

**MINUTES  
OF A  
SPECIAL VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL  
HELD ON 17 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 6.00 PM**

Present: Councillors Mrs Worne (Chairman), Brooks (Vice-Chairman), Batley, Bennett, Bicknell, Blanchard-Cooper, Bower, Buckland, Mrs Caffyn, Mrs Catterson, Charles, Clayden, Mrs Cooper, Cooper, Coster, Mrs Daniells, Dendle, Dixon, Edwards, Elkins, English, Goodheart, Mrs Gregory, Gunner, Mrs Hamilton, Mrs Haywood, Hughes, Huntley, Jones, Kelly, Lury, Mrs Madeley, Miss Needs, Oliver-Redgate, Oppler, Mrs Pendleton, Purchase, Miss Rhodes, Roberts, Miss Seex, Mrs Stainton, Mrs Staniforth, Stanley, Tilbrook, Ms Thurston, Dr Walsh, Mrs Warr and Mrs Yeates.

Honorary Aldermen Mr Dingemans and Mrs Stinchcombe were also in attendance at meeting.

[Note: The following Councillors were absent from the meeting during consideration of the matters referred to in the minutes outlined – Councillors Mrs Gregory, Hughes, Mrs Madeley and Mrs Stainton – Minute 478 [Part]].

469. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Councillors, representatives of the public, press and Officers to this Special Meeting of the Council. She extended a special welcome to Honorary Aldermen Mrs Stinchcombe and Mr Dingemans.

470. TRIBUTE IN MEMORY OF FORMER MEMBER OF STAFF - MARK EVERSON

The Chairman announced the sad news that former Tree Officer, Mark Everson, had recently passed away and that she wished to take a minute to remember him as he had been a true and original member of the 'Arun family' having started with Arun in 1974 up until his retirement in 2010.

It was outlined that Mark had an encyclopaedic knowledge of plants and trees which was regularly tapped into by his colleagues – he also knew many of the more interesting trees in the District personally. Mark would not only be remembered by many colleagues and Members, but also by many residents of Arun.

The Chairman asked Members and those present to join her in sending Mark's family and friends the Council's condolences and she asked if they could join her in taking part in a minute's silence.

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471. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Chapman Northeast, Smith and from Honorary Aldermen Mrs Goad and Mrs Morrish.

472. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

The Declaration of Interest Sheet set out below confirms those Members who had made a declaration of their personal interest as a Member of a Town or Parish Councillor or a West Sussex County Councillor, as confirmed in their Register of Interest as these declarations could apply to any of the issues to be discussed at the meeting.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Town or Parish Council or West Sussex County Council [WSSC]</b>
Councillor Tracy Baker	Littlehampton
Councillor Kenton Batley	Bognor Regis
Councillor Jamie Bennett	Rustington
Councillor Paul Bicknell	Angmering
Councillor Billy Blanchard-Cooper	Littlehampton
Councillor Jim Brooks	Bognor Regis
Councillor Ian Buckland	Littlehampton and WSSC
Councillor Mike Clayden	Rustington
Councillor Andy Cooper	Rustington
Councillor Alison Cooper	Rustington
Councillor Sandra Daniells	Bognor Regis
Councillor David Edwards	WSSC
Councillor Roger Elkins	Ferring and WSSC
Councillor Paul English	Felpham
Councillor Inna Erskine	Bognor Regis
Councillor Steve Goodheart	Bognor Regis
Councillor Pauline Gregory	Rustington
Councillor June Hamilton	Pagham
Councillor Shirley Haywood	Middleton-on-Sea
Councillor David Huntley	Pagham
Councillor Henry Jones	Bognor Regis
Councillor Martin Lury	Bersted
Councillor Claire Needs	Bognor Regis
Councillor Mike Northeast	Littlehampton
Councillor Francis Oppler	WSSC
Councillor Jacky Pendleton	Middleton-on-Sea and WSSC
Councillor Vicky Rhodes	Littlehampton
Councillor Emily Seex	Littlehampton

Councillor Martin Smith	Aldwick
Councillor Samantha Staniforth	Bognor Regis
Councillor Matt Stanley	Bognor Regis
Councillor Isabel Thurston	Barnham & Eastergate
Councillor James Walsh	Littlehampton and WSCC
Councillor Jeanette Warr	Bognor Regis
Councillor Amanda Worne	Yapton
Councillor Gillian Yeates	Bersted

473. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chairman invited questions from members of the public who had submitted their questions in advance of the meeting in accordance with the rules of the Council's Constitution.

