

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF  
THE COUNCIL  
HELD ON THURSDAY, 16 FEBRUARY 2023 FROM 7.30 PM TO 10.00 PM**

**Members Present**

Councillors: Caroline Smith (Mayor), Beth Rowland (Deputy Mayor), Sam Akhtar, Parry Batth, Rachel Bishop-Firth, Laura Blumenthal, Chris Bowring, Shirley Boyt, Prue Bray, Rachel Burgess, Anne Chadwick, Stephen Conway, David Cornish, Andy Croy, David Davies, Peter Dennis, Lindsay Ferris, Michael Firmager, Paul Fishwick, Jim Frewin, Maria Gee, David Hare, Peter Harper, Pauline Helliars-Symons, Graham Howe, Chris Johnson, Clive Jones, Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen, Sarah Kerr, Tahir Maher, Morag Malvern, Charles Margetts, Rebecca Margetts, Adrian Mather, Andrew Mickleburgh, Stuart Munro, Alistair Neal, Jackie Rance, Ian Shenton, Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Mike Smith, Wayne Smith, Bill Soane, Alison Swaddle and Shahid Younis

**Members In Attendance Virtually**

Councillors: Gregor Murray

**104. Minute Silence**

The Mayor referred to the recent earthquake in Turkey and Syria which had killed over 40,000 people and left millions homeless. The Mayor stated that everyone's thoughts were with the victims and their families. The Mayor asked Members to stand for a minute's silence.

**105. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Keith Baker, Gary Cowan, Phil Cunningham, John Halsall and Abdul Loyes.

Gregor Murray attended the meeting on Microsoft Teams.

**106. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19 January 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor, subject to a word change on Page 39 – 100.8 – Question from Pauline Jorgensen – in line 1 "leaflets" should read "leaves".

**107. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**108. Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor had no announcements.

**109. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

**110. Petitions**

The following Member presented a petition in relation to the matter indicated.

The Mayor's decision as to the action to be taken is set out beneath the petition.

Norman Jorgensen	Norman Jorgensen presented a petition containing 1,800 signatures from residents who wished to see the continuation of weekly waste and recycling collections across the
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	<p>Borough.</p> <p>To be forwarded to officers in the Place and Growth department.</p>
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### **111. Medium Term Financial Plan and Associated Reports**

The Council considered four reports which together comprised a single Agenda item:

- Housing Revenue Account Budget 2023/34 as set out on Agenda pages 47 to 56;
- Capital Programme and Strategy 2023/26 as set out on Agenda pages 57 to 88;
- Treasury Management Strategy 2023/26 as set out on Agenda pages 89 to 140;
- Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/26 including Revenue Budget Submission 2023/24, as set out on Agenda pages 141 to 158.

The Mayor reminded Members that a total of 90 minutes would be set aside for the debate.

The Mayor also reminded Members that Appendix A to the Medium Term Financial Plan (the Statutory Resolution) and the Council Tax by Band and Parish, had been circulated.

#### **111.1 Clive Jones, Leader of the Council - Statement on the Budget**

I present this prudent, forward-looking, and compassionate Budget to the Council together with the circulated amended page that does not change the figures but better represents our Climate Emergency endeavours.

This is the first Budget that the Liberal Democrats have proposed for many years and is probably the most challenging budget process this Council has ever experienced. With inflation at over 10%, rising demand for services, shortfalls in anticipated income and now higher interest rates, we have had to endure a financial storm of tropical intensity.

The unprecedented financial challenges have obliged us to take difficult decisions to ensure the council's financial viability. I am pleased to say that we did not shy away from those tough decisions and as a result of taking them we have been able to eliminate the ongoing shortfall we inherited of £2.3m and have now set a balanced budget for 2023-24 that plans for the future and leaves the Council's finances in a better state than we found them almost a year ago.

Before I turn to some of the details of the Budget, I would like to thank my Executive and our Corporate Leadership Team for the immense work they have put into this Budget. We began preparation in May when we took over the administration and we have had to go through three major reviews of our Capital Programme to arrive at this balanced budget.

