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## Council

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 21 February 2024 from 7.00 pm - 10.22 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney, Andy Booth, Lloyd Bowen, Hayden Brawn, Derek Carnell, Lloyd Chapman, Shelley Cheesman, Roger Clark, Simon Clark, Charles Gibson, Tim Gibson, Kieran Golding, Alastair Gould, Angela Harrison, James Hunt, Carole Jackson, Elliott Jayes, Mark Last, Rich Lehmann, Peter Macdonald, Peter Marchington, Claire Martin, Ben J Martin (Deputy Mayor), Charlie Miller, Lee-Anne Moore, Pete Neal, Tara Noe, Tom Nundy, Chris Palmer, Richard Palmer, Hannah Perkin, Ashley Shiel, Julien Speed, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen (Mayor), Terry Thompson, Mark Tucker, Angie Valls, Karen Watson, Mike Whiting, Ashley Wise and Dolley Wooster.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Lisa Fillery, Robin Harris, Jo Millard, Larissa Reed and Claire Stanbury.

**OFFICERS PRESENT (VIRTUALLY):** Martyn Cassell, Charlotte Hudson and Emma Wiggins.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Ann Cavanagh, James Hall, Mike Henderson and Tony Winckless.

666 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Mayor outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

667 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 31 January 2024 (Minute Nos. 544 – 592) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

668 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Elliott Jayes disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as he was a Council representative on Citizens Advice Swale.

Councillor Kieran Golding disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as he was a Council representative on Citizens Advice Swale.

Councillor Hannah Perkin disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as she was a Council representative on Citizens Advice Swale.

Councillor Claire Martin disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as she was a Council representative on Faversham Pools.

Councillor Dolley Wooster disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as she was Chair of Sheerness Town Council.

Other Members disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as they sat on Parish Councils but were advised by the Monitoring Officer that it was not necessary.

During the meeting, Councillor Ben J Martin disclosed a pecuniary interest in Item 9 – Various amendments from the Conservative group. He left the room and took no part in the discussion or voting.

#### 669 **Mayor's Announcements**

As it was only three weeks since the previous Council meeting, the Mayor's visits had been limited. She had attended the Oasis Dementia café for Sunday Lunch hosted by the Salvation Army and launched a female-led Hair and Beauty Academy in Sittingbourne, which was supported by Diversity House.

The Mayor announced that sadly the Forge Wartime House Museum in East Street, Sittingbourne would be closing on 27 April 2024. She referred to the museum as the 'Gem of Swale' and thanked the Museum for their support for the Mayor's charity events and also for their support when Councillor Paul Stephen was Mayor.

The Mayor said her next charity fundraising event would involve various modes of transport - bikes, boats, trains and planes. Another event would also include handbags. More information on the events would be circulated shortly.

#### 670 **Questions submitted by the Public**

The Mayor advised that one question had been received from the public.

##### **Question 1 – Swale Friends of the Earth**

*Re the document 'Guidance for complying with the climate change planning condition to reduce operational carbon of new dwellings in Swale by 50%'.*

*What proportion of houses have been built since 2020 that comply with the guidelines and how many have been checked to comply using BREEAM and Home Quality Measuring?*

##### **Response – Councillor Alistair Gould, Chair of Planning and Transportation Working Group**

*Thank you for your question.*

*Since the document referred to is guidance, and while we encourage house builders to follow it, we do not monitor its use. The current guidance is under review and will look at achieving net zero.*

*All homes have to meet Building Regulations on energy efficiency and carbon emissions and the checking and enforcement of this is a matter for Building Control.*

*We condition sustainability requirements such as EV charging points and water consumption and these have to be discharged before occupancy.*

*We encourage the use of renewable energy such as solar and air source heat pumps where appropriate. We have also this week co-signed a letter to the Secretary of State, led by the Town and Country Planning Association, urging central government to allow local authorities to adopt planning policies which seek higher energy performance*

*standards than those enshrined in Building Regulations. There is also a consultation in progress on changes to the Building regulations and we will be responding to this and be pushing for the highest standards to be introduced in as short a time as possible. The emerging Local Plan will build upon current requirements and work towards net zero.*

### **Supplementary question**

Swale Friends of the Earth advised that the response to their proposed supplementary question had been covered in Councillor Gould's response to the original question.

