

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council

Date: Friday, 23 February 2024

Venue: Council Chamber - Civic Offices

PRESENT:

F Birkett
(Mayor)

Mrs P Hayre
(Deputy Mayor)

Councillors: Ms C Bainbridge, I Bastable, Mrs S M Bayford, R Bird, Mrs P M Bryant, Ms F Burgess, Miss J Burton, Mrs L E Clubley, M R Daniells, H P Davis, S Dugan, Mrs T L Ellis, D G Foot, M J Ford, JP, N R Gregory, D J Hamilton, Miss T G Harper, Mrs C L A Hockley, S Ingram, Mrs K Mandry, S D Martin, Mrs J Needham, P Nother, Ms S Pankhurst, Mrs K K Trott, N J Walker, Mrs S M Walker and S D T Woodward



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J M Englefield.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Mayor be authorised to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 14 December 2023.

3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor announced that a very enjoyable tea party was held on the 08 February in the Council Chamber where a talk was given on the comedy and social comment of seaside postcards.

The Mayor also announced that the next tea party will take place on Thursday 14th March where guests will receive a talk from the Crafty Makery Team.

Finally, the Mayor confirmed that his Black-Tie Charity Ball will be taking place on Friday 19 April 2024 in the Wardroom at HMS Collingwood. All proceeds will go to the Mayor's chosen charities of Sophie's Legacy and Veterans Outreach Support. Tickets are priced at £65 per person and it promises to be an outstanding event.

4. EXECUTIVE LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Executive Leader's announcements.

5. EXECUTIVE MEMBERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS**Leisure and Community**

The Executive Member for Leisure and Community announced that the construction of Fareham Live is progressing well and the venue will be opened later this year.

Over the past month, the floor screed in the main auditorium has been laid and the fly tower internal acoustic lining has been installed. Theatre equipment will start to be installed next month as well as the lifts and toilets.

The Executive Member stated that members would already be aware that it will be managed by Trafalgar Theatres who are a leading global live entertainment company operating 18 other venues. The Executive Member confirmed that she recently had the pleasure of meeting Gavin Shuman who is the Venue Director and was please to say that Gavin is working incredibly hard to develop an exciting programme for when the building opens. The

Pantomime has already been booked and tickets will be going on sale very soon.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were reminded that the Monitoring Officer had granted a dispensation to all members to enable a discussion and a decision to be taken at item 14 – Finance Strategy, Capital Programme, Revenue budget and Council Tax 2024/25.

7. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Council received an update in respect of the online petition requesting that the Council step in and work with Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Cultural Trust, the Ashcroft Arts Centre and residents in finding a solution to keep the Ashcroft Arts Centre open.

Members were advised that Trafalgar Entertainment has begun dialogue with the Ashcroft Arts Centre to ensure that community groups and organisations, who wish to move across to Fareham Live, can be accommodated when the Ashcroft Centre closes later this year. These discussions are already taking place as the intention for Fareham Live has always been to provide a community hub with a well-balanced programme of events.

Hampshire County Council's consultation on the provision of future services is currently running and closes on 31 March. The results of this petition will be made known to the Culture, Communities and Strategic Programmes Lead Officer at the County as part of that consultation.

8. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations given at this meeting.

9. REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE

(1) Minutes of meeting Monday, 8 January 2024 of Executive

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on Monday 08 January 2024 be received;
- (b) the recommendations contained in minute 10(2) be confirmed at item 18 of the agenda; and
- (c) the recommendations contained in minute 10(3) be confirmed at item 17 on the agenda.

(2) Minutes of meeting Monday, 5 February 2024 of Executive

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on Monday 05 February 2024 be received;
- (b) the recommendations contained in minute 10(1) be confirmed at item 14 on the agenda;
- (c) the recommendations contained in minute 10(2) be confirmed at item 15 on the agenda; and
- (d) the recommendations contained in minute 10(3) be confirmed at item 16 on the agenda.

- (3) Schedule of Individual Executive Member and Officer Delegated Decisions

RESOLVED that the Schedule of Individual Executive Member and Officer Delegated Decisions be received.

10. REPORTS OF OTHER COMMITTEES

- (1) Minutes of meeting Monday, 11 December 2023 of Appointments Sub-Committee

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the members of the Appointments Sub-Committee agree that the minutes of the meeting of the Appointments Sub-Committee held on 11th December 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record; and
- (b) Council agrees that the minutes of the Appointments Sub-Committee held on Monday 11 December 2023 be received.

- (2) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 13 December 2023 of Planning Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday 13 December 2023 be received.

- (3) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 14 December 2023 of Planning Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on Thursday 14 December 2023 be received.

