

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of a meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 19 February 2024.

PRESENT: Mr G Cooke (Chairman), Mr B J Sweetland (Vice-Chairman), Mr N Baker, Mr M Baldock, Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr P Bartlett, Mrs C Bell, Mrs R Binks, Mr T Bond, Mr A Brady, Mr D L Brazier, Mrs B Bruneau, Mr S R Campkin, Mr T Cannon, Miss S J Carey, Sir Paul Carter, CBE, Mrs S Chandler, Mr N J D Chard, Mrs P T Cole, Ms K Constantine, Mr D Crow-Brown, Mr M C Dance, Ms M Dawkins, Mr M Dendor, Mrs L Game, Mr R W Gough, Ms K Grehan, Ms S Hamilton, Peter Harman, Jenni Hawkins, Mr P M Hill, OBE, Mr A R Hills, Mrs S V Hohler, Mr S Holden, Mr M A J Hood, Mr A J Hook, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr A Kennedy, Mr J A Kite, MBE, Rich Lehmann, Mr B H Lewis, Mr R C Love, OBE, Mr S C Manion, Mr R A Marsh, Mr J P McInroy, Ms J Meade, Mr J Meade, Mr D Murphy, Mr P J Oakford, Mr J M Ozog, Mrs L Parfitt-Reid, Mr C Passmore, Mrs S Prendergast, Mr H Rayner, Mr O Richardson, Mr A M Ridgers, Mr D Robey, Mr D Ross, Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Mr T L Shonk, Mr C Simkins, Mr M J Sole, Mr P Stepto, Mr R G Streatfeild, MBE, Dr L Sullivan, Mr R J Thomas, Mr D Watkins, Mr S Webb, Mr M Whiting, Mr J Wright and Ms L Wright

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Cook (Democratic Services Manager)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

197. Apologies for Absence
(Item 1)

The Democratic Services Manager reported apologies from Mr Beaney, Mr Booth, Mr Broadley, Mr Chittenden, Mr Cole, Mr Collor, Mrs Dean, Mrs Hudson and Mrs McArthur.

The Democratic Services Manager advised that Mr Cannon would be joining the meeting slightly late and the General Counsel, Mr Watts, was joining the meeting online.

198. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests in items on the agenda
(Item 2)

The following interests were declared by Members:

- Mr Campkin was Deputy Leader and portfolio holder for Climate, Environment and Transport at Ashford Borough Council.
- Dr Sullivan's husband was employed by the Council, and she was a Cabinet Member at Gravesham Borough Council.
- Mr Baldock was Deputy Leader of Swale Borough Council.
- Mrs Parfitt-Reid was Cabinet Member for Housing and Health at Maidstone Borough Council.
- Sir Paul Carter and Mr Kite were Directors of Leigh Academies Trust.
- Mr Gough was a Member of Leigh Academies Trust.
- Mr Hill was a Director of Tenterden Schools Trust.
- Rich Lehmann was the portfolio holder for Environment at Swale Borough Council.

199. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2023
(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2023 be approved as a correct record.

200. Chairman's Announcements
(Item 4)

The Chairman had written to His Majesty the King on behalf of the County Council to wish him well following his operation and recent diagnosis.

201. Section 25 Assurance Statement
(Item 5)

Mr John Betts, Interim Corporate Director Finance, was in attendance for this item.

- (1) The Chairman advised that Members would be invited to ask technical questions for clarification during this item, but debate of budget policy would be reserved for Item 6.
- (2) Mr Oakford proposed, and Mr Gough seconded the motion that:

"Pursuant to section 25 of the Local Government Act, County Council is asked to consider and note this report and agree to have due regard to the contents when making decisions about the proposed budget."
- (3) The Interim Corporate Director Finance, as the Section 151 Officer, provided an overview of the Section 25 Assurance Statement. Mr Betts said, as outlined in the report, that the uncertainties of the economic environment meant there were significant risks in the authority delivering a balanced budget. He explained that, provided all the measures set out in the draft budget and medium-term plan were implemented, the Council would

continue to demonstrate financial sustainability over the short term, and a positive opinion could be given under Section 25 on the robustness of the estimate and the level of reserves.

- (4) Following a technical question from a Member Mr Betts confirmed that the Section 25 Assurance Statement covered all the budget proposals, including amendments, that were under consideration at the meeting.
- (5) The Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph 2 to the vote and the voting was as follows:

For (66)

Mr Baldock, Mr Baker, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Brady, Mr Brazier, Mr Campkin, Mr Cannon, Miss Carey, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mrs Cole, Ms Constantine, Mr Crow-Brown, Mr Dance, Ms Dawkins, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Grehan, Ms Hamilton, Mr Harman, Ms Hawkins, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Hood, Mr Hook, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kite, Mr Lehmann, Mr Love, Mr Manion, Mr Marsh, Mr McInroy, Ms Meade, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mrs Parfitt-Reid, Mr Passmore, Mrs Prendergast, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr D Ross, Mr Sandhu, Mr Shonk, Mr Simkins, Mr Sole, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild, Dr Sullivan, Mr Sweetland, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Whiting, Mr Wright, Ms Wright

Against (0)

Abstain (0)

Motion carried.

- (6) RESOLVED that pursuant to section 25 of the Local Government Act, County Council noted the report and agreed to have due regard to the contents when making decisions about the proposed budget.

202. Capital Programme 2024-34 and Revenue Budget 2024-25 (including Council Tax Setting 2024/25)

(Item 6)

- (1) The Chairman reminded Members that any Member of a Local Authority who was liable to pay Council Tax, and who had any unpaid Council Tax amount overdue for at least two months, even if there was an arrangement to pay off the arrears, must declare the fact that they are in arrears and must not cast their vote on anything related to KCC's Budget or Council Tax.
- (2) The Chairman drew Members' attention to the Section 25 Assurance Statement, as considered under the previous item, reminding them of the agreement by Council to give it due regard while considering the Budget.

- (3) The Chairman explained that proposed amendments to the draft budget were circulated to Members prior to the meeting.
- (4) Mr Oakford proposed and Mr Gough Seconded the following motion:

“County Council, having given due regard to the s25 Report (published for consideration as agenda item 5 of this meeting), is asked to agree the following:

2024-34 Capital Programme

- (a) The 10-year Capital programme and investment proposals of £1,665.3m over the years from 2024-25 to 2033-34 together with the necessary funding and subject to approval to spend arrangements.
- (b) The directorate capital programmes as set out in appendices A & B of the final draft budget report published on 9th February 2024.

2024-25 Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan

- (c) The net revenue budget requirement of £1,423.6m for 2024-25.
- (d) The directorate revenue budget proposals for 2024-25 and the medium term financial plan as set out in appendices D (high level county 3 year plan) E (high level 2024-25 plan by directorate), F (2024-25 key services), appendix G (individual spending, savings, income and reserves variations for 2024-25) of the final draft budget report published on 9th February 2024.

2024-25 Council Tax

- (e) To increase Council Tax band rates up to the maximum permitted without a referendum as set out in section 6.4 (tables 6.1 and 6.2) in the final draft report published on 9th February 2024.
- (f) To levy the additional 2% social care precept (raising an additional £17.774m and taking the total social care precept to £135,347,128 out of the total precept set out in recommendation (g) below).
- (g) The total Council Tax requirement of £935,667,397 to be raised through precepts on districts as set out in section 6.6 (table 6.3) in the final draft report published on 9th February 2024.

Kent Pay Scheme 2024-25

- (h) The recommendations from Personnel Committee on the changes to Kent Pay Scheme as set out in sections 7.8 and 7.9 of the final draft budget published on 9th February 2024
- (i) The uprating of member allowances linked to pay awards as set out in section 7.10 of the final draft budget published on 9th February 2024

Key Policies and Strategies

- (j) Fees and charges to continue to be reviewed in line with the policy agreed in the 2023-24 budget approval

- (k) The Capital Strategy as set out in appendix O of the final draft report published on 9th February 2024 including the Prudential Indicators.
- (l) The Treasury Management Strategy as set out in appendix M of the final draft report published on 9th February 2024
- (m) The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement as set out in appendix P of the final draft report published on 9th February 2024
- (n) The Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy as set out in appendix Q of the final draft report published on 9th February 2024.
- (o) The Reserves Policy as set out in appendix H of the final draft budget report published on 9th February 2024.

In addition:

- (p) To note that the Cabinet Member for Finance Corporate and Traded Services, in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet, will determine the final TCP reward thresholds for staff assessed as successful, excellent, and outstanding, and the uplift to the Kent Ranges consistent with Personnel Committee recommendation to County Council, and agree any other changes to the Kent Scheme through the conclusion of pay bargaining (after consultation with the Leader and the political Group Leaders)
- (q) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Finance (after consultation with the Leader, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate & Traded Services and the political Group Leaders) to resolve any minor technical issues for the final budget publication which do not materially alter the approved budget or change the net budget requirement and for any changes made to be reflected in the final version of the Budget Book (blue combed) due to be published in March 2024.
- (r) To note the information on the impact of the County Council's share of retained business rates, business rate pool and business rate collection fund balances on the revenue budget will be reported to Cabinet once it has all been received.
- (s) To note the ongoing and escalating cost pressures on the Council's budget alongside insufficient funding in the local government finance settlement and knock on requirement for savings and income in the final draft 2024-25 budget and medium term financial plan.
- (t) To note further potential economic volatility and the uncertain financial outlook for later years in the absence of a multi-year settlement from government from 2025-26 onwards as well as uncertain impact of the delayed social care reforms and reforms to local government funding arrangements.
- (u) To note that the planned use of reserves still ensures sufficient reserves are available in the short term with no immediate concerns triggering a S114 notice provided the use of these reserves is replaced with sustainable savings over the medium term.
- (v) To note the rate of recent drawdown from reserves and increase in risk is cause for serious concern and reserves need to be strengthened, particularly general reserve and the draft budget

includes a strategy to restore the general reserve to 5% by 2025-26. Further unplanned drawdowns would weaken resilience and should only be considered as a last resort with an agreed strategy to replenish reserves at earliest opportunity.

- (5) Dr Sullivan (Leader of the Opposition), Mr Hook (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) and Mr Lehmann (Leader of the Green & Independent Group) gave their responses to the recommendations.
- (6) Following a general debate, the Chairman called for cross-directorate amendments.
- (7) Dr Sullivan proposed, and Mr Brady seconded the following amendment:

Proposed Purpose:

“To amend the budget proposed by the Administration in line with the Labour Group’s Alternative Budget in accordance with sections 8.10 – 14 of the Constitution.”

Proposed Amount:

“See revised budget appendices D and G. Please also refer to the Labour Group’s alternative budget covering report, which includes the revised recommendation as proposed by the Labour Group.”

Proposed Funding Source:

“See revised budget appendices D and G. Please also refer to the Labour Group’s alternative budget covering report, which includes the revised recommendation as proposed by the Labour Group.”

Post meeting note – A covering report along with the revised budget appendices D and G can be accessed [here](#).

- (8) Following the debate, the Chairman put to the vote the amendment set out in paragraph 7 above and the voting was as follows:

For (14)

Mr Baldock, Mr Brady, Mr Campkin, Ms Constantine, Ms Dawkins, Ms Grehan, Mr Harman, Ms Hawkins, Mr Hood, Mr Lehmann, Mr Lewis, Ms Meade, Mr Stepto, Dr Sullivan

Against (53)

Mr Baker, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Brazier, Mrs Bruneau, Mr Cannon, Miss Carey, Mr Carter, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mrs Cole, Mr Cooke, Mr Crow-Brown, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Jeffrey, Mr

Kennedy, Mr Kite, Mr Love, Mr Manion, Mr Marsh, Mr McInroy, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mr Ozog, Mrs Parfitt-Reid, Mrs Prendergast, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr D Ross, Mr Sandhu, Mr Shonk, Mr Simkins, Mr Sweetland, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Whiting, Mr Wright, Ms Wright

Abstain (4)

Mr Hook, Mr Passmore, Mr Sole, Mr Streatfeild

Amendment lost.

(9) Mr Baldock proposed, and Mr Lehmann seconded the following amendment:

Proposed Purpose:

“To implement a shift in working patterns by reducing the working hours to 34 per week, whilst maintaining salaries at 2023-24 levels.

We propose that the £11m savings generated by this change are spent on -

- Reversing proposed cuts to Youth Services (£1.2m)
- Reversing proposed cuts to Community Wardens (£1m)
- Investment into Kent Karrier to publicise the service and maintain 2023 service levels (£500k one off investment and £750k pa running costs)
- Additional funding to repair potholes and other safety critical road maintenance (£1m)
- Set aside to cover implementation costs (£1.05m)
- Savings put back into reserves (£5.5m)”

Proposed Amount:

“£11m”

Proposed Funding Source:

“£11m cashable savings available from not making 2024-25 pay award. Decreasing staff hours to 34 hours per week will ensure the minimum hourly rate continues to be above Foundation Living Wage.”

(10) Following the debate, the Chairman put to the vote the amendment set out in paragraph 9 above and the voting was as follows:

For (6)

Mr Baldock, Mr Campkin, Ms Hawkins, Mr Hood, Mr Lehmann, Mr Stepto

Against (60)

Mr Baker, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Brady, Mr Brazier, Mrs Bruneau, Miss Carey, Mrs Chandler, Mrs Cole, Ms Constantine, Mr Cooke, Mr Crow-Brown, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Grehan, Ms Hamilton, Mr Harman, Mr Hill, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Hook, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kite, Mr Lewis, Mr Love, Mr Manion, Mr Marsh, Mr McInroy, Ms Meade, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mr Ozog, Mrs Parfitt-Reid, Mr Passmore, Mrs Prendergast, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr D Ross, Mr Sandhu, Mr Shonk, Mr Simkins, Mr Sole, Mr Streatfeild, Dr Sullivan, Mr Sweetland, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Whiting, Mr Wright, Ms Wright

Abstain (1)

Ms Dawkins

Amendment lost.

Children, Young People and Education Directorate

(11) The Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills introduced the budget for this directorate prior to general debate and the taking of directorate specific amendments.

(12) Following the general debate, the Chairman called for directorate specific amendments.

(13) Mr Streatfeild proposed, and Mr Hook seconded the following amendment:

Proposed Purpose:

“This amendment seeks to protect KCC’s provided or commissioned Youth Services. At present, KCC has 12 inhouse youth hubs while other contracted providers run services including music, sports, youth clubs, arts, and drama clubs, as well as street-based activities such as skateboarding.

Investment in youth is critical for the future of Kent, and thousands of young people have benefitted from these services. With crime and anti-social behaviour ever increasing, it is vital that young people are given alternatives that make positive impacts on our communities.

The decision taken in November 2023 to cease commissioned youth contracts has been heavily criticised by residents across Kent, including parents, young people and professionals working with young people. In response to KCC’s own public consultation, parents of children attending Ashford Youth Hub, said “there are a lot of people here that will suffer if you stop these activities youths will end up bored and getting into trouble instead”. Another parent added: “it’s one thing my vulnerable autistic child has been able to do with no financial burden on us and she’s made welcome, taught new skills and socialising with a mix of ages. The volunteers and staff are so great and supportive of us and her”.

Whilst Kent has a thriving voluntary youth sector, many of these organisations such as the Scouts and Guides, are consistently over-subscribed. KCC providing youth services reduces pressure on the voluntary sector and provides a breath of opportunities for young people.

The proposed budget change would reduce the required saving from the review of Youth Services, with the preserved funding to be used for provision of additional Youth Services to offset the reduction arising from the previous decision, either through further investment in KCC Open Access operations or through new commissioned contracts with external providers.”

Proposed Amount:

“£401.3k to be added to Youth Services budget (reducing the Commissioned Youth Services saving from £913k to £511.7k)”

Proposed Funding Source:

“Cease contribution to Civil Society Strategy (£401.3k)”

(14) Following the debate, the Chairman put to the vote the amendment set out in paragraph 13 above and the voting was as follows:

For (16)

Mr Brady, Mr Campkin, Ms Constantine, Ms Dawkins, Ms Grehan, Ms Hawkins, Mr Hood, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann, Mr Lewis, Ms Meade, Mr Passmore, Mr Sole, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild, Dr Sullivan

Against (52)

Mr Baker, Mr Baldock, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Brazier, Mrs Bruneau, Mr Cannon, Miss Carey, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mrs Cole, Mr Cooke, Mr Crow-Brown, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Harman, Mr Hill, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kite, Mr Love, Mr Manion, Mr Marsh, Mr McInroy, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mr Ozog, Mrs Parfitt-Reid, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr D Ross, Mr Sandhu, Mr Shonk, Mr Simkins, Mr Sweetland, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Whiting, Mr Wright, Ms Wright

Abstain (0)

Amendment lost.

Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate

(15) The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, the Cabinet Member for Environment, the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services and the Cabinet Member for Economic Development introduced the budget

for this Directorate prior to general debate and the taking of directorate specific amendments.

(16) Following the general debate, the Chairman called for directorate specific amendments.

(17) Ms Hawkins proposed, and Mr Campkin seconded the following amendment:

Proposed Purpose:

“We propose that the savings created by removing deputy cabinet members are redirected. Firstly towards increasing active travel interventions for schools to enable more children and young people to walk to school safely. This includes School Streets, assistance for schools with School Travel Plans. This is important to enable enough schools to sign up for these initiatives in order to promote children’s health, increase safety, to reduce traffic, and to save money on home to school transport. And secondly towards halving the proposed cuts to Road Safety Campaigns.”

Proposed Amount:

“£103,000 – Additional staff and resources to deliver School Active Travel Interventions/School Streets. £100,000 – Half the proposed cut to Road Safety campaigns”

Proposed Funding Source:

“Remove eleven deputy cabinet members for a saving of £203,000 per year”

(18) Following the debate, the Chairman put to the vote the amendment set out in paragraph 17 above and the voting was as follows:

For (17)

Mr Baldock, Mr Brady, Mr Campkin, Ms Dawkins, Ms Grehan, Mr Harman, Ms Hawkins, Mr Hood, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann, Mr Lewis, Ms Meade, Mr Passmore, Mr Sole, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild, Dr Sullivan

Against (49)

Mr Baker, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Brazier, Mrs Bruneau, Mr Cannon, Miss Carey, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mrs Cole, Mr Cooke, Mr Crow-Brown, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kite, Mr Love, Mr Manion, Mr Marsh, Mr McInroy, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mrs Parfitt-Reid, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr D Ross, Mr Sandhu, Mr Simkins, Mr Sweetland, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Whiting, Mr Wright, Ms Wright

Abstain (1)

Mr Shonk

Amendment lost.

(19) Mr Lehmann proposed, and Mr Hood seconded the following amendment:

Proposed Purpose:

“To reverse the recent change in the final draft budget and make the agreed ‘enabling’ payments to Maidstone, Gravesham, Ashford and Swale Borough Councils in recognition of the millions they save KCC each year by separating out food waste and recycling.”

Proposed Amount:

“£1.3m”

Proposed Funding Source:

“Reverse changes set out in table 7.2 of the final draft budget report – i.e.

- £0.5m Reverse contingency for impact on waste collection/disposal
- £0.8m increase use of one-off reserves”

(20) Following the debate, the Chairman put to the vote the amendment set out in paragraph 19 above and the voting was as follows:

For (19)

Mr Brady, Mr Campkin, Ms Constantine, Ms Dawkins, Ms Grehan, Mr Harman, Ms Hawkins, Mr Hood, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann, Mr Lewis, Ms Meade, Mr Passmore, Mrs Parfitt-Reid, Mr Shonk, Mr Sole, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild, Dr Sullivan

Against (45)

Mr Baker, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Brazier, Mrs Bruneau, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mrs Cole, Mr Crow-Brown, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kite, Mr Love, Mr Manion, Mr Marsh, Mr McInroy, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr D Ross, Mr Sandhu, Mr Simkins, Mr Sweetland, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Whiting, Mr Wright, Ms Wright

Abstain (1)

Mr Cannon

Amendment lost.

(21) Mr Hood proposed, and Mr Stepto seconded the following amendment:

Proposed Purpose:

“To redirect one off funding earmarked in the January draft budget into capital investment which will provide immediate and ongoing savings by reducing energy costs across KCC’s estate as well as bringing us closer to the carbon reduction goals in line with Framing Kent’s Future (Environmental Step Change). We propose that £3.2m is set aside to invest in projects outlined in KCC’s Net Zero Plan, including:

- Installing Solar PV on the roofs of 16 KCC buildings
- Insulating KCC buildings to reduce heat loss
- Further investment in Solar farms to help meet KCC’s energy needs
- LED lighting across KCC buildings where practicable
- Switch oil-fuelled generators to low carbon alternatives
- Installation of heat pumps (on a case by case basis, if financial savings can be demonstrated)”

Proposed Amount:

“£3.2m”

Proposed Funding Source:

“Remove £3.2m planned new investment from additional grant in final settlement and fund £3.2m of the transformation activity in the administration’s proposed budget funded from capital receipts from this grant. The capital receipts thus released to be used to fund the proposed investment, which will deliver future financial savings.”

(22) A point of clarification was raised in relation to the proposed funding source and Mr Oakford confirmed the £3.2m was allocated to the adult social care budget.

(23) Following the debate, the Chairman put to the vote the amendment set out in paragraph 21 above and the voting was as follows:

For (13)

Mr Brady, Mr Campkin, Ms Constantine, Ms Dawkins, Ms Grehan, Mr Harman, Ms Hawkins, Mr Hood, Mr Lehmann, Mr Lewis, Ms Meade, Mr Stepto, Dr Sullivan

Against (50)

Mr Baker, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Brazier, Mrs Bruneau, Mr Cannon, Miss Carey, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mrs Cole, Mr Cooke, Mr Crow-Brown, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr

Kite, Mr Love, Mr Manion, Mr Marsh, Mr McInroy, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mrs Parfitt-Reid, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr D Ross, Mr Sandhu, Mr Shonk, Mr Simkins, Mr Sweetland, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Whiting, Mr Wright, Ms Wright

Abstain (4)

Mr Hook, Mr Passmore, Mr Sole, Mr Streatfeild

Amendment lost.

Adult Social Care and Health Directorate

(24) The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health introduced the budget for this directorate prior to general debate. No amendments were proposed.

Corporate Functions (Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department)

(25) The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services and the Cabinet Member for Communications and Democratic Services introduced the budget for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department prior to general debate and the taking of directorate specific amendments.

(26) Following the general debate, the Chairman called for directorate specific amendments.

(27) Mr Stepto proposed, and Mr Sole seconded the following amendment:

Proposed Purpose:

"We propose that funding for the Combined Member Grant scheme should be increased to £4,800 per Member. This grant is vital to ensuring Members are able to deliver targeted support within their communities at a time when residents and organisations across Kent are struggling due to the cost-of-living crisis. This is especially vital at a time when the authority is making wide ranging cuts."

Proposed Amount:

"£97,200"

Proposed Funding Source:

"Freeze member allowances for 2024-25."

(28) Following the debate, the Chairman put to the vote the amendment set out in paragraph 27 above and the voting was as follows:

For (12)

Mr Campkin, Ms Constantine, Mr Harman, Ms Hawkins, Mr Hood, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann, Mr Lewis, Mr Passmore, Mr Sole, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild

Against (47)

Mr Baker, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Brazier, Mrs Bruneau, Mr Cannon, Miss Carey, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mrs Cole, Mr Cooke, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kite, Mr Love, Mr Manion, Mr Marsh, Mr McInroy, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mrs Parfitt-Reid, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr Robey, Mr D Ross, Mr Sandhu, Mr Shonk, Mr Simkins, Mr Sweetland, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Whiting, Mr Wright

Abstain (5)

Mr Brady, Ms Dawkins, Ms Grehan, Ms Meade, Dr Sullivan

Amendment lost.

(29) The Chairman proposed that, under s14.48 of the Constitution, Council resolve to extend the meeting beyond 5pm with business to conclude no later than 6pm and it was agreed unanimously.

(30) RESOLVED that the County Council agree to continue the meeting beyond 5pm with business to conclude no later than 6pm.

(31) Mr Hook proposed, and Mr Streatfeild seconded the following amendment:

Proposed Purpose:

“This amendment seeks to provide an additional income stream for the 2024/25 budget by hosting wedding ceremonies at County Hall. The unique history and location of County Hall would make it an ideal venue to offer low to medium budget weddings. There are several locations within County Hall where wedding ceremonies could take place with some minor adjustments, such as the main Council Chamber or the Darent Room. One advantage of the use of these rooms is the capacity to seat many people, with equipment in situ to webcast for family and friends unable to attend in person. The restaurant could also be used to cater for wedding breakfasts with customers using external caterers. There are facilities such as toilets and lifts already in place, and these rooms are disability friendly.”

Proposed Amount:

“Estimated potential revenue of £100k per annum into the budget.”

Proposed Funding Source:

“Initial investment to be funded from temporary use of reserves, which will be repaid from the future income stream.”

- (32) Mr Streatfeild declared an interest in that he was a director at a wedding venue in West Kent.
- (33) Mr Lehmann declared an interest in that he had been a wedding venue photographer for 15 years.
- (34) Mr Manion declared an interest in that he was a Church Warden for the Parish of Upper Deal and Great Mongeham.
- (35) Following the debate, the Chairman put to the vote the amendment set out in paragraph 31 above and the voting was as follows:

For (9)

Mr Harman, Ms Hawkins, Mr Hood, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann, Mr Passmore, Mr Sole, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild

Against (44)

Mr Baker, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Brazier, Mrs Bruneau, Mr Cannon, Miss Carey, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mrs Cole, Mr Cooke, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kite, Mr Love, Mr Marsh, Mr McInroy, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mrs Parfitt-Reid, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr Robey, Mr D Ross, Mr Shonk, Mr Simkins, Mr Sweetland, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Whiting, Mr Wright

Abstain (8)

Mr Brady, Ms Constantine, Ms Dawkins, Ms Grehan, Mr Kennedy, Mr Lewis, Ms Meade, Dr Sullivan

Amendment lost.

- (36) Mr Gough and Mr Oakford summarised the debate. As all the amendments had been determined, the Chairman put to the vote the substantive motion as set out in Item 6, paragraph 4 above and the voting was as follows:

For (46)

Mr Baker, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Brazier, Mrs Bruneau, Mr Cannon, Miss Carey, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mrs

Cole, Mr Cooke, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Harman, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kite, Mr Love, Mr Manion, Mr Marsh, Mr McInroy, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mrs Parfitt-Reid, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr Robey, Mr D Ross, Mr Simkins, Mr Sweetland, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Whiting, Mr Wright

Against (15)

Mr Brady, Ms Constantine, Ms Dawkins, Ms Grehan, Ms Hawkins, Mr Hood, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann, Mr Lewis, Ms Meade, Mr Passmore, Mr Sole, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild, Dr Sullivan

Abstain (1)

Mr Shonk

Substantive Motion Carried.

(37) RESOLVED that;

County Council, having given due regard to the s25 Report (published for consideration as agenda item 5 of this meeting), agreed the following:

2024-34 Capital Programme

- (a) The 10-year Capital programme and investment proposals of £1,665.3m over the years from 2024-25 to 2033-34 together with the necessary funding and subject to approval to spend arrangements.
- (b) The directorate capital programmes as set out in appendices A & B of the final draft budget report published on 9th February 2024.

2024-25 Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan

- (c) The net revenue budget requirement of £1,423.6m for 2024-25.
- (d) The directorate revenue budget proposals for 2024-25 and the medium term financial plan as set out in appendices D (high level county 3 year plan) E (high level 2024-25 plan by directorate), F (2024-25 key services), appendix G (individual spending, savings, income and reserves variations for 2024-25) of the final draft budget report published on 9th February 2024.

2024-25 Council Tax

- (e) To increase Council Tax band rates up to the maximum permitted without a referendum as set out in section 6.4 (tables 6.1 and 6.2) in the final draft report published on 9th February 2024.
- (f) To levy the additional 2% social care precept (raising an additional £17.774m and taking the total social care precept to £135,347,128 out of the total precept set out in recommendation (g) below).
- (g) The total Council Tax requirement of £935,667,397 to be raised through precepts on districts as set out in section 6.6 (table 6.3) in the final draft report published on 9th February 2024.

Kent Pay Scheme 2024-25

- (h) The recommendations from Personnel Committee on the changes to Kent Pay Scheme as set out in sections 7.8 and 7.9 of the final draft budget published on 9th February 2024
- (i) The uprating of member allowances linked to pay awards as set out in section 7.10 of the final draft budget published on 9th February 2024

Key Policies and Strategies

- (j) Fees and charges to continue to be reviewed in line with the policy agreed in the 2023-24 budget approval
- (k) The Capital Strategy as set out in appendix O of the final draft report published on 9th February 2024 including the Prudential Indicators.
- (l) The Treasury Management Strategy as set out in appendix M of the final draft report published on 9th February 2024
- (m) The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement as set out in appendix P of the final draft report published on 9th February 2024
- (n) The Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy as set out in appendix Q of the final draft report published on 9th February 2024.
- (o) The Reserves Policy as set out in appendix H of the final draft budget report published on 9th February 2024.

In addition:

- (p) To note that the Cabinet Member for Finance Corporate and Traded Services, in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet, will determine the final TCP reward thresholds for staff assessed as successful, excellent, and outstanding, and the uplift to the Kent Ranges consistent with Personnel Committee recommendation to County Council, and agree any other changes to the Kent Scheme through the conclusion of pay bargaining (after consultation with the Leader and the political Group Leaders)
- (q) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Finance (after consultation with the Leader, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate & Traded Services and the political Group Leaders) to resolve any minor technical issues for the final budget publication which do not materially alter the approved budget or change the net budget requirement and for any changes made to be reflected in the final version of the Budget Book (blue combed) due to be published in March 2024.
- (r) To note the information on the impact of the County Council's share of retained business rates, business rate pool and business rate collection fund balances on the revenue budget will be reported to Cabinet once it has all been received.
- (s) To note the ongoing and escalating cost pressures on the Council's budget alongside insufficient funding in the local government finance settlement and knock on requirement for savings and income in the final draft 2024-25 budget and medium term financial plan.

- (t) To note further potential economic volatility and the uncertain financial outlook for later years in the absence of a multi-year settlement from government from 2025-26 onwards as well as uncertain impact of the delayed social care reforms and reforms to local government funding arrangements.
- (u) To note that the planned use of reserves still ensures sufficient reserves are available in the short term with no immediate concerns triggering a S114 notice provided the use of these reserves is replaced with sustainable savings over the medium term.
- (v) To note the rate of recent drawdown from reserves and increase in risk is cause for serious concern and reserves need to be strengthened, particularly general reserve and the draft budget includes a strategy to restore the general reserve to 5% by 2025-26. Further unplanned drawdowns would weaken resilience and should only be considered as a last resort with an agreed strategy to replenish reserves at earliest opportunity.