### **671 Questions submitted by Members**

No questions were submitted by Members.

### **672 Leader's Statement**

*The Leader said:*

*"As this evening's meeting is potentially extensive in nature I intend my leaders statement unlike me to be short and sweet as there are far more important matters on the agenda.*

*I will not dilate here on the key agenda item this evening which of course is the budget, but I would just highlight that to add insult to injury the Country is officially in Rish cession.*

*Plans are continuing to take shape to deliver more health, education, leisure and employment opportunities on Sheppey. East Kent Colleges Group unveiled draft plans for one of three schemes that make up the Sheerness Revival Project at two consultation days last week which due to illness I was unfortunately unable to attend but ward members and other colleagues did.*

*At the event plans for EKC Sheppey College's extension were on display for viewing and to get comments and feedback from the public and local members, before final plans are submitted to the council. The extension, is of course part of the £20 million Sheerness Revival project which we have put together after successfully bidding for Levelling Up Funding. I am indebted to my coalition colleague Cllr Monique Bonney and our officers for their drive, enthusiasm and hard work behind the scenes on this project.*

*Whilst speaking about Sheerness it would be remiss of me not to mention the not insignificant fire at Garrison Road which lasted for an extended period of time and required residents to ensure that windows etc.. remained closed for safety and thankfully there were no injuries. Ward members reported how professional the fire crews on the ground had been in dealing with the incident and I will feed that back to KFRS.*

*The February policy and resources committee meeting saw agreement for the council's draft Corporate Equality Scheme 2024 – 2028 to go out to consultation. The scheme outlines how the council will fulfil its moral, social and legal obligations to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations.*

*The four outlined objectives in the scheme are:*

- *Supporting integration and cohesion in our local communities*
- *Supporting our vulnerable residents*
- *Ensuring easy, clear and convenient access to our services*
- *Promoting equality as a local employer*

*These objectives are designed to underpin the council's overall aims laid out in our new draft Corporate Plan, with the proposed vision being, learning from the past, focusing on the future.*

*The equality scheme sets out how we aim to make Swale a fairer place for everyone, our Borough is becoming an increasingly diverse place, and as a council, we need to tailor our services to meet those changing needs, whilst providing value for money for local residents.*

*There is of course so much more that I could have said, but as I stated at the outset I will keep it short and sweet and accordingly that concludes my Leaders statement."*

In response, the Leader of the Conservative Group acknowledged the work of the MP in helping to secure funding from the Levelling Up bid. He referred to the recent fire in Murston that had closed a road and led to chaotic traffic and welcomed the news of the Council's draft Corporate Equality Scheme 2024 -2028.

The Group Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the news on the Sheerness Revival Scheme and praised the work on the draft Corporate Equality Scheme 2024 – 2028 but asked officers to include information on sexual orientation and gender identity as collected in the most recent census.

Referring to the fire at Garrison Road, Murston, a Member thanked and gave praise to Kent Fire and Rescue Services, highlighting the good communication in keeping the public informed.

The Leader noted all responses.

**673 Nomination of Mayor 2024/25**

This item was withdrawn from the Agenda.

**674 Nomination of Deputy Mayor 2024/25**

This item was withdrawn from the Agenda.

**675 Pay Policy Report**

In proposing the recommendations, the Leader reminded Members that the Pay Policy had been agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee on 7 February 2024. He highlighted the key changes from the Policy published in 2023, as set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report. The Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations.

The Leader of the Conservative Group spoke in support, reminding Members that staff pay was a large part of the Council Budget.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group spoke of the good value of officers. She drew attention to the reference to 'Cabinet' on Appendix 1B which would be amended.

**Resolved:**

***(1) That the proposed Pay Policy Statement be agreed for publication on the Council's website.***

***(2) That the information within the Pay Policy Statement is updated with actual year-end figures before final publication.***

**676 Review of Polling Place - Teynham and Lynsted Ward**

The Leader introduced the report which sought to agree an alternative location for the Teynham and Lynsted polling place. He proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Bowen who reserved his right to speak.

