

CABINET

Meeting held on Tuesday, 6th February, 2024 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr G.B. Lyon, Leader of the Council
Cllr M.L. Sheehan, Deputy Leader and Environment & Neighbourhood Portfolio Holder
Cllr M.J. Tennant, Deputy Leader and Major Projects & Property Portfolio Holder

Cllr A. Adeola, Digital First & Corporate Portfolio Holder
Cllr J.B. Canty, Development & Economic Growth Portfolio Holder
Cllr Sue Carter, Community Portfolio Holder
Cllr P.G. Taylor, Finance Portfolio Holder

The Cabinet considered the following matters at the above-mentioned meeting. All executive decisions of the Cabinet shall become effective, subject to the call-in procedure, from **19th February, 2024**.

45. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –**

Having regard to the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors, no declarations of interest were made.

46. **MINUTES –**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 9th January, 2024 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

47. **COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2024/25 –**

(Cllr Diane Bedford, Chairman of the Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN2405, which set out the work carried out by the Council's Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group in respect of potential changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme. The Chairman welcomed Cllr Mrs. D.B. Bedford, Chairman of the Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group, who was attending to report on the Group's considerations and recommendations.

The Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group had met on 24th July, 2023, 30th August, 2023, 26th September, 2023 and 11th January, 2024 to consider its recommendations to the Cabinet. The Group had considered the on-going impact of Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis and had paid specific attention to a number of matters during its deliberations and these were set out in paragraph 2.3 of the Report. This had led to the Group recommending that a public consultation exercise should be carried out on potential changes to the scheme, which the Cabinet approved at its meeting on 15th October, 2023. The consultation had run from 3rd November, 2023 to 15th December, 2023 and had attracted a total of 522 responses. Having considered the results of the consultation exercise, the Group recommended that, for the calculation of Council Tax Support for 2024/25, the

maximum Council Tax liability used should be increased from 88% to 100%. This would mean that in cases where maximum support was granted, no Council Tax would be payable. The rationale for this recommendation was set out in the Report.

In discussing this proposal, Members were assured that the change would be implemented, initially, for a single year, with the ability to make further changes at the end of that period. The Cabinet expressed gratitude to the Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group for its work in producing these recommendations.

The Cabinet

(i) **RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL** that:

- (a) the increase of the maximum Council Tax liability used to calculate Council Tax Support from 88% to 100% be approved, to take effect from 1st April, 2024 and to apply to all calculations made within the Council Tax Support Scheme relating to liabilities occurring on or after 1st April, 2024; and
- (b) all other respects of the current Council Tax Support Scheme for working age customers be unchanged, with the addition of the annual uplift to rates used within the calculation mirroring those applied to national housing benefit rates, as advised by the Department for Work and Pensions; and

(ii) **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) the reduction of £20,000 in the budget for Exceptional Hardship during 2024/25, as set out in Report No. FIN2405, be approved;
- (b) the deliberations and considerations of the Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group in arriving at its recommendations, as set out in the Report, be noted; and
- (c) the outcome of the public consultation exercise, as set out in the Report and at Appendix 2 of the Report, be noted.

48. **COUNCIL PLAN AND RISK REGISTER QUARTERLY UPDATE OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2023 –**
(Cllr Sue Carter, Community Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet received Report No. ACE2401, which set out progress in delivering the Council Plan projects during the third quarter of 2023/24. Members were informed that progress against key activities and projects was included in the Report, along with the Council's business performance monitoring information and the Council's Corporate Risk Register. It was reported that, at the end of the third quarter, 90% of projects/activities were on track, with the remainder showing an amber status. No project had a red status.

In considering the Report, Members expressed satisfaction with the Council's performance levels and discussed matters around the improvement in the rate of abandoned phone calls, missed bin rates, the timely payment of invoices, phone calls misdirected to the Council's switchboard relating to non-Council activities, recycling rates and instances of violence at work.

The Cabinet NOTED the progress made towards delivering the Council Plan and the changes highlighted in the Corporate Risk Register, as set out in Report No. ACE2401.

