

## **Cabinet**

31 January 2023 – At a meeting of the Cabinet held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ.

Present: Cllr Marshall (Chairman)

Cllr Crow, Cllr Hunt, Cllr A Jupp, Cllr N Jupp, Cllr Lanzer, Cllr Russell, Cllr Urquhart and Cllr Waight

Apologies were received from Cllr J Dennis

Also in attendance: Cllr Baxter, Cllr Boram, Cllr Britton, Cllr Lord, Cllr Montyn and Cllr Wall (virtual)

### **Part I**

#### **22. Declarations of Interest**

22.1 No declarations of interest were made.

#### **23. Minutes**

23.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2022 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

#### **24. Council Plan and Revenue Budget 2023/24 (CAB05\_22/23)**

24.1 Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Finance and Support Services. The report was introduced by Cllr Jeremy Hunt, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property who outlined the proposed budget and recommendations. The Cabinet Member emphasised the focus on the County Council's priorities in the Council Plan and the underpinning theme of climate change. He described the main pressures, details of the local government finance settlement, which had been more favourable than anticipated, the deferral of Adult Social Care reform and of the introduction of the care cost cap. The Council continues to lobby government for realistic funding to meet the challenges ahead, however the Cabinet Member was pleased to present a balanced budget for 2023/24 without unnecessary use of reserves and whilst increasing investment into frontline services. The Cabinet Member explained the proposal to increase the Council Tax by 2.99% for general fund services and 2% for Adult Social Care and advised of an additional recommendation for residual funds from the Council Tax Support Grant to be used to support the continuation of discretionary hardship schemes for those eligible and in receipt of Council Tax Reduction across the Districts and Boroughs.

24.2 The Cabinet Member set out the challenges and risks ahead including economic impacts, cost of living, cost and demand of services and the changes to Government legislation in the pipeline.

Assumptions will be tested throughout the year to help understand short and long-term pressures. Monitoring will also continue through the performance reports against the Council Plan.

- 24.3 The Chief Executive, Becky Shaw, explained outcomes of a recent meeting with a wide cross section of partners who welcomed the engagement and opportunity to comment on the Council Plan and Revenue Budget 2023/24. An enthusiasm for joint lobbying and a continued focus on growth for the County economy were key themes from the session, as is the challenge of inflation faced by partners and the voluntary sector.
- 24.4 Chairmen from the Health and Adult Social Care, Fire and Rescue Service, Communities, Highways and Environment and Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committees supported the budget for 2023/24 whilst recognising the continued financial uncertainties and challenges ahead. Scrutiny Chairmen welcomed the additional investment in frontline services and particularly the one-off £4.5m for highways.
- 24.5 Cllr Kirsty Lord, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group discussed the national context and the challenges faced by residents including cost of living and energy cost pressures. She considered the longer-term position and challenges faced with setting the budget, but supported the approach of forward planning.
- 24.6 Cllr Caroline Baxter, Leader of the Labour Group thanked officers for presenting a balanced budget for 2023/24. She considered Key Performance Indicators in areas of Social Care and Children's Services and felt these crucial services are underfunded by Government and welcomed an opportunity to support lobbying for fairer funding for West Sussex. Cllr Baxter explained the challenge and concern of increased council tax for residents amidst cost of living pressures and suggested an annual budget survey be undertaken which involved residents in future proposals.
- 24.7 The Leader thanked the Minority Group Leaders and Scrutiny Chairmen for their contributions and help in shaping the budget. The following points were made by Cabinet Members in discussion:
- Cllr Jacquie Russell, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People welcomed the proposals as set out in the report and discussed the focus on holistic prevention work in 2023/24 to reduce the number of children entering care. Improvement work will continue in the service. Placements for children remain a challenge but the investment in the Capital Programme will improve the sufficiency of accommodation for children the County Council cares for.
  - Cllr Nigel Jupp, Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills outlined the net expenditure for the portfolio once grants have been passported to schools. Home to school transport remains the biggest challenge with cost pressures increasing. Cllr Jupp discussed the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit and hoped there would be Government clarification on the

