

Crawley Borough Council

Minutes of Cabinet

Wednesday, 1 February 2023 at 7.00 pm

Councillors Present:

M G Jones (Chair)	Leader of the Council
S Buck	Cabinet Member for Housing
G S Jhans	Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability
C J Mullins	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Wellbeing
S Mullins	Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Community Engagement
A Nawaz	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development

Also in Attendance:

Councillor T G Belben, R D Burrett and D Crow

Officers Present:

Natalie Brahma-Pearl	Chief Executive
Siraj Choudhury	Head of Governance, People & Performance
Chris Pedlow	Democracy & Data Manager
Paul Windust	Chief Accountant
Elizabeth Brigden	Planning Policy Manager
Sallie Lappage	Forward Planning Manager
Nigel Sheehan	Head of Projects and Commercial Services
Clem Smith	Head of Economy and Planning

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor S Malik

1. Disclosures of Interest

No disclosures of interests were made.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 23 November 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

3. Public Question Time

There were no questions from the public.

4. Matters referred to the Cabinet and Report from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

It was confirmed that no matters had been referred to the Cabinet for further consideration.

5. Crawley Borough Local Plan Review: Publication and Submission

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development presented report [PES/427](#) of the Head of Economy and Planning. The new Crawley Local Plan had been prepared based on the outcomes of monitoring the implementation of the 2015 adopted Local Plan, feedback from previous stages of formal public consultations and updated from the supporting technical evidence base. Following Full Council held on 16 December 2020 which approved the Draft Local Plan for Publication and Submission, formal public consultation took place from early January until the end of June 2021.

Progression of the Local Plan to Submission was subsequently delayed due to the work required in order to meet the Habitats Regulations specifically in relation to water supply constraints. Due to this, a number of key changes, which account for the impact of “water neutrality” and associated time delay, had been made to the draft Local Plan. On this basis, the amended draft Plan will be considered again at Full Council.

Following this, a further stage of Regulation 19 Publication Consultation will take place. It is supported by a number of statutory supporting documents (a Local Plan Map, a Sustainability Appraisal, a Habitats Regulations Assessment and a Consultation Statement).

The report requested Cabinet to recommend to Full Council approval of the submission draft Local Plan for public consultation (a statutory six-week period of), commencing 9 May 2023. In addition, was the recommendation to Full Council to approve the submission draft Local Plan for Submission to the Secretary of State for Examination by an independent Planning Inspector, subject to minor amendments deemed necessary following consultation for the purposes of clarity, together with the recommendation to Full Council for approval of the publication and submission of the supporting documents for the Local Plan. These included the Local Plan Map; the Sustainability Appraisal; the Habitats Regulations Assessment; the Consultation Statement; and the detailed technical evidence base documents necessary for supporting the Local Plan through Examination.

Councillor T Belben presented the Overview and Scrutiny Commission’s comments on the report [OSC/308](#) to the Cabinet following consideration of the matter at its meeting on 30 January 2023.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet:

- a) delegates the following authority to the Head of Economy and Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development

(Generic Delegation 5 will be used to enact these recommendations):

- i factual amendments and minor modifications to the Local Plan necessary in accordance with national policy and updated evidence for the purposes of clarity and accuracy.
 - ii to approval of updates or additions to the supporting documents for the Local Plan and technical evidence base documents to support the Local Plan through Examination.
- b) requests that the Full Council to approve:
 - i the submission draft Local Plan for Publication consultation (a statutory six-week period of public consultation), commencing 9 May 2023.
 - ii the submission draft Local Plan for Submission to the Secretary of State for Examination by an independent Planning Inspector, subject to minor amendments deemed necessary following the above consultation for the purposes of clarity and accuracy.
 - iii publication and submission of the supporting documents for the Local Plan: the Local Plan Map; the Sustainability Appraisal; the Habitats Regulations Assessment; the Consultation Statement; and the detailed technical evidence base documents necessary for supporting the Local Plan through Examination.

