

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET
HELD ON 30 JANUARY 2024 AT 2.00 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBER, WOODHATCH PLACE, 11 COCKSHOT HILL,
REIGATE, SURREY, RH2 8EF.**

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Cabinet at its next meeting.

Members: (*present)

*Tim Oliver (Chairman)
*Natalie Bramhall
*Clare Curran
*Matt Furniss
*David Lewis
*Mark Nuti
*Denise Turner-Stewart
*Sinead Mooney
*Marisa Heath
*Kevin Deanus

Deputy Cabinet Members:

*Maureen Attewell
Paul Deach
Jordan Beech
*Steve Bax

Members in attendance:

Catherine Powell, Residents' Association and Independent Group Leader

**PART ONE
IN PUBLIC**

1/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [Item 1]

Jordan Beech and Paul Deach joined the meeting remotely.

2/24 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: 11 DECEMBER 2023 AND 19 DECEMBER 2023 [Item 2]

3/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were none.

4/24 PROCEDURAL MATTERS [Item 4]

4/241 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS [Item 4a]

There was one member question. A response was published in a supplement to the agenda.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning commented in response to part A) of her question, that it was clear that the right monitoring mechanisms had not yet been identified but hoped that we as an authority were able to work alongside national bodies to ensure that the correct Environmental Protection could be put in place. With regards to part B) the Cabinet Member hoped that we are able to have constructive dialogue on the challenges that are facing officers in driving this through.

With regards to part A) the Cabinet Member for Environment stated that as Natural England guidance sets out, chalk streams had a really high biodiversity value and it would be very difficult to recreate any loss. The council was open to engaging with relevant parties on this and doing further work to protect chalk streams and all of those connected issues to do with flooding and pollution as well. With regards to part B) the Cabinet Member for Environment stated that the council was happy to work on this with relevant bodies ensuring constructive dialogue.

5/24 PUBLIC QUESTIONS [Item 4b]

There was one public question. A response was published in a supplement to the agenda.

6/24 PETITIONS [Item 4c]

There were none.

7/24 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED ON REPORTS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE [Item 4d]

8/24 REPORTS FROM SELECT COMMITTEES, TASK GROUPS AND OTHER COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL [Item 5]

The report was introduced by the Chairman of the budget task group who thanked officers for their engagement with the task group and thanked Cabinet for their response. She explained that the recommendations in the report were in addition to the Select Committee recommendations shared with Cabinet on 19 December 2023. The task group Chairman still remained concerned about the value the council placed on early intervention/ prevention support services but welcomed the additional £5m being spent in this area. There was still concern around SEND schools and the increase in costs which were noted in the recommendations. With regard to EIAs these had been made available in January 2024 although having them available last October would have been welcomed.

The Leader thanked the task group for their work on the budget and made a few comments. He stated that investing in prevention work

went hand in hand with the challenges of funding daily services. £30m had been put into the budget to specifically target early prevention and support. Work needed to be done to clarify what we meant by prevention and what this work entailed. None of the efficiencies being made by the council would impact front line services. An analogy had been drawn up in the press regarding debt levels of the County Council and Woking Borough Council but the Leader explained that the capital budget would focus on building facilities to support and improve outcomes for residents which in turn would generate savings in the future. The capital programme supported the preventative agenda. The Leader also hoped that as there had been more than 20 meetings where members could make suggestions to be included for consideration in the budget process, that there would not be any last minute suggestions being made at the Council meeting when the budget would be approved.

9/24 LEADER / DEPUTY LEADER / CABINET MEMBER/ STRATEGIC INVESTMENT BOARD DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST CABINET MEETING [Item 6]

There was one decision for noting.

RESOLVED:

That the decisions taken since the last Cabinet meeting be noted.

10/24 CABINET MEMBER OF THE MONTH [Item 7]

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care provided the Cabinet with an update on the work she and the services she supports had been undertaking. The following points were highlighted:

- The Cabinet Member explained that the Care Quality Commission (CQC) was now responsible for regulating local authorities' delivery of its Care Act duties. This was the first-time local authorities had been assessed on these duties since the introduction of the Care Act in 2014. The CQC had piloted their approach in five authorities with four rated as 'good' and one 'requires improvement'. The CQC had committed to complete assessments on all local authorities in the next two years.
- There had been some significant changes in staffing within Safeguarding in Adults, Wellbeing and Health Partnerships. A new post, Assistant Director, Safeguarding, Assurance, Mental Capacity Act (MCA) and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) had been established to provide strategic oversight and leadership across Surrey. The post has been recruited to on an interim basis following attempts to recruit permanently.
- Surrey had experienced increased numbers of safeguarding concerns and investigations referred to the local authority. Not all of these after investigation were safeguarding adults' issues,

however the high numbers, in the context of other increased demand had led to an outstanding list of open safeguarding cases which though reducing is currently standing at 3,700. Work was taking place with the Safeguarding Adults Board and other partners to make sure that there was a shared understanding of what is appropriate to be referred as a safeguarding adult's referral. A new safeguarding tracker has been developed to support each area to focus and bring the lists down.