- (4) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 17 January 2024 of Planning Committee

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday 17 January 2024 be received; and
 - (b) the recommendations contained in minute 7 be confirmed at item 14 on the agenda.
- (5) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 30 January 2024 of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee held on Tuesday 30 January 2024 be received; and
- (b) the recommendations contained in minute 7 and minute 8 be considered at item 14 on the agenda.

11. REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY PANELS

- (1) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 30 November 2023 of Housing Scrutiny Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Housing Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday 30 November 2023 be received.

- (2) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 8 February 2024 of Housing Scrutiny Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday 08 February 2024 be received.

- (3) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 16 January 2024 of Climate Change Scrutiny Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Climate Change Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday 16 January 2024 be received.

- (4) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 18 January 2024 of Daedalus Scrutiny Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Daedalus Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday 18 January 2024 be received.

- (5) Minutes of meeting Monday, 22 January 2024 of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Panel held on Monday 22 January 2024 be received.

- (6) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 24 January 2024 of Health and Public Protection Scrutiny Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Health and Public Protection Scrutiny Panel held on Wednesday 24 January 2024 be received.

- (7) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 25 January 2024 of Streetscene Scrutiny Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Streetscene Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday 25 January 2024 be received.

- (8) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 31 January 2024 of Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel held on Wednesday 31 January 2024 be received.

- (9) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 6 February 2024 of Leisure and Community Scrutiny Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Leisure and Community Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday 06 February 2024 be received.

12. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 2.12

There were no questions submitted for this meeting.

13. MOTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 2.6

- (1) Notice of Motion dated 12 February 2024 received from Councillor Mrs C L A Hockley

A notice of Motion was submitted by Councillor Mrs C L A Hockley in respect of community generated energy schemes:

“That Fareham Borough Council

- (i) Acknowledges the efforts that this Council has made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy:
- (ii) Further recognises:
 - that because small-scale renewable energy generation sites receive no guaranteed price certainty for the electricity they generate, it is difficult for sites to finance new generation projects or expand existing ones.
 - that enabling small-scale renewable energy generation sites (capacity below 5 megawatts) to export their electricity to an existing electricity supplier on fair terms would provide sites with a guaranteed income which can be used to expand existing projects or establish new ones.

- that very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers result in it being impossible for community-owned and run renewable electricity generators ('community schemes') to do so,
 - that requiring existing larger suppliers to work with community schemes to then sell the electricity they generate to local customers would mean local households, businesses and public services can access locally-generated, clean and affordable electricity,
 - that revenues received by such community schemes that chose to become local renewable electricity providers could be used to help improve the local economy, local services and facilities and to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions.
- (iii) Notes that the Government-commissioned Net Zero Review, authored by Rt Hon Chris Skidmore and published on the Government's website on the 14th January 2023, recommends that Government should commit to enabling community energy projects to provide energy directly to local households and businesses.
- (iv) Accordingly resolves to support a Right to Local Supply, as outlined in the Local Electricity Bill of last year that was supported by a cross-party group of 326 MPs; and
- (v) Further resolves to:
- inform the local media of this decision,
 - write to local MPs, asking them to support the establishment of a Right to Local Supply for community energy projects, and
 - write to the organisers of the campaign for the Right to Local Supply, Power for People, (at Camden Collective, 5-7 Buck Street, London NW1 8NJ or info@powerforpeople.org.uk) expressing its support.

Having been duly proposed by Councillor Mrs C L A Hockley and seconded by Councillor Miss T Harper, the Motion was referred to the Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel for consideration.

14. FINANCE STRATEGY, CAPITAL PROGRAMME, REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2024/25

- (1) Suspension of Standing Order 2.15 and 2.16

Having been duly proposed by Councillor S D Martin and seconded by Councillor I J Bastable, it was RESOLVED that:

- (a) the provisions of Standing Order 2.15 be suspended to allow the Executive Leader of the Council to speak on matters referred to in item 14(2) and 14(3) for longer than five minutes; and also to allow the Spokesman of the Opposition Group to speak for not more than ten minutes; and
- (b) the provisions of Standing Order 2.16 be suspended to allow the Executive Leader of the Council to speak on matters referred to in items 14(2) and 14(3) more than once to respond to points raised in debate.

(2) Report to the Executive - 05 February 2024

Councillors Mrs F L Burgess and M J Ford left the Chamber at the start of this item.