49. **ANNUAL PEOPLE REPORT AND OTHER HUMAN RESOURCES MATTERS –**
(Cllr Ade Adeola, Digital First & Corporate Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. PEO2401, which set out a number of updates in relation to the Council's workforce.

Members were informed that the Report contained updates on the implementation of elements of the Council's People Strategy, which had been adopted in 2021, and provided key data on the Council's workforce for 2023. Also being considered were a new Health and Wellbeing Statement of Intent and a Code of Practice relating to Health, Wellbeing and Stress Management. Members were also informed of the latest Pay Policy Statement and Gender Pay Gap calculations, which would be considered by the Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee and approved by the Council.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the Annual People Report, as set out in Report No. PEO2401, be noted;
- (ii) the Health and Wellbeing Statement of Intent, as set out on the Report, be approved, noting the approach to implementation;
- (iii) the Health, Wellbeing and Stress Management Code of Practice, as set out in the Report, be approved; and
- (iv) the Pay Policy Statement and the Gender Pay Gap report, as set out in the report to the Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee, be noted.

50. **FARNBOROUGH REGENERATION AND LEISURE AND CULTURAL HUB - NEXT STEPS –**
(Cllr Martin Tennant, Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. REG2402, which set out an update on regeneration within Farnborough town centre and on the Leisure and Cultural Hub project in particular.

The Cabinet was reminded that, at its meeting on 17th October, 2023, it had agreed the final project scope for the Leisure and Cultural Hub, the schedule of accommodation, the forecasted budget required to complete the pre-construction phases of the project and to submit the planning application. Members were

informed that this report now provided an update on the project, the operator procurement and options for the next stages, taking into account the work undertaken since October, impacts of inflation and implications for the current funding strategy, given the position relating to the Council's future capital programme, as set out in the 2024/25 budget report.

The Cabinet expressed support for the proposed approach.

The Cabinet

(i) **RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL** that:

- (a) an increase of £255,000 in the Capital budget for 2023/24, funded by a further draw down from the Levelling Up grant, be approved; and
- (b) the inclusion of the £1.725 million One Public Estate Brownfield Land Release Fund grant in the 2023/24 and 2024/25 capital programmes, as appropriate, be approved, to enable the demolition of the Pinehurst Car Park and site preparation and utilities work across plots established by the Civic Quarter Masterplan; and

(ii) **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) the revised costs of the current stage of planning and design work (RIBA Stage 3) of £386,855, as set out in Report No. REG2402, be noted;
- (b) an initial sum of £50,000 towards potential redesign work be approved;
- (c) the undertaking of a costing exercise by Willmott Dixon on the RIBA 3 designs, to provide market tested costs for consideration before the decision to move to the next stage of design and development (RIBA Stage 4), be approved;
- (d) the undertaking of a pre-planning consultation exercise in March, on the designs at the conclusion of the RIBA 3 design process, be approved;
- (e) the adjustment in the overall project timeline, to take into account the market costing exercise and provide a period for any necessary design revisions as a result of the report and the pre-planning public consultation exercise, as set out in the Report, be noted;
- (f) the undertaking of work as part of the Council's Financial Resilience Plan to address the affordability of the current and future capital programme and the links to the decision to move fully to the next stage of design and development (RIBA Stage 4) be noted;

- (g) the revised funding strategy for the project, given the position set out in the 2024/25 budget report and supporting Financial Resilience Plan, be noted;
- (h) the approach to the demolition of the Pinehurst Car Park and the temporary relocation of the Council's car boot sale to the High Street multi-storey in Aldershot be noted; and
- (i) the use of any slippage on the Civic Quarter capital budget in 2023/24 to progress elements of the Civic Quarter regeneration programme, where this could lead to improved land values in line with the Financial Resilience Plan, be approved.

51. **GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2024-25 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024-25 TO 2027-28 –**
(Cllr Paul Taylor, Finance Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN2406, which set out the draft General Fund Budget for 2024/25 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024/25 to 2027/28.

The Cabinet was reminded that the Medium Term Financial Strategy set out the key work streams for the Council to focus on over the medium term to address the projected significant shortfall in the General Fund budget. Members were informed that a wide range of information was presented in the report and accompanying appendices. It was confirmed that the Council was in a position to present a balanced budget for 2024/25 and that work was underway to address the key financial issues faced by the Council, which were summarised in paragraph 2.5 of the report.