I would also like to thank the cross-party Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee which has been considering and commenting on our proposals

since late summer.

Moving to the key features of our Budget submission. Our Budget proposals include much needed, substantial investment in our vital services totalling £15m. £6.3m is for Children's Services and £3.6m is for Adult Social Care. In addition, we have had to provide a staggering sum to cover the costs of inflation of just under £11m, which is £3m more than provided for in this current year. To help Councillors, you will find this set out on pages 59 and 60 of the MTFP.

The costs of investing in services and providing for inflation are funded in part by finding just short of £12m, primarily achieved through over £10m of cost reductions and some new income. This is the furthest this Council has had to go in many years in finding savings and possibly ever but is wholly necessary to meet the unavoidable financial pressures we face. Our efficiencies programme is more than double the £5.1m proposed last year and more than 60% of the total of the last four years' proposed savings.

As many previous Council leaders have said "we get very little from central government," my predecessors have complained that Wokingham is the poorest funded Unitary Authority per head of population in the country and unfortunately their government allows this sorry state to continue. This year we received a meagre £1.8 million more from the government at a time when we have had additional challenges of increased funding required for necessary statutory services and inflation totalling £26m. Wokingham receives an incomprehensible £30m per year less than if we were funded in the same way as the average unitary authority.

This situation must not continue. Something seriously needs to change for us to get a fairer deal for the residents of Wokingham Borough. We have lobbied Cabinet Ministers to present our case for more money from the government. But sadly, the government seems not to be listening. I am not alone in asking for more money, I know of council leaders from all over the country from all parties including the Conservatives who are complaining about being starved of cash by this government.

We continue to work to reduce the number of agency staff working at the council. The previous administration started to try to address this issue which is of course difficult as many agency staff work in adult social care and children's services areas where we have significant statutory responsibilities. If this was an easy issue to resolve, I am sure the previous administrations would not have struggled to contain agency spending in the way that they did for quite a few years. We are confident that we will be able to make savings in this area in the coming years.

We have been hearing from the opposition that if we had opted for elections every four years instead of three out of four there would be a saving to the council of £300,000. A bit of a red herring because there would have been no saving until the elections of 2025, 2027 and 2028. And the saving would then not be £300,000 a year, but a quarter of that sum.

An illustration of our responsible financial management is the significant financial contribution and ongoing commitment towards addressing the deficit associated with rising Education, Health and Care plans. An area known as Dedicated Schools Grant, where a deficit has been allowed to grow over the past four or five years

under the previous administration and has now reached a magnitude of alarming proportions. This financial contribution, together with an enhanced focus by the Council's leadership will ensure we get on top of this and avoid the Council sleep walking into a serious financial crisis.

Our Capital Programme for next year of just over £100m both addresses the £14m funding gap presented in last year's MTFP and delivers significant much needed capital investment in our community. This is detailed on pages 82-85 of the MTFP and includes investment in housing, investment in regeneration, investment in roads and transport and includes funding for a dementia care home.

As I have said before we have had to make some difficult and tough decisions. Increasing the Council Tax by 4.99% is one of those decisions. This has been forced on us by the government – which has made it clear that it expects councils to do this as part of its budget package. It's a pretty well-known fact that the majority of councils across the country, Lib Dem, Independent, Conservative or Labour run councils will increase Council Tax by the maximum allowed by the government. By the way... this is also what the Conservatives have done here in Wokingham for many years. Of this 4.99% increase 2% will be going towards the increased costs of Adult Social care which David Hare will talk about and 1% towards sorting out the problem left by the previous administration in our special educational needs funding.

The overall Budget proposal significantly enhances the financial resilience of the Council, which has been achieved in the most challenging financial landscape and demonstrates that we hold financial responsibility amongst our highest of priorities. This Budget invests in our community where help is needed, achieved through tenacious financial management to control, and reduce spend and making difficult decisions where required. It also leaves us with an improved General Fund Balance of £9.3m at the end of next year (as shown on page 10) and we will look to further strengthen this going forward.

Financial rigour, financial resilience and financial responsibility is the hallmark of this Budget, to ensure we are in the best possible position to support those most in need. Targeting our limited resources on those who are struggling is something we regard as the right thing to do, especially in hard times.

Madam Mayor, I commend this prudent, forward-looking, and compassionate Budget to the Council together with the circulated amended page that does not change the figures but better represents our climate emergency endeavours.

#### **111.2 Pauline Jorgensen, Leader of the Conservative Group - Statement on the Budget**

I want to make it very clear to residents that this budget is the work of the Coalition of Liberal Democrats, Labour and Independents and they are all equally responsible for the proposals. It is a budget that is built on a falsehood that has been repeated since the Liberal Democrats took power with the help of their allies. They claim that they have no choice because of the state they found the Council's finances in. Every poor decision, that is their excuse. It's always somebody else's fault. And it's simply not true.

Don't just take my word for it. At the last Executive meeting, the Council's own Chief Financial Officer (CFO) said that the Council's Finances were in good shape under the previous Conservative administration. The CFO's report sets out that, in 2020, Wokingham Borough was rated in the top 20 for financial sustainability by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy. The most recent data, published 2020-21, shows an even further improved position on indicators of financial stress, such as maintaining or improving reserves and the cost of social care as a proportion of total expenditure compared to other local authorities. Demonstrating that the previous Conservative administration's stewardship of the Council's finances was better than many other councils during the difficult pandemic period.

Power means making choices. When they do anything at all, the record of this administration is to repeatedly make the wrong choices. Since May the record of the Coalition has been one of dither and delay. There's certainly been a lot of talk but almost no action. Perhaps having been in opposition for the last two decades they aren't accustomed to making decisions, or maybe they are trying to duck the big issues. Having made broad sweeping promises in Opposition they find themselves incapable of acting.

Councillor Jones has bet the house on being able to reduce housing numbers. He's told everyone that will listen about his brush-past with Michael Gove and his invitation to a round table that we're still waiting to happen. And in the meantime, no sign of the Local Plan. We're left exposed to speculative development, endless costly appeals, and a growing pressure on services and infrastructure with no plan to address it.

This Budget before us continues the theme of poor choices. The choices of the Liberal Democrats, propped up by Labour and the Independents, are not taken in the best interests of our local residents or our communities – they are driven by ideology. Take car parking charges. Despite thousands of people in this Borough signing a petition begging the Council not to double parking charges and 40 businesses explaining how the changes will damage employment, the administration pressed on. Yet this budget acknowledges that this excruciating hike in charges won't save £500,000 as had been claimed, because £350,000 has had to be allocated to make up for the drop-off in usage of car parks and park and rides. So, residents and local businesses are being made to suffer not to save the Council's finances at all but because the administration doesn't want people to use cars. We believe that parking charges should be frozen this year to protect local business, with rises pegged to inflation in coming years if economic circumstances support it.

Then we turn to the coalition's decision to stop weekly collection of bins. Members have heard tonight that thousands of residents have signed a petition calling for weekly collection to be retained. We know that the Liberal Democrats have already made their minds up, because it's included in the Budget, and presumably Labour and the Independents will be whipped to fall in behind them. The sad truth is that this reduction in a service will not save a single penny in this coming year. Every household in the Borough will see a Council service reduced, families with young children and the disabled will be hit worst and we fear fly tipping and waste dumped in litter bins will increase – all costing the Council more. Worse still the Lib/Lab

coalition propose to take £2m out of reserves to pay for this change. Had the Conservative Group set the Budget, we would have maintained weekly bin collection, and would have made changes to encourage and increase recycling, we have looked at what other local authorities do and there are significant opportunities. Which brings me on to food waste caddy liners. Once again, we tried to put a stop to this nonsensical decision by the Liberal Democrats and their allies, but our pleas fell on deaf ears. As such, their budget tonight will scrap the purchase and distribution of the liners for food waste caddies. We are clear that we would have continued these caddy liners. We want to make it easier for residents to recycle, and recycling more organic matter including the used pet bedding and waste which currently fills many blue bags.

We Conservatives believe that people don't create waste for fun and need to be encouraged to recycle not punished because of their circumstances. The administration could have chosen to deliver increased savings by helping people to separate their leftover food from general waste. Instead, they're making it harder for households to recycle food waste. Why? Because the Liberal Democrats, aided by Labour and the Independents, want to use the money to fund their pet projects.

The Budget gives us an insight into where the money diverted from residents' services is instead going to be spent. On a Citizens' Assembly on climate change, even though consultative processes had already been set up. Undertaking community engagement on equality and anti-poverty rather than doing something about them. Lots of talking shops and consultations which their track record suggests they will then ignore. Increasing the number of Council and committee meetings while hiding information and frustrating debate.

The three specific items that I've mentioned – car parking charges, weekly waste collection and caddy liners – will be the subject of an amendment tonight. These are all areas where we've tried over and over to get the administration to think again. I say to Liberal Democrat, Labour and Independent Members: this is your last chance to listen to residents and do the right thing.

Other Conservative Members will highlight different areas where we would have acted differently had we set the Budget. We would have liked to have produced a fully comprehensive alternative Budget. But unlike the administration, we didn't have many months of preparation supported by hundreds of officers. I would however like to publicly thank the CFO and senior officers for their help and input. As such, we'll highlight the areas where we think funding could increase or decrease in order to achieve a balanced Budget, with the clear caveat that we don't have all the detailed figures that the administration has. This situation should be very familiar to the Liberal Democrats – it's exactly what they did over a number of years, including last year when they replied to the Budget.

One of the Liberal Democrats' first acts on taking office was to reject moving to full Council elections, instead of the current system of elections by-thirds, despite all out elections being what residents wanted and despite the electoral commission advising that elections by thirds leads to low turnout and that all out elections are fairer and more equitable to the electorate. But also despite officers estimating it would save the Council £4million over the 4-year period. Is this the action of an administration

facing difficult financial decisions?

Madam Mayor, what the Liberal Democrats are offering to residents tonight is less for more:

- bins will be collected less often,
- projects such as the solar farm to generate an income significantly delayed,
- Bohunt School expansion delayed,
- a real terms cut in road maintenance,
- no progress on housing numbers or the Local Plan,
- and, in return, people will pay more Council Tax, higher fees, and increased charges.

When residents made the decision to leave this Council as no overall control last May, they signalled that they wanted something different. We accept that. But almost 10 months on, it's becoming increasingly clear to local people that the Liberal Democrat-led experiment has not only failed, it is one that they can ill-afford. The Liberals did not put these changes in the manifesto they were elected on. I say to all people who don't like increased charges, worse road maintenance and worse services when you next get a chance to vote before you put your X in the box ask yourself, what are the Liberals planning which they dare not tell me about. If you refuse to listen to residents and disregard their views; if you put up fees and charges but reduce services; if you fail to act on planning and put the whole Borough at risk then why should residents put their trust in you?

The residents of Wokingham Borough deserve better. They deserve an administration that will invest in services, not cut them. They deserve to have their taxes and charges kept to a level they can afford. They deserve to have a Council Leader who will actually act to cut housing numbers and plan for future development, not just talk about it. They deserve to have a Council that will deliver on local communities' priorities, not the latest ideological fad of a group of councillors. And the best way for local people to get a Council that will truly be on their side, is to return a Conservative administration at this May's local elections.

