include claimants of pension age, which would allow the scheme to be administered through the system in time for annual billing, for efficiency. It was noted that there were significant additional costs expected in the medium term. This included the cost of food waste collection, repairs to leisure centres and the Capitol, as well as decarbonisation of Council buildings. It was confirmed that a proportion of these costs could be funded from reserves.

The forecast was based on best assumptions, and the medium term was uncertain. It appeared that there would be an increasing deficit, and as such action to address this was being taken. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Ruth Fletcher.

RESOLVED

- (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) That the price of the multi-storey car park day pass tariffs be increased 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) That those of working age and pension age on Council Tax Support be supported with up to £195 in 2024/25, funded from any 2024/25 Funding Guarantee grant, or reserve and 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) That it be approved that the Council remains in the West Sussex Business Rates pool in 2024/25 and
 - (ii) That authority be delegated 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.

REASONS

- (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.

CREATION OF A NEW HEAD OF SERVICE POST

Councillor Colette Blackburn, Cabinet Member for Climate Action & Nature Recovery, introduced the report. The creation of the Head of Service post would

demonstrate the commitment to climate action, and having the appropriate officer structure in place to deliver against the priority was crucial.

Councillor Jon Olson, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture & Green Spaces, seconded the proposal and spoke in support.

RESOLVED

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

REASONS

- 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.

CO/70 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES**

POLLING PLACES AND POLLING DISTRICTS REVIEW

Councillor Belinda Walters, Chairman of Governance Committee, introduced the report. There were changes to four polling places, and the polling districts within Cowfold, Shermanbury and West Grinstead were to be renamed. The changes were welcomed as it was felt that the allocated polling places would be more convenient for residents. Councillor Tony Bevis seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED

That the revised schedule of polling districts and polling places, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved for all elections.

REASONS

- (i) To ensure that polling districts, polling places and polling stations are relevant and fit for purpose.
- (ii) To ensure statutory compliance.

CO/71 **REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Councillor Tony Bevis provided an update as the representative on the West Sussex County Council Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee. The committee members had received training and conducted an evidence gathering exercise to consider the mental health provision in the County. There was also an inspection due from the Care Quality Commission. Service shortcomings had been identified, and action plans prepared. The Committee would receive updates on the progress of these plans. The introduction of the Integrated Care Board and the budget for the upcoming year was also discussed.

Councillor Clive Trott, the Armed Forces Champion and representative for the South East Reserve Forces and Cadets Association gave an update on the reduced reserve forces and cadets within the District. There was a drive to increase the Combined Cadet Forces in state schools, and Members were asked to advise Councillor Trott if they knew of any schools that would be interested. Support was needed for Steyning Air Training Corps, and a conference was due in February in relation to NHS support to veterans.

Councillor Liz Kitchen, the representative on the Gatwick Airport Consultative Forum, advised that the Development Consent Order was being considered by the Inspector. There was a potential change to the noise preferential route which could have an adverse impact on residents, particularly in the South of the District. The relevant Cabinet Member would be involved at the relevant stage.

CO/72 **NOTICE OF MOTION**

The following motion was moved by Councillor Claudia Fisher, and seconded by Councillor Colette Blackburn:

'England is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. This fact is officially recognised by the Government, in the form of a commitment to create a national Nature Recovery Network (NRN) which will be based on the Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) mandated by the Environment Act 2021.

An aspirational Nature Recovery Network has been mapped for the District. This is largely based around waterways, especially rivers which, by themselves, are crucially important as wildlife corridors and as habitats. But to deliver in this role within the NRN, our rivers need to flow naturally through the landscape, with curves and bends, flood plains and natural river margins and banks. The natural river margins and banks, including the wider riparian area, provide distinct habitats and protect the river against runoff of pollutants, sedimentation and erosion of the riverbank. Good water quality is essential for wildlife and for people.

Horsham District hosts two main rivers and their associated watersheds. Both the Western Adur and the Arun rise and start their journeys in our District. The journey of a third river, the Rother (a river of great significance for the South Downs National Park) finishes when it joins the Arun north of Hardham.

In 2019, every river in England failed to meet quality tests for pollution. Here, in Horsham, the Council is already working hard on turning that around and showing its intention to be a leading light in nature recovery with the Wilder Horsham District initiative, its involvement in the Adur River Recovery project and its partnership with the Weald to Waves initiative.

We wish to ask for better official recognition of the importance of our rivers' health. We are in a position now to move faster towards a world where there is a healthier balance between humans and the natural world so that we can ensure that decisions and policies made today hold fast for the health and happiness of future generations of the rivers' people, flora and fauna.

In doing this, we are recognising our crucial role in nature's recovery in our District and beyond.

This Council recognises:

- (a) The importance of the rivers Rother, Arun and Adur to the wellbeing and health of Horsham District's communities, businesses, agriculture and visitors and, in doing so, acknowledges the need to protect these rivers by supporting and maintaining their healthy flora, fauna and complex ecosystems.*

It therefore commits to:

- (b) The development of a 'Rivers Charter' (the terms of which will be approved by Horsham District Council) which (if viable) will build on the work that is already taking place in the District. As such, the Council would like to work alongside the Arun and Rother River Trust, the Ouse and Adur River Trust, the Adur River Recovery project, the Sussex Wildlife Trust, the South Downs National Park Authority, the Farm Clusters and landowners, as well as other stakeholders, so our rivers, our communities and the natural environment, of which we are the custodians, can thrive and flourish in perpetuity.'*

The Motion was debated. During the debate, it was suggested that the Council was already carrying out, in full, the matters for which it has powers and duties for. The issue of pollution and water quality was highlighted, and the need to work with Southern Water. Concerns were raised in relation to work required with other bodies, and it was suggested that measurable problems needed to be identified.

Members also spoke in support of the motion, and suggested that working with other organisations should produce better outcomes. Members raised the issues that have been experienced with flooding, in the District, and that a focus on rivers should have beneficial outcomes in relation this. It was suggested that the Charter would be a public way of recognising the work that is already being carried out, and would encourage further momentum.

Following a vote, the motion was declared CARRIED.

The Chairman, in accordance with Rule 4a.14(e), asked Members to vote as to whether to take the next Motion, as detailed on the agenda, as 30 minutes had elapsed. The motion was LOST.

CO/73 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

No questions had been received.

CO/74 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.17 pm having commenced at 6.00 pm

CHAIRMAN

This page is intentionally left blank