A Member questioned the suitability of the site for those with religious beliefs or alcohol dependency.

Councillor Speed, Ward Member for Teynham and Lynsted, spoke in support of the proposal and said the previous venue had been unsatisfactory. He said the proposed location had its own separate room to be used as a polling station, with its own entry and was very suitable.

A Member commented that if local Members were happy, the proposal should be supported.

Councillor Bowen, Ward Member, said the proposed location was closer to the more densely populated area and was an excellent choice.

**Resolved**

***(1) That the proposed change to the polling place in the Teynham and Lynsted polling place be approved.***

**677 2024/25 Final Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan including Council Tax Resolutions**

The Leader introduced the report which sought Council's approval to the Council Tax requirement, Revenue Budget, the Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2027/28 and the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2024/25 as set out in the report to the Policy and Resources Committee on 7 February 2024, subject to any amendments, and to approve the Council Tax resolutions set out in Appendix I of the report.

The Leader thanked officers in the Finance team for their hard work and support and said there had been extreme challenges in producing a balanced budget. He highlighted that Swale Borough Council (SBC) were in a better position than some other Councils facing being issued with Section 114 Notices and bankruptcy. He said that Council income had remained static over time due to the real time reduction in Government funding and Councils were dependent on Business Rate income which could be varied. He proposed the recommendations which were seconded by the

Deputy Leader, Councillor Baldock who reserved his right to speak.

The Mayor advised that nine amendments had been received, circulated to Members, and published on the Council's website and in accordance with procedure rule 3.1.14.3, included information from the Section 151 Officer on the impact of implementing the amendments.

**Amendment 1 – Use of reserves as a result of loss of KCC waste enabling payments**

Councillor Tim Gibson proposed that:

*“Following the last minute announcement that KCC waste enabling payments of £297k will no longer be provided to Swale, I am proposing reserves are used to offset the loss of the £297k and officers are tasked with identifying savings to the waste collection service that mitigate the loss of support from KCC over the medium term.”*

Councillor Baldock seconded the amendment and reserved his right to speak.

The Mayor read out the response from the Section 151 Officer, as set out on the Agenda.

Members debated the amendment and made points including:

- Disappointed for SBC but the payments from KCC were temporary;
- would support the amendment but SBC should have been better prepared;
- such short notice in withdrawing the payment was unreasonable;
- KCC budget did not support residents;
- how practical was it for officers to find savings so soon into the new waste contract?;
- disappointed that an SBC Councillor who was also a KCC Councillor voted to withdraw the funding;
- highlighted that KCC Members voted against officers' advice to withdraw funding;
- lower tier Government were picking up the cuts from central Government;
- the funding from KCC was always time limited and the contract had come to a natural end;
- KCC had its own financial issues;
- it was not well publicised that the grant had been temporary and notice that it was being withdrawn was too short;
- spoke of the impact on Swale residents that closing facilities in the borough to bridge the funding gap;
- drew attention that SBC officers had already agreed another year of grant funding with KCC officers before KCC Members voted to withdraw it;
- what income came from recycling?; and
- the cut from KCC came too late to prepare.

Councillor Baldock said there had been an agreement with KCC for over ten years and he set out the impact to SBC's budget in having to fill the gap at such short notice.

**In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.1.19(2), a recorded vote was taken, and voting was as follows:**

**For: Councillors Baldock, Bonney, Booth, Bowen, Brawn, Carnell, Chapman, Cheesman, R Clark, S Clark, C Gibson, T Gibson, Golding, Gould, Harrison, Hunt, Jackson, Jayes, Last, Lehmann, MacDonald, Marchington, B J Martin, C Martin, Miller, Neal, Noe, Nundy, C Palmer, R Palmer, Perkin, Shiel, Speed, P Stephen, S Stephen, Thompson, Tucker, Valls, Watson, Wooster, Whiting and Wise. Total equals 42.**

**Against: Total equals 0.**

**Abstain: Moore. Total equals 1.**

The Mayor announced the amendment had been agreed.

