

18 April 2024 at 7.00 pm


Council Chamber, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks

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Cabinet

Supplementary Agenda – Minute references marked to follow

	Pages	Contact
6. High Weald AONB Management Plan	Replacement Page 63	Vivienne Riddle Tel: 01732 227375
		
7. Financial Monitoring 2023/24 to the end of January 2024	Replacement Page 75	Alan Mitchell Tel: 01732227483
8. Carry Forward Requests 2023/24	Replacement Page 109	Alan Mitchell Tel: 01732227483

If you wish to obtain further factual information on any of the agenda items listed above, please contact the named officer prior to the day of the meeting.

Should you need this agenda or any of the reports in a different format, or have any other queries concerning this agenda or the meeting please contact Democratic Services on 01732 227000 or democratic.services@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

Item 6 – High Weald AONB Management Plan

The attached report was considered by the Development & Conservation Advisory Committee on 26 March 2024. The relevant Minute extract is below.

Development & Conservation Advisory Committee (26 March 2024, Minute 37)

The Senior Planning Officer (Policy) presented the report which advised that the Council was legally required to prepare and publish a management plan for the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In the High Weald, this requirement was delivered through the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee. A draft management plan had been prepared, after public consultation and with input from the Council, setting out key character components of the High Weald's natural beauty. It was an important guidance document for functions affecting the AONB and its setting.

The document was due to be approved by the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee on 27 March 2024.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet, that subject to its approval by the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee on 27 March 2024, it be recommended to Council to adopt the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

Item 7 – Financial Monitoring 2023/24 – to the end of January 2024

The attached report was considered by the Finance & Investment Advisory Committee on 9 April 2024. The relevant Minute extract is below.

Finance & Investment Advisory Committee (9 April 2024, Minute 56)

The Head of Finance presented the report, which set out the Council's financial position to January 2024, and the forecast position until March 2024. The forecast deficit had been reduced to an unfavourable variance of £195,000. The unfavourable variances included the pay award, which equated to an average increase of 5.7% from April 2023. They further included the Direct Services unfavourable forecast, which was largely due to the post-pandemic levels of waste, though a number of measures had been implemented in 2023/24 to partly offset this. There were additional costs associated with planning appeals, and it had been agreed that reserves could be used to fund this unplanned expenditure by way of a supplementary estimate.

Favourable variances included investment income receipts, though it was noted that the core value of the investments in the Multi Asset Income Funds had reduced. Unfilled vacancies resulted in a favourable variance of £791,000. Some of the vacancies were being offset by agency and consulting costs, and others were used to reduce the overall deficit. The capital programme was forecast to have expenditure of £10.7million against a budget of £33million. This was due to the re-evaluation of the Bevan Place scheme, and the delayed start to the White Oak residential scheme.

Members discussed the report and asked questions regarding specific budgets. The officer explained that a review of the Swanley Business Hub was ongoing to address funding solutions, and a report would be presented to Members. Implementing direct debits required the employment of consultants as the council's financial software was complex and integrated with a number of other systems. The Burlington Mews project had initially been approved with a budget to construct the properties, with a later budget added for ongoing maintenance. The maintenance budget was never required. The White Oak Leisure Centre showed a £700,000 underspend as savings were identified after the budget was revised.

Members discussed the cost implications of agency staffing and pressures on Direct Services. The Chief Officer for Finance & Trading explained that a large number of the issues within Direct Services had been addressed within the 2024/25 budget process. A recruitment freeze was implemented across the council, where only critical recruitment could take place. That meant this year had an exceptionally high rate of vacancies and agency staffing compared with previous years.

10 new staff were being recruited to Direct Services to reduce the cost of agency staff.

Members were advised that the Council had written to Government regarding the proposed grant for the implementation of a food waste service, as the grant was well below the costs of setting-up and running the service.

The final deficit for the year would be offset by the government grant of £165,000 which was announced in the Local Government Finance Settlement. The remainder would be funded from reserves and repaid over the 10-year budget period.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Item 8 – Carry Forward Requests 2023/24

The attached report was considered by the Finance & Investment Advisory Committee on 9 April 2024. The relevant Minute extract is below.

Finance & Investment Advisory Committee (9 April 2024, Minute 58)

The Head of Finance presented the report, which detailed the revenue and capital carry forward requests from the 2023/24 budget to 2024/25. The figures were prepared before the final outturn and thus were not exact.

In response to questions, the Chief Officer for Finance & Trading explained that carry forward requests were included in the budget forecast. Requests needed to have a clear and necessary budget function to be considered, and no carry forward could exceed the underspend on the specific budget. The Head of Finance explained that a table was missing in error from Appendix B. The missing information did not affect the amount carried forward.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

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Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) The Revenue carry forward requests totalling up to £908,000 as set out in Table 1 of the report be approved; and
- b) The Capital carry forward request totalling £748,000 as set out in Table 2 of the report be approved.