The Chairman confirmed that five questions had been submitted – these have been very briefly outlined below:

- (1) From Mr Cosgrove to the Leader of the Council regarding the closure by West Sussex County Council of family centres and youth provision in the District;
- (2) From Mr Cosgrove to the Leader of the Council regarding Bognor Regis regeneration;
- (3) From Mr Cosgrove to the Leader of the Council regarding Coast to Capital funding for the Place St Maur project;
- (4) From Mr Cosgrove to the Leader of the Council regarding the Bognor Regis Town Hall; and
- (5) From Mr Cosgrove to the Leader of the Council regarding the Bognor Regis Masterplan

*(A schedule of the full questions asked ; the responses provided and the detail of supplementary questions and responses can be found on the Public Question Time Web page at <https://www.arun.gov.uk/public-question-time>).*

The Chairman then drew Public Question Time to a close.

474. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS WITH PECUNIARY/PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

There were no questions from Members with prejudicial/pecuniary interests.

475. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Council Meetings held on 13 and 25 January 2021 were approved by the Council as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman when normal office functions started again.

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476. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman asked the Council to join with her in sending the Council's thoughts and prayers to the Royal Family in reaction to the news announced earlier in the day that the Duke of Edinburgh had been admitted to hospital as a precaution.

The Chairman then provided a brief outline of a virtual event that she would be holding on 23 March 2021 which would reflect upon the last year and how the Covid-19 pandemic had so overwhelmingly affected the District. Further details would follow soon.

477. URGENT MATTERS

There were no items for this meeting.

478. COUNCIL BUDGET 2021/22

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dr Walsh, presented his Budget Statement, **a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of the Minutes.**

An extract from the Minutes from the meeting of Cabinet [Minute 465] held on 8 February 2021; an amendment to those recommendations, and Appendix 4 setting out the statutory resolutions that the Council was also required to consider, had been uploaded to the Council's website prior to the meeting and had been emailed to all Councillors.

In proposing the recommendations at Minute 465 from the Cabinet meeting held on 8 February 2021, Councillor Dr Walsh confirmed that he needed to propose an amendment to include the additional statutory recommendations listed in the Group Head of Corporate Support's report as set out on pages 31 and 32 of the agenda.

The amendment added further recommendations (8), (9) and (10) which had also been circulated as part of the second bundle of papers. The additional wording has been set out below in bold:

The Council is recommended to RESOLVE - that

- (1) The General Fund Revenue Budget as set out in Appendix 1 is approved;
- (2) Arun's Band D Council Tax for 2021/22 is set at £191.52, an increase of 2.65%;
- (3) Arun's Council Tax Requirement for 2021/22, based on a Band D Council Tax of £191.52, is set at £11,994,514 plus parish precepts

as demanded, to be transferred to the General Fund in accordance with statutory requirements;

- (4) The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget as set out in Appendix 2 is approved;
- (5) The HRA rents for 2021/22 are increased by 1.5% (CPI plus 1%) in accordance with the provisions of the rent standard;
- (6) HRA garage rents are increased by 5% to give a standard charge of £12.93 per week (excluding VAT), and heating and water/sewerage charges increased on a scheme by scheme basis, with a view to balancing costs with income;
- (7) The Capital Budget as set out in Appendix 3 is approved;
- (8) The statutory resolutions required by the Council in agreeing its budget for 2021/22, as set out in Appendix 4 circulated at the meeting, be approved;**
- (9) It be noted that the Group Head of Corporate Support, in consultation with the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Corporate Support, has approved i) a Council Tax base of 62,6284 for 2021/22 and ii) the submission of the Council's NNDR1 return (the estimate of the Council's Business Rate income for 2021/22) to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; and**
- (10) For 2021/22, any expenses incurred by the Authority in performing in part of its area a function performed elsewhere in its area by a Parish/Town Council or the Chairman of a Parish Meeting shall not be treated as special expenses for the purposes of Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.**

The Leader opened his budget statement confirming that this was the second budget to be delivered by the Liberal Democrat administration and that moving back to last year's meeting, it would have been impossible to believe what was lying ahead in terms of the Pandemic and the unprecedented pressures that this would bring. Hopefully, now, we would be on the threshold of better times.

