

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council** held at the **New Council Chamber - Town Hall, Reigate** on **Thursday, 9 February 2023 at 7.30 pm.**

**Present:** Councillors F. Kelly (Mayor) and M. A. Brunt (Leader); R. Absalom (Deputy Mayor), T. Schofield (Deputy Leader), G. Adamson, T. Archer, R. H. Ashford, H. Avery, J. Baker, R. Biggs, M. S. Blacker, N. J. Bramhall, J. S. Bray, G. Buttironi, P. Chandler, V. Chester, Z. Cooper, J. C. S. Essex, P. Harp, R. Harper, N. D. Harrison, G. Hinton, J. Hudson, A. King, J. P. King, S. A. Kulka, V. H. Lewanski, S. McKenna, R. Michalowski, N. C. Moses, C. M. Neame, S. Parnall, A. Proudfoot, R. Ritter, S. Sinden, C. Stevens, M. Tary, D. Torra, R. S. Turner and S. T. Walsh

**Attended remotely:** Councillors J. Booton

**56 Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 1 December 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed.

**57 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Elbourne, Humphreys, Sachdeva and Thompson.

**58 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**59 Urgent business**

There was no urgent business.

**60 Public questions**

Jemma De Vincenzo asked a question about the regulation and maintenance of property standards for social housing within the borough. A response was given by Councillor Caroline Neame, Executive Member for Housing and Support.

Note: For more information on responses to Council questions, please see this page on the Council's website:

<https://reigate-banstead.moderngov.co.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13798>



61 Questions by Members

7 questions on notice were asked, and responses were given as follows:

Question by	To be answered by	Subject
Councillor Ritter	Councillor Ashford, the Executive Member for Community Partnership Support	Resident use of Community Partnership Support
Councillor Kulka	Councillor Schofield, Deputy Leader, and Executive Member for Finance & Governance	Voter ID Publicity
Councillor Essex	Councillor Schofield, Deputy Leader, and Executive Member for Finance & Governance	Pre-payment Meters
Councillor Torra	Councillor Bramhall, Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services	Pedestrian Zones in Redhill Town Centre
Councillor Booton	Councillor Bramhall, Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services	Benches on Earlswood Common
Councillor Chandler	Councillor Bramhall, Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services	Electric Vehicles as part of the RBBC Fleet
Councillor McKenna	Councillor Biggs, Executive Member for Planning Policy, and Place Delivery	National Planning Framework Consultation

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## 62 Recommendations

The Council received recommendations arising from the Executive meetings held on 15 December 2022 and 26 January 2023, relating to:

- (i) Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2022/23 (Executive minute 50);
- (ii) Budget and Capital Programme 2023/24 (Executive minute 57);
- (iii) Council Tax setting 2023/24 (Executive minute 58); and,
- (iv) Calendar of Meetings for 2023/24 (Executive minute 61).

### (i) Minute 50, Treasury Mid-Year Report 2022/23

**RESOLVED** that the recommendations of the Executive, from its meeting on 15 December 2022, in respect of minute 50 (Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2022/23) be adopted.

### (ii) Minute 57, Budget and Capital Programme 2023/24

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Brunt, moved the recommendations and in doing so commended the work of the officers and Members who contributed to it, including the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Budget Scrutiny Panel.

The Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Finance and Governance, Councillor Schofield, seconded the original recommendations, and reserved the right to speak.

Members' discussion of the [original recommendations of the Executive on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2023](#) included the following considerations:

- The Budget Scrutiny Panel concluded that the revenue budget savings, the additional income and the cost increases were achievable, realistic and based on sound financial practices and reasonable assumptions.
- The revenue and capital budget proposals for 2023/24 sought net service budget growth of £0.271m to reflect unavoidable growth (e.g. inflation, legislative change or increased demand on services) of £0.442m, funding risks relating to property voids and energy cost pressures of £1.35m, and planned investment in the Council's IT Strategy of £0.493m. This growth was offset by the proposed savings of £0.828m and additional income generation of £1.186m. Further income was expected to be generated from the 2023/24 municipal year as a result of the completion of the Rise development in Marketfield Way.
- Although the proposed savings were not expected to have a significant impact on service scope or quality, some reductions were proposed in the grants and funding to voluntary organisations. There was concern about the impact on residents of reducing funding for voluntary organisations.
- A Government settlement in December 2022 provided a new minimum funding guarantee to provide an extra 5% in core spending power, plus increased new homes bonus. The net result has been a £1.9m reduction in the use of

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earmarked reserves to balance the budget. Earmarked reserves of £0.5m was allocated to support the IT Strategy, and £0.5m to fund the net deficit on Housing Benefit Subsidy where government grant funding did not meet the Council's legal obligations.