- It was explained that an audit programme had been developed to ensure a quality approach across Adults, Wellbeing and Health Partnerships and regular strategic liaison meetings were taking place with providers.
- An update to the Housing Chapter of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment had been completed and the delivery of the Accommodation with Care and Support Strategy was moving at a good pace.
- The Leader recognised the good work being undertaken by the Cabinet Member on the Housing, Accommodation and Homes Strategy for Surrey which had been presented at a the LoveLocalGov event which focused on celebrating the best of local government work.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet Member of the Month update be noted.

11/24 2024/25 FINAL BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY TO 2028/29 [Item 8]

The report was introduced by the Leader who explained that a draft budget had come to Cabinet in November and would be taken to Full Council on 6 February for approval. At the November meeting a budget gap of £13.5m had been identified, the final budget contained within the Cabinet report addressed this gap. The final budget would assume an increase in the level of core council tax of 2.99% and an increase of 2% in the precept proposed by Central Government to cover the growing cost of Adult Social Care. The increase in council tax would put the council in a robust financial position. A final settlement from Government would be announced on 5 February which indicated an increase of funding by £600m, £500m of this would be ringfenced for adult social care. The lobbying by the council to government had been effective and acted on. The Leader gave special thanks to the Prime Minister, Jeremy Hunt and Michael Gove. The Leader reiterated the need for reform to funding in Local Government and highlighted the services where there were pressures including home to school transport.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources welcomed the final budget, thanking the Leader for his lobbying of government. Officers

were also thanked for helping develop the final budget. Additional funding from government would help the council to support vulnerable residents and invest for the future. Cabinet Members welcomed additional funding from the government especially for children and adults services. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities welcomed the £40m being made available for Your Fund Surrey from 2023-24 to 2025-26. The projects coming to fruition were supporting the prevention agenda of the council and supporting vulnerable residents.

The Leader noted that recommendation 5 in the report would be updated ahead of the Full Council meeting to reflect that earmarked reserves would no longer be used as additional funding had been received by government.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet makes the following recommendations to Council on 6 February 2024.

Cabinet recommends that Council:

1. Approves the net revenue budget requirement be set at **£1,197.1 million** (net cost of services after service specific government grants) for 2024/25 (Annex B), subject to confirmation of the Final Local Government Financial Settlement.
2. Approves the total Council Tax Funding Requirement be set at **£914.9 million** for 2024/25. This is based on a council tax increase of 4.99%, made up of an increase in the level of core council tax of 2.99% and an increase of 2% in the precept proposed by Central Government to cover the growing cost of Adult Social Care (Annex E).
3. Notes that for the purpose of section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council formally determines that the increase in core council tax is not such as to trigger a referendum (i.e. not greater than 3%).
4. Sets the Surrey County Council precept for Band D Council Tax at £1,758.60, which represents a 4.99% uplift. This is a rise of £1.61 a week from the 2023/24 precept of £1,675.08. This includes £251.44 for the Adult Social Care precept, which has increased by £33.50. A full list of bands is as follows:

| Valuation band | Core precept | ASC precept | Overall precept |
|----------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|
| A | £ 1,004.77 | £ 167.63 | £ 1,172.40 |
| B | £ 1,172.24 | £ 195.56 | £ 1,367.80 |
| C | £ 1,339.70 | £ 223.50 | £ 1,563.20 |
| D | £ 1,507.16 | £ 251.44 | £ 1,758.60 |
| E | £ 1,842.08 | £ 307.32 | £ 2,149.40 |
| F | £ 2,177.01 | £ 363.19 | £ 2,540.20 |
| G | £ 2,511.93 | £ 419.07 | £ 2,931.00 |
| H | £ 3,014.32 | £ 502.88 | £ 3,517.20 |

5. Approves the use of £5m of earmarked reserves, to enable additional targeted preventative and early intervention investment in the event that the Final Local Government Finance Settlement does not provide any additional funding to that contained in the provisional settlement (paragraph 6).
6. Notes that underlying General Fund Balances are projected to remain at £49 million as of 1 April 2024.
7. Approves the Total Schools Budget of £656.7 million to meet the Council's statutory requirement on schools funding (as set out in Section 9 of the 2024/25 Final Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2028/29).
8. Approves the overall indicative Budget Envelopes for Directorates and individual services for the 2024/25 budget (Annex B).
9. Approves the total £1,902.4 million proposed five-year Capital Programme (comprising £1,291.3 million of budget and £611.1 million pipeline) and approves the £404.9 million Capital Budget in 2024/25 (Annex C).
10. Approves the Capital and Investment Strategy (Annex F - Sections 1 to 3), which provides an overview of how risks associated with capital expenditure, financing and treasury will be managed as well as how they contribute towards the delivery of services.
11. Approves the policy for making a prudent level of revenue provision for the repayment of debt - the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy (Annex G).
12. Notes that the investment in Transformation required to deliver improved outcomes and financial benefits is built into the proposed Medium-Term Financial Strategy (as set out in section 3 of 2024/25 Final Budget Report and Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2028/29).
13. Cabinet notes that the Audit & Governance Committee has approved the following at its meeting on the 17th January 2024: Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators

(Annex F – Section 4) which set a framework for the Council's treasury function to manage risks, source borrowing and invest surplus cash.