#### **112. Budget Amendment**

It was proposed by Councillor Stuart Munro and seconded by Councillor Charles Margetts that the proposed Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/26 and Revenue Budget Submission 2023/24 be amended with the Budget changes set out in the table below:

Service	Budget Changes	Additional Spending	Savings	Rationale
		£,000	£,000	
Highways	Freeze car parking charges	500	-350	Based on no car parking charge increase, netting off the cost of £350k additional budgeted spending as a result of reduced usage of car parks and park and rides
	Road, pavement and pothole fund	1,000	-330	Increase budget by inflation (50% capital, 50% revenue) - £1m road and pothole budget partly grant funded
	California Crossroads – reduce capital		-84	S106 allocations from 22/23 carried forwards to 23/24. Reallocate carry forward to 22/23 on local roads in

	borrowing costs			Capital Programme. Reduce Capital borrowing costs in Revenue budget. £5.72m total cost, of which £4.2m could be reallocated to replace borrowing
	Accelerate street light night time switch off		-30	Nine months acceleration
Environment	Maintain weekly waste collection		-70	Maintain weekly waste – no cost, no benefits 2024; saving interest on Capital of 2% - £70k
	Keep caddy liners	80		Caddy liners only – no delivery cost required
	Outdoor gyms no longer progressing		-3	
Other	Scrap Climate Citizens' Assembly		-90	Already allocated deliberative process – additional £90k
Children's	Cancellation of St Cecilia delay costs following successful handover		-100	
CEX & Resources	Community engagement		-115	Remove Special Item spend increase
	Remove Overhead Growth		-741	Overhead growth
	Capital contingency reduction		-25	Interest charge on £1.5 m
	Remove high cost interims		-250	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,580</b>	<b>-2,188</b>	

In proposing the amendment, Stuart Munro stated that it demonstrated how the Conservative Group would make savings and reallocate money. The amendment was a prudent proposal which was what residents wanted. The amendment would deliver savings of £2.1m from reductions in wasteful increased spending on back office staff, too much focus on communications, too much focus on projects that were no longer progressing and removing expensive interim posts. The proposals would reallocate money to freeze current car park charges, increase spending on road maintenance and retain weekly waste collections. Previous Conservative administrations had built up over £100m of available reserves. The Liberal Democrat Budget failed its own test of sound finance and failed to address the needs and wants of residents. It lacked the ambition to continue the Conservative goal of getting the local economy back on its feet after Covid. It wasted money on internal reorganisations while cutting back and underinvesting on services affecting our communities such as roads and waste. It took money out of residents' pockets that could have been found through better financial management.

In addition to the amendment, Members received a copy of a paper from the Chief Finance Officer which provided an assessment of the proposed Budget amendment. The paper stated that the Budget Amendment put forward additional growth proposals and/or reduced income proposals totalling £1.6m. To fund this, £2.2m of savings had been proposed. The Substantive Budget Submission already incorporated a significant cost reduction/income generation challenge of £11.8m, which for context was more than double the £5.1m agreed at Council last year and



was over 7% of the Council's Net Budget. The additional savings would increase this total to £14m, or almost 9% of the Council's Net Budget. This would inevitably add sizeable risk on top of the challenging targets and subsequent risks already included in the Substantive Budget Submission.

Councillor Clive Jones stated that he did not accept the proposed amendment.

In opposing the amendment, Councillor Stephen Conway referred to the Chief Finance Officer's paper. Councillor Conway felt that the amendment demonstrated a lack of understanding of the financial challenges facing the Council. He stated that the amendment was based on inaccurate assumptions and false figures. It proposed to forego savings and income generation without a plausible explanation as to how the shortfall would be made up. The Conservatives pinned their hopes on abolishing a Citizens' Assembly which was not in the Budget and making savings in interim staff. They ran the Council for 20 years and made no such savings. The current administration had made savings and increased income in the Place and Growth budget in order to protect Children's and Adult services. The proposed Budget sought to target help on those who needed it most. It had gone through a rigorous process of scrutiny since last autumn. It deserved to be rejected by all Councillors who believed in sound finances and focussing help on those who needed it most.

Upon being put to the vote, voting on the amendment was as follows.