- In relation to the council tax and business rates, with higher collection rates than anticipated during the pandemic, it had been possible to release surpluses from the Collection Fund accounts. Council tax setting for 2023/24 was recommended to increase by 2.99%, however acknowledging that the 1% increase in Council Tax was not anticipated when drafting the budget, and recognising the ongoing financial challenges facing residents, the Council had established an 'Economic Pressures Reserve' of £0.150m to provide extra discretionary support to those who needed it.
- The Pay Award for 2023/24 was commended as a fair and practical approach which achieved balance with ongoing budget pressures.
- Some Members sought additional funding for the Council's environmental sustainability strategy, roll-out of recycling scheme, greenspaces management plans, and the provision of social housing and affordable homes; and therefore, sought to move an amendment.

**Councillor Chandler proposed, and Councillor Essex seconded, an amendment to recommendations iii (revenue budget requirement), iv (service budget growth), vi (revenue reserves), and vii (capital programme).**

The amendments sought additional funding growth in the revenue and capital programme for 2023/24, as listed within the [Notice of Amendment published with the addendum on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2023](#), to support the delivery of:

- a Community Support Programme to increase support for households in fuel poverty.
- The Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy.
- The roll-out of the Council's recycling scheme to all properties in the borough.
- The establishment of a new Empty Homes Officer to deliver the conversion of empty homes into housing for social rent.
- Improved Countryside and Biodiversity Management, town centre and street environments, and social housing developments.

Members' discussion of the amendment included the following considerations:

- Whether the additional funding arising from:
  - the additional 1% increase in the Council Tax setting for 2023/24 (proposed at 2.99% in total); and,
  - the government settlement in December 2022 –

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- should be used to deliver the objectives outlined within the amendment instead of following the original recommendations, which sought to allocate surplus funds to the revenue reserves.
- The Council continued to manage an ongoing funding shortfall with the use of its reserves to balance the annual budget. The amendment would commit the Council to drawing an additional £0.5m annually from its reserves, at a time when the Council, through its Financial Sustainability Programme, was seeking to find savings and efficiencies to reduce its reliance on reserves to balance the budget.
- Whilst there was not consensus in support of the amendment as a whole, some Members did support elements of the amendment, including the proposals to:
  - strengthen countryside management and biodiversity.
  - accelerate progress to complete the scheme to roll-out a full recycling service across the borough.
  - continue funding support for local charities and voluntary organisations.
  - introduce food waste bins.
- The Executive contended that the amended recommendations relating to countryside management and biodiversity were addressed by the original recommendations, insofar that:
  - funding for a replacement Countryside Officer was already provided, and that a recruitment process to fill that vacancy was in progress.
  - The Countryside Officer would support a revised Greenspaces Strategy and greenspaces management plans in consultation with local communities and interest groups.
- The amended recommendation in respect of funding a Town Centre Manager post to improve the day-to-day management of the borough's town centres was considered to be a duplication of the work already undertaken by the borough's business guilds and liaison meetings with stakeholders such as Horley Town Council.

**The Mayor called upon the Managing Director to conduct a recorded vote on the amendment** to the recommendations of Executive Minute 57 (Budget and Capital Programme 2023/24) as within the addendum, and voting was recorded as follows:

For: Councillors Chandler, Chester, Essex, Kulka, McKenna, Proudfoot, Ritter, Sinden, and Torra.

Against: Councillors Absalom, Archer, Ashford, Avery, Baker, Biggs, Blacker, Bramhall, Bray, Brunt, Buttironi, Cooper, Harper, Harrison, Hinton, Hudson, A. King, J. King, Lewanski, Michalowski, Moses, Neame, Parnall, Schofield, Stevens, Tary, Turner, and Walsh.

Abstain: Councillors Adamson, Harp, and Kelly (the Mayor).

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**The Mayor declared the amendment lost. Accordingly, the original recommendations, as moved, were voted upon and voting was recorded as follows:**

For: Councillors Absalom, Adamson, Archer, Ashford, Avery, Baker, Biggs, Blacker, Bramhall, Bray, Brunt, Buttironi, Cooper, Harp, Harper, Harrison, Hinton, Hudson, A. King, J. King, Lewanski, Michalowski, Moses, Neame, Parnall, Schofield, Stevens, Tary, Turner, and Walsh.

Against: Councillors Chandler, Chester, Essex, Kulka, McKenna, Proudfoot, Ritter, Sinden, and Torra.

Abstain: Councillor Kelly (the Mayor).

**The Mayor declared that the original recommendations were adopted.**

At 10:05pm the meeting was adjourned for ten minutes for a comfort break. At the resumption of the meeting at 10:18pm, the Council **RESOLVED** in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 2.6.2 of the Constitution to continue the meeting after 10:30pm so that all of the business on the agenda could be completed.

