

Minutes of a Meeting of Mid Sussex District Council held on 16 December 2015 from 7.00 pm to 7.45 pm.

Present: Councillors:

Peter Reed (Chairman)
Bruce Forbes (Vice-Chairman)

John Allen	David Dorking	Peter Martin
Jonathan Ash-Edwards	Sandy Ellis	Edward Matthews
Andrew Barrett-Miles	Steven Hansford	Norman Mockford
Edward Belsey	Ginny Heard	Pru Moore
John Belsey	Chris Hersey	Howard Muddin
Margaret Belsey	Margaret Hersey	Kirsty Page
Liz Bennett*	Colin Holden	Geoff Rawlinson
Anne Boutrup*	Anne Jones MBE	Robert Salisbury
Pete Bradbury	Chris King	Linda Stockwell
Heidi Brunsdon*	Jim Knight	Dick Sweatman
Kevin Burke*	Jacqui Landriani	Mandy Thomas-Atkin*
Cherry Catharine*	Andrew Lea*	Colin Trumble
Richard Cherry	Anthea Lea	Neville Walker
Rod Clarke	Andrew MacNaughton	Garry Wall
Phillip Coote	Bob Mainstone	Anthony Watts Williams
Ruth de Mierre	Gordon Marples	Norman Webster
Tony Dorey	Gary Marsh	John Wilkinson
		Peter Wyan

*Absent

58. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC – RULE 9

None.

59. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 11 November 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

61. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

62. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman informed Members that he had attended a number of civic engagements this month and that they were available for Members to view on the website.

63. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT PANEL ON MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES FOR 2016/17

Mr Anthony Cox, Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel, introduced the report to Council. He began by thanking the previous Panel Members, Mr Tony Bellringer, who had served on the Panel since its inception in 2001, and Mr Adam Haynes for their hard work. Mr Cox also thanked his new colleagues on the Panel, Mr Neil Gershon and Mr John Rowe for their fresh insight and also thanked MSDC officers, including Hannah Martin, for their administrative support.

He advised Members that the Panel had set out to understand the changes in workload and committee structure, and balance that against comparable data from other local authorities collected by South East Employers, at Appendix C in the report. He thanked Members for their high engagement in the Panel's work.

He stated that the Panel were recommending a 2.5% increase per annum in the Basic Allowance for the next four years in order to decrease the gap between allowances and inflation since 2001. He also said that the Panel recognised the importance of the work of Planning Committees and the impact this has for all residents and therefore recommended a 2.5% increase per annum for the next four years for Planning Committee Chairmen. In addition to this, the Panel proposes a new allowance for Vice-Chairmen of Planning Committees in recognition of the extra work and training.

He ended by saying as residents of Mid Sussex the Panel felt that the recommendations were entirely appropriate. He commended the report to Council.

The Chairman thanked the Panel for their diligent and fair work and asked the Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery to respond. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery imparted thanks to the previous Members of the Panel for their work and Mr Cox for his considerable experience. He also thanked the new Members of the Panel for the added value and insight they had brought to the work.

He reminded Members that the Panel was made up of independent persons who were residents of the district and that they had an important role in balancing the considerations of Members against demands and constraints. He welcomed the high engagement from Members who helped the Panel understand their role and workloads.

The Cabinet Member reminded Members that Mid Sussex led the way five years ago by freezing Members Allowances during the height of the recession and agreed that had been the right decision to make. However, he felt that now was the time to begin to bridge the gap between Members Allowances and inflation and quoted the report stating "As since 2001/2 the Basic Allowance has increased by just over 12%, yet inflation over the same period has increased by over 31%, a net deterioration of almost 19%." He felt the recommendation for the increase in Basic Allowance sent a clear message that financial constraint should not be a barrier for anyone who might wish to serve as a councillor.

He also felt it was right to recognise the difficult work of the Planning Committee Chairmen & Vice-Chairmen and the amount of evidence they need to consider and weigh to make hard decisions. He also said that it was right for the Panel to set out a four year plan. He therefore proposed to move Members to agree the recommendations in full. This was seconded by Councillor Bradbury.

One Member said that the report was commendable but sought further clarification on the Dependent Carer's Allowance. Mr Cox replied that the previous year the Panel had done a lot of work in assessing comparable data and rates people might expect to pay for caring for dependent children while Members attended meetings and the Panel had agreed that the figure of £15 was appropriate. The Panel felt that personal circumstances should not disbar individuals from being able to serve as councillors.