It was proposed by Councillor S D T Woodward and seconded by Councillor S D Martin that the Council accept the recommendation of the Executive and approves:

- (a) the capital programme and financing of £58,678,500;
- (b) an overall revised net revenue budget for 2023/24 of £12,376,100;
- (c) a net revenue budget for 2024/25 of £13,292,600;
- (d) a council tax for Fareham Borough Council for 2024/25 of £185.86 per band D property, which represents a £5.40 per year increase when compared to the current year and is within referendum limits;
- (e) an unchanged Council Tax Support scheme for 2024/25; and
- (f) that the Council continues to disregard the whole of any incomes prescribed in the Housing Benefit (War Pensions Disregards) Regulations 2007 and the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012.

In presenting the budget proposals, the Executive Leader gave the following review of the Council's performance, success stories and notable achievements from the year and outlined the agreed priorities:

The Executive Leader began with a wholehearted thank you to all the Council staff and to his fellow councillors for their continued dedication and professionalism. With regard to the budget being presented particular thanks were extended to Andy Wannell and his finance team without whom, in financial terms, this Council would not be the envy of many of its neighbours for prudent budgeting.

The Executive Leader advised that throughout the presentation there would be examples of the Council's considered but ambitious approach, with capital investments across the Borough and stated that whilst the Council continues to plan ahead carefully to meet the current and future needs of our residents, it must be acknowledged that we also face continued financial challenges, further impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. Therefore, the Executive Leader

recommended a very small increase of just one penny per day council tax increase for 2024/2025 for the average home.

The Council's performance, success stories and notable achievements from the year and the agreed priorities were advised as follows:

Residents are privileged to live in a Borough with many areas of high-quality parks and green spaces. Both Holly Hill Woodland Park and The Sensory Garden in the town centre were again awarded Green Flags designating them as some of the best parks in the country.

For over 25 years, Fareham in Bloom has brought residents together to showcase their gardens. Hundreds of entries were submitted in a range of categories this year, with hundreds of votes being cast by our residents to choose the winners.

Since the opening of the beautiful Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Park last year, lots of residents are enjoying the space and views it has to offer.

The Borough opened two new sponsored tree planting areas, the Queen's Copse and Platinum Copse, in honour of our late Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

The Council manages 46 children's play areas across the Borough and has been working to upgrade many of them with inclusive equipment. Hundreds of residents gave their feedback about how Badger's Copse, Fielding Road and Seafield Park play areas could be improved. Improvement works were completed in Winter 2023.

Following the public consultation on the re-development of Crossfell Walk play area, 15 additional pieces of play equipment are being added. Work is due to start within the next few months. Residents also voted to name the project to transform The Fareham North West community and leisure facilities as 'Fareham Park'.

The community gathered in great numbers for the King's Coronation ceremonial and community events. Once more younger residents were able to enjoy Access All Areas where a total of 98 children attended.

Despite the weather, thousands of people also enjoyed this year's Christmas light switch on with the festive decorations, music, performers, and activities.

In October, Fareham Borough Council bought Fareham Shopping Centre and several adjoining properties on West Street. Ownership will enable the Council to provide stability and reassurance to its tenants as it works with them and other key partners to develop a new all-encompassing strategy leading to a more vibrant town centre.

Demolition work is well advanced on Osborn Road and the multi storey will be replaced with a surface car park benefiting from larger car parking spaces and electric vehicle charging points.

A Let's Talk Fareham pop-up engagement session took place in West Street to gain on-the-spot feedback from residents. This pop-up feedback session will

be held on an ad-hoc basis and aims to provide an informal setting for residents to voice their opinions about consultations or to raise any concerns they might have within the Borough.

A new Facebook group called Let's Talk Fareham has been created where Fareham residents can comment and interact with posts relating to open consultations taking place in the Borough. Valuable feedback is already being gained from this group and the number of members currently stands at over 600.

The new operator, Trafalgar Theatres was appointed for Fareham Live. Trafalgar Theatres has a proven international track record and expertise in regional theatre and venue operation. Its current portfolio of 14 venues represents both regional and international theatres, live music venues and concert halls.

An exclusive sponsorship opportunity was launched for individuals and businesses to become a part of history at Fareham Live. 'A Wave of Thanks' piece of wall art will be featured in the foyer and made up of coloured bars, which will be inscribed with the name of each sponsor.

An impressive array of accessible features will welcome residents and performers with disabilities to Fareham Live. The Council has received £50,000 of Government funding for Fareham Live's Changing Places Toilet, part of a £30 million national fund to install these in public places and tourist attractions.

There has been significant building progress at Fareham Live where the site is really coming together now.

In collaboration with the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership, we were pleased to launch tailored business support for start-ups. This provides 12 months of intensive support to eight new businesses in the Fareham postcode area. A series of free business networking events was introduced across the Borough. These events are supported by the Federation of Small Businesses, Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise South, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Council appointed the decarbonisation specialist, Beyond Procurement to help reduce the carbon footprint of businesses in Fareham. Beyond Procurement will provide a 12-month support programme to 27 Fareham-based businesses, providing expert advice to help them achieve their sustainability goals and, in most cases, reduce their energy costs.

Essential improvement works to the runway and taxiways at Solent Airport were completed in September.

A revised package of investment at Solent Airport was approved this year. Spearheaded by Aeronautical Ground Lighting (AGL), the improvements programme was increased by circa £800,000 to include new airport fuel assets and almost £400,000 for safety improvements to the Visual Control Room at the Control Tower.

D-Day 80 plans were confirmed by the Executive. Montserrat Events Community Interest Company has been appointed to organise an event, to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of D-Day in June 2024 non-airside at Daedalus which Regional City Airports will oversee airside.

Three housing developments were officially opened this year. Sir Randal Cremer House, Queen's Road and Capella Close are delivering a mix of sheltered and affordable homes.

The Executive Leader was pleased to note that the 'Fareham Local Plan 2037' was formally adopted at a Full Council meeting in April. The Fareham Local Plan 2037 is now part of the Council's Policy Framework that will be used by the Planning Committee when considering planning applications and will sit alongside the Welborne Plan.

The Welborne Strategic Design Code and Streets Manual were both formally submitted and approved this year. Both documents underpin the whole character and layout for Welborne, dictating the design, look and feel of the development.

The first of many thousands of lines of hedges were planted by Secretary of State Michael Gove in a ceremony at Welborne. The scheme should see the first residents move in this year.

A rolling five-year programme has been approved to modernise the Fareham Borough Council fleet of commercial vehicles and move towards a more modern, resilient, efficient, and cost-effective fleet. This programme not only looks to lower the overall age of the fleet but will incorporate 16 electric vehicles to replace old diesel vehicles. The Council is also developing a detailed business case for a solar farm on Hook Recreation Ground. The proposed 3.5MW solar farm will assist towards the Council's commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030 as well as generate much needed income.

An additional seasonal dog exclusion zone came into force at Hill Head, to safeguard protected birds. The new protected zone will create a safe haven for migrating birds at the western end of the beach between October and March each year.

The cost-of-living crisis has increased the cost of council wide services in areas such as energy, fuel and building costs. As the Council's Medium Term Finance Strategy for 2023-2027 has predicted a funding gap in all years, a new opportunities plan for 2023-2027 is being developed to address these predictions and will be a major focus for the Council for the next few years.

Coastal car park charges were implemented in 9 of our car parks in 2021. Wicor Recreation Ground car park has now been reclassified as a coastal car park and will provide additional income for the Council to continue to provide a good level of enforcement and car park provision across the Borough.

The Council has re-confirmed its commitment with Hampshire County Council to working together to secure additional funds, if necessary, for the M27 Junction 10 Improvement Scheme, to ensure that Welborne Garden Village

remains on track. The ravages of inflation have had a negative impact on the cost of construction materials and is in turn expected to affect the cost of the project. The Executive Leader stated that he has just received a very positive response having alerted government to this possibility.

The Executive Leader stated that, even though the Council has achieved a great deal already, there is still a great deal to do to ensure residents continue to receive high quality services as there will be further financial pressure in the future.

The financial year 2024/25 will see a further one-off settlement from central government even though the Council has been asking for clarity over its funding and for the opportunity to make its own decisions over setting council tax rather than rely on a percentage increase that is determined centrally. The Fair Funding Review has been deferred until the start of the 2025/26 financial year so any changes arising from this will not be seen until the 2026/27 financial year and the chances are that finances for district councils will not benefit from this review mainly due to pressures in other areas such as social care and education.

As well as potential funding reductions the Council must also plan for other budget pressures that will see spending increase over the next few years. There is an ongoing cost of the homelessness service provision (£100,000 - £2m), changing demand for car parking, HCC's arrangement for waste & recycling, the emerging waste strategy from central Government, the increasing pressure of maintaining our own assets and managing our woodlands, all of which come at a cost to the council. The Executive Leader stated that with all of this we must not forget climate change which is never out of the news and is something on which the Council has also focussed.

Also, the council has expectations and demands from its customers that can come at a cost particularly around areas such as keeping the borough tidy or maintaining the high standards of our parks and open spaces. This all comes on top of the current cost of living crisis that has not only seen many households struggle but has also seen this council experience cost increases due to high inflation.

As with all Medium-term finance strategies, the outlook for the Council's finances is based on best estimates at this point. These figures do include a 3% increase in council tax if approved by Members tonight. There have been calls for councils to be able to increase their council tax by more than 3% but these have been rejected by the government. This means that Fareham will continue to fall behind other local authorities as Fareham's band D council tax is £75 below the average district council tax and is over £200 below the highest band D who will be able to increase their council tax by over £11 which is double the proposed increase for Fareham thus making the gap between those prudent councils and others even greater.