**(iii) Minute 58 (Council Tax Setting 2023/24)**

The Mayor called upon the Managing Director to conduct a recorded vote on the recommendation under Executive Minute 58 (Council Tax Setting 2023/24), which was recorded as follows:

For: Councillors Absalom, Adamson, Archer, Ashford, Avery, Baker, Biggs, Blacker, Bramhall, Bray, Brunt, Buttironi, Cooper, Essex, Harp, Harper, Harrison, Hinton, Hudson, A. King, J. King, Kulka, Lewanski, McKenna, Michalowski, Moses, Neame, Parnall, Proudfoot, Ritter, Schofield, Sinden, Stevens, Tary, Torra, Turner, and Walsh.

Against: Councillor Chandler.

Abstain: Councillors Chester and Kelly (the Mayor).

**(iv) Minute 61, Calendar of Meetings for 2023/24**

**RESOLVED** that the recommendation of the Executive, from its meeting on 15 December 2022, in respect of minute 61 (Calendar of Meetings for 2023/24) be adopted.

**63 Statements**

The Council received a statement from Councillor Biggs, Executive Member for Planning Policy and Place Delivery, about a statutory public consultation by Natural England in relation to the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The consultation run for 14 weeks, starting on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023. The Council was a statutory consultee under Section 83 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, however Natural England had extended the consultation to other stakeholders, including local parish councils, partnership members, businesses, landowners, community organisations, recreational interest groups, and the wider public.

Further details would follow about how the public could participate in the consultation, such as webinars, stakeholder events and in-person drop-in sessions at accessible venues hosted by Natural England.

Councillor Biggs also updated the Council about 'The Rise', a new commercial and residential development in central Redhill, which was nearing completion and was expected to open on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023. The development included a variety of leisure facilities including a cinema, shops, restaurants, and bars.

**64 Pay Policy for 2023/24**

The Managing Director presented the report on the adoption of the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24 in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

The statement set out the Council's existing approach to pay and included details of the highest and lowest earners and the relationship between the two.

The pay policy statement was required to be approved by the Council in advance of the following financial year and, to ensure transparency, it was required to be published on the Council's website.

The statement reaffirmed the Council's ongoing commitment to paying a fair and Real Living Wage to all employees and workers, above national minimum wage levels.

The recommendation set out in the report was moved by Councillor Lewanski, as Chair of the Employment Committee, and seconded by Councillor Schofield.

**RESOLVED** that the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24 be approved.

**65 Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on Members' Allowances for 2023/24**

The report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) and Parish Remuneration Panel (PRP) set out recommendations for the Members' Allowances Schemes for Reigate and Banstead Borough Council; and, Horley Town Council and Salfords and Sidlow Parish Council respectively.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Brunt, moved an amendment to recommendations 1 and 3 of the IRP's report, which sought to lower the increase to the basic allowance proposed by the IRP to 2.99%, in line with Council Tax increase

adopted for 2023/24, and to freeze the Leader's special responsibility allowance with no increase from the 2022/23 rate.

**RESOLVED** to adopt the amended recommendations within the officer's report.

**66 Constitution update: Governance Task Group**

**RESOLVED** to adopt the recommendations within the officer's report.

**67 Leader's announcements**

**RESOLVED** to adopt the recommendations within the officer's report.

**68 Mayor's announcements**

The Mayor gave thanks to Andy Nash and his team at the Belfry Shopping Centre in Redhill. Over the festive season the shopping centre had facilitated fundraising opportunities for numerous local charities and helped them to raise thousands of pounds.

The annual Poppy Appeal for Remembrance Day in November raised £18,000 in donations to support the Mayor's charities (SASH and The Include Project). The event was held at the Belfry Centre in Redhill and was supported by many other local charities including Stripey Stork, Renewed Hope, Autism All Stars, The Lucy Rayner Trust, Home Start, The Orpheus Centre Trust, Active Prospects, Sight for Surrey and The Children's Trust.

The Mayor also congratulated the cast, staff, and the volunteers for the Cinderella Pantomime performance and production at the Harlequin Theatre in Redhill, which raised £2,157.80 for the Mayor's chosen charities.

Friday 27 January marked Holocaust Memorial Day. The Mayor lit a candle in memory of all those killed in the holocaust and other genocides in Bosnia, Cambodia, Darfur and Rwanda.

The Mayor attended a business guild event held at the Town Hall during the previous evening and commended the work of the borough's Business Guilds in promoting the borough's towns as vibrant places to live and work, including organising events such as the Christmas Fayre and Town Christmas Lights in Reigate.

The Mayor sought support on behalf of SASH, which supported East Surrey Hospital, for a project to repair some of the old benches on the hospital grounds which were in poor condition, and in doing so, called for people with DIY skills who would be able to refurbish some of these benches to get in touch with the Mayor's Office for further details.

The meeting finished at 10.39 pm