

**To all Members of the Council**

16 February 2024

You are hereby summoned to attend a Meeting of Rother District Council to be held at the Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea, on **Monday 26 February 2024** at 6:30pm, when it is proposed to transact the business stated below.

At 6:25pm, prior to the commencement of the meeting, you are invited to join the Chair in prayer which will be led by her Chaplain, the Dean of Battle, the Reverend Lee Duckett.

1. To approve as a correct record and to authorise the Chair to sign the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 December 2023.
2. To receive apologies for absence.
3. Disclosure of Interests and Dispensations
To receive any disclosures by Members of disclosable pecuniary interests / other registerable interests / non-registerable interests in matters on the agenda and the nature of any interest and details of any dispensations obtained. Members are reminded of the need to repeat their declaration immediately prior to the commencement of the item in question.
4. To receive the Chair's communications.
5. To answer questions from members of the public, if any, in accordance with paragraph 10 of the Council Procedure Rules. (Time limit 30 minutes.)
6. To answer questions from Members of the Council, if any, in accordance with paragraph 11 of the Council Procedure Rules. (Time limit 30 minutes.)
7. To receive the report of the Cabinet on matters for determination by full Council at its meeting held on 5 February 2024 (the meeting scheduled for 8 January was cancelled) as under: (Pages 3 - 12)
5 February 2024
 - Draft Revenue Budget 2024/25 (CB23/61) (See Agenda Item 8)
 - New Housing Allocations Policy (CB23/62)
 - Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring as at Quarter 3 - 2023/24 (CB23/63)
 - Members' Allowance Scheme 2024-2027 (CB23/64)
8. Budget 2024/25 - to consider and if thought fit, to pass a resolution in the terms set out in the report. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 17.5 (b) a recorded vote will be taken on this matter. (Pages 13 - 28)

9. To receive the report of the Head of Paid Service, in accordance with paragraph 17a of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, of an urgent decision taken by Cabinet at its meeting held on 11 December 2023. (Pages 29 - 30)
10. To receive the report of the Licensing and General Purposes Committee on matters for determination by full Council at its meeting held on 15 January 2024 as under: (Pages 31 - 34)

15 January 2024

- Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy (LG23/12)

11. To receive the report of the Chief Executive on the designation of the Section 151 Officer (Chief Finance Officer). (Pages 35 - 36)
12. To receive the report of the Chief Executive on the appointment of a Council Representative to the East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. (Pages 37 - 38)
13. To receive the report of the Chief Executive on the appointment of a Council Representative to the Bexhill Festival of Music. (Pages 39 - 40)
14. To receive the report of the Chief Executive on a change to the Membership of the Planning Committee. (Pages 41 - 42)
15. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13, consideration be given to the Motion to Council submitted by Councillor McGurk on the Climate and Ecology Bill. (Pages 43 - 46)
16. To consider nominations received for the appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council for 2024/25, and, if necessary, to determine those nominations by secret ballot in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 17.4.

(In accordance with normal practice, this process is intended to determine the names to be put forward at the Annual Council Meeting).



Lorna Ford
Chief Executive

Town Hall
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex, TN39 3JX

Rother District Council

Report to	-	Council
Date	-	26 February 2024
Report of the	-	Cabinet
Subject	-	References from Cabinet Meetings

The Council is asked to consider recommendations arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 5 February 2024 (the meeting scheduled for 8 January 2024 was cancelled) as set out below.

CABINET – 5 FEBRUARY 2024**CB23/61. DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25 PROPOSALS**

Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer on the draft Revenue Budget for 2024/25. The budget had been scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 22 January 2024 and a copy of the Minutes arising from the OSC meeting had been appended to the report for Cabinet's consideration. Also appended to the report were details of the summary draft Revenue Budget, the summary information for each service area, main changes from the updated 2023/24 budget, Capital Programme, summary of the budget consultation responses, proposals for new Council Tax premiums, consideration of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for 2024/25, summary of cashless car parking consultation and fees and charges.

The following key issues were highlighted:

- the overall financial position had improved since the report to the OSC by £442k, taking the forecast drawdown from reserves down from £626k to £185k, the reasons for this were detailed in the report;
- the draft Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) applied to 2024/25 did not guarantee any future funding streams beyond the following year and was again a further single year settlement;
- the Council's Core Spending Power (CSP) had been set at £12.9m, an increase of £0.6m from 2023/24, equating to 5.1%;
- the small Business Rates Multiplier for 2024/25 would remain frozen again at 49.9p, but councils would be compensated for any reduction in income because of this decision;
- the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities had increased the overall Revenue Support Grant (RSG) in line with Consumer Price Index inflation, however the Council effectively had a negative RSG, but would not be required to pay over negative RSG;
- for 2024/25, to ensure the Council remained within the referendum limit, it was assumed that a Council Tax increase of 3% to £204.56 would be agreed for a Band D property, subject to any final decision regarding special expenses;
- the detailed precept budgets from Rye and Bexhill-on-Sea Town Councils had not been received at the time of drafting the report so it

had not been possible to undertake an assessment of special expenses. It was recommended that the Deputy Chief Executive be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance, to make any final changes necessary in respect of special expenses once the position had been reviewed and reported to full Council on 26 February 2024;

- the Council would receive several government grants, including New Homes Bonus (£136k), Rural Services Delivery Grant (£72k), CSP Minimum Funding Guarantee (£778k), Services Grant (£15k) and New Burdens Grant (awaiting further details) although these were pending the final settlement announcement;
- the Benefits Administration, Local Council Tax Support and Homelessness Prevention grants did not form part of the CSP calculation and were still subject to confirmation;
- the Medium Term Financial Strategy forecast, reported to Cabinet on 6 November 2023 which outlined several cost pressures that might affect the Council's budget, had been reviewed and were discussed within the report;
- the Council's 'Fit for the Future' programme proposed a total of £3.3m savings to be made through efficiencies, income and savings identified from several areas, which were detailed within the report. Total savings of £3.1m had been included within the provisional budget figures;
- the amount of Reserves required to fund the Revenue Budget in 2024/25 equated to £0.2m; and
- a fundamental review of the Capital Programme was being undertaken to ensure capital schemes remained affordable and continued to deliver the outcomes originally anticipated. No new proposals or capital growth items had been included within the updated programme, except for any recent Committee decisions.

The budget consultation closed on 17 December 2023 and 694 responses had been received, the highest level of response the Council had ever had to a budget consultation. A summary of the results was attached to the report at Appendix E. It was noted that in general terms, respondents were supportive of the proposals.

Following the introduction of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, there were opportunities for the Council to consider changes to its approach relating to certain discretionary areas of the Council Tax, concerning empty properties and second homes; the former could be introduced by April 2024, the latter required the decision to be taken at least 12 months before the financial year to which it would apply, so would therefore not take effect until the 2025/26 financial year. (Full details could be found at Appendix F to the report.)

It was proposed to change the CTRS for the 2024/25 financial year, to introduce a new, 100% funded scheme from April 2024. The proposed changes would improve the overall maximum level of support to 100% for the lowest income and most vulnerable working age applicants and remove the £5 per week minimum payment. (Full details was contained within Appendix G to the report.)

During the debate, the following points were noted:

- Members acknowledged the 582 respondents to the cashless car parking consultation and noted that issues raised would be discussed with the Head of Neighbourhood Services;
- Members thanked the Interim Deputy Chief Executive and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance for their work in developing the budget and acknowledged the limits which had to be worked within;
- Members were satisfied that an extra 1% had been added to the staff pay award budget;
- Members agreed that the level of reserves be kept at a higher level than that recommended by the Council's external auditor, Grant Thornton; and
- Members were pleased to see the changes proposed to the CTRS.

The draft Revenue Budget had been balanced for 2024/25 by the planned use of just under £0.2m from Usable Revenue Reserves, which would reduce Reserves to £5.2m by 31 March 2025. From 2025/26, onwards the projections saw contributions going back into reserves, which would take reserve levels back up to around £8.0m by 2027/28. The Council's ability to deliver a balanced budget was even more dependent on strong financial management and the delivery of the 'Fit for the Future' financial resilience programme.

