

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2023 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Dickins (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Dyball, Maskell, McArthur and Thornton

Cllrs. Pender and Purves were also present.

Cllr Dr Canet was present via a virtual media platform which does not constitute attendance as recognised by the Local Government Act 1972.

73. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 8 December 2022, be approved and signed as a correct record.

74. Declarations of interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

75. Questions from Members (maximum 15 minutes)

A Member asked a question concerning central government support for Sencio. The Chairman replied that government would announce any such support in April.

76. Matters referred from Council, Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee, CIL Spending Board or Cabinet Advisory Committees (if any)

There were none.

77. Budget update 2023/24

The Portfolio Holder Portfolio Holder for Finance & Investment presented the report which set out progress made in preparing the 2023/24 budget and updated Members on key financial information. The changes detailed in this report reduce the annual budget gap to £126,000 if approved.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Officer Finance & Investment further advised that the report contained a number of changes since the report to Cabinet in December 2022, including the announcement of the Provisional Local Government Settlement which had resulted in a number of changes including the reference to 'Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funding from 2024/25 subject to recycling performance. It also mentioned that the 'Fair Funding Review' and 'Business Rates Reset' would not take place in the next two years.

Cabinet - 12 January 2023

He further advised that other major changes outside of the settlement were using the extra income from the Business Rates Retention Pool in 2023/24, additional interest receipts based on income received from the investments in Multi Asset Income Funds, a dividend from Quercus 7 and reduced contributions required to the superannuation fund following the recent triennial valuation.

The Finance & Investment Advisory Committee had discussed how the flexibility of the 10-year budget approach had assisted in these uncertain times. With inflation at a long time high, the future extent of price increases and how long they continued for remained uncertain. Therefore, the budget included those items where there was certainty or a good indication but for others, assumptions have remained unchanged.

As has been shown with the Council's approach to the 2022 pay award and the SCIA for utility costs it was currently best to deal with these issues when they arrive. The danger of changing assumptions with the current uncertainties was that greater savings and reductions to service may be made than end up being required.

It was highlighted that Members needed to recognise that when there was greater certainty it was highly likely that additional savings would be required in the next budget process.

The report requested Cabinet to consider each growth or saving SCIA in Appendix E, the additional growth and saving proposals made by the Advisory Committees in Appendix F and recommend an increase level of Council Tax for 2023/24.

Members considered the options set out before them and decided not to pursue a savings suggestion concerning potentially holding daytime meetings.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That

- a) the growth and savings/additional income proposals as set out in Appendix E be included in the budget;
- b) the further growth and savings/additional income suggestions put forward by the Advisory Committees listed in Appendix F be dealt with as follows -

Income from a Council energy saving advice service - the Portfolio Holder to have further discussion with the Chief Officer

Replicate Environmental Health's working practices and structural changes across other services - the Portfolio Holder to have further discussion with the Chief Officer

Continue to review the Council's energy use in the Argyle Road building - the Portfolio Holder to have further discussion with the Chief Officer

Cabinet - 12 January 2023

Examine the cost savings that daytime committee meetings could bring - no further action; and

- c) a Council Tax increase for 2023/24 of 3% be recommended to Council.

78. Calculation of Council Tax Base and Other Tax Setting Issues

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Investment presented the report which set out details of the calculation of the District's tax base for council tax setting purposes. These figures were used to determine tax rates for each of the council tax hands once the Council's budget was known. The report set out that the tax base for 2023/24 would be £51,990.30. The collection rate of 99.4% for 2023/24 had been included which represented a return to pre Covid-19 projections.

The Head of Finance set out the report and also advised Members of the timetable for setting the 2022/23 council tax. He explained that the major precepting authorities' Council Taxes should be known in advance of Council setting the tax for the whole District on 21 February 2023.