The Executive Leader stated that, this year, the Council has a balanced budget for 2023/24 which will see a small contribution to reserves.

Next year - 2024/25 - will see a need to use reserves of £404,200 to balance the budget even with a 3% increase in council tax.

In future years, the shortfall will continue to grow towards the end of the strategy period to an extent where the deficit will be £1.9m by 2026/27 this also requires a 3% increase in council tax each year but there will be no available reserves to balance the budget after the 2025/26 financial year. The council does have healthy reserves but must keep a minimum of 5% as a spending reserve for emergencies. Fareham has chosen to double the 5% as a spending reserve but government expectations in the finance settlement are for councils to use reserves before seeking additional council tax increases or any other help from the government. These figures include all the assumptions and known changes to the budgets but more importantly do not include provisions for new priorities such as climate change, town centre regeneration or the costs of implementing the corporate strategy which was approved last year.

The Executive Leader stated that we know that climate change is a popular topic at the moment with pledges to be carbon neutral by 2030 but to achieve this there must be investment in services which is difficult when we are aware of the deficit picture. The cost of living crisis has affected the council as well as residents. Inflation is slowly coming under control, but the bank base rates have increased to their highest levels since 2008 currently being at 5.25%.

The Council purchased the shopping centre in September 2023 as part of a wider regeneration project which is a big priority for the council. This has helped generate significant additional income and, along with the opportunities plan work so far, has helped to buy some time and push the problem back a year.

At this point, the Executive Leader turned his attention to the Council's capital programme. The General Fund capital programme for the next 5 years is a very generous £59 million, focussed on delivering schemes which accord with our Council Priorities.

The biggest scheme the Council has for the next 5 years is the development of the Fareham Live project which will see investment of £17m with a view to the facility being opened later this year. Also working alongside this project, the demolition of the Osborn Road Multi Storey Car park will be demolished as the facility came to the end of its useful life and will be replaced by a surface car park which will provide a much better customer experience for those using the town centre and the new Fareham Live. There will then be over 1,400 parking spaces within very easy reach of Fareham Live.

The Executive Leader stated that as well as the big-ticket items the Council will continue to invest in the airport, in housing grants, in Leisure schemes and in the vehicle fleet to make sure we continue to provide high quality services for our residents. This is a fully funded programme, paid partly from resources that the Council has accumulated, and also with a large proportion attracted from external sources, thereby protecting the Council Tax payers.

At the end of the 5 years it is estimated that there will be a surplus of £3 million which represents a contingency of 5% of the overall programme but this relies on every scheme being completed on time and within budget. Surplus resources are required to cover budgetary situations and also for new

schemes that may come online during the next 5 years, and it is important to realise that the programme relies heavily on capital receipts, revenue contributions of almost £10 million to fund the programme and also borrowing arrangements of just over £16million are required to fund the programme. Despite all of the committed capital spend it is important to note that there will be a need to spend some £200 million in the next 30 years to make sure that all of the Council's assets remain fit for purpose and to keep them operational.

The Executive Leader announced that he would now turn to the revenue budget for Council housing. The cost of running the Housing Revenue Account in 2024-25 is estimated to be just over £15.3 million, with the principal source of funding being from rents. Almost 90% of the annual income is from rent of dwellings and garages with the average weekly rent in Fareham being £120.40 in 2024-25 which represents an increase of 7.7% which is in line with the usual rent increase of CPI as of September of the previous year plus 1%. This as with Council Tax setting is agreed centrally so any local control over rent setting is not available to those who know their customers and stock the best.

As part of the Housing Revenue Account the next 5 years will see a £28 million investment in our properties including improvements, acquisitions and a new build programme. The Council also has a large investment in its housing stock of over £28m through to 2027/28. The Executive Leader went on to highlight some of the current projects:

- Sir Randal Cremer House (Station Rd, Portchester – 16 age restricted flats) work started on site in December 2021 costing around £3.0m and it was officially opened in June 2023
- Capella Close (Stubington Lane – 11 shared ownership houses with average share purchased of 40%) project circa £2.5M has been completed and all but one of the units have been sold generating capital receipts of over £1.2m.
- Proposed redevelopment of Assheton Court in Portchester which is a sheltered housing scheme looking to provide 60 sheltered flats replacing the dated building that had 33 units.
- Ophelia Court which is another shared ownership development of 9 properties. Project cost circa £2.5m with almost 20% coming from grant.

In referring to the Council's consultation portal, Let's Talk Fareham, the Executive Leader was pleased to note that there has been more than double the number of respondents compared to last year.

