

Northern Rother District Councillors' Report January 2023.

Draft Revenue Budget 2023/2024

Members were concerned that not all relevant information had been provided to them to enable detailed scrutiny of the budget, including the **true costs of the Blackfriars development**, the savings identified through the FSP and how and where the £32,000 grant from Government to cover the additional burdens placed on the Council through the Elections Act and Voter ID would be spent;

The proposal before Cabinet at its next meeting on 6th February is a Council Tax increase for 2023/24 at Band D of £5.22 (2.70%) and set at £198.60.

The offer of £1.5 million capital funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC), contingent on match funding from the Council should be noted.

The draft Revenue Budget has been balanced for 2023/24 by the planned use of £2.035 million from Usable Revenue Reserves. However, this is not a sustainable approach and it is imperative that the Council continues to deliver on key initiatives such as the Financial Stability Programme (FSP) and the Service Planning process, which are aimed at generating additional income and cost savings. Without such action, the financial forecast shows Reserves will be under considerable pressure and will fall below £5 million within a couple of years. This also increases the Council's vulnerability to being able to cope with unexpected cost increases. There are other risks and uncertainties within the budget forecast, which is not unusual when forecasting five years ahead. Delivering a sustainable future for the Council remains challenging if the Council is to maintain delivery of essential services to the public.

Public Spaces Protection Order (No 1A) - Dog Control:

The PSPO (No 1A) Dog Control expires in January 2024. There is the opportunity to amend the Order. The Public, Police, PCC, ESCC, P&TCs will be consulted about renewing the Order.

Rother Health and Well-Being: Leisure Facilities Strategy:

The results of the consultation on this matter show that there is overwhelming support for the strategy as drafted, with perhaps some additions to support future provision for the next 10 years and beyond.

Old Lydd Road, Council Led Housing Development.

the Director – Place and Climate Change will be granted delegated authority to accept the £185,000 grant from the Brownfield Land Release Fund Round 2, for the purposes of delivering this project; an addition to the Capital Programme of £395,000, funded by £185,000 Brownfield Land Release Fund and £210,000 capital borrowing be authorised to facilitate the remediation and delivery of the site for housing (to be reimbursed by eventual capital receipt).

the Director – Place and Climate Change will be granted delegated authority to procure the contractor/s required for the remediation works and close the carpark, subject to planning approval, including procuring contractors and entering into other contracts as necessary for the completion of this phase of the project.

Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on their recommendations for the Members' Allowance Scheme to be paid for the period 2023-2027.

Cabinet considered the recommendations made by the IRP, commented thereon and referred all recommendations to full Council. This will enable a full and robust debate by all Members on the Allowance Scheme. Whilst in the interests of economy and administration the Council had requested that the IRP made recommendations on allowances for the 4 year period (2023-2027), the rationale for recommending a one year increase is noted. Should Council approve the recommendations, it will be necessary for the Council to reconvene the IRP in Autumn 2023 to review the allowances to be set for the remainder of the Council term 2024-27.

To confirm the named appointment to the role of Interim Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer).

Recommendation to COUNCIL: That Duncan Ellis be designated as the Council's Interim Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) with effect from 20 February 2023.

Levelling Up Funding.

The award of Levelling Up Funding is a significant step forward for the creative economy in the district. The £23m project at the De La Warr Pavilion will secure the future of this building as an economic driver and hub for the community. The Sidley Recreation Ground Project will provide a key community asset for the district's most deprived ward. It will build upon previous investment in that site and ensure that the skate park and BMX track are serviced with appropriate facilities. It will also ensure the Heart of Sidley Community Interest Company will have an income generating opportunity providing for their long term sustainability, providing services to their community.

Cllrs. Tony Ganly & Martin Mooney.