Councillor Dr Walsh outlined that this Budget had been prepared with an even greater degree of uncertainty than usual. It had been achieved using a fine balance between prudence and ambition. It had been necessary to be extremely agile to respond to the needs of residents, bearing in mind the severe financial climate that the Council was having to operate in which had been exasperated by the Pandemic.

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The Budget formed part of the Council's medium-term financial plan to give economic security to its residents and to show that despite facing continuing significant funding challenges and declining support from Central Government, the Council could deliver effective efficient services.

It was pleasing to report that this was an extremely positive budget with much to celebrate despite having to operate within a severely constrained financial envelope. Although there was still great uncertainty about local government funding for the future, everything in this budget would be provided at a cost of £191 per annum for a Band D property and Arun's share of the total bill was less than 10%. This charge seemed comparatively modest given the breadth of the services that the Council provided. The Council proposed to increase its share of the Council Tax by £4.95 or 2.65% (less than 10p per week). It was reiterated that Arun's share constituted a small percentage of the overall Council Tax bill with the majority of this local tax going to the County Council.

Councillor Dr Walsh stated that he was proud and delighted to announce that, despite all the financial pressures being faced, the Council had been able to achieve a balanced budget. In addition to this, a sum of approximately £0.5M had been added to the contingencies budget as a buffer against the adverse financial effects of the pandemic. This has been achieved by reserving a significant proportion of the COVID funding allocated by Government for 2021/22. This meant that as well as balancing the budget, significant funds had been allocated to address future funding pressures demonstrating this administration's strong commitment to sound financial planning whilst not having to "raid on reserves". In addition to this there was an ambitious capital programme, which would benefit the residents of the District and make a visible difference.

Councillor Dr Walsh provided some background to the ongoing changes in Central Government funding and covered a range of points:

- It was anticipated that the New Homes Bonus, a major funding source to the Council, would reduce to zero.
- The major funding source from central government going forward would be the retention of business rates and any increase would be dependent upon growth in the rates base across the District. Arun had experienced significant growth since the inception of this scheme in April 2013 (especially in supermarkets) and this has proved to be of significant benefit to the Council and had partially offset the reduction in other funding sources. There was the real threat that the Council would lose all or some of this growth if the Government reset the business rates base.
- Given these severe risks, it was vitally important for the Council to mitigate against them so that it could continue to prudently plan. For this increased uncertainty, the only prudent way to achieve this was to maintain a reasonable level of balances. This was why the Cabinet had taken the decision to transfer approximately £850k to the Funding Resilience Reserve which now totaled approximately £5.8M and would

mean that the Council would have time to properly and systematically plan for the inevitable reductions in the Council's net budget within a realistic timeframe.

- It was therefore important to hold a reasonable level in the Council's General Fund Reserve. It was anticipated that this would amount to approximately £6.7M at March 2022.

Despite all these factors, Councillor Dr Walsh was pleased to be able to confirm that the Council had made significant progress on implementing the digital agenda. Full Council had adopted the Digital Strategy in January 2020 delivering a joined-up customer experience, meeting expectations and transforming the way that the Council worked. These and other highlights were:

- The Council had successfully achieved a sudden unanticipated move to homeworking and had made excellent progress on pressing ahead with the digital agenda;
- The website was being redesigned to improve the overall customer experience and provide information much faster.
- Climate change; carbon reduction and biodiversity measures at around £100k would be overseen by the new Climate Change Officer recruited this month.
- Small grants would be made available to Day Centres in Bognor Regis and Littlehampton to assist in post-Covid recovery.