The consultation on the proposed budget saw 76% of respondents agreeing that it is reasonable to increase Council Tax by 3% for 2024/25, with the highest priority being identified to explore new opportunities to generate income. Meanwhile 70% of respondents see it as reasonable for Council Tax to increase by up to 5% in future years.

The Executive Leader stated that he was pleased to be able to present the budget which maintains the support of residents.

The gross budget for 2024/25 will see the Council spend almost £53 million with a net budget totalling £13.2 million and is almost £1.4 million more than the base budget for the current year.

Each year, in recognition of the economic conditions at the time, the Council determines how the budget should be prepared for the following year. The Medium-Term Finance Strategy was considered in last month and clear budget setting principles were determined as a result. These key principles are the basis for preparing the General Fund Revenue budget for 2024/25.

The Executive Leader stated that fundamentally and, most importantly, the budget must be and is balanced, that is to say there is sufficient income to meet planned costs. Secondly, the budget must be sustainable, providing sufficient flexibility to respond to changing needs and demands in the future. And, just as importantly, The Council needs to be confident that the budget is robust, providing sufficient resources to fulfil its pledges, targeting resources where they are most needed.

Where spending pressures are known, they have been fully allowed for in the budget, and the sources of income to pay for the services have been carefully estimated to reflect a realistic position. Savings and opportunities have been built into the budget but only those which are secured have been included, providing a high degree of certainty, and limiting the risk of a budget deficit in the year. This is a strong position, providing certainty for customers, employees and ourselves that the Council can continue with the level and quality of services that it has delivered since the current administration took control.

The Executive Leader stated that, despite receiving one of the lowest levels of Government support in the country and taking account of the impact of the unprecedented economic climate, it has been possible to set a net budget of £13.2 million for 2024/25. With funding from business rates and government grants considered, the sum of £8,212,761 must be raised from Fareham's Council taxpayers.

Fareham's Council Tax base for 2024/25 is 44,188.9 which shows an increase of 50 band D equivalent properties over the 2023/24 figure. This is along with around 2,500 properties receiving assistance through the council tax support scheme. Dividing the amount to be raised from taxpayers by the tax base gives a Council Tax for band D properties of £185.86. So, with Fareham's proportion of the council tax rising £5.40 this year it remains a small element of the overall increase of £90.80 for 2024/25.

The Executive Leader stated that the Police and Crime Commissioner will be increasing their share of council tax by £10 with the Hampshire Fire showing an increase of £2.41.

The biggest increase will be from the County Council which has agreed to raising council tax by the maximum allowed. The increase will be 2% for the social care precept and 3% going on ordinary council tax which gives a total increase of 5% or a £72.99 rise for a band D property.

The Executive Leader stated that times remain tough and that he was therefore in a position where he must say to customers that Council Tax for Fareham will need to increase in line with government guidelines. In real terms, this is still below the level it would have been if the Council had increased Council Tax in line with inflation each year. He announced that the overall position for Fareham's taxpayers will be:

Fareham Borough Council £185.86
Hampshire County Council £1,533.24
Police and Crime Commissioner £261.46
Hampshire Fire and Rescue £82.84

This gives a total for a Band D property of £2,063.40, which represents a 4.6% increase over the 2023/24 figure.

The Executive Leader stated that he had outlined a budget that delivers all services that the Council would want to deliver plus much more, plus a proposed capital programme for the next 5 years, valued at £59 million.

The Executive Leader confirmed that although the Council has seen further spending and funding pressure this year, going forward a balanced budget has been set albeit with using an element of reserves. In line with Central Government policy Council Tax has been increased. The Executive Leader stated that, considering the demand on services and funding limitations from central government, it is a remarkable achievement to have kept council tax so low and that even with a £5.40 increase Fareham will still have one of the lowest council tax band D charges in the country. The Executive Leader advised that Fareham has most properties in Band C and here the Council Tax for two adults will be £165.21 which is an increase of just over a penny a day for services.

On that note, The Executive Leader asked Members, to approve the recommendations set out under Item 14(3) on the agenda, stating that this makes Fareham's Council Tax one of the lowest "district" rates in England, which is quite impressive when considering that, at the same time, the majority of councils will receive more Government support per dwelling than Fareham.

The Executive Leader ended his budget presentation by saying thank you to all Members and to Fareham Borough Council staff for their dedication and hard work during his time as Executive Leader over the past 25 years and indeed over his 38 years as a Councillor and stating that it had been a pleasure to work with all concerned.

Having been duly proposed by Councillor S D T Woodward and seconded by Councillor S D Martin, the Mayor opened the item for debate.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Ms C Bainbridge addressed the Council. In doing so she raised two amendments to the budget which were tabled at the meeting as Budget Amendment 1, referring to the Housing Revenue Account (see item 15 below) and Budget Amendment 2, as appended to these minutes.

Having been duly seconded by Councillor D J Hamilton and following a debate on the amendment, Budget Amendment 2 was declared lost with 4 voting in favour, 23 against and no abstentions.

Returning to the substantive motion and on it being put to the meeting, the recommendations (a) to (f), as outlined on page 5 of the agenda, were declared carried unanimously.

(Councillors Ms Bainbridge, Bastable, Mrs Bayford, Bird, Birkett, Mrs Bryant, Ms Burton, Mrs Clubley, Daniells, Davis, Dugan, Mrs Ellis, Foot, Gregory, Hamilton, Miss Harper, Mrs Hayre, Mrs Hockley, Ingram, Mrs Mandry, Martin, Ms Needham, Nother, Ms Pankhurst, Mrs Trott, Walker, Mrs Walker and Woodward voting in favour)

RESOLVED that the recommendations of the Executive be accepted and accordingly, the Council approves:

- (a) the capital programme and financing of £58,678,500;
 - (b) an overall revised net revenue budget for 2023/24 of £12,376,100;
 - (c) a net revenue budget for 2024/25 of £13,292,600;
 - (d) a council tax for Fareham Borough Council for 2024/25 of £185.86 per band D property, which represents a £5.40 per year increase when compared to the current year and is within referendum limits;
 - (e) an unchanged Council Tax Support scheme for 2024/25; and
 - (f) that the Council continues to disregard the whole of any incomes prescribed in the Housing Benefit (War Pensions Disregards) Regulations 2007 and the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012.
- (3) Council Tax 2024/25 for Fareham Borough Council, Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner and Hampshire Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority

The Council considered information tabled at the meeting: a schedule showing the formal calculations for setting the Council Tax and a graphical breakdown of Council tax rates, as attached to these minutes.

Having been duly proposed by Councillor S D T Woodward and seconded by Councillor S D Martin, on the recommendations being put to the meeting, they were declared CARRIED unanimously with 28 voting in favour, none voting against and none abstaining.

(Councillors Ms Bainbridge, Bastable, Mrs Bayford, Bird, Birkett, Mrs Bryant, Ms Burton, Mrs Clubley, Daniells, Davis, Dugan, Mrs Ellis, Foot, Gregory, Hamilton, Miss Harper, Mrs Hayre, Mrs Hockley, Ingram, Mrs Mandry, Martin, Ms Needham, Nother, Ms Pankhurst, Mrs Trott, Walker, Mrs Walker and Woodward voting in favour,)

RESOLVED that the Council:

- (1) notes that on 23 February 2024 the Council calculated the Council Tax Base 2024/25 for the whole Council area as 44,188.9 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")]
- (2) calculates that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2024/25 is £8,212,761
- (3) notes that the following amounts be calculated by the Council for the year 2024/25 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:-
 - (a) £55,826,500 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils.
 - (b) £47,613,739 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
 - (c) £8,212,761 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
 - (d) £185.86 being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.
 - (e) £0.00 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
 - (f) £185.86 being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.
- (4) notes that the County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the table below.
- (5) notes that the Fire Authority will meet on 27 February 2024 and after that meeting will issue their precept to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the table below.

Should the figures change from the draft report then the Council agrees to delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer to amend the

Council Tax for 2024/25 in the event that any of the precepting authorities change their precept calculation from that expected and reported to the Council meeting.

- (6) that the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 38 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables below as the amounts of Council Tax for 2024/25 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

Valuation Bands							
Fareham Borough Council							
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
123.91	144.56	165.21	185.86	227.16	268.46	309.77	371.72
Hampshire County Council							
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
874.88	1,020.69	1,166.51	1,312.32	1,603.95	1,895.57	2,187.20	2,624.64
Hampshire County Council – Adult Social Care							
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
147.28	171.83	196.37	220.92	270.01	319.11	368.20	441.84
Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire							
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
174.31	203.36	232.41	261.46	319.56	377.66	435.77	522.92
Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority							
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
55.23	64.43	73.64	82.84	101.25	119.66	138.07	165.68
Aggregate of Council Tax Requirements							
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
1,375.61	1,604.87	1,834.14	2,063.40	2,521.93	2,980.46	3,439.01	4,126.80

- (7) that in accordance with the set of principles set by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for the year, it is determined that the relevant basic amount of council tax for 2024/25 is not excessive.

15. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND CAPITAL PLANS 2024/25

Having been duly proposed by Councillor S D T Woodward and seconded by Councillor S D Martin, the Mayor opened the item for debate.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Ms C Bainbridge addressed the Council. In doing so she raised an amendment to the budget which was tabled at the meeting as Budget Amendment 1 and appended to these minutes.

Having been duly seconded by Councillor D J Hamilton and following a debate on the amendment, Budget Amendment 1 was declared lost with 4 voting in favour and 24 voting against with no abstentions.

(Councillors Ms Bainbridge, Hamilton, Nother and Mrs Trott voting in favour and Councillors Bastable, Mrs Bayford, Bird, Birkett, Mrs Bryant, Ms Burton, Mrs Clubley, Daniells, Davis, Dugan, Mrs Ellis, Foot, Gregory, Miss Harper, Mrs Hayre, Mrs Hockley, Ingram, Mrs Mandry, Martin, Ms Needham, Ms Pankhurst, Walker, Mrs Walker and Woodward voting against).

Returning to the substantive motion and on having been put to the meeting, the recommendations of the Executive, as outlined on page 5 of the agenda were CARRIED unanimously with 28 voting in favour, none voting against and none abstaining.

(Councillors Ms Bainbridge, Bastable, Mrs Bayford, Bird, Birkett, Mrs Bryant, Ms Burton, Mrs Clubley, Daniells, Davis, Dugan, Mrs Ellis, Foot, Gregory, Hamilton, Miss Harper, Mrs Hayre, Mrs Hockley, Ingram, Mrs Mandry, Martin, Ms Needham, Nother, Ms Pankhurst, Mrs Trott, Walker, Mrs Walker and Woodward voting in favour)

RESOLVED that the recommendations of the Executive made at its meeting on 05 February 2024 in respect of the Housing Revenue Account Budget and Capital Plans 2024/25 be accepted and, accordingly, the Council agrees that:

- (a) rents be approved for Council Dwellings as set out in paragraph 27 with effect from 1 April 2024;
- (b) rents for Council garages be increased by 7.7% with effect from 1 April 2024;
- (c) the revised budget for 2023/24 be approved;
- (d) the base budget for 2024/25 be approved; and
- (e) the Fees and Service Charges at Appendix E be approved.

16. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2024/25

Having been duly proposed by Councillor S D T Woodward and seconded by Councillor S D Martin, and on having been put to the meeting, the

recommendations of the Executive made at its meeting on 05 February 2024, contained at item 14(2) of the agenda were accepted.

RESOLVED that the Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy 2024/25 be approved.

17. CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/25

Having been duly proposed by Councillor S D T Woodward and seconded by Councillor S D Martin and on having been put to the meeting, it was agreed that the recommendations of the Executive at its meeting on 08 January 2024 contained at item 9(1) of the agenda be accepted.

RESOLVED that the Capital Programme and Capital Strategy 2024/25 be approved.

18. APPROVAL OF PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2024/25

Councillor M J Ford returned to the Chamber for this item.

Having been duly proposed by Councillor S D T Woodward and seconded by Councillor S D Martin, and on having been put to the meeting, it was agreed that the recommendations of the Executive made at its meeting on 08 January 2024 be accepted.

RESOLVED that the updated Pay Policy Statement 2024/25, as annexed to the Medium-Term Finance Strategy, be approved.

19. COUNCIL TAX LONG TERM EMPTY AND SECOND HOME PREMIUM CHARGES

The Council received a report by the Chief Executive Officer which recommended the adoption of discretionary changes to Council Tax premiums on long term empty properties and second homes.

Having been duly proposed by Councillor S D T Woodward and seconded by Councillor S D Martin and, on having been put to the meeting, the recommendations (a) to (d) as detailed in the report were agreed.

RESOLVED that the Council agrees:

- (a) a new 100% premium on second homes and restricted second homes after 12 months from 01 April 2025;
- (b) an earlier 100% premium for Long Term Empty Properties which have been empty and unfurnished for a period between 1 and 5 years (previously a period between 2 and 5 years);
- (c) the Council's Section 151 Officer be granted delegated power to waive these premiums or alter the policy in exceptional circumstances after

consultation with the Executive portfolio holder with responsibility for Local Tax Collection; and

(d) an update to the Council Tax Discounts, Exemption and Premiums Policy, as detailed at Appendix A to the report.

20. PROPOSED CHANGE OF DATE OF APRIL COUNCIL MEETING

RESOLVED that the date of the April Council meeting be moved from the scheduled date of Thursday 18 April 2024 to Tuesday 09 April 2024 to coincide with the 50th Anniversary of the first Council meeting of Fareham Borough Council.

21. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

There were no changes to appointments to committees.

(The meeting started at 5.00 pm
and ended at 7.36 pm).

..... Chairman

..... Date