

Minutes of a Meeting of Mid Sussex District Council held on 28 February 2018 from 7.00 pm to 7.42 pm.

Present: Councillors:

Bruce Forbes (Chairman)
Phillip Coote (Vice-Chairman)

Jonathan Ash-Edwards
Andrew Barrett-Miles
Edward Belsey
John Belsey*
Margaret Belsey
Liz Bennett
Michelle Binks
Anne Boutrup*
Pete Bradbury
Heidi Brunsdon*
Cherry Catharine
Richard Cherry
Rod Clarke*
Ruth de Mierre
Tony Dorey
David Dorking*
Sandy Ellis*
Claire Fussell

Steven Hansford
Sue Hatton*
Ginny Heard*
Chris Hersey
Margaret Hersey
Colin Holden
Anne Jones MBE*
Jim Knight*
Jacqui Landriani
Andrew Lea
Anthea Lea
Judy Llewellyn-Burke
Andrew MacNaughton
Gordon Marples
Gary Marsh*
Edward Matthews

Norman Mockford*
Pru Moore
Howard Mundin
Kirsty Page*
Geoff Rawlinson*
Peter Reed
Robert Salisbury*
Linda Stockwell
Dick Sweatman
Mandy Thomas-Atkin
Colin Trumble*
Neville Walker
Garry Wall
Anthony Watts Williams
Norman Webster
Rex Whittaker
John Wilkinson
Peter Wyan*

*Absent

1. OPENING PRAYER

The opening prayer was read by the Vice-Chairman.

2. TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 9

None

3. TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 31 JANUARY 2018.

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 31 January 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY MATTER ON THE AGENDA

During item 8, Councillor Bradbury and Councillor Andrew Lea declared personal interests as Members of West Sussex County Council when they spoke on the item.

5. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AGREES TO TAKE AS URGENT BUSINESS

None.

6. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman drew Members attention to his recent engagements which are available to view online.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET – 19 FEBRUARY 2018

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Growth introduced the report which was seconded by the Leader. As there were no Members wishing to speak the Chairman took Members to the recommendations which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

Council agreed:

- (i) that £28,675 be transferred to Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 22;
- (ii) that £9,202 be transferred to Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 23;
- (iii) that £37,930 be transferred to Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 24;
- (iv) that £83,403 be transferred to Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 25;
- (v) that windfall income as set out in paragraph 26 of this report be transferred to General Reserve;
- (vi) that £14,176 be transferred to Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraph 27;
- (vii) that £734,696 is transferred from the funds earmarked for 'SAMM in perpetuity' within General Reserve to the SAMM fees Specific Reserve as detailed in paragraphs 28 & 29;
- (viii) the variations to the Capital Programme contained in paragraph 54 in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure rule B4.

8. CORPORATE PLAN AND BUDGET 2018/19

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Economic Growth introduced the report, thanking the Scrutiny Committee, Members and Officers for their efforts in producing a strong budget and Corporate Plan which supports local communities, provides modern services and facilitates work to promote sustainable economic growth in the District.

He highlighted that the central government grant to the Council has been reduced from £6.5m in 2010 to zero in 2018/19 and therefore the Council has achieved financial independence for the first time. He informed Members that the Council has made representations on the pressure which could be faced in 2019/20 when the

Government forecasts a negative grant, and noted that the Secretary of State has committed to reviewing the situation.

The Deputy Leader drew Members attention to some key areas contained within the plan:

- 1) A proposed 3.2% increase in Council Tax.
- 2) A £1.8m Capital Programme including modernisation and upgrading projects which will have a direct impact on communities across the District.
- 3) The redesign of the Revenues and Benefits Service, making better use of technology to meet the needs of Mid Sussex residents.
- 4) Significant support to community groups through Cabinet Grants.
- 5) Resources provided to fund temporary accommodation and ways in which the Council can influence housing more broadly across the District.
- 6) Projects to build stronger and resilient communities such as the upgrade of the CCTV arrangements in partnership with Sussex Police and Town Councils.
- 7) The work undertaken to facilitate planned and coordinated sustainable economic growth, for example taking advantage of the Government's increase in planning fees to support the Council's planning function, supporting the Burgess Hill growth programme, and the development of an Economic Strategy.

A Member commented that the proposed increase in Council Tax should be seen in context of the past 5 years freeze in Council Tax, which has resulted in benefits to local residents. He also noted councils' ongoing financial pressures related to social care, which need to be tackled by Central Government and not just at District level.