RECOMMENDED: That:

- 1) the expenditure and budget for 2024/25 as detailed in Appendix A to the report be approved along with the anticipated use of reserves;
- 2) the updated Capital Programme set out in Appendix D to the report be approved;
- 3) the Council Tax for 2024/25 at Band D be increased by £5.94 (2.99%) and set at £204.54 (subject to any changes to special expenses yet to be confirmed);
- 4) the proposals contained within Appendix F to the report regarding council tax premiums for empty homes and second homes be agreed as follows;
 - empty homes - the application of the current premium of 100% for all dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (empty dwellings) is reduced from a period of two years to one year with effect from 1 April 2024;
 - second homes - the application of a premium of 100% for all dwellings which are unoccupied but substantially furnished (second homes) be applied with effect from 1 April 2025;
 - that the Deputy Chief Executive be authorised to agree with the major preceptors the funding of any award under Section 13A (1)(C) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (reduction in liability) from the Collection Fund; and
 - that the Deputy Chief Executive be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance to make any necessary changes to the policy in line

with the Council's requirements and any guidance given by the Secretary of State or regulation;

- 5) the proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme be approved for 2024/25 with a move from an 80% funded scheme to a 100% funded scheme;
- 6) the fees and charges contained within Appendix J to the report be approved and the Deputy Chief Executive be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance to make any necessary changes; and
- 7) the Deputy Chief Executive be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance to make any final changes necessary in respect of special expenses once the position has been reviewed.

(Councillor Field declared an Other Registrable Interest in this matter in so far as she was a Member of East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and as the matter directly related to the finances of the ESCC, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct left the meeting during the consideration thereof.)

(Councillor Timpe declared an Other Registrable Interest in this matter in so far as she was a Member of Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council and involved with the Manor Barn, Bexhill and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof.)

(Cabinet Agenda Item 5)

CB23/62. **NEW HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

Cabinet received Minute OSC23/45 arising from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 22 January 2024 that had considered a report on the New Housing Allocations Policy (HAP) 2024. The HAP provided a framework for the equitable, effective and accountable allocation of social housing across the district and met the Council's statutory obligations under Section 166A(1) of the Housing Act 1996. The Housing Needs Operations Manager advised that an eight-week public consultation had been held from 7 July 2023 to 4 September 2023; 111 responses were received. It was noted that most of the proposed changes were agreed, however, to adopt the new HAP, it would be necessary to reassess all existing households that were on the register. It was the intention to review the Policy annually.

Cabinet was fully supportive of the new HAP and recommended formal approval and adoption. It was also recommended that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Housing and Regeneration, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing to adopt the HAP 2024 at the end of the implementation period and make any further minor amendments, if required.

RECOMMENDED: That:

- 1) the new Housing Allocations Policy 2024 be approved and adopted;
- 2) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Housing and Regeneration to formally adopt the Housing Allocations Policy 2024, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing, following the conclusion of the implementation period; and
- 3) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Housing and Regeneration to make any further minor amendments to the Housing Allocations Policy 2024, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing.

(Cabinet Agenda Item 8)

CB23/63. **REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING AS AT QUARTER 3 - 2023/24**

Cabinet received and considered the report of the Interim Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer on the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter 3 2023/24. The report updated Members on the Council's finances as at the end of December 2023 and projected provisional outturn for 2023/24. The Revenue Budget, Capital Programme Statements and impact of the forecast on the Council's reserves were summarised at Appendices A, B and C to the report respectively. The report also included a brief update on the Collection Fund performance.

The forecast outturn for the 2023/24 financial year was based on the position as at 31 December 2023 and indicated a forecast deficit position of £2.709m at 31 March 2024, against a budgeted deficit of £2.221m, which was a variance of £488k.

The report detailed the material variances and the forecast was summarised at Appendix A to the report.

Several small savings were being forecast by the end of the financial year, with no more being achieved. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) removed the current Financial Stability Programme and replaced it with a new 'Fit for the Future' financial resilience programme, which was designed to close the budget gap over the medium-term period through making efficiencies, savings and increasing income to help support frontline services. The forecast deficit had increased by £200k since the previous quarterly report, as these savings were being made in the services directly and not in this part of the statement.

Since the 2023/24 budget was approved, several small, unbudgeted, grants from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had been received, mainly in respect of New Burdens grants and additional Section 31 Grants.

The Interim Section 151 Officer was continuing to work with Heads of Service and elected Members to undertake a fundamental review of capital schemes within the Capital Programme, which currently amounted to more than £157m. The revised 2023/24 budget was

£28.5m (Appendix B to the report) and the forecast outturn for the year at Quarter 2 was £20.1m, a variance of (£8.3m) or 29% of the programme. Most of the forecast underspend was attributable to schemes which had progressed more slowly than expected or had been paused pending review, with only a small amount of savings forecast on schemes which had been completed. An external consultant had been employed to undertake the review, which would be completed within the next six to twelve months.

The Mount View Street Development scheme was completed in 2020/21; at that time, no accruals were made for outstanding expenditure. Subsequently, in 2023, a payment was made in respect of valuation work, at a cost of £42.5k. To enable this to be financed, it was requested that Council approve the reinstatement of the scheme to the Capital Programme and the additional budget of £42.5k, to be funded from borrowing.

The forecast impact on reserves was a drawdown of £2.449m for revenue, which was £404k higher than the planned use of £2.045m, and £0.260m for capital which was £84k higher than the planned use of reserves.

The Council Tax collection rate at the end of Quarter 3 was 84.20% of the collectable debit, 0.07% higher than the corresponding figure in 2022/23. The Business Rates collection rate at the end of Quarter 3 was 83.31% of the collectable debit, 1.26% lower than the corresponding figure in 2022/23. It was noted that the collection rates continued to hold well despite the squeeze on finances following the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, although business rates were showing a larger, adverse difference in the income received as a percentage of collectable debt, when compared to the previous year.

The forecast outturn on the Revenue Budget at Quarter 3 2023/24 was a deficit of £2.709m, which was £488k greater than the approved planned use of Reserves. The Council's Capital Programme had a forecast outturn of £20.1m.

RECOMMENDED: That a budget in respect of residual costs on the Mount View Street Development scheme, be added to the capital programme in 2023/24, at a cost of £42.5k, to be financed from borrowing;

Cabinet also **RESOLVED** to note the report.

(Cabinet Agenda Item 9)

CB23/64. **MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME 2024-2027**

In accordance with the Members Allowances Regulations 2003, before the Council could make any amendments to its allowance scheme, the Council had to have regard to the recommendations made by an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). In February 2023, the Council set its allowances to apply for the current civic year only (2023-24) and agreed that the IRP be reconvened in the subsequent autumn / winter to

carry out a further review and make recommendations for the allowances to apply for the remainder of the current Council administration (2024-27).

The IRP reconvened in November 2023, met with the Leader of the Council, received relevant information to inform their review and received comments from elected Members, and a copy of their further recommendations was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

The IRP had made a total of eight recommendations, with the key recommendations as follows:

- the Basic Allowance be increased by 3% for 2024/25 only;
- the IRP meet annually during this administration in light of the current local and national economic position;
- the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) be increased by the same amount each year agreed for the Basic Allowance;
- the SRA for the Chair of the Human Resources Committee be a 0.33 ratio of the Basic Allowance (same as Audit and Standards and Licensing and General Purposes Committee Chairs);
- the allowances for the “co-optees” be increased each year in line with that agreed for Members; and
- the subsistence allowances, breakfast, lunch, tea and dinner remain the same for the period 2023-27.

Given the Council’s current financial position, Cabinet was not supportive of an increase on the Members’ Allowances (IRP Recommendation 1) and agreed that all other allowances should remain the same; it was noted that should Members not support an increase there would be a modest budget saving in the region of £16k.

The Leader of the Council acknowledged the work of the IRP and thanked the Panel for their thorough report.

RECOMMENDED: That:

- 1) the Members’ Basic Allowance remain the same and not be increased in line with the staff pay award and that consequently all other Allowances remain the same;
- 2) consideration be given to the remaining Independent Remuneration Panel’s recommendations as set out at Appendix A at full Council; and
- 3) the Chief Executive be authorised to amend the Scheme within the Constitution, following approval by full Council of the allowances to be paid.

(Cabinet Agenda Item 11)

Councillor D.B. Oliver
Leader of the Council

Recommendation 1: That the Members' Basic Allowance **NOT** be increased by 3%, in line with the staff pay award for 2024-2025.

Recommendation 2: That the IRP meet annually to review the Basic Allowance until Autumn 2026 when the next full review is due to take place.

Recommendation 3: That the amounts are rounded either up or down to the nearest full pound.

Recommendation 4: That the value of the SRAs is determined by any increases made to the Basic Allowance. **[NO PROPOSED INCREASE 24/25]**

Recommendation 5: That the IRP review and make recommendations on the ratios of SRAs to Basic Allowances as part of the review process.

