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Minutes of the meeting of the **Council** held in Committee Rooms - East Pallant House on Tuesday 27 February 2024 at 2.00 pm

Members Present: Mrs C Apel (Chair), Mr J Cross (Vice-Chairman), Mr I Ballantyne, Mrs T Bangert, Mr R Bates, Mr D Betts, Mr S Boulcott, Mr B Brisbane, Mr R Briscoe, Mr J Brown, Mrs H Burton, Mx R Chant, Ms M Corfield, Ms H Desai, Mr G Evans, Mrs E Hamilton, Ms O Hickson, Mr F Hobbs, Mrs D Johnson, Mr S Johnson, Mr T Johnson, Mr A Moss, Ms E Newbery, Mr T O'Kelly, Mr H Potter, Ms S Quail, Mr C Todhunter, Mr J Vivian, Ms V Weller and Mr T Young

Members not present: Mr J Brookes-Harmer, Ms J Brown-Fuller, Ms B Burkhart, Mr M Chilton, Mr C Hastain and Mrs S Sharp

Officers present all items: Mrs L Baines (Democratic Services Manager), Mr N Bennett (Divisional Manager for Democratic Services), Mr A Frost (Director of Planning and Environment), Mrs J Hotchkiss (Director of Growth and Place), Mrs L Rudziak (Director of Housing and Communities), Mrs D Shepherd (Chief Executive) and Mr J Ward (Director of Corporate Services)

83 Minutes

Cllr Apel welcomed everyone present.

In a vote the following resolution was agreed:

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 23 January 2024 be approved as a correct record.

84 Urgent Items

Cllr Apel announced one late item, a dispensation report. The item had been published online and circulated to members in hard copy.

85 Declarations of Interests

Members made the following declarations of interest:

With regard to agenda item 7 Cllr Bangert declared an other interest due to her role with Bourne Community College. Cllr Bangert left the room for the vote on the recommendation linked to the College.

With regard to agenda item 10 Cllr Bangert declared an other interest having been part of the Neighbourhood Plan group. Cllr Bangert left the room during the item.

With regard to agenda item 10 Cllr Brown also declared an other interest having been part of the Neighbourhood Plan group. Cllr Brown left the room during the item.

With regard to agenda item 10 Cllr Hickson also declared an other interest having been part of the Neighbourhood Plan group. Cllr Hickson left the room during the item.

86 **Chair's Announcements**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Brookes-Harmer, Cllr Brown-Fuller, Cllr Burkhart, Cllr Chilton and Cllr Sharp.

Cllr Apel wished to acknowledge the work on the Canal Basin Light Show. She extended the council's thanks to all those involved.

Cllr Apel also announced that she would be organising a wine tasting evening to raise funds for her Chairs charities.

87 **Public Question Time**

One public question had been received from Simon Oakley. The question was as follows:

Over the last few years, this Council has created a number of posts, time limited and funded from reserves. Examples are:

Full Council 28 Jun 2020 - Climate Change Officer, 2 years, £150k;

Cabinet 7 Sep 2021 (following budget amend at Full Council 2 Mar 2021) - Home Energy Efficiency Officer, 2 years, up to £86k; and

Full Council 8 Mar 2022 - Growth and Sustainability Officer, 2 years, £120k and Landscape Officer, 2 years, £112k.

The last two annual Climate Emergency Action Plan reports have also referred to a Specialist Environment Officer.

Could you advise as to the following:

When were the above referenced posts filled;

In the case of the first two, were these posts continued (including under any title change) and if so how were their continuation funded;

In the case of the Mar 2022 created posts, are there plans to continue them and if so how will their continuation be funded; and

In the case of the Specialist Environment Officer Post, when was it created and how is it funded?

Cllr Brown provided the following response:

Thank you Mr Oakley for your question.

As you know the council, like all other councils from time to time will employ staff on temporary contracts. These may be extended or made permanent depending on how successful they are, and what the council's priorities dictate. By way of example the budget being presented later today incorporates a further extension to the Supporting You team. This has been extended beyond the initial 2 year period as the cost of living crisis continues to impact residents.

However, turning to your specific questions:

The Climate Change Officer, which was actually called the Climate Emergency Officer, was agreed to be funded for an initial 3 years at the full Council meeting on 5 March 2019, rather than 28 June 2020. This post was reviewed, and became a permanently funded post, re-titled Carbon Reduction Project Manager. This decision followed the council's formal process at that time for reviewing discretionary spending, including bids for growth. That process, referred to as the Future Services Framework was carried out by all political groups. The outcome of which was reported to the 24 January 2022 Cabinet and finally approved by Council on 25 January 2022.