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 Council that:

- a) the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance & Trading for the calculation of the Council's tax bases for the year 2023/24, be approved;
- b) pursuant to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance & Trading and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended) the amount calculated by the Sevenoaks District Council as its council tax base for the whole area for the year 2023/24 shall be 51,990.30;
- c) pursuant to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance & Trading and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended) the amount calculated by the Sevenoaks District Council as the council tax base for 2023/24 for the calculation of local precepts shall be:

Parish	Tax Base
Ash-cum-Ridley	2,483.11
Badgers Mount	337.07
Brasted	790.33
Chevening	1,458.10
Chiddingstone	619.26
Cowden	449.59
Crockenhill	659.42

Cabinet - 12 January 2023

Dunton Green	1,347.57
Edenbridge	3,891.91
Eynsford	956.23
Farningham	679.90
Fawkham	306.55
Halstead	811.60
Hartley	2,560.84
Hever	646.99
Hextable	1,692.19
Horton Kirby & South Darent	1,293.29
Kemsing	1,871.11
Knockholt	642.62
Leigh	952.95
Otford	1,735.72
Penshurst	839.73
Riverhead	1,270.73
Seal	1,345.48
Sevenoaks Town	9,844.68
Sevenoaks Weald	629.00
Shoreham	718.66
Sundridge	944.90
Swanley	5,710.83
Westerham	2,091.38
West Kingsdown	2,408.56

- d) any expenses incurred by the Council in performing in part of its area a function performed elsewhere in its area by a parish or community council or the chairman of a parish meeting shall not be treated as special expenses for the purposes of section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

79. Scrap Metal Dealer Licence Fees 2023/24

The Portfolio Holder for Cleaner & Greener presented the report which proposed the fees for applications for Scrap Metal licences. The proposed fees were set locally on a cost recovery basis and included a 5% inflationary cost. The Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee had considered the same report and recommended the fees for approval.

Members discussed the proposals and asked questions of clarification.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the fees as set out below, be approved.

Cabinet - 12 January 2023

Type of Application	2023/2024 Proposed Fee
Site Licence - Grant (3 years)	£532
Site Licence - Renewal (3 years)	£449
Collectors Licence Grant/Renewal (3 years)	£324
Minor administrative change to licence	£36
Variation - change of site manager	£193
Variation from collector to site licence	£230
Variation from site to collector licence	£149

80. The Education People - next steps

The Portfolio Holder for People & Places presented the report which provided an update on the transfer of educational services from West Kent Enterprise Advisory Network (WKEAN) to Kent County Council owned The Education people (TEP).

The West Kent Partnership Manager advised that prior to August 2022, the District Council was the accountable body for WKEAN for assisting schools in West Kent with career advice services that were closely aligned with the economic needs of the district and future career opportunities. This was transferred to The Education People providing similar services to the rest of Kent. The Council would continue to co-ordinate with and monitor The Education People using the Gatsby Benchmarks which formed the quantitative benchmarks against which progress could be measured.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That

- a) The Education People continue to deliver the WKEAN which would be monitored by the Council; and
- b) Sevenoaks District Council encourage staff to volunteer time to support local schools in connection with Careers Hub activities and events.

81. Discretionary Rate Relief

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Investment presented the report which set out the proposal for awarding discretionary rate relief for 2023/2024. Discretionary rate relief could be awarded in isolation or given to 'top up' a mandatory award. The Finance & Investment Advisory Committee had considered the same report.

The Business Rates Manager estimated level of relief was based upon the multipliers set out in paragraph 17 of the report. Ultimately, should the multipliers change a further report setting out the revised relief awards would be submitted.

Cabinet - 12 January 2023

If applications were approved, the estimated total gross relief granted would be £227, 253.42.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the proposals for granting relief from business rates for 2023/24, as set out in Appendix B to the report, be approved.

82. Financial Monitoring 2022/23 - to the end of November 2022

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Investment presented the report which outlined the Council's financial position to November 2022 and the forecast position as at 31 March 2023, which was an estimated unfavourable variance of £242,000. He advised that the Finance & Investment Advisory Committee had considered the same report.

The Head of Finance further advised that Parking & Development Management incomes were expected to exceed budget. Investment returns were ahead of budget due to the Council's investing in Multi-Asset Income Funds. These favourable variances were offset by forecast unfavourable variances from land charges, the Print studio, Direct Services and investment property income.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS

This notice was published on 13 January 2023. The decisions contained in Minute 77, 79, 80, 81 and 82 take effect immediately. The decisions contained in Minute 78 are references to Council.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.54 PM

CHAIRMAN