Moving onto the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), this reflected the Business Plan that was presented to Cabinet in January 2020. The primary objectives were to increase the housing stock, ensure that housing assets were fit for purpose and to maximise income to make the best use of available resources. The Council was on course to deliver its 90<sup>th</sup> new Council house this year.

The final part of the budget concerned the capital programme where Councillor Dr Walsh was able to state that despite the severe financial pressures that was facing, there was a sound capital programme in place.

In conclusion, the Leader commended what he stated was a forward looking and prudent budget, produced in the face of the most testing times imaginable. The Council had managed to achieve a balanced budget despite the factors outlined. This budget was regarded as sensible and ambitious in any climate but under the current circumstances it was an exceptional achievement. Councillor Dr Walsh formally proposed the budget, as amended, to the Council, and he urged Councillors to support it.

Councillor Oppler then seconded the recommendations as amended.

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The Chairman then invited Councillor Dixon to respond to the Budget as the Leader of the Independent Group. Councillor Dixon confirmed that it had been an incredibly difficult year for all Councils. The Coronavirus pandemic had been a huge diversion from normal Council business and had impacted significantly on traditional income streams. At the same time, the Council had received strong support from the Government with legislation, guidance and emergency grant funding for the Council and local businesses. Councillor Dixon then stated that he wished to pay tribute to the Council's staff who had adapted to the national emergency and kept Council services running in extremely difficult and unprecedented times. Despite these difficulties and, with the help of Government funding, the Council had managed to achieve a balanced budget for the financial year 2021-22 which was excellent news.

Councillor Dixon stated that despite the positives highlighted, there were clear risks to the budget – these were:

- The previous administration had committed around £16 million of reserves to the Littlehampton Wave, leaving reserves lower at a time when they might be needed.
- The Littlehampton Wave had started trading robustly and as a result of Covid-19 had relied upon significant income from the Council
- Income from town centre parking was a risk due to the difficulties and challenges being faced by the High Street and the significant shift towards online shopping.
- Future funding for this and all other Councils remained uncertain.
- The New Homes Bonus was coming to an end which would have implications for the Council.
- Councillor Dixon urged the Leader of the Council to write to the Government in order to share with them the Council's financial forecasts so that they could see the challenges ahead.
- The Independent group welcomed the investment in an officer to lead on climate change efforts.

In concluding, Councillor Dixon confirmed that this was a sensible budget in the prevailing circumstances which his Group fully supported.

The Chairman then invited Councillor Ms Thurston to respond on behalf of the Green Group. She congratulated the Liberal Democrat Group and the Finance Team in providing a reassuring balanced budget and during a very unprecedented and challenging year. Councillor Ms Thurston hoped that this crisis would become less dominating allowing the Council to move forward with more projects in the year ahead. There was the need to spend wisely now to invest in changes that would bring long term benefits to current and future residents. The other long-term crisis to face was that of climate change as the climate emergency was beginning to bite locally and would create long-term issues for the future generation of Arun if more action was not taken now. It had been pleasing to welcome the Council's new Sustainability and Climate Change Officer who would be drawing up the Council's Climate Change Action Plan to tackle and reduce the Council's own carbon omissions. Councillor Ms Thurston stated



that she welcomed the Tree Planting Strategy and hoped that other projects would follow as protecting existing biodiversity was just as important. She applauded other green initiatives such as the Food Waste Trial and research into active travel routes to increase walking and cycling in the District. She commended the provision of new housing stock and the use of low carbon alternatives all of which were an excellent way of introducing new green technologies. Councillor Ms Thurston confirmed that she was pleased to support this careful budget which she fully commended.

The Chairman then invited Councillor Miss Seex to respond on behalf of the Arun Independent Group. She outlined her view that the Council needed to align budgets and resources to sit alongside the Council's priorities. She was not averse to a modest increase if those funds were spent well for the benefit of residents. However, she felt that the priorities set out before Covid-19 had been 'wishy washy' at a time when the Council needed to lay down a laser focused way for its economy to recover as the Covid-19 pandemic came to an end. It was essential for the Council to find a way of ending deprivation in Bognor Regis and Littlehampton and to do this it needed to make regeneration a priority. To achieve this, more resources needed to be invested into the economy team.