The Home Energy Efficiency Officer was also assessed by the Future Services Framework, but was not deemed by that council to be a priority, and so was not progressed further. Again, this was reported to the 24 January 2022 Cabinet meeting.

The Growth and Sustainability Officer was filled in July 2022 on a temporary 2 year contract. Funding for this post has now been incorporated into the 2024-25 budget before Council today. This decision has followed the work of the Budget Review Group. A cross party group set up specifically to oversee the development of the Council's budgets. Again, as with previous reviews all political groups were involved in reaching this conclusion, the outcome of which was reported to the Cabinet meeting last month.

The Landscape Officer was filled in February 2023, for an initial 2 years fixed term contract. The future of this post will be considered during this year as part of a wider review of the Planning service as recommended by the Budget Review Group.

The Specialist Environment Officer post, was also agreed as part of the recommendations of the 24 January 2022 Cabinet report and approved by Council on 25 January 2022. This was an addition to the council's base budget and so has always been funded permanently.

Finally, I would like to point out that the 24 January 2022 Cabinet meeting was a special meeting of the Cabinet to consider the Future Services Framework which was a Part 2 meeting. The detail of the report was therefore not publicly available. However, Mr Oakley, as you were a member at that time you would have received this report. I appreciate its useful to bring all the information together.

Mr Oakley was permitted a supplementary question. He asked whether Cllr Brown would agree that before new discretionary posts and activities are adopted that their full and cumulative medium and long term financial implications and sustainability including what constraints their on-going costs would have on the funding of other services should be fully thought through before they are proposed given funding revenue activities from reserves is not financially sustainable.

Cllr Brown responded. He replied that no, the council's approach makes sense with one caveat. He explained that it make sense when trying something new to have a time limited trial period. Any of the posts which resulted from Motions put forward had much consideration given to how they should be funded in the short, medium and long term. It made sense to run them for a trial period. He added that there is time through the budget review process to consider whether or not to bring them into the base budget. Cllr Brown concluded that he was happy with the approach taken.

88 **Draft Capital Strategy 2024-25 to 2028-29**

Cllr Moss moved the recommendation which was seconded by Cllr Brown.

Cllr Moss then introduced the item.

Cllr Cross asked whether any council owned land is available for new commercial development. Cllr Moss explained that as part of the regeneration strategy the council would be looking at land that can be brought forward including land in the Southern Gateway. This will include both council owned land and land owned by partner organisations and other landowners.

Cllr Chant spoke about the economic and social implications of empty shop units with reference to Crane Street, St James Industrial Estate and the general high street. Cllr Chant asked Cllr Moss how or if the council will come up with a strategy to minimise the number of empty units by working with charities to ensure the council's assets are used to their best economic and community purposes. Cllr Moss explained that the council does not own many of the properties in the high street. Where the council does own properties there are currently three empty units in Crane Street but work is underway to try to get those filled. Two of the empty units are available for pop up shops to help local start-up businesses. This gives local entrepreneurs the opportunity to trial their businesses. The council is also working closely with the BID to look at regeneration opportunities. With regard to St James Industrial Estate there is currently a 65% occupancy or under offer status following the full redevelopment of the site. Cllr Moss acknowledged that there is a demand from the charitable sector to have units in some of the council's sites so the council is reviewing its Grants Programme taking this into account.

Cllr Bates asked as Chair of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee at its last meeting how many of the council's retail units owned or let out were empty. He explained that Mr Gillett had provided a written response that there are five vacant units; three vacant shop units in Crane Street, one industrial unit at Terminus Road and one industrial unit at Woodrupp Centre. He spoke about the trend for falling property prices and potential impact this could have on the value of the council's property assets. He asked if there is any current policy to encourage greater occupancy in the council's property portfolio. He suggested reducing rents in the short or longer term or offering the rents to the charitable sector at subsidised rates. Cllr

Moss referred to his previous response. He also explained that Crane Street is becoming more vibrant which he hoped would continue to encourage independent businesses as well as chain shops to be located in the city centre. He clarified that the council's property portfolio generates a £2.6 million per year income. £1.75 million is from assets which support the provision of local services. Investment properties generate between £850,000 and £1 million per annum depending on market trends. He acknowledged that the council has to account for market trends. He emphasised the importance of the regeneration strategy going forwards.