The Mayor used her discretion to bring forward amendments 8 and 3 for discussion.

#### Amendment 8 – Funding to Faversham Pools

Councillor Hannah Perkin proposed that:

*“Faversham Pools funding be restored to 22/23 budget levels with £20,000 being funded from the additional Government settlement.”*

Councillor Perkin set out the popularity and many benefits of Faversham Pools to residents including local schools ‘learn to swim’ and the positive impact on health. She drew attention to the use of the facility by those with disabilities and the benefits it brought.

In seconding the amendment, Councillor Ben J Martin reserved his right to speak.

The Mayor read out the response from the Section 151 Officer, as set out on the Agenda.

A Member spoke in support of the amendment and the positive impact on the health of residents.

Councillor Ben J Martin gave a history of the setting up of Faversham Pools and spoke of its popularity as a visitor attraction. He said as a charity it did not receive the same funding that public pools did and it was important to support the amendment to protect swimming facilities in the east of the Borough.

**In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.1.19(2), a recorded vote was taken, and voting was as follows:**

**For: Councillors C Gibson, Gould, B J Martin, Perkin and Thompson. Total equals 5.**

**Against: Councillors Baldock, Bonney, Booth, Bowen, Brawn, Carnell, Chapman, Cheesman, R Clark, S Clark, T Gibson, Harrison, Hunt, Last, Miller, C Palmer, R Palmer, Shiel, P Stephen, S Stephen, Tucker, Valls, Watson, Wooster, Whiting and Wise. Total equals 26.**

**Abstain: Councillors Goulding, Jackson, Jayes, Lehmann, MacDonald,**

**Marchington, Moore, Neal, Noe, Nundy and Speed. Total equals 11.**

As Councillor Claire Martin sat on Faversham Pools as a trustee, she did not take part in the discussion or the vote.

The Mayor announced the amendment had fallen.

Amendment 3 – Grant to Citizen Advice Service (CAS)

Due to the re-order of discussion, Councillor Charles Gibson proposed an amendment to his original amendment so that the amended amendment proposed was:

*“Citizens Advice Swale to be awarded full funding in line with 23/24 budget, funds to be taken from additional Government settlement and the remaining grant funding of £113k moving to reduce the budget gap.”*

The seconder of the amendment, Councillor Claire Martin, accepted the amendment to the amendment.

Councillor Charles Gibson spoke about how vital the Swale Citizens Advice was for residents across the whole borough and said that the service needed to be protected. He drew attention that the funding to support the amendment would come from the unexpected Government funding and said that most users of the service were the least able to rely on other resources if the service was withdrawn.

In seconding the amendment, Councillor Claire Martin reserved her right to speak.

The Mayor read out the response from the Section 151 Officer, as set out on the Agenda.

Other Members made comments including:

- Highlighted the important service;
- Citizens Advice needed to look at alternative funding;
- gave suggestions of how funding could be sought and encouraged the CAS’s representatives to assist;
- grants had been cut to SBC resulting in cuts in providing grants to other services;
- amendment was very worthy;
- service gave important housing advice;
- highlighted that previous cuts in grant to the service were withdrawn when additional money became available, but the service needed to find alternative means of funding;
- all Members should offer their skills and help to the service; and
- should advise that full amount of funding would be awarded this year but there would be no future funding.

The proposer of the amendment encouraged all Members to support the full grant.

The Leader, Councillor Tim Gibson, said that as a former trustee he had advised the service to seek additional funding. He suggested that Members could offer their skills to help secure funding as in future there might be none.



**In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.1.19(2), a recorded vote was taken, and voting was as follows:**

**For: Councillors Baldock, Bonney, Brawn, Carnell, Chapman, Cheesman, S Clark, C Gibson, T Gibson, Gould, Harrison, Jackson, Last, Lehmann, MacDonald, Marchington, B J Martin, C Martin, Miller, Moore, Neal, Noe, Nundy, C Palmer, R Palmer, Shiel, P Stephen, S Stephen, Thompson, Valls, Watson, D Wooster and Wise. Total equals 33.**

**Against: Councillors Booth, R Clark, Hunt, Speed and Tucker. Total equals 5.**

**Abstain: Councillors Bowen and Whiting. Total equals 2.**

As Trustees of the CAS, Councillors Golding, Jayes and Perkin did not take part in the vote.