The Chairman then invited Councillor Gunner to respond to the Budget on behalf of the Conservative Group. Councillor Gunner confirmed that in addressing the budget he would table an amendment and he explained the background to this. Over the last year the people of Arun had suffered greatly as a result of the pain and hurt that Covid-19 had brought. One of the main issues had been financial with many having been furloughed; had working hours reduced; or had been made redundant leaving many with hard choices to make and often a choice between health and wealth. Councillor Gunner stated that the Council wanted to look after and support residents as much as possible and that the pandemic situation had also been tough for the Council in terms of the impact for staff and on the Council's finances. The Government had recognised this impact too and by supporting the Council to the tune of millions whilst also recognising that dealing with the Pandemic situation needed to be a shared endeavour. The Council had received £2m in unring-fenced grants. The Council's budget had to be managed to support its residents whilst at the same time continuing to provide all services. Councillor Gunner confirmed that the Council did not need more funding in the next financial year to continue to run these services. It could not be compared to West Sussex County Council or other Town or Parish Councils. It was Councillor Gunner's view that the Council should freeze its portion of the council tax in recognition of the situation that its residents found themselves in.

Councillor Gunner then proposed and outlined the detail of his amendment which addressed four areas:

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- To increase the Economy budget – recognising that in order to get businesses back on their feet and get residents returned to work, additional staff resource was needed.
- To freeze the management budget for 2021/22;
- To reduce the planning budget in view of the fact that £321k had been earmarked to spend on consultants to review the Local Plan – this was not needed now
- To propose a £100k reduction in the contingencies budget
- All these proposals would allow the Council to put a freeze on Council Tax without a cut in services.

Councillor Mrs Pendleton then seconded this amendment.

Prior to inviting Councillors to debate this amendment, the wording was shared to the meeting – and is set out below:

1. The General Fund Revenue Budget as set out in Appendix 1 **as amended by the Conservative Group** is approved;
2. Arun's Band D Council Tax for 2021/22 is set at ~~£191.52~~ **£186.57, the same level as in 2020/21, an increase of 2.65%;**
3. Arun's Council Tax Requirement for 2021/22, based on a Band D Council Tax of ~~£191.52~~ **£186.57**, is set at ~~£11,994,515~~ **£11,684,506** plus parish precepts as demanded, to be transferred to the General Fund in accordance with statutory requirements;

To understand the context behind the amendment, an Appendix was shared to the meeting which is attached to these minutes.

Councillor Gunner was invited to explain further the detail of his amendment.

The Chairman then invited debate on the amendment. The first to speak objected to the fact that such a detailed amendment had not been shared in advance of the meeting. It was stated that as the detail of the amendment had been set out in an Excel document, this was too difficult to read from a screen share set up and so highlighted the importance of circulating amendments in advance. Councillors opposed this amendment for several reasons. The most overriding one was that any freeze on Council Tax set back the Council's Council Tax base storing up trouble for years ahead. The amendment only provided an easing of financial strain in a very temporary way as it meant that a period of playing catch-up at some point would be required. It was also pointed out that other Councils were increasing their Council Tax and that this was necessary in order to continue to provide the services needed by their communities. In view of the amendments proposed to the General Fund Budget, the view of the Council's Section 151 Officer was sought in terms of whether he could confirm if these were prudent and financially sensible.

The Chairman invited the Section 151 Officer to provide his professional opinion. He outlined his responsibility under the Local Government Act 2003 to comment on the amendment and its robustness in relation to the estimates. He outlined that the Appendix submitted with the budget report had been based on a lot of work undertaken by Officers and so it was very difficult to move figures around without fully understanding the true implications. The Section 151 Officer's professional view was that making reductions to the Council's budget would not compensate for loss of Council Tax income. Without the background behind the amendment it was difficult however the proposed reductions appeared to be one off in nature, or in relation to management support would probably mean staff reductions which would be difficult to assess in terms of how the savings could be achieved. All the savings identified from the amendment would not replace the loss of Council Tax income. Members' attention was then drawn to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy which had been approved by Cabinet in September 2020 and predicted significant deficits but had been based upon a rise in Council Tax for 2021/22 and the life of the forecast. To freeze Council Tax would mean that these deficits would be significantly higher due to the taxbase not increasing and this would mean that any cuts would have to be deeper. This would also compromise any ambition that the Council might have in relation to borrowing as this depended upon revenue to fund the resulting financing costs.