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Sam Akhtar	Rachel Bishop-Firth	
Parry Batth	Shirley Boyt	
Laura Blumenthal	Prue Bray	
Chris Bowring	Rachel Burgess	
Anne Chadwick	Stephen Conway	
David Davies	David Cornish	
Michael Firmager	Andy Croy	
Peter Harper	Peter Dennis	
Pauline Helliard-Symons	Lindsay Ferris	
Graham Howe	Paul Fishwick	
Norman Jorgensen	Jim Frewin	
Pauline Jorgensen	Maria Gee	
Charles Margetts	David Hare	
Rebecca Margetts	Chris Johnson	
Stuart Munro	Clive Jones	
Jackie Rance	Sarah Kerr	
Wayne Smith	Tahir Maher	
Bill Soane	Morag Malvern	
Alison Swaddle	Adrian Mather	
Shahid Younis	Andrew Mickleburgh	
	Alistair Neal	
	Beth Rowland	
	Ian Shenton	

	Imogen Shepherd-Dubey	
	Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey	
	Caroline Smith	
	Mike Smith	

The Mayor confirmed that the amendment was **lost**.

#### **112.1 Housing Revenue Account Budget 2023/24**

It was proposed by Clive Jones and seconded by Stephen Conway that the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2023/24, as set out on Agenda pages 47 to 56, together with the revised recommendation set out in the supplementary paper, be approved.

Voting on the item was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Sam Akhtar		
Parry Batth		
Rachel Bishop-Firth		
Laura Blumenthal		
Chris Bowring		
Shirley Boyt		
Prue Bray		
Rachel Burgess		
Anne Chadwick		
Stephen Conway		
David Cornish		
Andy Croy		
David Davies		
Peter Dennis		
Lindsay Ferris		
Michael Firmager		
Paul Fishwick		
Jim Frewin		
Maria Gee		
David Hare		
Peter Harper		
Pauline Helliard-Symons		
Graham Howe		
Chris Johnson		
Clive Jones		
Norman Jorgensen		
Pauline Jorgensen		
Sarah Kerr		
Tahir Maher		
Morag Malvern		
Charles Margetts		
Rebecca Margetts		
Adrian Mather		

Andrew Mickleburgh		
Stuart Munro		
Alistair Neal		
Jackie Rance		
Beth Rowland		
Ian Shenton		
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey		
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey		
Caroline Smith		
Mike Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		
Shahid Younis		

**RESOLVED:** That Council approve the following:

- 1) the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2023/24 (Appendix A);
- 2) Council house dwelling rents be increased by up to 5.99%, effective from 3 April 2023, in line with the Council's Rent Setting Policy, approved by the Executive on 27 October 2022;
- 3) garage rents be increased by 5.99%, effective from April 2023;
- 4) Shared Equity rents be increased by 5.99%, effective from April 2023;
- 5) Tenant Services Charges be increased by 5.99%, effective from April 2023;
- 6) the Housing Major Repairs (Capital) Programme for 2023/24, as set out in the report;
- 7) sheltered room guest charges for 2023/24 remain unchanged at £9.50 per night per room.

#### **112.2 Capital Programme and Strategy 2023-2026**

It was proposed by Clive Jones and seconded by Stephen Conway that the Capital Programme and Strategy 2023/26, as set out on Agenda pages 57 to 88, be approved.

Voting on the item was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Rachel Bishop-Firth	Sam Akhtar	
Shirley Boyt	Parry Batth	
Prue Bray	Laura Blumenthal	
Rachel Burgess	Chris Bowring	
Stephen Conway	Anne Chadwick	
David Cornish	David Davies	

Andy Croy	Michael Firmager	
Peter Dennis	Peter Harper	
Lindsay Ferris	Pauline Helliard-Symons	
Paul Fishwick	Graham Howe	
Jim Frewin	Norman Jorgensen	
Maria Gee	Pauline Jorgensen	
David Hare	Charles Margetts	
Chris Johnson	Rebecca Margetts	
Clive Jones	Stuart Munro	
Sarah Kerr	Jackie Rance	
Tahir Maher	Wayne Smith	
Morag Malvern	Bill Soane	
Adrian Mather	Alison Swaddle	
Andrew Mickleburgh	Shahid Younis	
Alistair Neal		
Beth Rowland		
Ian Shenton		
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey		
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey		
Caroline Smith		
Mike Smith		

**RESOLVED:** That Council approve the following:

- 1) the Capital Strategy for 2023/26 – Appendix A;
- 2) the three year Capital Programme for 2023/26 – Appendix B;
- 3) the draft Vision for Capital Investment over the next five years – Appendix C;
- 4) the use of developer contribution funding (S106 and CIL) for Capital projects, as set out at Appendix D. Approval is sought up to the project budget.