Recommendation 6: That a SRA for the Chair of the Human Resources Committee be applied at a 0.33 ratio of the Basic Allowance. **[NOTE: THIS IS THE SAME SRA AS PAID TO CHAIR OF LICENSING AND GENERAL PURPOSES AND AUDIT AND STANDARDS]**

Recommendation 7: That the allowances paid to the "co-optees" be increased in line with increases agreed for Members' Basic Allowance between 2024-2027. **[NO PROPOSED INCREASE 24/25]**

Recommendation 8: That the subsistence rates remain unchanged until 2027.

Rother District Council

Report to	-	Council
Date	-	26 February 2024
Report of the	-	Chief Executive
Subject	-	Budget 2024/25

Recommendation: It be **RESOLVED:** That the following be approved:

1. The updated General Fund Summary and movement in reserves (Appendix A);
 2. The formal Council Tax Resolution (Appendix B); and
 3. The Optimum Level of the General Fund Reserve for 2024/25 to 2027/28 (Appendix D).
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Introduction

1. The Localism Act 2011 requires the billing authority to calculate a Council Tax requirement for the year, not its budget requirement as previously. There have been three changes to the budget since the Cabinet meeting as follows;
 - The final settlement figures for 2024/25 have now been announced and incorporated into the updated position (£176k reduction);
 - The £611k savings for shared services have been removed to allow for a further year of planning before these savings are anticipated. This leaves savings of c£2.6m built into next year's budget; and
 - As per the delegation included within the budget report to Cabinet, the special expenses position has now been reviewed and a provision of (£787k) is included as detailed within Appendix C.
2. The above changes do not impact on the bottom line of the 2024/25 budget which still shows a deficit and reserve requirement of £185k. These changes have been built into the updated General Fund summary in Appendix A.
3. The precept levels of other precepting bodies have been received and are detailed below:

Town and Parish Councils

4. The Town and Parish Council Precepts (including Special Expenses for Bexhill and Rye) for 2024/25 are detailed in Appendix C and total £3,769,450 (2023/24 £3,468,114). The increase results in an average Band D Council Tax figure of £96.17 (£90.03 for 2023/24).

East Sussex County Council

5. East Sussex County Council met on 6 February 2024 and set their precept at £69,705,306 (£65,246,531 in 2023/24) for the area of Rother. This results in a Band D Council Tax of £1,778.31 (£1,693.80 in 2023/24). This includes the Adult Social Care Precept of £256.50 (£222.66 2023/34) at Band D.

Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner

- Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner met on 5 February 2024 and set their precept at £9,913,440 (£9,241,525 in 2023/24) for the area of Rother. This results in a Band D Council Tax of £252.91 (£239.91 in 2023/24).

East Sussex Fire Authority

- East Sussex Fire Authority met on 8 February 2024 and set their precept at £4,213,339 (£4,020,416 in 2023/24) for the area of Rother. This results in a Band D Council Tax of £107.49 (£104.37 in 2022/23).

Excessive Council Tax increases

- The Localism Act 2011 introduced a requirement for a local authority to determine whether its proposed Council Tax increase for a financial year is excessive, in which case a local referendum would be needed. The Secretary of State has indicated that for 2024/25, the maximum amount that a District Council can increase its Council Tax is the higher of either 3% or £5.
- Cabinet have recommended Rother District Council's basic amount of tax for 2024/25 to be increased by £5.94 (2.99%) to £204.54 (£198.60 2023/24), which is within the Secretary of State's guidelines and is therefore not excessive. This represents a Council Tax requirement of £8,017,457, (£7,650,285 in 2023/24).

Budget Consultation

- The Council budget consultation with residents and businesses closed on the 17 December 2023. There was a total of 694 (126 2023/24) responses, a summary of the results can be found within Appendix E of the budget report to Cabinet on 5 February 2024.

Conclusions

- The recommendations of the Cabinet are set out in the formal Council Tax Resolution in Appendix B. If the formal Council Tax Resolution at Appendix B is approved, the total Band D Council Tax will be as follows:

	2023/24	2024/25	Increase
	£	£	%
Rother District Council	198.60	204.54	2.99%
East Sussex County Council	1,471.14	1,521.81	3.44%
<i>East Sussex County Council – social care precept</i>	222.66	256.50	15.20%
Total East Sussex County Council	1,693.80	1,778.31	4.99%
East Sussex Fire & Rescue Authority	104.37	107.49	2.99%
Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner	239.91	252.91	5.42%
Sub-total	2,236.68	2,343.25	4.76%
Town and Parish Council (average)	90.03	96.17	6.81%
Total	2,326.72	2,439.42	4.84%

Appendix A

	2023/24 Budget (updated) £ (000)	2024/25 Budget £ (000)	2025/26 Budget £ (000)	2026/27 Budget £ (000)	2027/28 Budget £ (000)
Departmental Budgets					
Chief Executive	3,539	3,170	3,056	2,935	2,892
Deputy Chief Executive	4,703	4,860	4,852	4,845	4,842
Director Place & Climate Change	8,784	7,335	7,192	7,041	6,987
Total Cost of Services	17,026	15,365	15,100	14,821	14,721
Net Financing Costs	(170)	(166)	430	462	621
Contract and Income Inflation	0	0	(113)	(116)	82
Additional 1% staff pay award	0	100	100	100	100
Cut for the Future - savings projections/service pressures	0	0	(917)	(1,223)	(1,223)
Net Cost of Services	16,856	15,299	14,600	14,044	14,301
Special Expenses	(751)	(787)	0	0	0
Business Rates - retained share	(4,849)	(4,820)	(4,965)	(5,114)	(5,267)
Non-Specific Revenue Grants (Government)	(1,157)	(1,490)	(1,337)	(1,371)	(1,406)
Council Tax Requirement (Rother only)	(7,650)	(8,017)	(8,344)	(8,727)	(9,148)
Collection Fund (Surplus)/Deficit	0	0	0	0	0
Total Income	(14,407)	(15,114)	(14,646)	(15,212)	(15,821)
Funding Gap	2,449	185	(46)	(1,168)	(1,520)
Earmarked and General Reserves	(8,128)	(5,419)	(5,234)	(5,280)	(6,448)
Use of/(Contribution to) Reserves	2,449	185	(46)	(1,168)	(1,520)
Contribution from revenue to capital expenditure	260	0	0	0	0
Total Reserves	(5,419)	(5,234)	(5,280)	(6,448)	(7,969)
Reserves as a % of Net Cost of Services	32%	34%	36%	46%	56%

Budget 2024/25

DRAFT RESOLUTION

To consider and, if thought fit, to pass a resolution in the following terms: -

1. (a) That Council approves the Rother District Council General Fund Council Tax Requirement of £8,017,457 for 2024/25 and the resultant Band D tax of £204.54 as set out in this report.
- (b) As per the delegation included within the budget report to Cabinet, the special expenses position has now been reviewed and a provision of £786,630 has been made as detailed within Appendix C. The expenses incurred by the Council, in the sum of £711,556 in respect of Bexhill and £75,074 in respect of Rye, should now be approved as the Special Expenses chargeable to residents of Bexhill and Rye respectively. All other expenses incurred by the Council (excluding Parish Precepts) be approved as general expenditure for the purposes of section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. (This resolution will be reviewed annually).
2. That it be noted, the following amounts for the year 2024/25 in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, made under section 33 (5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:-
 - (a) 39,197.50 being the amount calculated by the Council in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012, as its Council Tax base for the year.
 - (b)

Ashburnham & Penhurst	192.37	Etchingham	433.01	Rye Foreign	156.59
Battle	2,904.96	Ewhurst	558.54	Salehurst & Robertsbridge	1,033.72
Beckley	563.26	Fairlight	910.85	Sedlescombe	678.27
Bexhill	17,332.72	Guestling	643.37	Ticehurst	1,743.25
Bodiam	170.06	Hurst Green	598.65	Udimore	191.69
Brede	868.68	Icklesham	1,248.21	Westfield	1,135.37
Brightling	198.66	Iden	235.04	Whatlington	160.72
Burwash	1,276.43	Mountfield	208.20		
Camber	666.67	Northiam	1,063.51		
Catsfield	387.60	Peasmarsh	509.10		
Crowhurst	378.26	Pett	465.84		
Dallington	173.79	Playden	161.02		
East Guldeford	32.93	Rye	1,916.16		

being the amounts calculated by the Council in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amounts of its Council Tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

3. That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2024/25 in accordance with sections 32 to 38 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 as amended: -

- a. £52,749,160 Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in section 32(2)(a) to (e) of the Act. (this amount is the Council's gross expenditure including the Parish Council Precepts and the Special Expenses for Bexhill and Rye).
- b. -£40,962,254 Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in section 32(3)(a) to (c) of the Act.
- c. £11,786,906 Being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with section 32(4) of the Act, as its council tax requirement for the year.
- d. £300.71 being the amount at 3(c) divided by the amount at 2 above (Item T), calculated by the Council, in accordance with section 33(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year.
- e. £3,769,450 Being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in section 35(1) of the Act
- f. £204.54 Being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by the amount at 2(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates.

g.