Having received this advice, other Councillors spoke against the amendment stating that it was unclear and unimpressive. The increase in Council Tax proposed amounted to a 10 pence per week increase and it was felt that most residents could afford this. There were elements of the amendment that were of interest which perhaps with notice could have been explored in advance of the meeting. However, it was felt that it was impossible to be able to evaluate whether the amendments proposed would be good or bad for the Council and so on this basis, the amendment should not be supported.

Other comments made were that parts of the amendment should be supported or explored further, especially the increase in staff resource for the Economy section. Questions were asked about the money in the planning budget and the review of the Local Plan.

There were Councillors that supported the amendment stating that it was vital for the Council to take notice of the plight of its residents in such exceptional times. Comments were made that at previous Budget meetings, amendments had never been circulated to Councillors in advance. Points were made in that the content of the amendment had been shared with Officers in advance of the meeting. Central Government had generously supported the Council and so it was now the turn of this Council to support its residents as there was no valid reason to increase Council Tax for this year. The amendment had been carefully planned to mean that there would be no service reductions and to recognise the fact that further funding could be received from Central Government giving the Council the ability right now to freeze Council Tax.

The Chairman then called a short adjournment.

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Following much discussion, Councillor Miss Seex confirmed that she wished to make an amendment to Councillor Gunner's amendment. This was that the Council needed to support the £40k of additional funding that would supply an additional head count for the Economy team from either the Council's reserves or the large financial increase proposed for planning. Councillor Miss Seex confirmed that she was proposing this amendment as the Council needed to get serious about economic regeneration and the economic development of the District.

Councillor Goodheart seconded this amendment.

Following several Points of Personal Explanation and Points of Order raised, the Interim Monitoring Officer provided advice confirming that now a further amendment had been formally put and seconded that Councillor Gunner should be presented with the opportunity to consider if he might wish to accept Councillor Miss Seex's amendment and then withdraw some or all of his amendment in response. Councillor Gunner confirmed that he did not wish to accept Councillor Miss Seex's amendment in any aspect. This meant that following the conclusion of the debate on Councillor Gunner's amendment it would be put to the vote and if declared lost, then Councillor Miss Seex's amendment would then be discussed. It was confirmed that the Council could not debate two amendments running at the same time.

Debate then continued on Councillor Gunner's amendment.

The Section 151 Officer provided further advice and clarification in response to some of the points raised by Councillors.

Councillor Mrs Pendleton then spoke as seconder to the amendment in response to some of the statements that had been made. She explained the rationale behind the amendment outlining that the savings made would balance the freeze in Council Tax. The amendment sought to assist residents when they needed it most by reducing funding in areas that would not have an impact such as management and support service contingencies. This would still achieve a balanced budget without drawing on reserves.

In line with Council Procedure Rule 18.6 – the voting on this amendment was recorded.

Those voting for it were Councillors Bicknell, Bower, Mrs Caffyn, Charles, Clayden, Mrs Cooper, Cooper, Dendle, Edwards, Elkins, English, Goodheart, Gunner, Hughes, Kelly, Oliver-Redgate, Mrs Pendleton, Miss Rhodes and Roberts (19). Those voting against were Councillors Batley, Bennett, Blanchard-Cooper, Brooks, Buckland, Mrs Catterson, Coster, Dixon, Mrs Gregory, Mrs Hamilton, Mrs Haywood, Huntley, Jones, Lury, Miss Needs, Oppler, Purchase, Mrs Staniforth, Stanley, Tilbrook, Ms Thurston, Dr Walsh, Mrs Warr and Mrs Yeates (24). Councillors Mrs Daniells, Miss Seex and Mrs Worne abstained from voting (3).