The Deputy Leader acknowledged that the increase in Council Tax should be seen in the context of the past freeze and noted that the proposed 3.2% increase which is a common position of Councils this year, would still place Mid Sussex as the third lowest Council Tax in the Sussex area. In terms of social care he highlighted the importance of the Council's early intervention work and the work carried out to consider the wider environment and the options the Council has to influence the position.

A Member asked for an update on the Council's position regarding alternatives to temporary accommodation. The Deputy Leader confirmed that the Cabinet understands the importance of the issue and is looking at options of how temporary accommodation can be provided directly. A business case with cost proposals will be brought to Members as soon as possible.

A Member queried the significant expenditure assigned to the changes in the Revenues and Benefits service, and the significant processing charges related to the cashless carpark ticket machines. He also raised concern for Hassocks residents regarding the increase in Council Tax, taken alongside the Parish Council's decision to increase its precept by 45%. He felt that there should be more oversight of the Parish Council's decision.

The Deputy Leader acknowledged that there will be a cost in modernising the Revenues and Benefit's Service but that the increase in technology will result in cost benefits in the long term. Processing claims will be less labour intensive and the online service will reduce the potential for error, therefore having an impact on the DWP clawback costs.

Regarding concerns over the cashless parking option, he noted that the transaction costs will be monitored in detail by the Cabinet Member. By providing more options for payment, there is the potential to see an increased use of the car parks which would result in increased revenue. He also confirmed that the project will not require residents to provide their vehicle registration number when purchasing tickets.

In response to the increase in precept by Hassocks Parish Council he noted that it was each Parish's right to make its own decisions on precepts and be accountable to residents in their reasons behind the decision. He highlighted that Ministers have commented in recent years on the need for Parishes to show restraint and justify expenditure.

A number of Members commended the work invested in creating a robust Corporate Plan and Budget which provided a good foundation for progress to be measured by the Council and Residents.

The report was seconded by the Leader who thanked everyone involved in setting a budget to be proud of, one which is transparent and open to examination by residents.

With regard to the increase in Council Tax he acknowledged that a freeze was appropriate during times of economic recession but that the time was right for an increase to ensure the Council has resilience to face challenges. He noted the importance of having a strong vision for the future and being able to demonstrate to the tax payer the ways in which Council delivers value for money.

He concluded that the budget is the third one of the current administration and it sets the scene for the next administration in 2019, building a legacy for the future with a solid foundation, clear plans and ambitions. The challenge for the coming year is to deliver on those ambitions.

The Chairman took Members to a recorded vote in accordance with the budget regulations:

	For	Against	Abstained
Councillor Ash-Edwards	✓		
Councillor Barrett-Miles	✓		
Councillor Edward Belsey	✓		
Councillor Margaret Belsey	✓		
Councillor Liz Bennett	✓		
Councillor Michelle Binks	✓		
Councillor Pete Bradbury	✓		
Councillor Cherry Catharine	✓		
Councillor Richard Cherry	✓		
Councillor Phillip Coote	✓		
Councillor Ruth De Mierre	✓		

Councillor Tony Dorey	✓		
Councillor Bruce Forbes	✓		
Councillor Claire Fussell	✓		
Councillor Steve Hansford	✓		
Councillor Chris Hersey	✓		
Councillor Margaret Hersey	✓		
Councillor Colin Holden	✓		
Councillor Jacqui Landriani	✓		
Councillor Andrew Lea	✓		
Councillor Anthea Lea	✓		
Councillor Judy Llewellyn-Burke	✓		
Councillor Andrew MacNaughton	✓		
Councillor Gordon Marples	✓		
Councillor Edward Matthews	✓		
Councillor Pru Moore	✓		
Councillor Howard Muddin	✓		
Councillor Peter Reed	✓		
Councillor Linda Stockwell	✓		
Councillor Dick Sweatman	✓		
Councillor Mandy Thomas-Atkin	✓		
Councillor Neville Walker	✓		
Councillor Garry Wall	✓		
Councillor Anthony Watts Williams	✓		
Councillor Norman Webster	✓		
Councillor Rex Whittaker	✓		
Councillor John Wilkinson	✓		

The 37 Members present voted in support.

RESOLVED

Council resolved to approve the Corporate Plan and Budget for 2018/19 as set out in the report.

The Meeting was closed at 7:42 pm.

Chairman