

CABINET

9 February 2023

Minute Extract

1. **GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2023-24**
(CAB3388)

As noted above, Councillor Thompson declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect of the report due to her role as a board member of the Hampshire Cultural Trust. She remained in the room but took no part in the debate or decision in connection with recommendation 3 (c) as set out below.

Councillor Power introduced the report emphasising it was the financial plan to deliver the council plan which was agreed in January.

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillor Bolton addressed Cabinet as summarised briefly below.

He requested further details about the council's proposals to deliver its commitments towards reducing carbon emissions. He noted the £250k funding proposals towards "greener faster" but considered this insufficient to meet the carbon net zero target. He asked specifically what was intended to be spent on tackling the climate emergency in 2023/24?

Councillor Power emphasised that every Cabinet Members' budget proposals included measures to reduce the carbon footprint. However, it was only possible to include detailed budgets once clear costs, benefits and funding streams had been identified and secured. As soon as projects had secured monies further details would be provided.

The Chief Executive provided an update of the matters discussed during consideration of this report at Scrutiny Committee on 7 February 2023 which were noted by Cabinet. The Committee did not forward any issues for the attention of Cabinet. However, some minor typographical corrections would be made to the report before it was submitted to Council.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the report.

RECOMMENDED (TO COUNCIL):

1. **That the level of General Fund Budget for 2022/23 be agreed, and recommend the summary as shown in Appendix A of the report.**

2. That the creation of and transfers to reserves (detailed in section 13.13 of the report) be approved to support the delivery of the key priorities in the Council Plan, including:

- a. Greener Faster (£250k)**
- b. Future of Waste (£500k)**
- c. Pride in Place (£150k)**
- d. Digital Transformation (£400k)**
- e. Regeneration (£300k)**
- f. Cost of Living/Living Well (£170k)**
- g. Transitional Reserve (additional £230k)**

3. That the Pride in Place investment proposals set out in section 13.5 of the report be supported, including:

- a. To increase the regeneration budget by £130k per annum to provide capacity to deliver the council's regeneration programme.**
- b. To increase the Town Forum bus shelter replacement programme by £10k per annum from 2023/24**
- c. To freeze the proposed grant funding reductions to Hampshire Cultural Trust and maintain pre-2022/23 funding levels until the end of 2024/25, at a cost of £43k per annum.**
- d. Extend the current one-off budget funding street scene works under the Pride in Place priority by £50k per annum**
- e. Increase the tree works budget by £78k per annum to fund ongoing essential works to the Council's trees across the district**
- f. Increase the Natural Environment and Recreation Team budget by £23k per annum to fund a tree officer post to manage the council's trees.**

4. That the proposed increase to the salary budget of £175k per annum to fund all grades being uplifted by one increment on the existing pay scales be approved, in accordance with Appendix G of the report, to give Winchester a more competitive market position for recruitment and retention of staff.

5. That a discretionary 7% cap for 2023/24 on the annual increase in rent for Partnered Home Purchase scheme property owners be approved, in line with the increase in social and affordable rents to existing tenants in the HRA.

6. That the sum of £1,186,879 be treated as Special Expenses under Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 in respect of the Winchester Town area as set out in section 16 and Appendix D of the report.

7. That the Council Tax for the Special Expenses in the Winchester Town area at Band D for 2022/23 be increased by 5.5% to £80.93, an increase of £4.22.

8. That the surplus balance on the Council Tax Collection Fund for distribution to this Council, calculated in January 2023 of £39,724.63, be approved.

9. That the level of Council Tax at Band D for City Council services for 2022/23 be increased to £155.29, an increase of £4.00 reflecting an average Council tax increase of 2.65%

10. That the new Council Tax Reduction scheme income bands be approved (set out in Appendix E of the report) that ensure claimants continue to receive the same level of support after the increase in Universal Credit from April 2023.

11. That the distribution of the Government's £150,512 Council Tax Support Fund through a reduction to Council Tax balances be approved, in line with the Government's guidance and additional local criteria, detailed in paragraph 17 of the report.