Another Member said the report was very thorough and was pleased to see Planning Committee Chairmen & Vice-Chairmen being recognised for the extra demands on Members' time.

A Member added to the comments made by the Cabinet Member and thanked the work of the Panel and the officers assisting the Panel.

As there were no more comments, the Chairman moved Members to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That Council agrees the recommendations of the Panel for a scheme of allowances for the financial year 2016/17.

64. COUNCIL TAXBASE 2016/17

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery introduced the report and advised that this was part of the Council's work in setting the Budget. He said that the taxbase had been affected by the reduction in Council Tax Support Claims which indicated that people's earnings were increasing. He moved Members to agree the recommendations and this was seconded by the Leader of the Council.

As there were no further questions, the Chairman took Members to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That pursuant to the Head of Finance's report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2003, the amounts calculated by Mid Sussex District Council as its tax base for the whole area for the year 2016/17 shall be 57,975.60 and for each parish area for the year 2016/17 shall be:

Albourne	303.1
Ansty & Staplefield	876.1
Ardingly	694.1
Ashurst Wood	732.9
Balcombe	809.2
Bolney	616.7
Burgess Hill	11,400.3
Cuckfield	1,649.3
East Grinstead	10,920.6
Fulking	143.5
Hassocks	3,329.1

Haywards Heath	11,270.1
Horsted Keynes	683.3
Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common	2,804.9
Lindfield	2,814.7
Lindfield Rural	1,326.9
Newtimber	38.4
Poynings	135.7
Pyecombe	111.0
Slaugham	1,159.5
Turners Hill	596.6
Twineham	135.2
West Hoathly	920.5
Worth	4,503.9

65. STATEMENT OF GAMBLING POLICY

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee for Leisure and Community introduced the report and advised that the Committee had considered the policy in detail on 15 September 2015. She advised that the Committee had welcomed the section in the policy concerning Door Supervisors and were reassured that these staff had to comply with industry codes of practice.

She advised that following the meeting the policy had gone out to public consultation and the Council had received two representations regarding the Council's proposal in its draft policy that very careful consideration be given to applications from gaming establishments which would be on routes to school. After taking legal advice, she confirmed that this approach could leave the Council open to a legal challenge and that there are sufficient controls in place under Section 14 of the policy to protect vulnerable groups. She moved Members to the recommendation. This was seconded by the Cabinet Member for Health and Community who said that the policy reflects the careful scrutiny and consultation as well as being in line with national policy.

One Member sought further clarification on the legal advice concerning the consideration of exposing children and young people to gambling with gambling premises in close proximity to school routes. The Solicitor to the Council advised that the legal advice given was correct. The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee for Leisure and Community provided further advice saying that the issue lay in part in the definition of "route to school" and that there could be multiple routes and assured Members that there were proper controls in place to protect vulnerable children and adults.

Another Member raised concerns about fixed betting terminals and noted that the policy complied with national legislation but asked the Leader if he could lobby the Minister for more stringent policies. The Cabinet Member for Health and Community replied by saying he shared his concerns about fixed betting terminals and how people can become easily addicted, however, the policy was written to comply with national legislation. He advised that he would note the Members concerns to take the matter further with Government.

As there were no further questions, the Chairman took Members to the recommendation which was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That Council approves the policy for Gambling at Appendix 1 for implementation on 31 January 2016.

66. ADOPTION OF ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING POLICY

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee for Leader and Service Delivery introduced the report. He advised that the Committee had considered the policy in detail at a meeting on 18 November 2015. He said that while the Council is not legally obliged to have such a policy, it was agreed that it would be prudent and best practice to adopt the Anti-Money Laundering Policy. He concluded by saying that the policy before Members was a tried and tested approach used by other local authorities and tailored for Mid Sussex and moved Members to agree the recommendation.

This was seconded by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery who agreed that the policy had been fully debated and that as the Council handles vast sums of public money it was important to adopt best practices.

As there were no further comments, the Chairman took Members to the recommendation which was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That Council approves the Anti-Money Laundering Policy.

67. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2016/17

The Chairman introduced the programme of meetings for the forthcoming year and these were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That Council approves the draft programme of meetings for 2016/17.

68. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET – 30 NOVEMBER 2015

The Chairman took Members to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

That Council agreed to:-

- (1) transfer £12,000 grant income relating to Housing Rent in Advance Scheme to Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 21 of the report;
- (2) transfer windfall income as set out in paragraph 22 of the report to General Reserve;

- (3) transfer £50,000 from the revenue underspend to the Asset Management Reserve;
- (4) transfer £50,000 from the revenue underspend to the Community and Economic Development Fund Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 23 of the report;
- (5) approve the variations to the Capital Programme contained in paragraph 30 of the report in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure rule B4; and
- (6) to finance the purchase of land in the North of the District and at the Brow Burgess Hill, inclusive of purchase costs and taxes in the sum of £730,000 to be drawn from the General Reserve.

69. REPORT OF THE LEADER

The Leader advised that he had recently chaired a meeting of the Mid Sussex Partnership Board which continues work with local stakeholders.

He also provided Members with an update on the Devolution work and advised that the two bids the Council is involved with (Three Southern Counties, 3SC, and Greater Brighton) will go before the Minister for consideration on 14 January 2016. He said that shortly after this date he would arrange for another Member Workshop to update Members on the latest information.

70. REPORT OF CABINET MEMBERS

Report of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery

The Deputy Leader began by informing Members that following the Spending Review publication it had confirmed that Revenue Support Grant would disappear by the end of the current term. He advised that the Council had prepared for this eventuality and were moving towards financial independence. It was also noted, in the Spending Review, that New Homes Bonus would remain but would take a reduced form and that more information would be released with the Financial Settlement.

He reminded Members that the Draft Corporate Plan and Budget papers would be published and circulated shortly and a Member Workshop would be held on 6 January 2016 at 6:30pm. The Draft Corporate Plan and Budget would then be considered by the Scrutiny Committee for Leader and Service Delivery on 12 January 2016.

The Deputy Leader informed Members that at the recent meeting of the CenSus Joint Committee, Adur District Council had delivered a report appraising the different options they are considering in delivering their Revenues and Benefits service. He advised that one of these options would involve leaving the CenSus Partnership to join Worthing Borough Council. He said that this was not unexpected and was no reflection on the CenSus service which Mid Sussex District Council delivers on behalf of the partnership. It was noted that further work would need to take place before a final decision was made.

Report of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Property

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Property updated Members on the Broadband Voucher Scheme for small businesses. He said that the scheme had been successful with 68 vouchers being issued to Mid Sussex businesses totalling £33,929. He advised that Coast 2 Capital is now promoting a Digital Connectivity Pilot Fund which is aimed at rural business estates and clusters in West Sussex and that the scheme was open until 15 January 2016.

Report of the Cabinet Member for Planning

The Cabinet Member for Planning reported that the Crawley Down and Burgess Hill Neighbourhood Plans had both successfully passed through referendum. He also advised that the consultation on the Focused Amendments to the District Plan would be extended until 15 January 2016.

Report of the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Sustainability

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Sustainability wished to thank the Council's partners, Serco, The Landscape Group and Places for People Leisure for all their work in providing services throughout the year. She remarked residents often say how happy they are with the service they receive, particularly during the Christmas holidays. She also wished to note her thanks to the Head of Leisure and Sustainability for his work in overseeing these contracts.

Report of the Cabinet Member for Health and Community

The Cabinet Member for Health and Community began by updating Members on the Princess Royal Hospital. He advised that the hospital will become a centre for hip surgery, Stroke rehabilitation and urology services.

He advised that along with officers he had recently attended a CCG information session about a planned Emergency Treatment Centre at Crawley Hospital which will also provide support for elderly residents in the north of the district.

The Cabinet Member reported that he had also attended several meetings including a Mid Sussex Liaison Group Networking event, a Health and Wellbeing Showcase event at County Hall North and a "Family Support Networks" workshop event at Clair Hall. In addition, he advised that officers had attended a multi-agency safeguarding hub briefing and information will be disseminated throughout the organisation.

He advised that at a recent Emergency Planning meeting West Sussex County Council provided a presentation on a pilot response mechanism for parishes to report impacts of adverse weather in order that a database of information can be created. He urged Members to encourage parish colleagues to take part in this project.

He provided an update on the latest Mid Sussex Partnership Board meeting which included information from West Sussex County Council on a new structure within the Safer West Sussex Partnership, and the Board also heard about a new initiative "Through the Gate", a service being delivered to prisoners in order to combat re-offence.

The Cabinet Member also attended the Affinity Sutton Resident Scrutiny Board

meeting where details of a business case to merge Affinity Sutton and Circle Housing was discussed. He advised that there would be consultation with residents and partner organisations.

He ended by thanking Members for their attendance at recent training sessions and said that officers made a great effort to ensure the training was informative and interesting.

71. QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.2

None.

Chairman