<u>PARISH COUNCIL AREA</u>	Band D
	£
Ashburnham & Penhurst	279.92
Battle	368.15
Beckley	248.92
Bexhill	286.74
Bodiam	293.97
Brede	252.53
Brightling	247.13
Burwash	293.22
Camber	299.79
Catsfield	287.10
Crowhurst	297.64
Dallington	267.83
East Guldeford	204.54
Etchingham	393.91
Ewhurst	348.55
Fairlight	308.84
Guestling	220.05
Hurst Green	299.39
Icklesham	338.12
Iden	272.61
Mountfield	262.18
Northiam	310.79
Peasmarsh	277.22
Pett	260.35
Playden	235.59
Rye	374.55
Rye Foreign	220.51
Salehurst	329.61
Sedlescombe	304.28
Ticehurst	295.81
Udimore	241.06
Westfield	302.31
Whatlington	250.93

being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 3(f) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

h.

<u>LOCAL TAX AREA</u>	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Ashburnham & Penhurst	186.61	217.72	248.81	279.92	342.12	404.33	466.53	559.84
Battle	245.43	286.34	327.24	368.15	449.96	531.78	613.58	736.30
Beckley	165.95	193.61	221.26	248.92	304.23	359.55	414.87	497.84
Bexhill	191.16	223.03	254.88	286.74	350.45	414.18	477.90	573.48
Bodiam	195.98	228.65	261.30	293.97	359.29	424.63	489.95	587.94
Brede	168.35	196.42	224.47	252.53	308.64	364.77	420.88	505.06
Brightling	164.75	192.22	219.67	247.13	302.04	356.97	411.88	494.26
Burwash	195.48	228.06	260.64	293.22	358.38	423.54	488.70	586.44
Camber	199.86	233.17	266.48	299.79	366.41	433.03	499.65	599.58
Catsfield	191.40	223.30	255.20	287.10	350.90	414.70	478.50	574.20
Crowhurst	198.43	231.50	264.57	297.64	363.78	429.93	496.07	595.28
Dallington East	178.55	208.32	238.07	267.83	327.34	386.87	446.38	535.66
Guldeford	136.36	159.09	181.81	204.54	249.99	295.45	340.90	409.08
Etchingham	262.61	306.38	350.14	393.91	481.44	568.98	656.52	787.82
Ewhurst	232.37	271.10	309.82	348.55	426.00	503.46	580.92	697.10
Fairlight	205.89	240.21	274.52	308.84	377.47	446.11	514.73	617.68
Guestling	146.70	171.15	195.60	220.05	268.95	317.85	366.75	440.10
Hurst Green	199.59	232.86	266.12	299.39	365.92	432.46	498.98	598.78
Icklesham	225.41	262.99	300.55	338.12	413.25	488.40	563.53	676.24
Iden	181.74	212.03	242.32	272.61	333.19	393.77	454.35	545.22
Mountfield	174.79	203.92	233.05	262.18	320.44	378.71	436.97	524.36
Northiam	207.19	241.73	276.25	310.79	379.85	448.92	517.98	621.58
Peasmarsh	184.81	215.62	246.41	277.22	338.82	400.43	462.03	554.44
Pett	173.57	202.50	231.42	260.35	318.20	376.06	433.92	520.70
Playden	157.06	183.24	209.41	235.59	287.94	340.30	392.65	471.18
Rye	249.70	291.32	332.93	374.55	457.78	541.02	624.25	749.10
Rye Foreign	147.01	171.51	196.01	220.51	269.51	318.52	367.52	441.02
Salehurst	219.74	256.37	292.98	329.61	402.85	476.11	549.35	659.22
Sedlescombe	202.85	236.67	270.47	304.28	371.89	439.52	507.13	608.56
Ticehurst	197.21	230.08	262.94	295.81	361.54	427.28	493.02	591.62
Udimore	160.71	187.49	214.27	241.06	294.63	348.20	401.77	482.12
Westfield	201.54	235.13	268.72	302.31	369.49	436.67	503.85	604.62
Whatlington	167.29	195.17	223.05	250.93	306.69	362.46	418.22	501.86

being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 3(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in Valuation Band "D", calculated by the Council, in accordance with section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different Valuation Bands.

- That the Council notes that for the year 2024/25, East Sussex County Council, the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner and the East Sussex Fire Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below: -

Precepting Authority	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
East Sussex County Council	1,185.54	1,383.13	1,580.72	1,778.31	2,173.49	2,568.67	2,963.85	3,556.62
- Council Tax	1,014.54	1,183.63	1,352.72	1,521.81	1,859.99	2,198.17	2,536.35	3,043.62
- Social Care Precept	171.00	199.50	228.00	256.50	313.50	370.50	427.50	513.00
Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner	168.61	196.71	224.81	252.91	309.11	365.31	421.52	505.82
East Sussex Fire and Rescue	71.66	83.60	95.55	107.49	131.38	155.26	179.15	214.98

5. That, having calculated the aggregate each case of the amounts at 3(h) and 4 above, the Council, in accordance with section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2024/25 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below: -
6. The Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer be authorised to authenticate and serve all notices etc required in connection with the Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rate.

Assessment as to whether change in Council Tax is excessive

7. That the Council's relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2024/25 is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under section 52B(3) of the Local Government Act 1992.

Valuation Bands

LOCAL TAX

<u>AREA</u>	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Ashburnham								
& Penhurst	1,612.42	1,881.16	2,149.89	2,418.63	2,956.10	3,493.57	4,031.05	4,837.26
Battle	1,671.24	1,949.78	2,228.32	2,506.86	3,063.94	3,621.02	4,178.10	5,013.72
Beckley	1,591.76	1,857.05	2,122.34	2,387.63	2,918.21	3,448.79	3,979.39	4,775.26
Bexhill	1,616.97	1,886.47	2,155.96	2,425.45	2,964.43	3,503.42	4,042.42	4,850.90
Bodiam	1,621.79	1,892.09	2,162.38	2,432.68	2,973.27	3,513.87	4,054.47	4,865.36
Brede	1,594.16	1,859.86	2,125.55	2,391.24	2,922.62	3,454.01	3,985.40	4,782.48
Brightling	1,590.56	1,855.66	2,120.75	2,385.84	2,916.02	3,446.21	3,976.40	4,771.68
Burwash	1,621.29	1,891.50	2,161.72	2,431.93	2,972.36	3,512.78	4,053.22	4,863.86
Camber	1,625.67	1,896.61	2,167.56	2,438.50	2,980.39	3,522.27	4,064.17	4,877.00
Catsfield	1,617.21	1,886.74	2,156.28	2,425.81	2,964.88	3,503.94	4,043.02	4,851.62
Crowhurst	1,624.24	1,894.94	2,165.65	2,436.35	2,977.76	3,519.17	4,060.59	4,872.70
Dallington	1,604.36	1,871.76	2,139.15	2,406.54	2,941.32	3,476.11	4,010.90	4,813.08
East Guldeford	1,562.17	1,822.53	2,082.89	2,343.25	2,863.97	3,384.69	3,905.42	4,686.50
Etchingham	1,688.42	1,969.82	2,251.22	2,532.62	3,095.42	3,658.22	4,221.04	5,065.24
Ewhurst	1,658.18	1,934.54	2,210.90	2,487.26	3,039.98	3,592.70	4,145.44	4,974.52
Fairlight	1,631.70	1,903.65	2,175.60	2,447.55	2,991.45	3,535.35	4,079.25	4,895.10
Guestling	1,572.51	1,834.59	2,096.68	2,358.76	2,882.93	3,407.09	3,931.27	4,717.52
Hurst Green	1,625.40	1,896.30	2,167.20	2,438.10	2,979.90	3,521.70	4,063.50	4,876.20
Icklesham	1,651.22	1,926.43	2,201.63	2,476.83	3,027.23	3,577.64	4,128.05	4,953.66
Iden	1,607.55	1,875.47	2,143.40	2,411.32	2,947.17	3,483.01	4,018.87	4,822.64
Mountfield	1,600.60	1,867.36	2,134.13	2,400.89	2,934.42	3,467.95	4,001.49	4,801.78
Northiam	1,633.00	1,905.17	2,177.33	2,449.50	2,993.83	3,538.16	4,082.50	4,899.00
Peasmarsh	1,610.62	1,879.06	2,147.49	2,415.93	2,952.80	3,489.67	4,026.55	4,831.86
Pett	1,599.38	1,865.94	2,132.50	2,399.06	2,932.18	3,465.30	3,998.44	4,798.12
Playden	1,582.87	1,846.68	2,110.49	2,374.30	2,901.92	3,429.54	3,957.17	4,748.60
Rye	1,675.51	1,954.76	2,234.01	2,513.26	3,071.76	3,630.26	4,188.77	5,026.52
Rye Foreign	1,572.82	1,834.95	2,097.09	2,359.22	2,883.49	3,407.76	3,932.04	4,718.44
Salehurst	1,645.55	1,919.81	2,194.06	2,468.32	3,016.83	3,565.35	4,113.87	4,936.64
Sedlescombe	1,628.66	1,900.11	2,171.55	2,442.99	2,985.87	3,528.76	4,071.65	4,885.98
Ticehurst	1,623.02	1,893.52	2,164.02	2,434.52	2,975.52	3,516.52	4,057.54	4,869.04
Udimore	1,586.52	1,850.93	2,115.35	2,379.77	2,908.61	3,437.44	3,966.29	4,759.54
Westfield	1,627.35	1,898.57	2,169.80	2,441.02	2,983.47	3,525.91	4,068.37	4,882.04
Whatlington	1,593.10	1,858.61	2,124.13	2,389.64	2,920.67	3,451.70	3,982.74	4,779.28

**Council Tax 2024/25
Local Precepts**

<u>PARISH COUNCIL AREA</u>	2024/25			2023/24			% COUNCIL TAX CHANGE
	LOCAL PRECEPT	divided by LOCAL TAX BASE	gives LOCAL BAND D COUNCIL TAX	LOCAL PRECEPT	divided by LOCAL TAX BASE	gives LOCAL BAND D COUNCIL TAX	
Ashburnham & Penhurst	14,500.00	192.37	75.38	13,650.00	186.18	73.32	2.81
Battle	475,270.00	2,904.96	163.61	399,777.00	2,790.34	143.27	14.20
Beckley	25,000.00	563.26	44.38	25,000.00	551.86	45.30	-2.03
Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council - see note 1	713,164.00	17,332.72	41.15	651,715.00	17,013.63	38.31	7.41
Bodiam	15,209.00	170.06	89.43	11,420.00	166.52	68.58	30.40
Brede	41,686.00	868.68	47.99	39,945.00	858.06	46.55	3.09
Brightling	8,460.00	198.66	42.59	7,894.00	200.04	39.46	7.93
Burwash	113,198.00	1,276.43	88.68	105,792.00	1,257.16	84.15	5.38
Camber	63,498.00	666.67	95.25	63,498.00	661.36	96.01	-0.79
Catsfield	32,000.00	387.60	82.56	32,000.00	383.66	83.41	-1.02
Cowhurst	35,217.71	378.26	93.10	32,455.00	371.97	87.25	6.70
Dallington	11,000.00	173.79	63.29	9,435.00	172.61	54.66	15.79
East Guldeford	0.00	32.93	0.00	0.00	33.13	0.00	0.00
Etchingham	82,000.00	433.01	189.37	71,600.00	422.20	169.59	11.66
Exhurst	80,437.00	558.54	144.01	77,343.00	556.97	138.86	3.71
Fairlight	95,000.00	910.85	104.30	90,000.00	891.58	100.94	3.33
Guestling	9,977.00	643.37	15.51	9,547.00	635.71	15.02	3.26
Hurst Green	56,784.00	598.65	94.85	48,681.00	587.34	82.88	14.44
Icklesham	166,729.95	1,248.21	133.58	159,580.00	1,235.63	129.15	3.43
Iden	16,000.00	235.04	68.07	16,000.00	233.76	68.45	-0.56
Mountfield	12,000.00	208.20	57.64	12,000.00	202.69	59.20	-2.64
Northiam	113,000.00	1,063.51	106.25	107,500.00	1,045.03	102.87	3.29
Peasmarsh	37,000.00	509.10	72.68	37,000.00	503.20	73.53	-1.16
Pett	26,000.00	465.84	55.81	23,000.00	466.93	49.26	13.30
Playden	5,000.00	161.02	31.05	5,000.00	163.57	30.57	1.57
Rye Town Council - see note 2	250,687.00	1,916.16	130.83	220,490.00	1,915.77	115.09	13.68
Rye Foreign	2,500.00	156.59	15.97	2,000.00	156.40	12.79	24.86
Salehurst & Robertsbridge	129,287.00	1,033.72	125.07	116,912.00	1,025.07	114.05	9.66
Sedlescombe	67,650.00	678.27	99.74	59,800.00	675.81	88.49	12.71
Ticehurst	159,110.00	1,743.25	91.27	150,150.00	1,700.30	88.31	3.35
Udimore	7,000.00	191.69	36.52	7,000.00	189.72	36.90	-1.03
Westfield	111,000.00	1,135.37	97.77	104,000.00	1,109.81	93.71	4.33
Whatlington	7,455.00	160.72	46.39	7,100.00	156.79	45.28	2.45
	2,982,819.66	39,197.50		2,717,284.00	38,520.80		

	Precept £	Taxbase	Local Tax £
Note 1			
Bexhill local precept shown above comprises			
: Bexhill Town Council	713,164.00	17,332.72	41.15
: Bexhill Special Expenses	711,555.84	17,332.72	41.05
	<u>1,424,719.84</u>		<u>82.20</u>
Note 2			
Rye local precept shown above comprises			
: Rye Town Council Precept	250,687.00	1,916.16	130.83
: Rye Special Expenses	75,074.16	1,916.16	39.18
	<u>325,761.16</u>		<u>170.01</u>

Chief Finance Officer's Report

The Robustness of the Estimates

1. This section of the report provides a commentary on the robustness of the estimates now presented and provides an analysis of the risks facing the Council in relation to the control of income and expenditure flows compared to the budgets that are recommended for 2024/25.
2. The framework within which the budget for 2024/25 has been prepared is like that of previous years and considers the following:
 - a) Previous financial year out-turn position (2022/23)
 - b) Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024/25 to 2027/28
 - c) In-year budget monitoring and associated reports
 - d) Cash flow monitoring
3. The outturn position for 2022/23 was reported to Cabinet on 17 July 2023. The outturn position is used to update the financial planning process and helps to establish the baseline for the current estimates by reflecting significant movements against the current position and those which will have an on-going impact on the future financial position of the Council.
4. The financial planning cycle is a well-rehearsed process. For 2024/25 the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) has been produced alongside the budget for 2024/25. The MTFS was initially presented to Cabinet on 6 November 2023 and the updated future year forecasts are included in this report as Appendix A. The MTFS for the period 2024/25 to 2027/28 has been prepared against a backdrop of uncertainty for the reasons discussed in the main Cabinet budget report. This uncertainty and the uncertainty around the funding for local government results in a far higher level of risk associated with trying to forecast a robust financial position over the medium term. However best estimates and assumptions have been used in producing this.
5. The MTFS seeks to identify future estimated budget requirements and funding shortfalls at an early stage of the annual budget process to enable preparation and planning beyond the short term. It also highlights work streams that will commence prior to the start of the following financial year that will support delivery of a sustainable budget for the Council in the medium term where appropriate.
6. Budget monitoring throughout the year is critical to ensuring the robustness of the estimates and maintaining a sound financial position. The in-year budget monitoring process is carried out throughout the year with all expenditure and income being monitored monthly. Not only does this provide an essential tool for identifying early on any variances so that mitigating action can be taken, but it is also fundamental in enabling the inclusion of the most up to date information in the future budgets and projections considering where budget pressures and additional income and savings are during the year.
7. The regular budget monitoring exercises that take place are used to inform the annual financial planning and budget process of changes that will have an on-

going financial impact in future years, as opposed to having only a one-off implication in the current financial year.