The amendment moved by Councillor Gunner was therefore NOT CARRIED.

The Chairman then asked Councillor Miss Seex to confirm if she still wished to proceed with her amendment proposed earlier. Councillor Miss Seex confirmed that she did and reconfirmed the wording to her amendment which is set out below:

“Accepting £40k additional funding to provide additional staffing for the Economy development team”.

Councillor Goodheart seconded this amendment.

The Chairman then invited debate on this amendment. The first to speak was Councillor Dr Walsh who confirmed that he was happy to accept this amendment and that he hoped that the Council would support it. Other Councillors confirmed that they were confused as to what was being proposed as this represented an additional £40k to be added to the budget. Councillor Miss Seex was asked how she proposed to spend the £40k and how this would be funded?

Following much discussion, questions were asked in terms of how this could be supported without knowing the detail of where this money would be found. The Council's Section 151 was again invited to provide his professional opinion. He confirmed that he had not been approached in terms of this amendment and so he could not confirm the source of funding only to assume that the £40k would be met from balances.

The Chief Executive confirmed that if a proposal to put an addition to the budget was put, it had to clearly identified where the funding would come from. This had to be confirmed now before the Council was able to continue with this debate. The Chief Executive confirmed that neither himself nor the Section 151 Officer had been approached by Councillor Miss Seex to discuss this option.

Councillor Miss Seex was invited to provide more detail on her proposal. She confirmed that she was trying to salvage something from Councillor Gunner's amendment which they had confirmed was achievable without any financial detriment. She wished to continue to allocate £40k to the Economic team as this was a requirement that was needed which she felt could be met from reserves and as the Conservative Group had already investigated this.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the funding proposed by the Conservative amendment was coming from reserves.

Councillor Miss Seex asked if the Appendix showing the detail behind the Conservative amendment could be shared again with the meeting. On this being shared, Councillor Miss Seex stated that the savings identified to the contingencies/miscellaneous fund would accommodate her proposal to increase the Economy budget by £40k or perhaps from savings proposed by the Conservatives to the Planning budget could be used. She asked if the Leader of the Council as Cabinet Member for Economy could comment in terms of whether he approved this suggestion.

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Councillor Miss Seex was reminded that this was her amendment and so she needed to confirm the detail that sat behind it.

Councillor Dr Walsh raised a Point of Personal Explanation and confirmed that he supported this amendment and Councillor Miss Seex's proposal for the £40k additional funding to the Economy team to be provided from the Council's balances.

The Section 151 Officer confirmed that this would be ongoing expenditure as the proposal was talking about posts as opposed to one-off expenditure and he pointed out that this would be an additional £40k that would need to be added to the base budget. The Section 151 Officer was asked to provide further clarification. He explained that the £40k as suggested by Councillor Dr Walsh, would be taken from the Council's balances which currently stood at £5.8m but that this would not be a one-off expenditure it would be £40k plus other costs associated with employment each year. This was doable but Councillors had to understand that this would be a reoccurring item of expenditure.

Debate on this second amendment saw some Councillors speaking in support as they agreed that the Economy team did need to be increased but they had difficulty in accepting how this would be funded and in terms of the Leader of the Council's response to the proposal. Other suggestions were made which were to take funding away from Planning (£7k) and to use the funding that had been put into place for the printer (£33k) which would avoid the need to use any of the Council's reserves.

The Chief Executive reminded Members that they needed to very carefully think about not making decisions without fully understanding the financial implications. He explained that he had met with all Group Leaders and provided them with ample opportunity to raise; discuss and investigate possible amendments ahead of this meeting. He invited the Section 151 Officer to explain the implications of the suggestions that had been made. The Section 151 Officer confirmed that the cost of the printer was £33k but that this printer would be used to bring in revenue income to a value of £244k in view of the printing contracts that the Council had in place with Chichester District Council and Worthing/Adur Council. As this was a serious income generator it was not considered prudent to remove the supply of this equipment.