Cllr Ballantyne asked whether the Strategy considers the maximum benefit for all communities. Cllr Moss explained that the Capital Programme is outlined in the February 2024 Cabinet papers. He outlined the Strategies aim to get maximum impact from income to support the council's services. He wished to commend officers for their work in helping deliver the Strategy.

In a vote the following resolution was agreed:

That the Council's draft Capital Strategy for 2024- 25 to 2028-29 be approved.

89 **Budget Spending Plans 2024-25**

Cllr Apel explained that a revised Budget Summary Statement 2024-25 had been included at page 17 of the agenda following the budget amendment agreed at the Cabinet meeting (resolution H).

Cllr Moss moved the recommendation which was seconded by Cllr Brown.

Cllr Moss then introduced the item.

Cllr Moss wished to thank Mrs Belenger, Mr Cooper and the team for their work in producing the Budget.

Cllr Brown also wished to thank officers. He went on to explain the reason behind the Budget decisions. He outlined investing in the district. He also spoke about planning long term from an environment perspective. He reminded members that the Environment Panel is now held in public. He also discussed the non-statutory services which the administration were prioritising. He also explained that the council had been working closely with the Chichester City Council who are due to consider their Business Plan, Midhurst in recovering from fire, Selsey on the sea defences and Bourne Community College to support the Think Family Post.

Cllr Briscoe asked whether there is a need to increase the rural car park charging. He also requested clarification on the reason for the inclusion of the Think Family worker post at Bourne College. He asked with reference to education falling under the remit of West Sussex County Council and the post being the only remaining post of its nature. Cllr Moss responded to the increase in parking charges and explained that the council went out to consultation in September last year. He added that largely the increases would be in line with inflation to help funding towards some non-statutory services. Cllr Brown responded to the Think Family Worker post. He acknowledged that it was not selected as part of the service prioritisation process but explained that it supports provision for vulnerable young people. He clarified that the extension of time would allow the College to plan for the post in subsequent years.

Cllr Ballantyne requested information on why some of the council's replacement vehicles are diesel. Cllr Brown wished to note his thanks to Mr Carter for his work on the project. He explained that the council already operates two electric waste collection vehicles which have not been reliable. He added that with the current available technology if the council had only electric vehicles it would not be able to manage its statutory waste collection requirements. Cabinet have authorised a review of the depot site with a focus on replacing vehicles with sustainable alternatives including the option of restoring older vehicles. He also added that he would continue to monitor developments in the use of vegetable oil as fuel.

Cllr Stephen Johnson spoke about improving biodiversity and protecting and enhancing wildlife corridors. Cllr Brown explained that the new wildlife strategy aims to enhance biodiversity.

Cllr Tim Johnson thanked officers for their work on the Budget and also wished to thank Mr Buckley for his work on efficiencies. He wished to note that the cost of living crisis had increased costs. He explained options for East Pallant House were being considered. He also requested more action on social housing. Cllr Moss wished to thank Cllr Tim Johnson as Leader of the Opposition for working as a critical friend. He agreed the cost of living crisis continues to be a big issue for the council. He confirmed that there is an increasing number of unintentionally homeless people in the district. He wished to thank officers for work they are doing. With regard to East Pallant House he clarified that the regeneration strategy will look at opportunities including bringing some housing into the city centre.

Cllr Hickson requested information on where the wellbeing service has its greatest impact. Cllr Bangert explained that it is largely funded by West Sussex County Council. She outlined the help the service provides in lifestyle changes for those with medical conditions such as heart conditions and diabetes. In 2023/24 more than 1000 people were seen by the service including carers, those with mental health problems, those who have English as a second language and those in areas where access to the services are normally limited.

Cllr Chant wished to thank officers for their work on the Light Show at the Canal Basin. Cllr Chant asked how the council can continue to develop the night time economy. Cllr Moss explained that the events team are bringing a number of events to encourage everyone to enjoy the city centre including those from the university and college. He confirmed that there had been a very positive response to events that had taken place. Cllr Brown explained the importance of partners. He gave the example that Chichester Cathedral recently held a silent disco. He wished to thank the Cathedral.

Cllr Vivian noted the £551,000 additional funding for bed and breakfast for those made homeless. He asked what more is being done to help the homeless in the district. Cllr Betts noted that the council had received a session that morning on prevention of homelessness. He explained that there will be a new Housing Strategy coming forward and he would update members on its progress.

Cllr Newberry asked what improvements will be made to the districts play equipment. Cllr Bangert explained that the council has a grants programme offering grants towards play equipment which often come as applications via the Parish Council. She explained that Sports England and the National Lottery also provide grants. She suggested contacting Mrs Peyman for further information. Cllr Moss explained that there are plans to upgrade parks equipment in the play parks owned by the council.