8. As part of the budget monitoring process, monthly variance reports are provided to budget managers and regular reports are presented to Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee detailing the latest projected outturn position for the current year. Regular reviews of expenditure, commitments and income streams are carried out to identify overspends or shortfalls in income at the earliest opportunity and reported to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Members along with recommended action plans to ensure that the Council's overall actual income and expenditure budget can be contained within budget.
9. In terms of cash flow monitoring, there have been no major cash flow issues during the year. The Council will potentially need to undertake short-term borrowing during 2024/25 for cash flow purposes and this will be secured at the best rates available. The Council's cash flow position for next year will however be heavily dependent on the spend within the capital programme which is currently subject to fundamental review, making these forecasts particularly difficult at the present time. The Council is also awaiting the announcement of any potential funds through the Levelling Up Fund which would further support the cash position if successful.
10. The annual budgets and the financial projections are prepared using the knowledge and information that is available at the time. Service managers and budget holders, being experts in their field are usually aware of any developments and changes that may affect their service delivery and consequently the cost of providing their services. Advice is also sought from any external advisors that the Council use to determine if there is anything that may impact on the Council's financial position. Officers also network and obtain information from their professional bodies to keep informed.
11. However, many budgets are related to factors that fall outside the control of the Council, e.g. changes in demand led services such as homelessness and temporary accommodation, changes in inflation and interest rates, changes in central government funding, and all of these can have a significant impact on the Council's overall budget and financial position both in the current and future years. Forecasting for these external influences is a challenge and a risk for the Council.
12. There are several financial risks facing the authority which are relevant at both service and corporate level. To manage these risks there are a few key areas within the budget that need to be closely monitored during the forthcoming financial year, as any variances can have a significant impact. These include:
 - a) The impact of changes in global and national politics and economies – This is very difficult to predict with a high degree of accuracy, but by keeping abreast of developments in both and seeking advice from experts in these fields informed assumptions can be made and sensitivity analysis can be undertaken so should there be changes in any areas the Council can react quickly and look at options to mitigate the impact. Officers will monitor the actual position against that forecast with any unexpected changes ultimately having to be covered using reserves if there is no other option open to the Council.

- b) Car park income – This area generates a significant level of income for the Council which in turn supports the delivery of other services across the Council. As this is a demand led service which is influenced by external factors this area is regularly monitored. The 2023/24 budget currently assumes gross income of £2.5m from all car parking related fees and charges.
- c) Planning and building control fees – The 2024/25 base budget includes income totalling approximately £1.4m from planning and building control fees. This income, like car parking, is demand led and so will be monitored regularly to identify any significant adverse variances against the budget.
- d) Waste fee income from garden bins – This is another significant source of income to the Council and reflects the activity across the district in terms of brown bin collections. A total income budget of £1.8m is included in the 2024/25 base budget.
- e) Future Funding – there have been no further updates on the delayed funding reforms apart from that these will not now be expected until the next Parliament. This has resulted in a continuation of one-year funding settlements, which provides no certainty in our funding positions and thus the medium-term forecasts in terms of central government support.
- f) New Homes Bonus (NHB) – The one-year settlement confirmed that the New Homes Bonus grant will only be £136k for 2024/25 compared with the previous year's allocation of £226k. As with the business rates and Fair Funding review we are still awaiting a replacement system.
- g) Investment Returns – During 2023/24 the Council's investment income has increased significantly due to the increases in Bank of England base rate, the pause and review of the capital programme and the focus on treasury management activities, which has resulted in far less borrowing than previously anticipated and additional income. This has resulted in the forecast outturn for 2023/24 reducing to (£170k) as opposed to the original budget forecast of £740k which is a positive movement of £914k. At the meeting of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) on 31st January, it was agreed to maintain the bank base rate at 5.25% to help to ensure inflation is under control before the rates start to come down. The investment return is predicted to remain at a healthy level throughout 2024/25.
- h) Employee budgets – The original MTFs proposals based on the previous year's forecast included a 2% provision for 2024/25 onwards. However following discussions with Cabinet an additional 1% has now been added to give a 3% provision next year and for future years. As a guide each 1.0% An allowance has also been made to reflect vacancy savings as in previous years.
- i) Procurement – Construction procurement continues to bring challenges due to the spiralling costs which have been badly impacted by inflation over the last year or so. This is placing significant pressure on budgets especially with capital projects and schemes. The Council will need to continue to monitor this position and take this into account when putting

together any budget estimates involving construction costs following the review of the current capital programme.

13. Looking beyond 2024/25, the financial projections included in the MTFs indicate that if the savings programme is delivered over the coming years that the Council will be able to deliver future years budgets without calling on the use of reserves. This is based on a forward projection of the 2024/25 funding levels as there is currently no indication of what the future funding regime will be. It is also assumed that if there is a reset of business rates then growth will be taken out and this could lead to a large reduction in this funding stream. The current financial projections show budget surpluses of £46k in 2025/26, £1.2m in 2026/27 and £1.5m in 2027/28 which should help to return reserves to around £8m by the end of that period.
14. The capital programme continues to be funded from external and internal resources i.e. capital receipts, grants, borrowing and revenue. Member preference is to avoid borrowing to fund future capital projects. Prudent estimates are made of the timing of capital receipts and grant funding is always secured before a scheme is included if it is to be a grant funded scheme. As mentioned above the capital programme is currently undergoing a fundamental review, the outcome of which will be reported to Committee as schemes are reviewed.
15. Elected Members have been involved in the preparation of the 2024/25 budget. There has been Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet meetings to identify savings, other officer/Member meetings and reports to Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Budget monitoring reports are also presented to Members during the year.
16. The Council also takes professional advice from third party organisations concerning technical areas that impact on the budget process, e.g. external advice in relation to the Collection Fund income, treasury management through Link, VAT and insurance. By doing so the Council is able to monitor the wider implications of changes in interest rates, inflation and employment and take remedial action to mitigate financial risk.
17. Based on the above assessment the Chief Financial Officer (s151) is comfortable with the robustness of the estimates now presented based on the analysis of the risks facing the Council in relation to the control of income and expenditure flows compared to the budgets that are recommended for 2024/25.

Adequacy of the Reserves

18. An assessment of the adequacy of the available reserves throughout 2024/25 is based on the potential commitments against the reserves which are either:
 - General Reserve
 - Earmarked Reserves
19. Where there is budgeted expenditure to be funded from a reserve, these have been included within the budget.
20. There are three main reasons for holding reserves:

- a) as a contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies;
 - b) to cushion against the impact of uneven cash flows and to avoid temporary borrowing; and
 - c) as a means of building up funds to meet known or predicted liabilities (earmarked reserves).
21. The review of the reserves is a well-established part of the budget setting and monitoring process and financial planning for the Council.
22. When assessing the level of reserves the Council should take account of strategic, operational and financial risks facing them.
23. There continues to be uncertainty around the funding streams for Local Government and so this continues to be a risk for Councils. The system or Business Rates Retention now means there will be fluctuations of income in year and between years, an element of this risk is mitigated by the earmarked reserve which was established for this purpose.
24. The Council is experiencing significant demand led budget pressures, particularly in respect of homelessness and temporary accommodation costs which are now budgeted at c£2m and have tripled over the last 4 years.
25. Other income streams from demand led services remain vulnerable both from economic factors and seasonal factors including weather that can influence for example car parking income. Steps have been taken to set prudent estimates of income from these services but the activity that drives the income remains difficult to predict.
26. The outcome of the assessment of the General Fund Reserve for 2024/25 and forward years is that it is recommended that the minimum level that the reserve should be maintained at the current level of £5.0m for 2024/25. This represents 33% of the Net Cost of Service for 2024/25. The actual level of the General Reserve at the end of the next financial year is estimated to be £5.2m.
27. In the opinion of the Chief Finance Officer the overall budgeted level of the General Fund Reserve as shown in Appendix A is considered adequate in the short term. The General Reserve balance (£5.2m) at the end of 2024/25 is forecast to be above the recommended minimum balance (£5.0m). All reserves will continue to be monitored throughout 2024/25 and will be subject to another annual review in 2025/26.
28. When considering the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves a holistic approach is taken, which considers the general reserve, earmarked reserves and the identified risks in relation to the revenue and capital budgets presented for approval.

Rother District Council

Report to	-	Council
Date	-	26 February 2024
Report of the	-	Chief Executive
Subject	-	Decisions taken as a matter of urgency at Cabinet Meetings

The Council is asked to receive the report of Cabinet, in accordance with paragraph 17 (a) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules on a decision taken as a matter of urgency at its meeting held on 11 December 2023.

CABINET – 11 December 2023**CB23/56. ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL PUBLIC CONVENIENCES CLEANING CONTRACT 2024**

The current public conveniences (PC) (non-statutory service) cleansing contract had been in operation for over 20 years and was scheduled to end on 31 March 2024. There was no option to extend, therefore a new contract was required. A competitive tender exercise would need to commence as soon as possible to complete the procurement process for a new three-year (plus two-year, plus a further one year extension period) with six-month break clause period contract in time for service mobilisation by the end of February 2024. This would be processed through the East Sussex Procurement Hub and the new contract would commence on 1 April 2024. The report detailed the procurement timelines, as well as the contract specification which was attached at Appendix A to the report.