The Mayor announced the amendment had been agreed.

In response to a Member question, the Section 151 Officer advised that as the remaining £113k of funding was committed to reducing the budget gap, any further amendments would require funding from reserves.

#### Amendment 2 – Grant to Swale CAS

The proposer of the amendment, Councillor Carole Jackson, with the agreement of the seconder of the amendment, Councillor Tom Nundy, withdrew the amendment.

#### Amendments, 4, 5 and 6 – Use of Member grants to fund alternative services

The proposer of the amendments, Councillor Charles Gibson, with the agreement of the seconder of the amendment, Councillor Ben J Martin, withdrew amendments 4, 5 and 6.

#### Amendment 7 – Member grants to be split to support the work of Area Committees

Councillor Hannah Perkin proposed that:

*“Members’ grants to be reduced to £0 and the resultant £47,000 to be split between the Area Committees to support the work programme of the Committees.”*

Councillor Perkin admitted that the amendment might not gain support but said it was important that residents’ concerns were discussed and acted on.

Councillor Claire Martin seconded the amendment and reserved her right to speak.

The Mayor read out the response from the Section 151 Officer, as set out on the Agenda.

In the discussion that followed, Members made comments including:

- Welcomed the need to do more but different groups controlled different committees;
- it was important to keep Members’ grants but needed to consider how Area Committees could continue to be successful;

- groups and charities already approached Area Committees and not all could be supported; and
- some Members had agreed their allocation of funding to charitable groups.

**In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.1.19(2), a recorded vote was taken, and voting was as follows:**

**For: Councillors C Gibson, B J Martin, C Martin and Perkin. Total equals 4.**

**Against: Councillors Baldock, Bonney, Booth, Bowen, Brawn, Carnell, Chapman, Cheesman, R Clark, S Clark, T Gibson, Golding, Gould, Harrison, Hunt, Jackson, Jayes, Last, Lehmann, MacDonald, Marchington, Miller, Moore, Neal, Noe, Nundy, C Palmer, R Palmer, Shiel, Speed, P Stephen, S Stephen, Thompson, Tucker, Valls, Watson, Wooster, Whiting and Wise. Total equals 39.**

**Abstain: None. Total equals 0.**

The Mayor announced that the amendment had fallen.

#### Amendment 9 – Various

In proposing the amendment, Councillor Lloyd Bowen, put forward amendments to the amendment so that the proposed amendment now stated:

*“We wish to propose the following amendments to the 2024/25 budget and fees and charges.*

#### *Income:*

- *Introduce planning fee costs for large majors (50+ houses or flats) of £150 per house/flat. Expected income £7500.*
- *Introduce a minimum fee for major (10-49 houses and flats) of £2871.25 +VAT or £150 = VAT per dwelling for applications of 20 or more dwellings. Estimated income £7500.*
- *Introduce an overnight camper van parking fee of £25 per night. Estimated income in excess of £25k.*
- *Scrap publication of Inside Swale saving £21k per annum.*

#### *Expenditure:*

- *Reduce the cost of the proposed night time parking from £3 to £2 (estimate £133k)*
- *Retain the free car parks we currently have (£38k)*
- *Freeze pitch fees for under 16 and mini football (rounded up to £1k)*
- *Scrap the proposed charges of £3.50 per box of clinical waste (sharps) and 2 collections (est £16k)*
- *Maintain CAS grant funding at current level as per amendment 2 already agreed (£66k)*

*Use the additional grant money of £179k to offset and use £14k from reserves to balance.”*

Councillor Bowen said the amendment helped assist the night time economy and helped put money in residents' pockets. He said the costs were put on developers and visitors rather than residents. Councillor Bowen confirmed that in proposing the amendment, the decision to use £113k to fill the shortfall of the deficit as agreed earlier in the meeting, would be reversed, but £66k to fund the CAS would be included.

