

Cabinet

23 July 2024 – At a meeting of the Cabinet held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ.

Present: Cllr Urquhart (Deputy Leader)

Cllr Crow, Cllr J Dennis, Cllr Hunt, Cllr A Jupp, Cllr Lanzer, Cllr Russell, and Cllr Waight

Apologies were received from Cllr Marshall (Leader)

Also in attendance: Cllr Wall (Virtual)

Part I

9. Declarations of Interest

9.1 No declarations of interest were made.

10. Minutes

10.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2024 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

11. Update on Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

11.1 The Cabinet considered a report by the Interim Director of Finance and Support Services and Director of Law and Assurance (copy appended to the signed minutes).

11.2 The Deputy Leader introduced the item and explained that this represented the start point of the budget and the setting of priorities. There remain uncertainties regarding the funding settlement and grants.

11.3 Cllr Hunt, Cabinet Member for Finance and Support Services, introduced the report as the first high level update of the Budget and Council Plan explaining that the report represents the final year of the current plan. Value for money remains a key focus on behalf of residents, recognising that Council tax represents 80% of the County Council's net revenue. The Council Tax rise remains capped at 2%.

11.4 Mr Suarez, Interim Director of Finance and Support Services, reported that the all-member briefing on the budget had taken place yesterday. Appendix B was highlighted as the productivity plan which would be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

11.5 Cllr Wall, Chairman of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee noted the challenging financial landscape. Early member engagement was welcomed and a good starting point for the budget. The identified savings were challenging and needed careful monitoring. New ways of working and strengthened partnerships were key and would be monitored by the scrutiny committee.

11.6 The following points were made by Cabinet Members in discussion.

- a. Cllr Russell, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Learning and Skills, noted the funding gap as a concern and the need to continue lobbying the Government on this. The Council's approach to risk was prudent, and the transformation journey for the Children's portfolio was praised.
- b. Cllr Crow, Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue, expressed concern on service impact if financial pressures were not addressed.
- c. Cllr Jupp, Cabinet Member for Adults Services, welcomed the outlined priorities which were set against the pressures for Adult Social Care. Work was continuing on the improvement plan with the ambition to ensure individuals remain as independent for as long as possible.
- d. Cllr Waight, Cabinet Member for Support Services and Economic Development, noted the work on recruitment and retention which had led to a reduction in agency usage. The smarter working programme is progressing to support hybrid working and flexible working patterns and the Oracle Fusion project was in a good place to gain improved processes, and also to assist with workforce planning and risk management.
- e. Cllr Dennis, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, reported that the last two winters had been challenging with high levels of rainfall. The budget would look to mitigate issues on the roads. The highways team were thanked for their hard work during challenging times.

11.7 Cllr Hunt recognised the discussed challenges but was confident that everyone would work together to balance the budget. The budget would be worked on and presented to scrutiny committees in November before County Council approval in February.

11.8 Resolved that the Cabinet notes:

1. That the Council Plan priorities and outcomes in Section 3 are not changed for the purposes of budgeting and business planning in 2025/26.
2. The financial challenge, as set out in Section 5, over the medium term and the immediate budget gap of between £30m and £60m for 2025/26 depending on the level of council tax that must be addressed before a balanced budget can be set in February 2025.
3. The risks and uncertainties in Section 6 and Annex 3 that still remain.
4. The overall approach for balancing the budget in Section 7.
5. The Productivity Plan included in Appendix B.

12. Emerging Issues

12.1 The Deputy Leader invited Cabinet Members to provide any verbal updates on current, significant issues from their respective portfolios that may benefit from discussion.

12.2 No updates were required.

13. Date of Next Meeting

13.1 The Cabinet noted that its next scheduled meeting will be held on 17 September 2024.

The meeting ended at 11.15 am

Chairman