Reasons for the Recommendations

National Government guidance expects local planning authorities to produce up-to-date Local Plans for their areas, setting out the strategic priorities for the area over a 15-year timescale and showing how development needs will be met. The Crawley Borough Local Plan was adopted by Full Council on 16 December 2015. It covers the period 2015 – 2030 and provides the borough's full planning policies for the purposes of development management decisions.

A full Local Plan Review is being undertaken to ensure the borough maintains up to date planning policies. A draft Local Plan has been considered and approved by the Council previously at the meetings of the Full Council held on 16 December 2019 and 16 December 2020. It had to be considered a second time in December 2020 due to advice relating to the government's aviation policy, which required us to reinstate most of the land safeguarded for an additional runway to the south of Gatwick Airport.

Unexpected critical legal matters relating to water supply and its potential impacts on internationally protected habitat sites have caused additional work and substantial delays to the progression of the Local Plan whilst being resolved. However, there is now sufficient information available to address these concerns through the Local Plan Review. As a consequence, Cabinet approval is being sought to refer the revised

Local Plan and supporting documentation to Full Council, seeking approval to undertake a further period of Regulation 19 consultation prior to submission of the final draft Plan to an Inspector for examination in public.

6. 2023-2024 Budget and Council Tax

The Leader presented reports [FIN/606](#) and [FIN606A](#) of the Chief Executive and Chief Accountant (s151 officer). The Council had a statutory responsibility to set a Council Tax and Budget in advance of the commencement of the new financial year. It was noted that the report detailed each of the Revenue, Capital and Housing Revenue Accounts that combine together to formulate 'The Budget'. In proposing the level of Council Tax for the Financial Year 2023/24, each of those accounts identified had been considered. The proposed Council Tax for 2023/24 was to be increased by 2.99%. In presenting the report the Leader highlighted the proposal to use £261,970 from the General Fund reserve, the proposal to increase the capital budget for Crawley Homes retrofit schemes by £900,000 to assist with water neutrality and the expenditure on capital projects.

The Leader also detailed the additional recommendations contained within the supplementary agenda which proposes to increase the capital programme for temporary accommodation by £1,150,000 to £9,548,258 and the budget for acquisitions of Land and Dwellings by £10,000,000. It was noted that the reasons for both additional proposals were to allow the Council to maximise any opportunities to help tackle the increasing pressures on the Council's budget in respect of temporary accommodation and the need for affordable housing.

Councillor T Belben presented the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's comments on the report [OSC/308](#) to the Cabinet following consideration of the matter at its meeting on 30 January 2023, which including acknowledging the serious impact of the cost of homelessness was and would be having on the Council finances in the next couple of years.

Councillors C Mullins, Jhans, and S Mullins spoke as part of the discussion on the report.

RESOLVED

That the Full Council be recommended to approve the following items regarding the 2023/2024 Budget:

- a) approve the proposed 2023/24 General Fund Budget which includes using £261,970 of general fund reserve and includes savings rolled forward from the current financial year as set out in section 6 of report [FIN/606](#),
- b) approve the proposed 2023/24 Housing Revenue Account Budget as set out in Appendix 3 of the report which includes the savings and growth items as set out in section 10 of report [FIN/606](#),
- c) agree to increase the capital budget for Crawley Homes retrofit schemes by £900,000 to assist with water neutrality, funded from the HRA but reimbursed by developers to carry out further retrofitting works on Council's housing stock and new-build schemes (para 11.3 of report [FIN/606](#)). In addition that authority be delegated to the Head of Crawley Homes, the Head of Corporate Finance, and the Head of Governance, People & Performance; in consultation with the

Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Housing, to enter into the necessary contracts, and complete all relevant legal documentation to achieve the above recommendation

(Generic Delegation 2 and 3 will be used to enact this recommendation).

- d) increase the capital programme by £129,950 funded from Government grant for the Town Centre DHN Phase 2 extended feasibility. An increase of £184,950 for the DHN and a reduction of £55,000 for the Town Centre Capital programme (para 11.5 of report [FIN/606](#)).
- e) approve the 2022/23 and future years Capital Programme and funding as set out in paragraph 11.6 of report [FIN/606](#),
- f) agree the transfers between reserves as outlined in Section 12 of report [FIN/606](#), this includes creating a Cost of Living reserve.
- g) agree that the Council's share of Council Tax for 2023/24 be increased by 2.99% (£6.55) from £218.79 to £225.34 for a band D property as set out in paragraph 13.1 of report [FIN/606](#),
- h) approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/2024 as outlined in paragraph 16.3 and Appendix 6 of the of report [FIN/606](#), noting that the pay award has yet to be agreed,
- i) approve that the S151 Officer (in consultation with the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council) be delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Hardship Policy (under Generic Delegation 7).
- j) agree to increase the capital budget for Temporary Accommodation by £1,150,000, funded from grant funding of £474,000 and borrowing of 676,000 as detailed in report [FIN606A](#).
- k) agree to increase the capital budget for Acquisitions of Land and Dwellings by £10,000,000 funded from 1-4-1 receipts £4,000,000 and borrowing of £6,000,000 as detailed in report [FIN606A](#)

Reasons for the Recommendations

To provide adequate funding for the proposed level of services and to fulfil the statutory requirement to set a Budget and Council Tax and report on the robustness of estimates.

7. 2022/2023 Budget Monitoring - Quarter 3

The Leader presented report [FIN/607](#) of the Chief Executive and Chief Accountant (s151 officer) on the Quarter 3 budget monitoring, which set out a summary of the Council's actual revenue and capital spending for the quarters to December 2022 together with the main variations from the approved spending levels and impact on future budgets. It was added that the Council had made significant in year savings.

Councillor T Belben presented the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's comments on the report [OSC/308](#) to the Cabinet following consideration of the matter at its meeting on 30 January 2023, which included, recognising that the deficit on the HRA had increased from £218,000 to £1.019m, mostly all due to the forecast overspend on

responsive repairs of £800,000. £350,000 of this was due to weather-related repairs, but the rest was due to increased material costs and the poor condition of properties being returned.

Councillors S Mullins and C Mullins spoke as part of the discussion on the report.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet approves to the projected outturn for the year 2022/2023 as summarised in this report [FIN/607](#).

Reasons for the Recommendations

To report to Members on the projected outturn for the year compared to the approved budget.

8. Treasury Management Strategy 2023-2024

The Leader presented reports [FIN/608](#) and [FIN608a](#) reports of the Chief Executive and Chief Accountant (s151 officer) on the Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/2024 which the Council was required to approve before the start of the financial year in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management and the Council's financial regulations.

Councillor T Belben presented the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's comments on the report [OSC/308](#) to the Cabinet following consideration of the matter at its meeting on 30 January 2023, which included requesting for further acronyms to be documented within finance reports, together with an explanation where appropriate.

Councillor Buck spoke as part of the discussion on the report including supporting the Commission's request to have a breakdown of acronyms within reports to aid Members consideration of the certainly financial reports. The Leader confirmed he would speak to Officers over the best way to address this matter for future reports.

RESOLVED

The Cabinet agrees to amend the prudential indicators in the Treasury Management Strategy 2023/2024 ([FIN/608](#)) as set out in Section 4 of report [FIN608a](#) before considering the recommendations contain within it.

That the Full Council be recommended to approve the following items:

- a) the Treasury Prudential Indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement contained within Section 5.4 of report [FIN/608](#).
- b) the Treasury Management Strategy contained within Section 6 of report [FIN/608](#).
- c) the Investment Strategy contained within Section 7 of report [FIN/608](#).
- d) the amended the prudential indicators in the Treasury Management Strategy 2023/2024 ([FIN/608](#)) as set out in Section 4 of report [FIN608a](#)

Reasons for the Recommendations

The Council's financial regulations, in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management, requires a Treasury Management Strategy to be approved for the forthcoming financial year. This report complies with these requirements.

9. Corporate Debt Policy

The Leader presented report [FIN/610](#) of the Chief Executive and Chief Accountant (s151 officer). The report proposes the adoption of a new Corporate Debt Policy. The policy details that the Council had a duty to ensure that it collects income and recovers debt efficiently and effectively to ensure it fulfils its financial responsibilities to its citizens and maximises its capacity to provide local services. It also details that the Council where possible would be proactively trying to prevent residents' Council relate debts arising or escalating. The Cabinet were informed to enable the Council to be able to this it uses a new software system called "Lateral" to enable it to have a shared view of debt across the Council. This system identifies people that were vulnerable and be able to point them to get debt advice to help avoid them getting into further debt.

Councillor T Belben presented the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's comments on the report [OSC/308](#) to the Cabinet following consideration of the matter at its meeting on 30 January 2023, which included their support for proposed centralised approach to debt management and the support the Council was proposing to provide to its residents.

Councillors S Mullins, and Jhans spoke as part of the discussion and in support of the report.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet:

- a) approves the Corporate Debt Policy (Appendix A of report [FIN/610](#)) for adoption and subsequent publication.
- b) delegates authority to the Head of Corporate Finance, in consultation with the Leader, to review and make amendments to the Corporate Debt Policy as further changes to legislation and statutory guidance are introduced.

(Generic Delegation 7 will be used to enact this recommendation).

Reasons for the Recommendations

The council has a duty to ensure that it collects income and recovers debt efficiently and effectively to ensure it fulfils its financial responsibilities to its citizens and maximises its capacity to provide local services.

The Council must meet legislative requirements in respect of income collection and has an obligation to collect on behalf of other organisations.

10. Corporate Plan 2023-2027

The Leader presented report [CEX/60](#) of the Chief Executive. The report documented a refresh the Council's Corporate Plan, so it reflected the Council's priorities for the period 2023-2027. The key changes within the Plan from the previous edition related to the Borough's recovery from the economy crisis and the impacts of the Covid pandemic, the impact of water neutrality on the built environment, the need for more affordable housing and temporary accommodation and the importance of reducing the Council's and the town's Carbon footprint, through the delivery of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

The Cabinet acknowledged the Commission's comments of support for the proposed Corporate Plan as detailed in report [OSC/308](#) from its meeting held on 30 January 2023.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet:

- a) approves the Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027 (Appendix A of report [CEX/60](#))
- b) delegates authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make any minor amendments to the Corporate Plan including any changes to legislation and statutory guidance as required.

(Generic Delegation 7 will be used to enact this recommendation).

- c) requests Full Council to adopt the Corporate Plan 2023 - 2027.

Reasons for the Recommendations

The Corporate Plan sets out the strategic direction of the Council for the next four years. Where necessary, it will be updated to ensure the Council's activities reflect the national and local challenges it faces.

11. Irrecoverable Debts 2022-2023 (Over £50,000)

The Leader presented report [FIN/609](#) of the Chief Executive and Chief Accountant (s151 officer). The Council endeavours to collect all debts due to the Council, there will inevitably be some debts that remain irrecoverable. Individual debts of up to £50,000 can be written-off using delegated powers. The report sought authority to write off individual debts in 2022 - 2023 of over £50,000 and also provided a summary of debts written off using delegated authority:

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet approves the write-off irrecoverable debts totalling £154,931.53 as shown in the following table.

Name and Address	Reason for Write-Off	Total Value of Write-Off
Howell Transport and Haulage Ltd Barlow House, Crompton Way, Crawley RH10 9QB	In Liquidation	£154,931.53

Reasons for the Recommendations

The Council's [Constitution](#) necessitates amounts exceeding £50,000 requiring write-off to be approved by the Cabinet.

Closure of Meeting

With the business of the Cabinet concluded, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.41 pm

M G JONES
Chair