The contract was being offered in four lots as follows, namely Lot 1: Bexhill PCs; Lot 2: Battle PC; Lot 3: Rye PCs; and Lot 4 Camber PCs. Members welcomed the Lot-based approach as this might attract smaller, geographical closer business operators to bid, which would improve service responsiveness.

To alleviate pressure on the Council's finances, the number of PCs (27 down to 15) that were open to the public had been closed on a trial basis and it was hoped that the public would be responding to the Council's current budget consultation which sought views on PC provision. Some of the facilities were ageing, required refurbishment and repair, and suffered from regular vandalism. In future, to deliver a sustainable service, it was hoped that full responsibility of many of the PCs would be devolved to the relevant Parish and Town Councils or local community groups; it was noted that it was not just about the cleaning of the toilets, but maintenance / repairs etc. and all options would be considered and explored.

It was noted that although the contract was being offered based on the 15 toilets that were currently open, this did not mean that those currently

closed, on a trial basis, would remain closed. The contract would be flexible to accommodate any variations, including an increase in the number of PCs in the contract.

It was emphasised that in making the contract flexible, and including a break clause, may deter potential contractors from bidding and so risk not having a contract in place. It was therefore noted that the length of the contract may need to be shortened and the break clause removed to mitigate this risk.

It was difficult to determine the cost of a new contract (current contract for 2023/2024 was approximately £273,000), particularly regarding inflationary increases etc. Therefore, it was anticipated that the new contract would be more expensive.

Delegated authority was granted to the Director – Place and Climate Change to appoint a new PC cleansing contract from 1 April 2024, once relevant procurement procedures had been completed. Cabinet agreed that prior to devolution opportunities, it was essential that PCs were accessible and kept in a clean and tidy condition.

RESOLVED: That the Director – Place and Climate Change be granted delegated authority to appoint a new public convenience cleansing contractor from 1 April 2024, once relevant procurement procedures have been completed.

(The Chair of Council had agreed that this decision could be taken as a matter of urgency to enable the Council to commence the tender process without delay and meet the tight timescales).

(Cabinet Agenda Item 11)

Lorna Ford
Chief Executive

Rother District Council

Report to	-	Council
Date	-	26 February 2024
Report of the	-	Licensing and General Purposes Committee
Subject	-	Reference from the Licensing and General Purposes Committee – Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy

The Council is asked to consider the recommendation arising from the Licensing and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 15 January 2024 as set out below.

LICESNING AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – 15 JANUARY 2024**LG23/12. HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING POLICY**

Members received and considered the report of the Head of Environmental Services, Licensing and Community Safety outlining the Council's recommended changes to standard conditions of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, to ensure the conditions adhered to the Government's best practice guidance.

The Council licensed the drivers of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles, the hackney carriage and private hire vehicles themselves and the operators of private hire vehicles. Hackney carriages could apply for hire and wait on taxi ranks. Private hire vehicles could only be booked (in advance) through an operator. The primary role of licensing was the protection of the public and therefore the Council had adopted a Licensing Policy and conditions to this end. The last policy was adopted in 2023.

In November 2023, the Government published best practice guidance. The authority already met most of the best practice in the guidance and officers had made recommendations where the Council did not comply, which was detailed at Appendix A to the report.

Seven recommendations were highlighted; four were considered minor and could be formally approved by Council in February 2024. The other three were more significant changes to the Policy and therefore a public consultation would need to be held. Once completed, the consultation results would be reported to the Committee at its meeting scheduled to be held on 22 May 2024.

The guidance set out in detail the requirement to ensure that disabled people were protected and could access taxis. The Council's policies should encourage much greater provision of taxis for disabled people, but it was not clear how carrying out surveys, as recommended, would greatly assist this. Officers would need to consider this further and consult other local authorities about what action could be taken.

Safeguarding / Disability Awareness was considered extremely important, and it was recommended that appropriate facilitators were sourced to deliver this type of training, to include assessment exercises. Incentive schemes (monetary) were also suggested to encourage drivers to adapt their vehicles for disability access etc. Caution was aired, as this could lead to unfairness, and it was necessary that budgets were balanced. Concern was raised regarding the issue of 'tinted' windows, and how drivers could ascertain their vehicle's light transmission percentage. The manufacturer's vehicle specification should stipulate this information, plus officers had access to a light transmission testing machine. Members were advised that the majority of other local authorities' hackney carriage vehicles were colour distinctive, e.g. Hastings Borough Council – dark blue, with a crest.

Members were supportive of and agreed the recommendations as detailed in the report, with an additional recommendation for the consultation, namely 8) that all drivers received disability awareness, attitudes and behaviours and safeguarding training annually. For clarity reasons, it was also suggested that the word 'tinted' be added after the word transmission in Recommendation 6).

The Committee agreed that the public consultation should be accessible to all relevant organisations / groups, was designed using the plain English guide and was user-friendly. It was also agreed that the consultation be developed, in consultation with the Chair of the Licensing and General Purposes Committee and Councillor Timpe.

RECOMMENDED: That the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy be amended as follows:

- 1) that penalty points awarded under the Council's penalty points scheme remain on the licence for a period of three years;
- 2) new drivers be required to be trained on disability awareness, attitudes and behaviours and safeguarding from 1 April 2024 and existing drivers be trained before their next licence renewal after 1 October 2024;
- 3) new operators and their customer-facing staff be required to be trained on disability awareness from 1 April 2024 and existing operators and their staff to be trained before their next licence renewal after 1 October 2024; and
- 4) Vehicle Compliance Tests (VCT) to be carried out annually, except on vehicles more than 10 years old which will still be required to have a VCT every six months.

Licensing and General Purposes Committee also **RESOLVED:** That the Council consult on:

- 5) amending the age condition for electric and hybrid vehicles and vehicles which are wheelchair accessible, to limit the age to 15 years;

- 6) amending conditions to permit windows to the rear of the B-pillar if they have a minimum light transmission (tinted) of 30% or above;
- 7) requiring all newly licensed hackney carriages to be white and no newly licensed private hire vehicles to be white from 1 October 2024; and
- 8) all drivers receive disability awareness, attitudes and behaviours and safeguarding training annually.

(Licensing and General Purposes Committee Agenda Item 7)

Councillor R. Thomas
Chair, Licensing and General Purposes Committee

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Rother District Council

Report to:	Council
Date:	26 February 2024
Report of:	Lorna Ford, Chief Executive
Subject:	Designation of Section 151 Officer (Chief Finance Officer)

Recommendation: It be **RESOLVED:** That Andrew Vallance be designated as the Council's Section 151 Officer (Chief Finance Officer) with effect from 8 April 2024.

Introduction

1. This report is seeking approval to designate Andrew Vallance as the Council's Section 151 Officer (Chief Finance Officer (CFO)), following his appointment as the Council's Deputy Chief Executive.
2. In accordance with the Council's Constitution the Senior Officer Appointments Panel has appointed Andrew Vallance as the Council's Deputy Chief Executive, but as this role is also designated as the Council's Section 151 Officer, formal approval by Council of the designation is required.

Background

3. The Section 151 Officer (CFO) is one of the three statutory posts which authorities are required to have (the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer being the other two).
4. Following the senior officer restructure and the recruitment exercise to appoint a new Deputy Chief Executive (DCE) which combines the post of Section 151 Officer, this report confirms the appointment to the post and seeks formal designation of Andrew Vallance as the Council's CFO (Section 151 Officer).
5. Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires local authorities to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and appoint a CFO to take responsibility for those arrangements.

Recruitment

6. The post of Deputy Chief Executive / Section 151 Officer was advertised on Wednesday 4 October 2023 and 11 applications were received. From this a shortlist of four was compiled.
7. The Senior Officer Appointments Panel comprised Councillors Oliver, Bayliss, Field, Gray and Grohne which met on Thursday 23 November 2023 to interview the four shortlisted candidates.
8. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, an offer of employment as a Chief Officer shall only be made where no well-founded objection from any Member of the Cabinet is received; it is confirmed that no such objections from a Member of the Cabinet were received.

9. The Senior Officer Appointments Panel's offer is therefore confirmed, and Andrew Vallance has been appointed to the post of Deputy Chief Executive and will take up the position on 8 April 2024.

Financial Implications

10. There are no financial implications for the proposals within this report.

Legal Implications

11. Unlike the Chief Executive, there is no statutory requirement for full Council to approve the appointment to this post, however, the Council's Constitution requires the designation of the Section 151 Officer to be approved. This provides openness and transparency as to who is fulfilling this statutory post.