- issue soon. Cllr Jupp highlighted the Government announcement for increased funding for schools.
- Cllr Duncan Crow, Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue said the difficult decisions made in previous years have enabled the Council to be in a strong position to focus on areas that make the biggest difference to the County. He explained expenditure across his portfolio which includes libraries, records services (births, deaths, marriages), Community Hub and Fire and Rescue Services. He explained the benefit of additional investment in the Fire and Rescue Service allowing for additional Firefighters and 7 day crewing for improved response times.
  - Cllr Amanda Jupp, Cabinet Member for Adults Services described the budget as positive with the increased investment in the portfolio to meet demand from population increases and people with complex care needs. Government funding from the delayed Adult Social Care reforms will be used to mitigate pressures as well as continue preparation for the reforms.
  - Cllr Bob Lanzer, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing welcomed the budget and considered the Council Tax increase of 4.99% as competitive when compared to the rate of inflation and increase of charges for other services. Cllr Lanzer explained the Public Health Grant settlement is awaited and services can be maintained through reserves in the meantime. The establishment and launch of the Integrated Care System will seek to improve lives and maximise the approach to partnership working.
  - Cllr Steve Waight, Cabinet Member for Support Services and the Economy outlined the major change programmes underway and the benefits to be gained from the smarter working programme, including more flexible working options, a reduction in emissions and rationalising the operational office estate. Cllr Waight highlighted the proposed capital spend and the work ongoing in the digital area which will bring new business to West Sussex. The Council are on track to exceed Government targets for rural connectivity and growth programmes have levered additional investment from both Government and the private sector.
  - Cllr Deborah Urquhart, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change and Deputy Leader endorsed the Council Plan and Revenue Budget 2023/24 and advised of the income from solar projects, decarbonisation of the estate and Operation Watershed. Cllr Urquhart outlined the significant investment in frontline services and congratulated the Cabinet Member for Finance and Property.
  - Cllr Paul Marshall, Leader of the Council explained the principal aim of the budget is to deliver the Council Plan and its underpinning theme of climate change. Whilst there is still uncertainty, the budget is robust, and the gross spend is significant. The cost of inflation and contracts for commissioned services are significant but funding these is important so that the Council can continue to provide vital services for residents. The additional provision for corporate

pressures is not likely to be available in future and will still be tested in terms of deliverability. Census data shows the County has seen a population increase of over 9% since 2011 which therefore reflects increased demand upon services. The Leader was pleased to present a balanced budget which continues to invest in services, commits to deliver positive outcomes for residents and businesses whilst meeting the needs of the most vulnerable within it.

24.8 Cllr Hunt thanked colleagues for their comments and reassured members and residents that despite the challenges, the County Council is in a sound financial position with a continued focus on the priority outcomes in the Council Plan.

24.9 Resolved – that Cabinet:

1. Endorses the County Council budget for 2023/24, as set out in Appendix A including the recommendations listed on pages 13-15 and Annex 1, the Capital Strategy set out in Annex 2(a) and the Treasury Management Statement set out in Annex 2(b), for approval by County Council on 17 February 2023.
2. Endorses an allocation of £0.4m be made available from the Covid-19 reserve to provide funding to support the continuation of the Council Tax hardship schemes across the West Sussex district and boroughs for 2023/24.

## **25. Appointments to Outside Bodies (CAB06\_22/23)**

25.1 Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Law and Assurance.

25.2 Resolved – that Cabinet:

1. Appoint Cllr Sean McDonald and Cllr Ashvin Patel to the Littlehampton Harbour Board for the remainder of the council term (May 2025)
2. Add the Shelley Copthorne Educational Foundation to the County Council list of Outside Bodies
3. Appoint Cllr Bruce Forbes to the Shelley Copthorne Educational Foundation for the remainder of the council term (May 2025).

## **26. Emerging Issues**

26.1 Cabinet Members provided updates on possible and planned Trade Union strike action and mitigations in place to deal with the impact of these, particularly in relation to fire and rescue. Members will be updated accordingly on developments.

**27. Date of Next Meeting**

27.1 The next meeting of Cabinet will be held on 14 March 2023.

The meeting ended at 12.05 pm

Chairman