Cllr Evans asked for clarification on why car parking charges have been increased. Cllr Desai explained that increases are a requirement and were in line with inflation.

Cllr Donna Johnson explained she was happy to see continued support for Supporting You. She wished to acknowledge the impact the provision has had on residents in her ward.

Cllr O’Kelly requested clarification on the figures relating to the enforcement of planning controls. Cllr Brisbane explained that on page 69 of the agenda pack the figures for 2024/25 are correct at £272,000 for planning enforcement. He clarified that the previous financial year figures had been misallocated. Approximately £100,000 allocated to development management should have been attributed to planning enforcement.

Cllr Stephen Johnson asked if reassurance could be given that car park payment machines will always be reliable and available. Cllr Desai explained that a proportion of the parking revenue goes towards maintenance and improvements to the car parks. She also promoted mi-permit as a method of payment.

Cllr Ballantyne asked a question relating to the withdrawal of Foreshores services at Bracklesham Bay. Cllr Apel explained that it was not relevant to the budget.

A recorded vote was carried out on recommendations A – G by Mrs Shepherd as the recommendations include one related to Council Tax.

The results were as follows:

Cllr Apel – For
Cllr Ballantyne – For
Cllr Bangert – For
Cllr Bates – For
Cllr Betts – For
Cllr Boulcott – For
Cllr Brisbane – For
Cllr Briscoe – For
Cllr Brookes-Harmer – Absent
Cllr Brown – For
Cllr Brown-Fuller – Absent
Cllr Burkhart – Absent
Cllr Burton – For
Cllr Chant – For
Cllr Chilton – Absent
Cllr Corfield – For
Cllr Cross – For
Cllr Desai – For
Cllr Evans – For
Cllr Hamilton – For
Cllr Hastain – Absent
Cllr Hickson – For
Cllr Hobbs – For
Cllr Donna Johnson – For
Cllr Stephen Johnson – For
Cllr Tim Johnson – For
Cllr Moss – For
Cllr Newbery – For

Cllr O'Kelly – For
Cllr Potter – For
Cllr Quail – For
Cllr Sharp – Absent
Cllr Todhunter – For
Cllr Vivian – For
Cllr Weller – For
Cllr Young – For

Totals:

For = 30
Against = 0
Abstain = 0
Absent = 6

The resolutions were agreed as follows:

RESOLVED

- a) That a net budget requirement of £17,618,700 for 2024-25 be approved.
- b) That Council Tax be increased by £5.41 from £181.07 to £186.48 for a Band D equivalent in 2024-25.
- c) That the New Homes Bonus (NHB) be treated as general revenue funding as set out in para 4.6 and 4.7.
- d) The capital programme, including the asset renewal programme (appendices 1c and 1d of the agenda report) be approved.
- e) The capital prudential indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy (appendix 4 of the agenda report) be approved.
- f) That £1.11m is transferred from the General Fund Reserve to the Investment Risk Reserve to reduce the risk for the movements in fair value statutory override ending on 31 March 2025.
- g) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Growth and Place to spend the £150k allocated from the West Sussex Business Rate Pool for economic development purposes, following consultation with the Cabinet member for Economic Development and Place.

Following her earlier declaration Cllr Bangert then left the room before the next recorded vote.

A recorded vote was then carried out on recommendation H by Mrs Shepherd.

The results were as follows:

Cllr Apel – For
Cllr Ballantyne – For
Cllr Bangert – Absent for the vote
Cllr Bates – For
Cllr Betts – For
Cllr Boulcott – For
Cllr Brisbane – For
Cllr Briscoe – Against

Cllr Brookes-Harmer – Absent
Cllr Brown – For
Cllr Brown-Fuller – Absent
Cllr Burkhart – Absent
Cllr Burton – For
Cllr Chant – For
Cllr Chilton – Absent
Cllr Corfield – For
Cllr Cross – For
Cllr Desai – For
Cllr Evans – For
Cllr Hamilton – For
Cllr Hastain – Absent
Cllr Hickson – For
Cllr Hobbs – Abstain
Cllr Donna Johnson – For
Cllr Stephen Johnson – For
Cllr Tim Johnson – For
Cllr Moss – For
Cllr Newbery – For
Cllr O’Kelly – For
Cllr Potter – Abstain
Cllr Quail – For
Cllr Sharp – Absent
Cllr Todhunter – For
Cllr Vivian – For
Cllr Weller – For
Cllr Young – For

Totals:

For = 26

Against = 1

Abstain = 2

Absent = 7

The resolution was agreed as follows:

To allocate a total of £22.5k from reserves to be released to Bourne Community College (BCC) in two tranches: £15k in academic year 2024-25 and £7.5k in academic year 2025-26. Each year the release of funds would be subject to the school filling the funding gap and retaining the Think Family worker post.