There were Councillors who spoke stating that other Councillors needed to pause and pay attention to what the Chief Executive and the Section 151 Officer were saying. It was felt that making policy and financial changes in this way was very dangerous and irresponsible. The budget had been compiled very carefully by the finance team and any change made to it had numerous implications. The budget presented by the Council's financial experts was what should be accepted.

Following very lengthy discussion, Councillor Miss Seex confirmed that she wished to withdraw her amendment on the understanding that Councillors and Officers would work together to bring a report to the next Full Council meeting to resolve this issue and to provide the detail to make this proposal work following discussion with all Group Leaders.

The Chairman then invited debate on the substantive recommendations.

There were Councillors who hoped that work could be undertaken to find the funding proposed by Councillor Miss Seex for additional Officers in the Economy section so that valuable and much needed regeneration would proceed.

A range of questions were then asked about the amount of money that the Council spend on Consultants; would Foreshore Officers be recruited for the forthcoming Summer season; would the Council be looking at undertaking a review of its office space as homeworking had been so successful. Questions were also asked on the level of affordable housing provided as targets were not being seen to be met. Debate also focused on the Place St Maur project; climate change issues; sheltered accommodation and especially assisting the residents at Flaxmean.

Councillor Dr Walsh, as proposer to the recommendations, responded to some of the points raised. He confirmed that as suggested at the start of the debate, he would write to Central Government to share with them the Council's financial forecasts so that they could see the challenges ahead. This matter was also being addressed by the District Council's Network.

Following a range of Points of Order and Points of Personal Explanations raised, the Interim Monitoring Officer outlined that in line with the Council's Constitution a recorded vote was required when voting on the budget.

Those voting for the substantive recommendations were Councillors Batley, Bennett, Blanchard-Cooper, Brooks, Buckland, Mrs Catterson, Coster, Dixon, Mrs Hamilton, Mrs Haywood, Huntley, Jones, Lury, Miss Needs, Oppler, Purchase, Mrs Staniforth, Stanley, Tilbrook, Ms Thurston, Dr Walsh, Mrs Warr and Mr Yeates (23) and those voting against were Councillors Bicknell, Bower, Mrs Caffyn, Charles, Clayden, Mrs Cooper, Cooper, Dendle, Edwards, Elkins, English, Gunner, Kelly, Oliver-Redgate, Mrs Pendleton, Miss Rhodes and Roberts (17). Councillors Mrs Daniells, Goodheart, Miss Seex and Mrs Worne abstained from voting (4).

The Council

RESOLVED – That

- (1) The General Fund Revenue Budget as set out in the revised Appendix 1 is approved;
- (2) Arun's Band D Council Tax for 2021/22 is set at £191.52, an increase of 2.65%;
- (3) Arun's Council Tax Requirement for 2021/22, based on a Band D Council Tax of £191.52, is set at £11,994,515 plus parish precepts as demanded, to be transferred to the General Fund in accordance with statutory requirements;

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- (4) The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget as set out in Appendix 2 is approved;
- (5) HRA rents for 2021/22 are increased by 1.5% (CPI plus 1.0%) in accordance with the provisions of the rent standard;
- (6) HRA garage rents are increased by 5% to give a standard charge of £12.93 per week (excluding VAT) and heating and water/sewerage charges increased on a scheme by scheme basis, with a view to balancing costs with income;
- (7) The Capital Budget as set out in Appendix 3 is approved;
- (8) The statutory resolutions required by the Council in agreeing its budget for 2021/22, as set out in Appendix 4, are approved;
- (9) It be noted that the Group Head of Corporate Support, in consultation with the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Corporate Support, has approved i) a Council Tax base of 62,628 for 2021/22 and ii) the submission of the Council's NNDR1 return (the estimate of the Council's Business Rate income for 2021/22) to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; and
- (10) For 2021/22 any expenses incurred by the Authority in performing in part of its area a function performed elsewhere in its area by Parish/Town Council or the Chairman of a Parish Meeting shall not be treated as Special Expenses for the purposes of Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(The meeting concluded at 10.30 pm)