

Minutes

Name of meeting	CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date and Time	MONDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2024 COMMENCING AT 5.00 PM
Venue	COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs J Robertson (Chairman), P Spink (Vice-Chairman), R Downer, K Love, C Quirk and S Redrup
Co-opted	Simon Cooke (IWALC)
Also Present	Cllrs P Jordan, I Stephens, D Andre, J Bacon, P Fuller, J Jones- Evans and K Lucioni Laura Gaudion, Wendy Perera, Megan Tuckwell, Melanie White and Ashley Whittaker
Also Present (Virtual)	Cllr L Peacey-Wilcox Sharon Betts, Francis Fernandes, Kerry Hubbleday, Colin Rowland, Claire Shand and Chris Ward
Apologies	Cllrs W Drew and C Mosdell

79 Apologies and Changes in Membership (If Any)

Apologies had been received from Cllr Warren Drew and Cllr Clare Mosdell.

80 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received at this stage. It was advised that general dispensation was applied which enabled councillors to discuss matters of the budget.

81 Public Question Time - 15 Minutes Maximum

No public questions were received.

82 Pre-Decision Scrutiny - Budget and Council Tax Setting 2024-2025 and Future Years' Forecasts

The committee considered the draft budget proposals for 2024-25, prior to its presentation to the Cabinet (on 15 February 2024) and the Full Council (on 28 February 2024).

Concerns were raised regarding the fact that the council would enter into the 2024-25 financial year with a structural deficit (and would need to draw on general reserves of £1.2m) despite additional government funding, an increase in council tax, and savings proposals amounting to £2.75m.

Comments were made with regards to the Island's population and demographic cost pressures, cross-party working, the scrutiny of alternative budget proposals, and the projected income generation for the 2025-26 budget as a result of a proposed increase in council tax premiums on second homes.

Questions were raised regarding the key additional investments proposed in the capital programme, which included £0.8m for vehicle fleet replacement to electric vehicles. It was advised that this was part of the council's rolling programme of vehicle replacements.

The committee sought additional detail on the £0.5m provision for structure and drainage works associated with Osborne Steps. It was confirmed that this was a one-off capital expenditure for the sole remaining route from the upper cliffs of Shanklin to the sea front.

Questions were raised regarding the £86,000 allocated for a refurbishment of a building to provide Coroners Court facilities. It was clarified that this was a one-off capital investment relating to the upper floor of the Seaclose building, which was being remodelled to create a flexible space which could be used by the coroners court and would avoid future expenditures associated with renting alternative facilities.

Concerns were raised regarding the impact on service delivery as a result of the proposed deletion of the contingency for feasibility studies and match funding opportunities of £431,000. It was advised that alternative one-off funds were available and therefore this was an area where a saving could be made in order to reach an overall balanced budget.

Discussion took place regarding the budget predictions and assumptions, particularly the long-term future forecast of funding in light of the recent announcement that the council would receive an additional £3m in funding for 2024/25, on top of an additional £1m ring-fenced for Adult Social Care.

Questions were raised in relation to the budget allocated to address homelessness and to deliver housing affordable to Island residents. The Leader confirmed that the proposals were intended to aid the delivery of affordable homes to rent, to buy and for sale.

Questions were raised regarding the minimum level of reserves required by the council and the committee received detail outlining the contingencies in place should it be likely that the general reserves would fall below £8.0m (where a Section 114 notice was likely to be served).

RESOLVED:

THAT the report to Cabinet be noted.

83 Members' Question Time

Cllr Michael Lilley submitted a written question in relation to the Adult Social Care budget (MQ 08-24). A written response was provided.

The chairman confirmed that he had been given notice of the Regulation 10 general exception notice regarding the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme Grant Recommendations – Easter 2024.

CHAIRMAN