The Capital Programme for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28 was set out at paragraph 8.5 of the report. It was explained that the Capital Programme was focussed on delivering against the Council's key priority of town centre regeneration, with further schemes aimed at enhancing the delivery of core services through improvement and enhancement of assets. The main areas where the Council would be facing increased levels of risk and uncertainty over the medium term were set out in Section 9 of the report. In discussing the details of the report, Members expressed their gratitude for the hard work of the finance team.

The Cabinet

- (i) **RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL** that approval be given to:
 - (a) the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the strategy to resolve the Medium Term Financial Strategy deficit, as set out in Report No. FIN2406;
 - (b) the draft General Fund Revenue Budget Estimates Summary 2024/25, as set out in Appendix 4 of the Report;
 - (c) the Council Tax requirement of £7,683,131 for this Council;

- (d) the Council Tax level for Rushmoor Borough Council's purposes of £232.74 for a Band D property in 2024/25;
 - (e) the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 8.5 of the Report;
 - (f) the Strategy for the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts, as set out in paragraph 9.2 of the Report;
 - (g) the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) project list, as set out in Appendix 6 of the Report; and
- (ii) **RESOLVED** that the earmarking of £250,000 of the Stability and Resilience Reserve during 2024-25, to provide capacity to address and deliver the Financial Resilience Plan and to enable the Chief Finance Officer to continue to engage with expert external assistance and advice, as set out in paragraph 5.8 of the Report, be approved.

52. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC –

RESOLVED: That, taking into account the public interest test, the public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the under mentioned item to avoid the disclosure of exempt information within the paragraph of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 indicated against the item:

Minute No.	Schedule 12A Para. No.	Category
53	3	Information relating to financial or business affairs

**THE FOLLOWING ITEM WAS CONSIDERED
IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC**

53. THE GALLERIES, ALDERSHOT - UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS –
(Cllr Martin Tennant, Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Exempt Report No. REG2401, which set out an update on the Galleries regeneration scheme in Aldershot town centre.

Members were reminded that, in March, 2022, the Cabinet had agreed, in principle, to the disposal of the existing High Street Multi-Storey Car Park in return for the transfer of the former Conservative Club site at Little Wellington Street to the Council, as part of proposals to realise the delivery of the Galleries redevelopment. The report set out the due diligence that had been undertaken to formalise the agreement, along with the draft Heads of Terms for the Contract of Sale and a summary of the financial risks. Also included was an update on the Homes England Housing Infrastructure Fund monies.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the disposal of the Council's legal interest in the existing High Street Multi-Storey Car Park, Aldershot in exchange for the freehold interest of the former Conservative Club site at Little Wellington Street, Aldershot to the Council be approved, subject to the necessary terms being agreed as detailed below, on the basis that a new, purpose-built public car park of at least 250 spaces would be constructed by the developer prior to handover, noting that best consideration under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 would be achieved, as set out in Appendix 1 of Exempt Report No. REG2401;
- (ii) the draft Heads of Terms for the Contract for Sale and exchange of freehold, as set out in Appendix 2 of the Exempt Report, be noted, with the Head of Regeneration and Development/Executive Head of Property and Growth, in consultation with the Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder, being authorised to agree final terms;
- (iii) the amendments to the Housing Infrastructure Fund Marginal Viability Fund agreement, by way of Deed of Variation, regarding the extension of time to the availability period of the funding to December, 2024 and changes to the drawdown conditions, as set out in the Report, be noted; and
- (iv) for the purposes of satisfying Housing Infrastructure Fund Marginal Viability Fund drawdown conditions, the draft Mirrored Agreement, as set out in Appendix 4 of the Exempt Report and the draft Entity Company Guarantee, as set out in Appendix 5 of the Exempt Report, forming the basis of clawback arrangements in the event of the Galleries scheme not meeting the contract outputs be noted, with the Head of Regeneration and Development, in consultation with the Major Projects and Property Portfolio Holder, being authorised to agree final terms.

The Meeting closed at 7.56 pm.

CLLR G.B. LYON, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