Reasons for Decisions:

Council will meet on 6 February 2024 to agree a budget and to set the Council Tax Precept for 2024/25. Cabinet is required to recommend a budget to Council for consideration at this meeting. The budget directs available resources to support the achievement of the Council's ambitions and priorities in the 2030 Vision and the Refreshed Organisation Strategy.

The budget will also support the delivery of the continuing transformational changes that are required to ensure that the Council can improve priority outcomes for residents, while managing growing demand for services and ensuring future financial sustainability.

12/24 ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR SURREY'S COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS FOR SEPTEMBER 2025 [Item 9]

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning introduced the report explaining that this was an annual report regarding the admission arrangements that will apply for Surrey's community and voluntary controlled infant, junior, primary and secondary schools for admission in September 2025. Surrey County Council was responsible for setting the admission arrangements for 78 community and voluntary controlled schools for 2025. The remaining schools were academies, foundation, free, trust and voluntary aided schools that were responsible for setting their own admission arrangements. The admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools for 2025 would remain as determined for 2024 therefore no consultation would be required.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet makes the following recommendations to Council on 6 February 2024.

Cabinet recommends that Council approves:

1. The admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools, including the Published Admission Numbers (PANs), for September 2025 as set out in Annex 1 and its appendices.

Reasons for Decisions:

- The local authority has a duty to determine the admission arrangements for all community and voluntary controlled schools by 28 February 2024
- The admission arrangements are working well
- The arrangements enable the majority of pupils to attend a local school and in doing so reduce travel and support Surrey's sustainability policies
- The changes highlighted in bold red text in Sections 10, 11, 14 and 19 of Annex 1 have been made to add clarity to the arrangements and reflect existing practice
- The arrangements remain as they were determined for 2024, which enables parents to have some historical benchmark by which to make informed decisions about their school preferences for 2025 admission
- The arrangements are compliant with the School Admissions Code

13/24 STRATEGIC INVESTMENT BOARD ANNUAL REPORT - FINANCIAL YEAR 2022/23 [Item 10]

The annual report was introduced by the Leader who explained the role of the Strategic Investment Board in overseeing the council's investments and performance of the council's trading companies. Investment return was expected to remain between 2-2.5% of the council's net revenue budget over the next 5 years with reserves to manage any fluctuations. The Leader explained that changes to the Public Works Loan Board lending rules had prevented Councils taking on additional borrowing to invest purely for commercial gain and that the council had not made any such investments since 2018. The asset holdings of the council were regularly reviewed by the Board. The Leader gave an update on the performance of each trading company stating that each was performing well with no financial challenges.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet endorses the Annual Report of the Strategic Investment Board.

Reasons for Decisions:

- To inform the Council about the activities of the Strategic Investment Board
- The Strategic Investment Board has been established in accordance with best practice governance to ensure effective oversight and alignment with the strategic objectives and values of the Council.

(The decisions on this item can be called in by the Resources and Performance Select Committee)

14/24 2023/24 MONTH 8 (NOVEMBER) FINANCIAL REPORT [Item 11]

The report was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources who explained that at Month 8 the Council was forecasting an overspend of £1.7m against the 2023/24 revenue budget, after the application of the contingency budget. At Month 8, capital expenditure of £267.4m was forecast for 2023/24, a variance of £0.9m less than the re-set budget of £268.3m. The capital pipeline budget included £40m for Your Fund Surrey for 23/24 – 25/26, including an allocation available to each Councillor for the small project fund which enables them to support local small capital projects in their community. It was proposed to increase the allocation to individual councillors from £50,000, to a total of £100,000. There had also been a submission from Waverley Borough Council for a reimbursement of the Council's share of the additional council tax raised for specific years from implementing changes to empty homes policies. This was for a total of £575,933.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet notes the Council's forecast revenue budget (after the application of the full contingency budget) and capital budget positions for the year.
2. That Cabinet approves the Empty Homes proposal of £575,933 to Waverley Borough Council relating to 2022, outlined in paragraph 7 – 8.
3. That Cabinet approves the increase to the Your Fund Surrey small project fund allocation for each individual councillor to £100,000.

Reasons for Decisions:

This report is to comply with the agreed policy of providing a monthly budget monitoring report to Cabinet for approval of any necessary actions.

(The decisions on this item can be called in by the Resources and Performance Select Committee)

15/24 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC [Item 12]

RESOLVED: That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information under the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

16/24 STRATEGIC INVESTMENT BOARD ANNUAL REPORT - FINANCIAL YEAR 2022/23 [Item 13]

The Leader introduced a Part 2 annex which contained information which was exempt from Access to Information requirements by virtue of Paragraph 3: information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

There was a short discussion amongst the Cabinet about the properties contained within the commercial portfolio.

RESOLVED:

See Minute 13/24.

Reasons for Decisions:

See Minute 13/24.

17/24 PUBLICITY FOR PART 2 ITEMS [Item 14]

It was agreed that non-exempt information may be made available to the press and public, where appropriate.

Meeting closed at 15:30

Chairman