### **112.3 Treasury Management Strategy 2023-2026**

It was proposed by Councillor Imogen Shepherd-Dubey and seconded by Councillor Clive Jones that the Treasury Management Strategy 2023/26, as set out on Agenda pages 89 to 140, be approved.

Voting on the item was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Sam Akhtar		Maria Gee
Parry Batth		
Rachel Bishop-Firth		
Laura Blumenthal		
Chris Bowring		
Shirley Boyt		
Prue Bray		
Rachel Burgess		

Anne Chadwick		
Stephen Conway		
David Cornish		
Andy Croy		
David Davies		
Peter Dennis		
Lindsay Ferris		
Michael Firmager		
Paul Fishwick		
Jim Frewin		
David Hare		
Peter Harper		
Pauline Helliard-Symons		
Graham Howe		
Chris Johnson		
Clive Jones		
Norman Jorgensen		
Pauline Jorgensen		
Sarah Kerr		
Tahir Maher		
Morag Malvern		
Charles Margetts		
Rebecca Margetts		
Adrian Mather		
Andrew Mickleburgh		
Stuart Munro		
Alistair Neal		
Jackie Rance		
Beth Rowland		
Ian Shenton		
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey		
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey		
Caroline Smith		
Mike Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Bill Soane		
Alison Swaddle		
Shahid Younis		

**RESOLVED:** That Council:

- 1) note the Treasury Management Strategy, set out in Appendix A, including the following additional appendices:
  - Prudential Indicators (Appendix B);
  - Annual Investment Strategy 2023/24 (Appendix C);

- Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy (Appendix D);

2) note that the Audit Committee agreed the Treasury Management Strategy, including the change of minimum credit rating for investments, on 1 February 2023 and has recommended the report to Council.

#### **112.4 Medium Term Financial Plan 2023-2026 Including Revenue Budget Submission 2023/24**

It was proposed by Councillor Clive Jones and seconded by Councillor Stephen Conway that the Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/26, including the Revenue Budget Submission 2023/24, set out on Agenda pages 141 to 158, be approved.

Voting on the item was as follows:

<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstain</b>
Rachel Bishop-Firth	Sam Akhtar	Jim Frewin
Shirley Boyt	Parry Batth	
Prue Bray	Laura Blumenthal	
Rachel Burgess	Chris Bowring	
Stephen Conway	Anne Chadwick	
David Cornish	David Davies	
Andy Croy	Michael Firmager	
Peter Dennis	Peter Harper	
Lindsay Ferris	Pauline Helliard-Symons	
Paul Fishwick	Graham Howe	
Maria Gee	Norman Jorgensen	
David Hare	Pauline Jorgensen	
Chris Johnson	Charles Margetts	
Clive Jones	Rebecca Margetts	
Sarah Kerr	Stuart Munro	
Tahir Maher	Jackie Rance	
Morag Malvern	Wayne Smith	
Adrian Mather	Bill Soane	
Andrew Mickleburgh	Alison Swaddle	
Alistair Neal	Shahid Younis	
Beth Rowland		
Ian Shenton		
Imogen Shepherd-Dubey		
Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey		
Caroline Smith		
Mike Smith		

**RESOLVED:** That Council:

- 1) approve the Medium Term Financial Plan (MFTP) 2023/26, including the Budget Submission for 2023/24 and the Summary of Budget Movements (SOBM);
- 2) note, in relation to the Capital Programme, that additional challenges have

emerged in the secondary school places capital programme, are currently being worked through and will be reported to the Executive in early 2023/24, in order to seek the necessary budget provision;

- 3) approve the Statutory Resolution that sets out the 2023/24 Council Tax levels (as set out in Appendix A to the report);
- 4) approve that, in the event that there are any changes to the provisional precept of the Fire Authority or parishes arising from their precept setting meetings being held before the end of February 2023, the Deputy Chief Executive (S151 Officer) be delegated authority to enact all relevant changes to the MTFP, Statutory Resolution and Council Tax levels.