The seconder of the original amendment, Councillor Mike Whiting, accepted the amended amendments and reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Ben Martin declared a pecuniary interest and left the room during the debate and did not take part in the vote.

The Section 151 officer addressed the amended amendment by advising that:

Income:

- the income for large, major pre-applications of £150 per dwelling and for overnight camping were assumed figures; and
- the savings for scraping Inside Swale were the current year's net budget position.

The above proposals, if deliverable, would generate additional income of £61k.

Expenditure:

- The expenditure for reducing the cost of parking would now be £133k;
- retaining free car parks would cost £38k;
- freezing pitch fees would cost £563 (rounded up to £1k);
- scrapping the proposed charges of £3.50 per box of clinical waste; (sharps) after 2 collections would cost approximately £15k to £20k; and
- maintain CAS grant funding at current level as per amendment 2 already agreed (£66k)

She advised that the net position had left a budget gap of £14k which was proposed to be taken from reserves.

Members were invited to debate the amendment and made comments including:

- Was critical that prior to 2019, the previous administration were short sighted and had not increased Council Tax and in some instances had reduced it;
- supported the charge for overnight parking of camper vans;
- the retaining of free car parks would be better discussed at the relevant Committee;
- scrapping the publication of Inside Swale excluded residents who were in internet poverty;
- there was a financial and social cost in excluding some parts of the population by scrapping Inside Swale;
- the estimate for motorhome income fees was unrealistic and was unlikely to be achieved;
- spoke of the strong feeling of residents who had attended the previous evening's Sheppey Area Committee who could not afford the proposed parking fees on the Isle of Sheppey, and the impact it would have;

- a former opposition group attempted to scrap Inside Swale previously, before more residents than currently, had access to internet;
- car park fees led to a decrease in foot fall and there would be an impact on the night time economy;
- reducing parking charges was a compromise; and
- no other group other than the Conservative group had proposed amendments that increased income.

Councillor Mike Whiting, the seconder of the amendment, said that businesses and the voluntary economy would be impacted by the increase in car park fees. He said it was immoral to charge for sharps boxes collections for those that had health issues. Councillor Whiting referred to charging developers more so residents were not impacted.

In response to the amendments, the Leader, Councillor Tim Gibson said that all amendments were estimated, not fiscally sound and too vague and he could not support. He said that Inside Swale had been refreshed and was now more current and relevant than it had previously been and was vital for many residents.

In response to a Member's question, the Section 151 Officer and the Chief Executive explained how the Parking Policy, which included the structure of the parking fees, would be discussed at the Community Committee on 6 March 2024 and if the introduction of some charges for car parks was not supported it would lead to a budget gap

**In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.1.19(2), a recorded vote was taken, and voting was as follows:**

**For: Councillors Booth, Bowen, R Clark, Hunt, Marchington, Moore, Neal, Noe, Speed, Tucker and Whiting. Total equals 11.**

**Against: Councillors Baldock, Bonney, Brawn, Carnell, Chapman, Cheesman, S Clark, T Gibson, Golding, Gould, Harrison, Jackson, Last, Lehmann, Miller, C Palmer, R Palmer, Shiel, P Stephen, S Stephen, Thompson, Valls, Watson, Wooster and Wise. Total equals 25.**

**Abstain: Councillors C Gibson, Jayes, MacDonald, C Martin and Nundy, Perkin. Total equals 6.**

The Mayor announced the amendment had fallen.

After discussing all the amendments, Members debated the substantive motion.

Councillor Bowen acknowledged that the budget was the coalition's budget that was set in economically challenging times. He referred to the cost of living crisis and said that higher costs would translate to residents. Councillor Bowen highlighted that all increases proposed by the administration were above the rate of inflation. He urged the administration to seek alternative funding streams and said that of all the amendments, only the Conservative group had submitted an amendment that could increase additional income to the authority and that the reserves currently being relied upon were built up by the previous Conservative administration.

Councillor Perkin said her group would support the administration's good decisions and

challenge where there could be improvements. She said her group were sad that Faversham Pools had not received the funding that was necessary but there were other aspects of the administration's budget that were commendable. Councillor Perkin said SBC should declare a financial emergency supported by the Local Government Association and the Local Government Information Unit, as other authorities had. She highlighted the decisions made by Central Government that had impacted local authorities.

Other Members made comments including:

- The budget was tight and the Council had provided services as best it could from the limited funding from Central Government;
- SBC had received more grant money than many other authorities in Kent in recent years;
- referred to three petitions that had been handed in prior to the meeting addressing the car parking fees, that would be discussed at the relevant committee in due course;
- the decisions made would impact all;
- KCC needed to be more fair;
- local authorities significantly helped residents during the Covid-19 pandemic and the long term finance of local government needed to be looked at;
- the grant money received was mostly Covid-19 pandemic money to help businesses during and after the 9 pandemic;
- the aftermath of assisting to recover from Covid-19 pandemic was still impacting; and
- the budget faced was a direct result of Government Policy.

A Member queried whether the figures on parking fees were correct on pages 3 and 4 of the report and asked whether SBC were subsidising funding under the new bin contract, and whether this was included in the figures on page 11. The Section 151 officer explained the difference in car park fees and agreed to set this out more clearly and she agreed to find out and update the information on funding as part of the new bin contract.

In seconding the recommendation, the Deputy Leader, Councillor Baldock said that SBC still had the second lowest Council Tax in Kent. He said that where savings were found, they were swallowed up by KCC withdrawing the waste grant funding and he paid tribute to officers in putting together a budget with minimal impact to residents.

The Leader, Councillor Tim Gibson, acknowledged the robust debate during challenging times. He referred to the withdrawal of the KCC waste grant funding, the cost of living crisis and said that the UK was now officially in recession. Councillor Gibson praised Members and Officers for their work on the budget in ensuring that SBC had not been issued with a Section 114 Notice as some other Councils had. He spoke about the efforts being made to seek more funding support from Central Government, including for temporary accommodation and homelessness, so far without success.

**In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.1.19(2), a recorded vote was taken, and voting was as follows:**

**For: Councillors Baldock, Bonney, Brawn, Carnell, Chapman, Cheesman, S Clark, T Gibson, Golding, Gould, Harrison, Jackson, Jayes, Last, Lehmann, MacDonald,**

Miller, Nundy, C Palmer, R Palmer, Shiel, P Stephen, S Stephen, Thompson, Valls, Watson, Wooster and Wise. Total equals 28.

Against: Councillors Booth, Bowen, R Clark, Hunt, Marchington, Moore, Neal, Noe, Speed, Tucker and Whiting. Total equals 11.

Abstain: Councillors C Gibson, B J Martin, C Martin and Perkin. Total equals 4.

**Resolved:**

***(1) That members note the Director of Resources opinion on the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of reserves.***

***(2) That minute number 604 of the Policy and Resources committee on 7 February 2024 on the report on the Medium Term Financial Plan and the 2024/25 revenue and capital budgets be approved.***

***(3) That the resolutions contained in Appendix I be approved.***

***(4) That in accordance with the proposals contained within SI 2014 No. 165 that a recorded vote be taken on the 2024/25 Budget and Council Tax and the Budget be approved including the agreed amendments.***

#### 678 Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25

The Leader introduced the report which set out and sought approval of the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 and the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators. He proposed the recommendation which was seconded by the Deputy Leader who reserved his right to speak.

The Leader of the Conservative Group spoke in support but stressed that the Policy and Resources Committee should keep the subject under review and be cautious when considering future loans.

**Resolved:**

***(1) That the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 and the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators be approved.***

#### 679 Recommendations for Approval

**Resolved:**

***(1) That Minute No. 445 from the Policy and Resources Committee held on 29 November 2023 as amended at the Policy and Resources Committee held on 7 February 2024 be agreed.***

#### 680 Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned from 8.39 pm until 8.59pm.

**681 Standing Orders**

Members agreed to extend Standing Orders at 10pm in order that Council could complete its business.

Mayor

Copies of this document are available on the Council website <http://www.swale.gov.uk/dso/>. If you would like hard copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact Swale Borough Council at Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT or telephone the Customer Service Centre 01795 417850.

All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel