

Minutes of the **Cabinet**
of the **Test Valley Borough Council**
held in The Annexe, Crosfield Hall, Broadwater Road, Romsey
on Wednesday 20 December 2023 at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

Councillor P North (Chairman)

Councillor P Bundy

Councillor D Drew

Councillor M Flood

Councillor N Adams-King (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor A Johnston

Councillor N Lodge

Councillor T Swain

Also in attendance

Councillor N Gwynne

369

Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

370

Public Participation

There was no public participation.

371

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

372

Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

373

Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 15 November 2023 were proposed by Councillor P North and seconded by Councillor Adams-King.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record

374 **Recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

There were no recommendations to consider from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

375 **Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25**

Consideration was given to a report of the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder which set out the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme for the forthcoming 2024/25 financial year.

The cost-of-living crisis has affected households throughout the borough. CTS is one way that the Council can offer support in the form of a discount from the full impact of Council Tax.

Due to the volatility in the wider economy at this time, it is recommended that a continuation of the current CTS scheme, updated to take account of latest regulations, be approved.

Having considered the options and for the reasons set out in the report, the recommendations were proposed by Councillor Flood, seconded by Councillor P North and Cabinet agreed to the following:

Recommended to Council:

- 1. That the Council Tax Support scheme for 2024/25, as shown in the Annex to the report, be approved.**
- 2. That the Head of Finance and Revenues, in consultation with the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, be authorised to make any necessary changes to the Scheme that are required by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) Regulations 2024 when they are confirmed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.**
- 3. In the event that any new government initiatives are introduced that result in receipt of a grant or an increase in Universal Credit or other government benefits, that the Head of Finance and Revenues, in consultation with the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, be authorised to disregard these awards as income in accordance with government guidelines.**

376 Authority to spend for New Theatre/Cultural Hub Architectural Services

Consideration was given to the report of the Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships (North) Portfolio Holder and the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder which sought approval of the funding which would enable the Council to commit up to £3.74M of expenditure on architectural and technical services relating to the delivery of a new theatre and cultural hub in Andover Town Centre.

In November 2023 the Council was notified that it had been successful in being awarded funding of £18.3M from the Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF), the majority of which would be used to deliver the new theatre and cultural hub. It was expected that the full costs of the works would be rechargeable to the LUF funding.

Having considered the options and for the reasons set out in the report, the recommendations were proposed by Councillor Flood, seconded by Councillor P North and Cabinet agreed to the following:

Recommended to Council:

- 1. That £3.74M be added to the Capital Programme to deliver the project outlined in the report, to be funded from the Capital Receipts Reserve.**
- 2. That the transfer of £1M to the Capital Receipts Reserve for the reasons set out in paragraphs 7.4 and 7.5 of the report, be approved.**

377 Fees and Charges

Consideration was given to a report of the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder which presented the proposed Fees and Charges for 2024/25.

As far as was possible, increases in charges within the control of the Council had been minimised. Details of increases were set out in the report.

Having considered the options and for the reasons set out in the report, the recommendations were proposed by Councillor Flood, seconded by Councillor P North and Cabinet agreed to the following:

Resolved:

- 1. That the fees and charges for 2024/25, as set out in the annexes to the report, be approved.**
- 2. That Heads of Service be authorised to increase relevant fees and charges in line with statutory levels should they change following this report.**

Great Crested Newt Licensing

Consideration was given to the report of the Planning Portfolio Holder which considered the introduction of an additional route for Great Crested Newt (GCN) licensing in relation to new development proposals across the borough.

At present, where a proposed development was likely to impact GCN, developers required a licence that could only obtain from Natural England. The District Licensing System would offer a simpler and potentially more cost-effective option for developers to satisfy their obligations in Test Valley.

Having considered the options and for the reasons set out in the report, the recommendations were proposed by Councillor Bundy, seconded by Councillor P North and Cabinet agreed to the following:

Resolved:

- 1. That the Council becomes part of the District Licensing System for Great Crested Newts subject to the Head of Planning and Building being satisfied with the detailed terms and conditions of implementation and thereafter operation of the system.**
- 2. That NatureSpace be authorised to apply to Natural England on the Council's behalf for a license under the District Licensing System.**

(The meeting terminated at 6.02 pm)