Conclusion

12. Council is asked to approve the designation of Andrew Vallance as this Council's Section 151 Officer, with effect from 8 April 2024.

Lorna Ford
Chief Executive

Rother District Council

Report to	-	Council
Date	-	26 February 2024
Report of the	-	Chief Executive
Subject	-	Appointment to East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Recommendation: It be **RESOLVED:** That an appointment be made to the East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the current Council term (until 2027) and that attendance thereat be designated an approved duty.

Introduction

1. Following the appointments made to outside bodies at the Annual Council meeting held on 24 May 2023 (Minute C23/21 refers), the appointment made to the East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee requires replacement.
2. At the Annual Council meeting, Council approved the appointment of Councillor S. McGurk as this Council's representative on East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor McGurk is unable to continue with this appointment and a replacement representative is required.
3. The appointment is to be made with immediate effect up to the end of the current Council term (2027).

Consideration

4. The appointment to the East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee must be made from the current membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and cannot be the same Member appointed to the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board (Cllr T. Killeen).

Conclusion

5. Council is invited to appoint an alternative representative on the East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the current council term, until May 2027.

Lorna Ford
Chief Executive

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Rother District Council

Report to	-	Council
Date	-	26 February 2024
Report of the	-	Chief Executive
Subject	-	Appointment of a Member to Bexhill Festival of Music

Recommendation: It be **RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) Bexhill Festival of Music be added to the Council's list of outside bodies to which formal appointments are made; and
 - 2) A Member representative be appointed with immediate effect, up until the end of the current Council term (May 2027) and to designate attendance thereat as an approved duty.
-

Bexhill Festival of Music

1. A request has been received by the Leader of the Council from the Bexhill Festival of Music that it be added to the list of outside organisations to which a formal Councillor representative appointment is made.
2. The Bexhill Festival of Music was founded in 2007 to:
 - further Bexhill's identity as a cultural destination
 - celebrate the rich talent of its community
 - engage education as a core element
 - bring world class performers
 - increase local and regional tourism
 - strengthen the economic impact within the town
3. Councillor Hazel Timpe, the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, Tourism and Joint Waste Contract has expressed an interest in being involved and being appointed as the Council's representative.
4. Full Council is invited to consider the request and note that Councillor Timpe wishes her name to be put forward as the representative.
5. Should Council agree, the appointment is made with immediate effect and will be made up until the end of the current Council term (May 2027).

Lorna Ford
Chief Executive

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Rother District Council

Report to	-	Council
Date	-	26 February 2024
Report of the	-	Chief Executive
Subject	-	Change in Committee Membership – Planning Committee

Recommendation: It be **RESOLVED:** That the change to the membership of the Planning Committee be noted.

Introduction

1. At the Annual Council Meeting held on Wednesday 24 May 2023, the appointments to the Council’s committees were approved in accordance with the allocation of seats, determined by the various political group strengths on the Council in line with the nominations of the Group Leaders.
2. On Monday 29 January 2024, the Chief Executive was in receipt of the resignation of Councillor Mier as a Member of and therefore Chair of the Planning Committee.

Replacement Member

3. In accordance with Council Procedure Rules 5.6 (a) and (b) following receipt of the resignation and subsequent notification from the Liberal Democrat Group Leader Councillor Killeen, on 9 February 2024 Councillor Mrs V Cook was appointed to the vacant Liberal Democrat seat on the Planning Committee with immediate effect. This enabled the appointment to take effect for the next meeting of the Committee that took place on Thursday 15 February 2024.
4. Full Council is asked to note the change in Membership, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.6.

Lorna Ford
Chief Executive

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Rother District Council

Report to	-	Council
Date	-	26 February 2024
Subject	-	Motion to Council – Climate & Ecology Bill motion

Motion submitted by Councillor Simon McGurk, seconded by Councillor Polly Gray**Preamble**

Humans have already caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt in the UK, and across the world. The average global temperature has already increased by 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels and alongside this the natural world has reached crisis point, with 28% of plants and animals threatened with extinction. In addition, the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world as more than one in seven of our plants and animals face extinction, and more than 40% are in decline. Climate change remains a major concern for UK voters with 66% of people (according to YouGov) expressing they are 'worried about climate change and its effects'. Alongside this, the popularity of Sir David Attenborough's Save Our Wild Isles initiative demonstrates public concern that UK wildlife is being destroyed at a terrifying speed.

Climate & Ecology Bill

The Climate & Ecology Bill (CE Bill), a private member's bill currently before the House of Commons, seeks to address the challenges that this situation poses by creating a whole-of-government approach to deliver a net zero and nature positive future. Based on the latest science, the CE Bill aims to align current UK environmental policy with the need to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030, which was goal agreed to at COP15, via the Kunming-Montreal Framework (22 December 2022); and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the UK's fair share of the remaining global carbon budget to give the strongest chance of limiting global heating to 1.5°C, which was the goal agreed to at COP21, via the Paris Agreement (12 December 2015). By bridging the gap between the UK Government's current delivery, and what has been agreed at international levels, Britain has a chance to be a world leader on climate and the environment; seizing the opportunities of the clean energy transition, including green jobs and skills; reduced energy bills; and boosting the UK's food and energy security.

Rother District Council notes that: The Climate and Ecology Bill has been introduced in the UK Parliament on four occasions since 2020, including most recently in the House of Commons 10 May 2023. The Bill is backed by (at the most recent count) 180 cross-party MPs and Peers, 237 local authorities, alongside the support of eminent scientists, such as Sir David King; NGOs, such as the Wildlife Trusts, the Doctors' Association, Oxfam, the W.I. and CPRE; businesses, such as The Co-operative Bank, Riverford and The Body Shop; and 42,000 members of the public. The CE Bill would require the UK Government to develop and achieve a new environmental strategy, which would include:

1. Delivering a joined-up environmental plan, as the crises in climate and nature are deeply intertwined, and require a plan that considers both together;

2. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with 1.5°C to ensure emissions are reduced in line with the best chance of meeting the UK's Paris Agreement obligations;
3. Not only halting, but also reversing the decline in nature, setting nature measurably on the path to recovery by 2030;
4. Taking responsibility for our overseas footprint, both emissions and ecological;
5. Prioritising nature in decision-making and ending fossil fuel production and imports as rapidly as possible;
6. Providing for re-training for those people currently working in fossil fuel industries; and
7. Giving the British people a say in finding a fair way forward via a temporary, independent and representative Climate & Nature Assembly, as part of creating consensus and ensuring that no one and no community is left behind.

Rother District Council therefore RESOLVES to:

1. Support the Climate and Ecology Bill;
2. Inform local residents and inform local press/media of this decision;
3. Write to Sally Ann Hart and Huw Merriman to inform them that this motion has been passed, and urge them to sign up to support the CE Bill—or thank them for already doing so;
4. Write to Zero Hour, the organisers of the cross-party campaign for the CE Bill, expressing Rother District Council's support (councils@zerohour.uk).

Proposer, Councillor Simon McGurk, Labour Group.

Background Information for Context

The Bill was first developed with members of the successful 'Big Ask' campaign which led to the Climate Change Act 2008, and is now led by a coalition of UK campaigners, world-leading scientists, academics and members of the public. The Climate and Ecology Bill was first introduced to Parliament in September 2020. The updated Bill was [introduced](#) in the House of Lords in June 2022.

The Climate and Ecology Bill has received backing from a wide range of supporters from different fields including Liz Bonin, Ben Fogle, Kumi Naidoo (Director, Greenpeace International, 2009-16); musician, Thom Yorke; environmentalist, Bill McKibben; Volans co-founder, John Elkington and actor-playwright Sir Mark Rylance. It has support from across the political spectrum.

The Climate and Ecology Bill makes sure the UK does its bit to keep global warming down to 1.5°C, which gives us a chance to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. This means cutting down greenhouse gas emissions really fast.

While the existing Environment Act only offers to halt the decline of nature by 2030, the Climate and Ecology Bill commits to reversing biodiversity loss by 2030.

Weaning ourselves off fossil fuels means big changes. So it's important that everyone is on board with them. That's why the Bill also calls for a climate and nature assembly to help Government and Parliament develop an emergency strategy on the way forward.

The Bill, which was written by scientists, experts and campaigners, was first introduced in Parliament by Caroline Lucas MP in September 2020 and now has the backing of over 150 parliamentarians representing all major political parties.

The bill is promoted by Zero Hour and championed by Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall, further details can be found here: <https://www.zerohour.uk/>

The bill can be read here: <https://www.zerohour.uk/downloads/climate-and-ecology-bill.pdf>

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