

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of a meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 13 February 2025.

PRESENT: Mr B J Sweetland (Chairman), Mr A M Ridgers (Vice-Chairman), Mr N Baker, Mr M Baldock, Mr P Bartlett, Mr D Beaney, Mrs C Bell, Mrs R Binks, Mr T Bond, Mr A Booth, Mr A Brady, Mr D L Brazier, Mr S R Campkin, Miss S J Carey, Sir Paul Carter, CBE, Mrs S Chandler, Mr N J D Chard, Mr I S Chittenden, Mrs P T Cole, Mr P Cole, Ms K Constantine, Mr G Cooke, Mr P C Cooper, Mr M C Dance, Ms M Dawkins, Mr M Dendor, Mrs L Game, Mr R W Gough, Ms K Grehan, Ms S Hamilton, 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, Rich Lehmann, Mr B H Lewis, Mr R C Love, OBE, Mr R A Marsh, Ms J Meade, Mr J Meade, Mr D Murphy, Mr P J Oakford, Mr J M Ozog, Mr C Passmore, Mrs S Prendergast, Mr H Rayner, Mr O Richardson, Mr D Robey, Mr D Ross, Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Mr T L Shonk, 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), Mr B Watts (General Counsel) and Mr J Betts (Interim Corporate Director Finance)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

286. Apologies for Absence
(Item 1)

The Democratic Services Manager reported apologies from Mr Paul Barrington-King, Mr Conrad Broadley, Mr Tom Cannon, Mr Nigel Collor, Mr Derek Crow-Brown, Mrs Trudy Dean, MBE, Ms Jenni Hawkins, Mrs Sarah Hudson, Mr Jeremy Kite, MBE, Mr Thomas Mallon, Mrs Margot McArthur, Mr James McInroy, Mr Mike Sole, Ms Lottie Parfitt and Mr Charlie Simkins.

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

- (1) The General Counsel advised that Members' Register of Interests detailed their main declarations and it was not necessary to declare any of those at the meeting. However, Members may wish to declare any specific interest in relation to the agenda.
- (2) Ms Meade declared an interest that she was a carer.

- (3) Miss Carey declared a pecuniary interest that she was a Trustee of the Turner Contemporary and would leave the Chamber during any relevant discussions.

288. Minutes of the meetings held on 19 December 2024 and 9 January 2025 and, if in order, to be approved as a correct record
(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 19 December 2024 and 9 January 2025 be approved as a correct record.

289. Chairman's Announcements
(Item 4)

With the deepest regret the Chairman advised Members of the sad passing of Mr Matthew Balfour and said tributes would be heard at the March County Council meeting.

290. Section 25 Report
(Item 5)

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

- (1) Mr John Betts, Interim Corporate Director Finance, as the Section 151 Officer, provided an overview of the Section 25 Assurance Statement. He said there were considerable risks facing the authority in delivering a balanced budget due to a number of factors including the current economic environment, the single year finance settlement for local government, the scale of savings required, and the growing demands on core statutory services. He said all the budget resolutions had undergone extensive scrutiny and reminded Members that the Section 25 Assurance Statement covered the Administration's proposed budget and all the amendments. He noted that the total of all the revenue amendments for 2025/2026 amounted to 0.4% of the overall budget. Mr Betts explained that provided all the measures set out in the draft budget and the medium term plan were implemented, including the delivery of savings, managing growth, minimising borrowing, and maximising council tax increases and precepts, the Council would continue to demonstrate financial sustainability over the medium term. The assessment was that the overall budget estimates were robust and the levels of reserves were adequate.
- (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 Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph 2 to the vote and the voting was as follows:

For (57)

Mr Baker, Mr Baldock, Mr Bartlett, Mr Beaney, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Booth, Mr Brady, Mr Brazier, Mr Campkin, Miss Carey, Sir Paul Carter, CBE, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mr Chittenden, Mr Cole, Mr Cooper, Ms Constantine, Mr Cooke, Mr Dance, Ms Dawkins, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Grehan, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hill, OBE, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Hood, Mr Hook, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Lehmann, Mr Love, OBE, Mr Marsh, Mr Meade, Ms Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mr Ozog, Mr Passmore, Mrs Prendergast, Mr Rayner, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr Sandhu, MBE, Mr Shonk, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild, MBE, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Whiting, Mr Wright, Ms Wright

Against (0)

Abstain (2)

Mr B Lewis, Mr D Ross

Motion carried.

- (4) 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.

291. Capital Programme 2025-35 and Revenue Budget 2025-26 (including Council Tax Setting 2025/26)
(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 a document setting out the procedure for the meeting and the 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:

2025-35 Capital Programme

- (a) The 10-year Capital programme and investment proposals of £1,419m over the years from 2025-26 to 2034-35 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 5th February 2025.

2025-26 Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan

- (c) The net revenue budget requirement of £1,530.9m for 2025-26.
- (d) The directorate revenue budget proposals for 2025-26 and the medium term financial plan as set out in appendices D (high level county 3 year plan) E (high level 2025-26 plan by directorate), appendix F (individual spending, savings, income and reserves variations for 2025-26) and G (2025-26 key services) of the final draft budget report published on 5th February 2025.

2025-26 Council Tax

- (e) To increase Council Tax band rates up to the maximum permitted without a referendum as set out in section 6.4 (table 6.1) of the final draft report published on 5th February 2025.
- (f) The total Council Tax requirement of £994,287,655 to be raised through precepts on districts as set out in section 6.6 (table 6.2) in the final draft report published on 5th February 2025.

Kent Pay Scheme 2025-26

- (g) Note the transition of all Kent Scheme staff to the new pay structure agreed by County Council in May 2024
- (h) Agree to the recommendations on the uplift to Kent Pay Scheme as set out in section 7.9 of the final draft budget published on 5th February 2025

Key Policies and Strategies

- (i) Fees and charges to continue to be reviewed in line with the policy agreed in the 2023-24 budget approval
- (j) The Capital Strategy as set out in appendix O of the final draft report published on 5th February 2025 including the Prudential Indicators.
- (k) The Treasury Management Strategy as set out in appendix M of the final draft report published on 5th February 2025
- (l) The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement as set out in appendix P of the final draft report published on 5th February 2025
- (m) The Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy as set out in appendix Q of the final draft report published on 5th February 2025.
- (n) The Reserves Policy as set out in appendix H of the final draft budget report published on 5th February 2025.

In addition:

- (o) To delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to agree any other non-pay related changes to the Kent Scheme through the conclusion of pay bargaining.
 - (p) 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 and structural changes 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 2025.
 - (q) 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.
 - (r) 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 2025-26 budget and medium term financial plan.
 - (s) To note potential changes to local authority funding system from 2026-27 onwards and consequential uncertain financial outlook for later years until a multi-year settlement from government is reintroduced.
 - (t) To note that fundamental changes to social care are unlikely until after Baroness Casey enquiry concludes.
 - (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 potential drawdown to balance 2024-25 outturn is still cause for serious concern and reserves will still need to be maintained ahead of changes under Devolution White Paper. 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) Mr Brady (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) Mr Brady proposed, and Ms Meade 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 F. 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 F. 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 F 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 (12)

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

Against (42)

Mr Baker, Mr Bartlett, Mr Beaney, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Booth, Mr Brazier, Miss Carey, Sir Paul Carter, CBE, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mr Cole, Mr Cooper, Mr Cooke, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hill, OBE, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Love, OBE, Mr Marsh, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mr Ozog, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr Sandhu, MBE, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Wright, Ms Wright

Abstain (7)

Mr Chittenden, Mr Hook, Mr Passmore, Mr Ross, Mr Shonk, Mr Streatfeild, MBE, Mr Whiting

Amendment lost.

Children, Young People and Education Directorate

(9) 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.

- (10) Following the general debate, the Chairman called for directorate specific amendments.
- (11) Mr Hood proposed, and Mr Lewis seconded the following amendment:

Proposed Purpose:

“Allocate up to £75k from the money earmarked for general reserves to fund a comprehensive feasibility study into cost effective ways of providing home to school transport by exploring (among other things) in-house options and practices used outside of the UK. This study would solely be to look at Home to School transport for children in mainstream education.”

Proposed Amount:

“£75k”

Proposed Funding Source:

“Reduce Contribution to General Reserves”

- (12) Following the debate, the Chairman put to the vote the amendment set out in paragraph 11 above and the voting was as follows:

For (16)

Mr Baldock, Mr Brady, Mr Campkin, Sir Paul Carter, CBE, Mr Chittenden, Ms Constantine, Ms Dawkins, Ms Grehan, Mr Hood, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann, Mr Lewis, Ms Meade, Mr Passmore, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild, MBE

Against (41)

Mr Baker, Mr Bartlett, Mr Beaney, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Booth, Mr Brazier, Miss Carey, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mr Cole, Mr Cooke, Mr Cooper, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hill, OBE, Mr Hills, Mr Holden, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Love, OBE, Mr Marsh, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mr Ozog, Mrs Prendergast, Mr Richardson, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr Ross, Mr Sandhu, MBE, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Whiting, Mr Wright,

Abstain (0)

Amendment lost.

Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate

- (13) 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.

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

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

Proposed Purpose:

“This amendment seeks to reduce the amount of capital allocated to the Strategic Estate Programme and allocate to the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) capital project. With the future of KCC uncertain, we believe that other than any urgent repair works, no further capital should be spent on the Invicta House refurbishment. With the proposed restructure to local government, a new unitary authority may decide not to include Invicta House as part of its strategic estate. We believe this funding should be used on important assets needed by residents right now rather than for investment in buildings KCC may not require in the future. With the looming ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles, many Kent residents will be making the switch to electric vehicles. However, not every resident has access to their own driveway or garage and park their cars on the street. The amendment proposes to ‘top-up’ the LEVI grant so that more Kent residents benefit from additional EV charging infrastructure.”

Proposed Amount:

“£2.149m to ‘top-up’ the LEVI capital project funding.”

Proposed Funding Source:

“Cancelling the reconfiguration of the 3rd and 4th floor of Invicta House, including provision of Member and CMT spaces.”

(16) Following the debate, the Chairman put to the vote the amendment set out in paragraph 15 above and the voting was as follows:

For (9)

Mr Baldock, Mr Campkin, Mr Chittenden, Mr Hood, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann, Mr Lewis, Mr Passmore, Mr Stepto

Against (41)

Mr Baker, Mr Bartlett, Mr Beaney, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Booth, Mr Brazier, Miss Carey, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mr Cole, Mr Cooke, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hill, OBE, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Love, OBE, Mr Marsh, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mr Ozog, Mrs Prendergast, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr

Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr Ross, Mr Sandhu, MBE, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Wright, Ms Wright

Abstain (8)

Mr Brady, Sir Paul Carter, CBE, Ms Constantine, Mr Cooper, Ms Dawkins, Ms Meade, Mr Shonk, Mr Whiting

Amendment lost.

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

Proposed Purpose:

“This amendment seeks to reduce the amount of capital allocated to the Strategic Estate Programme and allocate to the Highways Asset Management/Annual Maintenance capital project. With the future of KCC uncertain, we believe that other than any urgent repair works, no further capital should be spent on the Invicta House refurbishment. With the proposed restructure to local government, a new unitary authority may decide not to include Invicta House as part of its strategic estate. We believe this funding should be used on important assets needed by residents right now rather than for investment in buildings KCC may not require in the future. Potholes and poorly maintained roads continue to inconvenience Kent’s Road users. This extra funding will provide additional support to tackle the ongoing challenges of road maintenance to create long-lasting repairs to Kent’s highways network.”

Proposed Amount:

“£5.6m to increase the Highways Asset Management/Annual Maintenance capital project.”

Proposed Funding Source:

“Cancellation of the Scope 2 enhanced works to Invicta House.”

(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 (8)

Mr Baldock, Mr Campkin, Mr Chittenden, Mr Hook, Mr Lewis, Mr Passmore, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild, MBE

Against (40)

Mr Bartlett, Mr Beaney, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Booth, Mr Brazier, Miss Carey, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mr Cole, Mr Cooke, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Hood, Mr

Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Love, OBE, Mr Marsh, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mr Ozog, Mrs Prendergast, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr Ross, Mr Sandhu, MBE, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Wright, Ms Wright

Abstain (10)

Mr Baker, Mr Brady, Sir Paul Carter, CBE, Ms Constantine, Mr Cooper, Ms Dawkins, Mr Lehmann, Ms Meade, Mr Shonk, Mr Whiting

Amendment lost.

(19) Mr Passmore proposed, and Mr Chittenden seconded the following amendment:

Proposed Purpose:

“Fly tipping in Kent was reported to have increased in Kent and Medway by 10% with 27,000 incidents reported in 2022- 23 there is no reason to believe that it is not continuing to rise due to the increasing costs of commercial waste disposal. For Districts clearing up the mess is difficult, time consuming and expensive stretching our budgets further and with very low levels of prosecution there is no effective deterrent. It is proposed provide additional funds to Districts including but not limited to strategically placed movable ANPR Cameras located in the vicinity of fly tipping hot spots which will aid the work of District staff who are working to reduce this disgusting treatment of our environment.”

Proposed Amount:

“£1m”

Proposed Funding Source:

“Reduce the £12m waste reserve to £11m and use this unringfenced EPR income to fund these ANPR Cameras.”

(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 (13)

Mr Brady, Mr Campkin, Mr Chittenden, Ms Constantine, Ms Dawkins, Mr Hood, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann, Mr Lewis, Ms Meade, Mr Passmore, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild, MBE

Against (39)

Mr Baker, Mr Bartlett, Mr Beaney, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Booth, Mr Brazier, Miss Carey, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mr Cole, Mr Cooke, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hill, OBE, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Love, OBE, Mr Marsh, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mr Ozog, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr Sandhu, MBE, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Wright, Ms Wright

Abstain (3)

Mr Ross, Mr Shonk, Mr Whiting

Amendment lost.

Adult Social Care and Health Directorate

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

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

(22) 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.

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

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

Proposed Purpose:

“Reverse the proposed £1.75m cut to the grant paid to districts for Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) support for the 2025-26 financial year (using money earmarked for general reserves) to allow for a thorough investigation of the underlying causes of the estimated £5million gap in council tax base between the KCC estimate and the estimates reported by districts for 2025-26.”

Proposed Amount:

“£1,750k”

Proposed Funding Source:

“Reduce Contribution to General Reserves”

(25) Following the debate, the Chairman put to the vote the amendment set out in paragraph 24 above and the voting was as follows:

For (15)

Mr Brady, Mr Campkin, Mr Chittenden, Ms Constantine, Ms Dawkins, Ms Grehan, Mr Hood, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann, Mr Lewis, Ms Meade, Mr Passmore, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild, MBE, Mr Whiting

Against (43)

Mr Baker, Mr Bartlett, Mr Beaney, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Booth, Mr Brazier, Miss Carey, Sir Paul Carter, CBE, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mr Cole, Mr Cooke, Mr Cooper, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hill, OBE, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Love, OBE, Mr Marsh, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mr Ozog, Mrs Prendergast, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr D Ross, Mr Sandhu, MBE, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Wright, Ms Wright

Abstain (1)

Mr Shonk

Amendment lost.

(26) Mr Gough and Mr Oakford summarised the debate. As all the amendments had either been determined or withdrawn, 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 (41)

Mr Baker, Mr Bartlett, Mr Beaney, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Booth, Mr Brazier, Miss Carey, Sir Paul Carter, CBE, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mr Cole, Mr Cooke, Mr Cooper, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hill, OBE, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Love, OBE, Mr Marsh, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mr Ozog, Mrs Prendergast, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr Sandhu, MBE, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Wright, Ms Wright

Against (10)

Mr Campkin, Mr Chittenden, Mr Hood, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann, Mr Lewis, Mr Passmore, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild, MBE, Mr Whiting

Abstain (7)

Mr Brady, Ms Constantine, Ms Dawkins, Ms Grehan, Ms Meade, Mr Ross, Mr Shonk

Substantive Motion Carried.

(27) RESOLVED that:

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:

2025-35 Capital Programme

- (a) The 10-year Capital programme and investment proposals of £1,419m over the years from 2025-26 to 2034-35 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 5th February 2025.

2025-26 Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan

- (c) The net revenue budget requirement of £1,530.9m for 2025-26.
- (d) The directorate revenue budget proposals for 2025-26 and the medium term financial plan as set out in appendices D (high level county 3 year plan) E (high level 2025-26 plan by directorate), appendix F (individual spending, savings, income and reserves variations for 2025-26) and G (2025-26 key services) of the final draft budget report published on 5th February 2025.

2025-26 Council Tax

- (e) To increase Council Tax band rates up to the maximum permitted without a referendum as set out in section 6.4 (table 6.1) of the final draft report published on 5th February 2025.
- (f) The total Council Tax requirement of £994,287,655 to be raised through precepts on districts as set out in section 6.6 (table 6.2) in the final draft report published on 5th February 2025.

Kent Pay Scheme 2025-26

- (g) Note the transition of all Kent Scheme staff to the new pay structure agreed by County Council in May 2024
- (h) Agree to the recommendations on the uplift to Kent Pay Scheme as set out in section 7.9 of the final draft budget published on 5th February 2025

Key Policies and Strategies

- (i) Fees and charges to continue to be reviewed in line with the policy agreed in the 2023-24 budget approval
- (j) The Capital Strategy as set out in appendix O of the final draft report published on 5th February 2025 including the Prudential Indicators.
- (k) The Treasury Management Strategy as set out in appendix M of the final draft report published on 5th February 2025
- (l) The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement as set out in appendix P of the final draft report published on 5th February 2025

- (m) The Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy as set out in appendix Q of the final draft report published on 5th February 2025.
- (n) The Reserves Policy as set out in appendix H of the final draft budget report published on 5th February 2025.

In addition:

- (o) To delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to agree any other non-pay related changes to the Kent Scheme through the conclusion of pay bargaining.
- (p) 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 and structural changes 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 2025.
- (q) 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.
- (r) 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 2025-26 budget and medium term financial plan.
- (s) To note potential changes to local authority funding system from 2026-27 onwards and consequential uncertain financial outlook for later years until a multi-year settlement from government is reintroduced.
- (t) To note that fundamental changes to social care are unlikely until after Baroness Casey enquiry concludes.
- (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 potential drawdown to balance 2024-25 outturn is still cause for serious concern and reserves will still need to be maintained ahead of changes under Devolution White Paper. 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.