

**Minutes of a meeting of Scrutiny Committee People and
Communities
held on Wednesday, 24th January, 2024
from 7.00 pm**

Present: S Hatton (Chairman)
P Lucraft (Vice-Chair)

A Bashar
P Brown
R Clarke

D Eggleton
S Ellis
J Knight

D Pascoe
J Russell

Absent: Councillors J Mockford

Also Present: Councillors P Chapman, J Hitchcock and M Kennedy

Also Present as Cabinet Member: Councillors A Bennett, AM Cooke, R Eggleston, I Gibson, C Hobbs

**1 TO NOTE SUBSTITUTES IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE
RULE 4 -SUBSTITUTES AT MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES ETC.**

None.

2 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from Councillor Mockford.

**3 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS IN RESPECT
OF ANY MATTER ON THE AGENDA.**

None.

**4 TO BE AGREED BY GENERAL AFFIRMATION THE MINUTES OF THE
PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2023.**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2023 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

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

None.

6 DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN AND BUDGET FOR 2024/25.

Kathryn Hall, Chief Executive introduced the report, thanking the cross-party working group for their help in developing the proposals. In acknowledging the unprecedented challenges that the Council faces in terms of service delivery and finance she also

highlighted the benefits of a prudent financial strategy. This has enabled the Council to continue to make positive choices for residents, such as the provision for 123 recycling and protecting funds available for community grants. It was also noted that a Government announcement on a provisional Local Government finance settlement is welcome but in terms of the funds available it is unlikely to significantly affect the proposed budget.

The Chairman reiterated thanks to the working group for their contributions in shaping the proposals and thanked the officers for their hard work in preparing the budget. The Chairman then took the Committee through the report by section.

Under Section 3, Judy Holmes, Deputy Chief Executive provided a summary of the significant achievements relating to Planning and Sustainable Economy and Communities. It was noted that the District Plan is at Regulation 19 Consultation, progress has been made on delivering the Sustainable Economy Strategy and the Mid Sussex Partnership has been refreshed. Simon Hughes, Director People and Commercial Services provided a summary of the significant achievements relating to cyber security, the Revenues and Benefits team, homelessness, the 123 food waste trial, investment in leisure centres and the Centre for Outdoor Sport. Louise Duffield, Director Resources and Organisational Development provided a summary of the significant achievements relating to recruitment including the launch of an apprenticeship scheme and adult work experience programme.

Discussion was held on proposal to introduce differential parking, particularly relating to East Grinstead. Members noted the limited free and off-street parking available in the area, the impact for local residents and whether the town was busy enough to warrant the tariffs. Members discussed the proposed feasibility of increasing capacity at Queens Road Car Park with additional decks with a suggestion that it included a dedicated deck for residents and concessionary parking permits. It was noted that the work commissioned by Parking Matters for the Parking Strategy supports the proposals in the budget. One key element of the parking strategy is to consider tariffs that meet the needs of the local businesses, community, commuters, and residents in different areas. Members discussed the potential to invest in technology such as signage to indicate the availability of spaces and it was noted that the introduction of differential tariffs would allow the Council to consider such investment according to need.

Director Resources and Organisational Development also provided a summary of the Reserves Policy and usable reserves and other balances as set out in section 4. It was noted that there is a £1.6m draw on reserves but the future New Homes Bonus and Treasury Management income will go towards alleviating this. It was also noted that the Council has been able to achieve the Local Authority Housing Fund, by match funding the Government's offer.

The Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendations contained in the report which were approved with 7 in favour, 2 against and 1 abstention.

RESOLVED

The Committee considered the proposals for 2024/25 as set out in the Corporate Plan and Budget 2024/25 at Appendix A and agreed any comments or recommendations that it wishes to make to Cabinet on:

- (a) The financial outlook facing the Council over the medium term.
- (b) The proposed increase in Council Tax.

- (c) The strategy to use the General Reserve to balance the 2024/25 Budget.
- (d) The commitment to top up the General Reserve where possible over the medium term.

7 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME - PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES.

Louise Duffield, Director, Resources and Organisational Development introduced the report. It was noted that NHS colleagues are scheduled to attend the meeting in April and therefore a meeting with social housing partners will be scheduled for the first meeting of the municipal year.

The Chairman took Members to a vote on the recommendation contained in the report which was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED

The Committee confirmed the work programme for the municipal year 2023/24 and beyond.

8 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.2 DUE NOTICE OF WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN.

None.

The meeting finished at 7.38 pm

Chairman