Note: The Statutory Resolution is attached as an Appendix to the Minutes of the meeting.

### **113. Treasury Management Mid Year Report 2022-23**

Council considered the Treasury Management Mid-Year report 2022/23, set out at Agenda pages 159 to 166.

The report provided a summary of the Council's treasury management activities during the first six months of 2022/23. It was presented to Council for the purpose of monitoring and review in line with the treasury management practices. The report stated that the Council had adhered to all the agreed prudential indicators with the exception of internal borrowing. This included ensuring the necessary liquidity to deliver the Council's day to day operations.

It was proposed by Imogen Shepherd-Dubey and seconded by Clive Jones, that the recommendation in the report be approved.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED** That the Council note:

- 1) that the Treasury Management Mid-Year report was considered and agreed by the Audit Committee at their meeting on Wednesday 30 November 2022;
- 2) that all approved indicators, set out in the Treasury Management Strategy, have been adhered to, with the exception of internal borrowing, which is forecast to be higher than set out in the strategy and ratio of financing costs to net Revenue stream – General Fund;
- 3) due to the current uncertainty in the interest rate market, the internal borrowing parameter is being reviewed with the Council's treasury management advisers and will be reported back as part of the Treasury Management Strategy;
- 4) the contents of "Table A", as set out in the report, which shows the net benefit per Council Tax D equivalent, from the income generated less the financing costs on all borrowing to date equates to £15.29 per Band D for 2022/23 – this income is used by the Council to continue to provide priority services for the Borough's residents;

- 5) as at the end of September 2022, the forecast for the total external General Fund debt was £112m at March 2023, which reduces to £81m after taking into account cash balances (net indebtedness) reducing interest costs in the current economic climate;
- 6) the Executive agreed, on 27 October 2022, recommendation 3 of the Capital Monitoring 2022/23 – Q2 report “note that due to the current uncertainty surrounding higher interest rates, as part of our financial management process, a review is to be undertaken to determine what Capital projects can be postponed this year, to minimise exposure to borrowing at high rates – any postponement to be agreed by the Executive.

#### **114. Energy Contract Procurement**

Council considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 167 to 183, which sought approval for a procurement strategy for the migration of the Energy Buying Strategy from the current framework provider (CCS – Crown Commercial Service) to the Laser Framework.

The report stated that the rationale for moving framework suppliers was to ensure best value (energy price) for the Council. The significant rise in energy prices over the past eighteen months had prompted an investigation into measures to enable the Council to procure smarter. It was considered that the levels of service offered by the Laser Framework would exceed the current CCS offer and would also deliver significant levels of additional flexibility, adaptivity and responsiveness in tariff pricing and trading arrangements. The proposed procurement strategy was in line with the Council's procurement regulations.

It was proposed by Councillor Sarah Kerr and seconded by Councillor Chris Johnson, that the recommendation in the report be approved.

It was noted that recommendation 4) should refer to the Executive Members for Finance and Housing.

Upon being put to the vote, it was:

#### **RESOLVED** That Council:

- 1) approves the procurement strategy set out in the Procurement Business Case for the migration of the Council's Energy Buying Strategy from the current framework provider (CCS – Crown Commercial Service) to the Laser Framework;
- 2) approves the Procurement Business Case;
- 3) notes that an updated Procurement Business Case will be reported back to the Executive and Council, with proposed contract terms and timescales for implementation;
- 4) delegates authority to the Director of Resources and Assets, in consultation with the Executive Members for Finance and Housing, to engage with framework



suppliers and negotiate on future contract provision, in line with the approved procurement strategy.