90 Council Tax Resolution

Cllr Moss moved the recommendation which was seconded by Cllr Brown.

Cllr Moss then introduced the item.

A recorded vote was carried out on recommendations A – G by Mrs Shepherd as the recommendations include one related to Council Tax.

The results were as follows:

Cllr Apel – For
Cllr Ballantyne – For
Cllr Bangert – For
Cllr Bates – For
Cllr Betts – For
Cllr Boulcott – For
Cllr Brisbane – For
Cllr Briscoe – For
Cllr Brookes-Harmer – Absent
Cllr Brown – For
Cllr Brown-Fuller – Absent
Cllr Burkhart – Absent
Cllr Burton – For
Cllr Chant – For
Cllr Chilton – Absent
Cllr Corfield – For
Cllr Cross – For
Cllr Desai – For
Cllr Evans – For
Cllr Hamilton – For
Cllr Hastain – Absent
Cllr Hickson – For
Cllr Hobbs – For
Cllr Donna Johnson – For
Cllr Stephen Johnson – For
Cllr Tim Johnson – For
Cllr Moss – For
Cllr Newbery – For
Cllr O’Kelly – For
Cllr Potter – For
Cllr Quail – For
Cllr Sharp – Absent
Cllr Todhunter – For
Cllr Vivian – For
Cllr Weller – For
Cllr Young – For

Totals:

For = 30

Against = 0

Abstain = 0

Absent = 6

The resolution was agreed as follows:

RESOLVED

That having considered the Cabinet's budget proposals from their meeting of 6 February 2024, Council are asked to also approve the Council Tax Resolutions as set out in Appendix A.

91 **Draft Treasury Management and Investment Strategy**

Cllr Moss moved the recommendation which was seconded by Cllr Brown.

Cllr Moss then introduced the item.

Cllr Quail wished to acknowledge the work of Arlingclose and asked whether Cllr Moss would make any additional comments. Cllr Moss explained that the council has a record of careful investment. He wished to thank the council's team and the Arlingclose team for the work they do.

Cllr O'Kelly asked how the council ensures ethical investments. Cllr Brown explained the Policy includes ethical investment as far as legally possible. The Policy accounts for security, liquidity and yield in that order.

In a vote the following resolution was agreed:

RESOLVED

That the Treasury Management Policy Statement, the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, the Investment Strategy, and relevant Indicators for 2024-25 be approved.

On behalf of the Council Cllr Apel thanked Mrs Belenger over 40 years work in Local Government. She wished Mrs Belenger a very happy retirement. Mrs Belenger received a round of applause.

92 **Making the Southbourne Modified Neighbourhood Development Plan**

Following their earlier declarations Cllr Bangert, Cllr Brown and Cllr Hickson all left the room during the item.

Cllr Brisbane moved the recommendation which was seconded by Cllr Moss.

Cllr Brisbane then introduced the item.

Cllr Briscoe wished to thank all those involved in making the Neighbourhood Plan for their work. Cllr Todhunter echoed Cllr Briscoes comments and referred to the examiners positive feedback of the Plan.

In a vote the following resolution was agreed:

RESOLVED

That following the successful referendum result on 25 January Council make the Southbourne Modified Neighbourhood Development Plan part of the Development

Plan for Chichester District (excluding the area within the South Downs National Park).

93 Late Items

Cllr Apel explained that there was one late item outlined in the supplementary agenda pack.

Cllr Moss proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Cllr Brown.

Mr Bennett was invited to outline the report.

Cllr Apel wished to thank Cllr Donna Johnson and Cllr Young for their help.

Cllr Moss wished to endorse his support. He praised Cllr Sharp for her work and echoed thanks to Cllr Donna Johnson and Cllr Young for the support they had provided.

In a vote the following resolution was agreed:

RESOLVED

That Council grant a dispensation to Councillor Sharp in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 for the period to 15 June 2024.

As the Group Leader of the Green and Local Alliance Group Cllr Tim Johnson thanked the Council for supporting the recommendation.

94 Exclusion of the press and public

There was no requirement to go into Part II.

The meeting ended at 4.10 pm

CHAIRMAN

Date: