

## **COUNCIL**

**Date and Time:** Thursday 25 February 2021 at 7.00 pm

**Place:** Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Fleet

**Present:**

### **COUNCILLORS –**

Kennett - (Chairman)

Ambler	Delaney	Quarterman
Axam	Dorn	Radley
Bailey	Drage	Smith
Blewett	Farmer	Southern
Butler	Forster	Tomlinson
Clarke	Kennett	Wheale (7.17pm)
Cockarill	Kinnell	Wildsmith
Crampton	Lamb	Worlock
Crisp	Makepeace-Browne	Wright
Crookes	Neighbour	
Davies	Oliver	

Officers Present:

Daryl Phillips	Joint Chief Executive
Emma Foy	Head of Corporate Services
Celia Wood	Committee Services

### **75 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

It was unanimously agreed to suspend Standing Orders 9.3 (Show of Hands for Voting, 22.1 (Standing to Speak) and 22.2 (Chairman Standing).

### **76 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 January 2021 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **77 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence had been received.

### **78 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Crampton asked for it to be noted that she is now working as a clinical supervisor overseeing vaccinations at the Harlington Centre.

## 79 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12 – QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

Questions had been received from Mr Simon Brown, Mr Tristram Cary and Mr David Turver, details of which are set out in Appendix A attached to these Minutes.

## 80 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14 – QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

None.

## 81 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

## 82 CABINET MEMBERS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, **Councillor Radley** announced:

Contacts received by the Community Safety Team are steadily increasing (39 received in November 2020 – 66 in January 2021) - which means the message that support with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) issues and vulnerability concerns is getting out to Hart residents.

A flyer has been designed to go out to all households with the Council Tax Bills advising correct reporting of ASB to Police as well sharing contacts for the team and detailing other crisis support numbers.

This will utilise the back of the existing Landlord promotion leaflet, so it is not a further paper resource.

Efforts are being concentrated on building connections with Neighbourhood Watch networks across the district as key partners in sharing of information and provision of reporting and intelligence – webinars are being offered to encourage engagement and hopefully drum up interest in these very valuable community resources.

A Hart Community Newsletter will be produced by the end of March to share with members and key partners - initially introducing the team and their scope of work and then monthly to spotlight ongoing issues, celebrate successes and share useful contacts, information and opportunities.

The Cabinet Member for Community, **Councillor Bailey**, reported

I am pleased to confirm that yesterday we started our lateral flow testing at the Council Offices, and it is currently fully staffed by teams pulled from different areas of the Council. I'm very grateful for the huge effort that has been taken to make this happen. The plan is over next couple of weeks the facility will be more staffed by volunteers that are currently being vetted and we hope they will be in place by mid-March.

Hart Response Hub – with the increase in the shielded patient lists over recent weeks we haven't seen a significant increase in referrals through the Hub for support however a second tranche of additions to the shielded list is going to take place this week and as it is for many over 70 this may lead to additional support requests in the coming days. I can confirm that the Hub is well staffed and additional back up in place if necessary.

Community pantry for the District is being developed and continuing to progress well and I would like to put on record my thanks to St Edwards the developers who have donated a container due to arrive at Yateley Industries in the next week or so. This will be used to store the food and other donations and I will be sending an email to all members in the coming weeks with details on how they can point residents to the Community Pantry who may want to take benefit to it.

The budget to be considered tonight is maintaining ongoing support for Homelessness an area we do extremely well as a Council. You will be aware the Government announced the eviction ban that has been in place for tenants during the Covid crisis has been extended for a further month to end of March. This does mean the types of cases our teams are dealing with are usually more complicated often people who are often classed as 'sofa surfers' and so we are mediating with landlords and tenants where there is sometimes friction for people in those situations. I can confirm currently we have 2 people in bed and breakfast in the district through our commitment to no 'First Night Out' so that we look for people to stay whenever they are threatened with homelessness.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, **Councillor Oliver**, reported:

The Harlington Covid-19 Vaccination Centre opened last week and is currently delivering over 1000 jabs a week for Hart residents. As a volunteer myself I can confirm that all the medics, volunteers and residents who use the service are very happy with the parking arrangements HDC have organised and that these are on a Free to use basis. Fleet Town Council, Hart Voluntary Action (HVA) and Fleet Lions also need to be congratulated on helping set the centre up with the NHS.

The centre is an 'invitation only' facility so, if you don't have an invite from your GP, do not attend. There are no spare vaccine doses left at the end of a day.

### **83 JOINT CHIEF EXECUTIVES' REPORT**

There was no report from the Joint Chief Executives.

### **84 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

**Meeting**

**Date**

**Overview & Scrutiny**

**19 January 2021**

No questions asked.

**Cabinet (draft)**

**4 February 2021**

No questions asked.

**Minute 102** – Draft Budget 2021/2022 (see Minute 85 below)

**Minute 103** – Capital Strategy Management Plan

Councillor Radley put the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Neighbour.

**RESOLVED**

That the Capital Strategy Management Plan be approved.

**Staffing (draft)**

**11 February 2021**

No questions asked.

**Minute 13** - Pay Policy Statement Financial Year 2021-22

Councillor Wildsmith put the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Neighbour.

A recorded vote was requested against the recommendation as follows:

FOR the recommendation: Councillors Ambler, Axam, Bailey, Blewett, Butler, Clarke, Cockarill, Crisp, Davies, Delaney, Drage, Harward, Lamb, Makepeace-Browne, Neighbour, Oliver, Quarterman, Radley, Wildsmith.

AGAINST the recommendation: None

ABSTENTIONS: Councillors Crampton, Crookes, Dorn, Farmer, Forster, Kennett, Kinnell, Smith, Southern, Tomlinson, Wheale, Worlock, Wright

**RESOLVED**

That the Pay Policy Statement Financial Year 2021-22 be approved.

**Planning (draft)**

**10 February 2021**

No questions asked.

**85 DRAFT BUDGET 2021/22**

**Cabinet Minute 102** – Draft Budget 2021/22.

Council considered the summary of Cabinet's revenue and capital budget recommendations for 2021/2022, enabling Council to calculate and approve the Council Tax requirement for 2021/22. The report also included the Head

of Corporate Services' (Section 151) statutory statement to Council on the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves.

Councillor Radley provided a budget speech summarising the key elements of the budget and highlighting that the budget was balanced due to a contribution of £381K from reserves. Cllr Radley proposed the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Neighbour.

Members considered whether to deal with the recommendations on block or individually and were advised that the Budget is should be debated as a single package.

Members debated:

- The difficulty budgeting for Local Government especially in the current climate of unusual circumstances brought on by the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The loss of recycling revenues from Hampshire County Council and the effect on the budget of losing that revenue.
- 5Cs Contract and the effect on the budget this may have made.
- Re-instating the Overview and Scrutiny Service Boards for guidance and input to give Councillors greater insight in the budgeting process.

After the debate, a Recorded Vote was taken:

FOR the recommendation: Councillors Ambler, Axam, Bailey, Blewett, Butler, Clarke, Cockarill, Crisp, Davies, Delaney, Drage, Harward, Kinnell, Lamb, Makepeace-Browne, Neighbour, Oliver, Quarterman, Radley, Smith, Wildsmith.

AGAINST the recommendation: Councillors Crampton, Crookes, Dorn, Farmer, Forster, Southern, Tomlinson, Wheale, Worlock, Wright.

ABSTENTIONS: Councillor Kennett.

The Recommendation was agreed.

## **DECISION**

1. That the Council Tax Base for 2021/22 be noted
  - (a) for the whole Council area as 41,055.21 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")]; and
  - (b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates as in the attached Appendix 1A.
2. The Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2021/22 (excluding Parish precepts) is £7,465,479.68

3. That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2021/22 in accordance with Sections 31 and 34 to 36 of the Act:
- (a) £46,854,119 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) £35,924,871 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
  - (c) £10,929,248 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(1) of the Act).
  - (d) £266.21 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 (including Parish precepts).
  - (e) £3,463,769 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per Column 2 of Appendix 1A).
  - (f) £181.84 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.
  - (g) The amounts set out in column 6 of Appendix 1A for each part of the Council's area being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 3(f) above the amounts of the special items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned in Appendix 1A divided in each case by the amount at 1(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 34 of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.
  - (h) The amounts set out in columns 1 to 9 of Appendix 1B for each part of the Council's area being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 3(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the

amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

4. That it be noted that for the year 2021/22 Hampshire Country Council's precept figures are subject to approval on the 25<sup>th</sup> February and are listed below. If any changes are required as a result of Hampshire County Council approval provision for delegation to change is provided in 2.6 of this report. The Police & Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings below:

Valuation Band	Hampshire County Council	HCC Adult Social Care	Police & Crime Commissioner for Hampshire	Hampshire Fire & Rescue
	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
A(R)	666.69	83.56	125.81	39.13
A	800.03	100.27	150.97	46.95
B	933.36	116.99	176.14	54.78
C	1066.70	133.70	201.30	62.60
D	1200.04	150.41	226.46	70.43
E	1466.72	183.83	276.78	86.08
F	1733.39	217.26	327.11	101.73
G	2000.07	250.68	377.43	117.38
H	2400.08	300.82	452.92	140.86

- 4.1 That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3(h) and 2.2 above, the Council, in accordance with section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts shown in Appendix 1D as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2021/22 for each of the categories of dwellings in each of the Parishes.
- 4.2 That for the purposes of section 35 (2) (d) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, any expenses incurred by the District Council in the financial year 2021/22 in performing functions in a part of the district which elsewhere in the district are performed by a Parish Council, shall not be special expenses of the District Council.
- 4.3 That the Council concluded the £5 increase in Council Tax for Hart District Council for 2021/22 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992
- 4.4 That the Head of Corporate Services in consultation with the Cabinet member for Finance be given delegated authority to amend the final council tax calculations in the event of approved changes from the other precepting authorities.
- 4.5 That the fees and charges for 2021/22 as set out in Appendix 2 be approved.

- 4.6 That the budget set out in Paragraph 13 of the report attached to the 25 February 2021 Council Agenda be approved.
- 4.7 That the revised Capital Programme for 2020/21 to 2021/22 as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report attached to the 25 February 2021 Council Agenda be approved.
- 4.8 That the Section 151 officer's statutory report regarding the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of reserves detailed in paragraph 14 of the report attached to the 25 February 2021 Council Agenda be noted.

## **86 OUTSIDE BODIES - FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS**

None.

The meeting closed at 8:59pm

DRAFT

Response to Cllr. Radley

In response to Cllr. Radley's entreaty to the Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny at last night's Hart District Council meeting to reinstate the Service Boards, he is certainly aware of the decision (under the previous Chairman) to change the format for service reporting to that of a rolling Quarterly Review presented by Heads of Service to the Overview & Scrutiny committee.

The reason for this change was based solely on the fact that Council Members frequently failed to turn up for Service Boards, despite signifying their previous intention to attend, and thus no rigorous examination of individual service performance or spend took place. At a mid-year review of Overview & Scrutiny progress and performance held by O&S committee members in January this year, it was decided that the Quarterly Service Review format still had merit but should be refined to include a quantitative presentation of quarterly performance and spend, similar to that presented at the Service Board meetings. Work is already underway to revise the current format of service review reporting to accommodate a more data-driven presentation for the 2021/22 municipal year.

Cllr. Dr Jane Worlock Chairman, Overview & Scrutiny

## COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12

### QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

**Mr Simon Brown asked:**

In regard to recreational access to the military lands next to Fleet and across a wider area being under threat:

- 1 What assistance and support can Hart Council offer to our recreational users?
- 2 Will the Council formally support Ash Parish Council in this matter and lobby for the access to be retained unless the specific area is actively being utilised for training?

**Councillor Radley responded:**

Mr Brown, thank you for your questions. I am Hart's representative on the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board, hence why I am assigned to answer your question. I am very familiar with the situation having been a keen and regular user of these lands for the past 30 years. Whether it is walking or cycling on my mountain bike I know the area well.

Like you and so many others I do find it frustrating when I find the fenced in area closed, when it is obvious that the land is not being used for training. Although that does indeed happen in my experience, I have also found the lands to be open more often in the past year especially at weekends and on bank holidays. So, I would like to recognise that the Army do make efforts in this regard, especially during the Covid lockdowns. In fact the Army lands along Bourley Road were open once again this weekend and being enjoyed by very many people.

It is not my job to speak on behalf of the army and I have no intention to do so. In response to your asking what support Hart gives to recreational users I will point out the range of SANGS (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space) which we have set up at numerous locations around the district. These mini country parks are funded by developers for the explicit intention of drawing would be walkers away from the Special Protection Areas. Hart manage and maintain sites at Edenbrook Country Park and Bramshot Park. A privately funded SANG is located very close to the Bourley & Long Valley SPA on Ewshot Marsh. Hart would encourage walkers to explore and discover these facilities.

Hart have also recently opened a highly praised BMX track off Pale Lane north of Fleet. Which when we are not in lockdown attracts visitors from a very wide area.

I personally have engaged directly with the Army and was party to the negotiations to have access gates put in and to have them opened when the training lands are not in use. While I agree that they could be opened more often, I still believe the current regime is better than the total lockout which we would have faced without community intervention.

Thank you for bringing the initiative of Ash Parish Council to my attention, I have read the statement made by Cllr Nigel Manning, Chairman of Ash Parish Council and note that they are primarily concerned with restrictions to the area known as the Ash Firing Range. The situation there would seem to be different in nature to that which we have locally at Bourley. I wish Ash Parish Council well in their endeavours and will watch their progress with keen interest.

Meanwhile I shall continue to use whatever contact I have with the Army to lobby for them to maintain a more permissive access policy on the Bourley Road site. I would encourage my council colleague who is responsible for the Military Covenant, Cllr. Chris Dorn to use his extensive connections to do the same.

**Mr Brown asked a supplementary question:**

Will the council write to DIO raising the issue of a lack of access at Long Valley and request additional gates are provided, and that they remain unlocked when the area is not in active use?

**Councillor Radley responded:**

I was made aware earlier today by a member of the public of the legal advice that the Trail Action Group (TAG) had received about the interpretation of the byelaws and I would like to take time to study that press release. Certainly I am very happy to write to the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and to engage them once again in a discussion about increasing the access to the permitted lands and also I will make reference to the interpretation of the byelaws if unable to fully comprehend what the legal judgement is telling us and if TAG are willing to send me the full legal advice received I would happy to analyse it and write to the DIO on behalf of not just TAG but everybody who enjoys using that land.

**Mr Tristram Cary asked:**

At the GC Stakeholder Forum both you and Patricia Hughes stressed that the Garden Village project might not be sited in the Shapley Heath area after all. Can you please confirm that in the light of this change of heart, the Shapley Heath project plan will be renamed, and the project plan amended so that the most suitable site for any Garden Village is established early in the project and if not, please could you explain why?

**Councillor Cockarill responded:**

Thank you for your question. The name Shapley Heath is a working title to identify the project rather than a site specific name. There has been no change of heart either in terms of the area of search or in the ambition of the Council to deliver a new striving community for Hart but in order to properly assess the viability of creating a new garden Community we need to have a potential site to study. The area of search we are currently reviewing, has been before this Council for a number of years but until now has not been properly considered in the context of providing a new community. Other options may come before us in the future and if they do, we will need to assess them fully as well.

**Mr Cary asked a supplementary question:**

On 26 February 2019, the Inspector wrote to Hart Council to say that SHGV could only be introduced in Local Plan after it had first undertaken detailed evaluation of alternative options which included other sites and other strategies such as urban extensions to show the SHGV was the best strategy. I wonder how the Stakeholders Forum can be adapted to develop a vision for Hart based on this wider range of options and now having attended some of these meetings it is clear SHVG does seriously limit the Stakeholders' idea of what might be possible so if you are trying to develop a vision for Hart it seems very limiting not to explain this is just one possible option.

**Councillor Cockarill responded:**

Without going into detail, you need to divorce the garden village plan project from the local planning process what we are doing at this stage is evaluating the options for what we might produce as a Garden Community and that is what the Stakeholders Forum is for, to assess what sort of things we think a new Community in Hart should have, there is an option of doing something in the Shapley Heath area and that is what we are benchmarking against, there will come a point where we will either decide to move ahead with the garden village project or decide not to. At another point in time we will need to revisit our local plan at that stage if we have decided to move forward with the Garden Village then the Shapley Heath site and any other site that comes forward will have to be assessed as to whether it is the most suitable site. However, we are several years from making that determination.

**Mr David Turver asked:**

- 1 The Shapley Heath Stakeholder Forum presentations show a myriad of Technical and Viability studies need to be completed by October 2021 to maintain your schedule. For instance, the Homes and Heritage Thematic Group needs to produce reports on Housing Type and Tenure, Urban Design, Heritage and Landscape/Gaps. Can you explain what proportion of all of these studies is going to be produced by internal staff and what proportion by external consultants?

**Councillor Cockarill responded:**

Thank you for your questions Mr Turver and for your input into the Stakeholders Forum. The example you have provided is the Strategic Report which will be commissioned by Councils and there are various ways of delivering that. We could utilise our own resources, we could look to see what support other organisations in the Thematic groups can provide, such as Hampshire County Council, Enterprise M3 LEP, Natural England etc and once we've got those conversations done and we know what the scope is, then we would look to external consultants.

**Mr Turver asked a supplementary question:**

You submitted a funding proposal to the Government where the vast proportion of the £406k you asked for was to produce these various studies that we discussed before therefore it seems odd you can't answer the first

question of how much is going to be provided internally and how much from external consultants.

**Councillor Cockarill responded:**

As I was trying to explain, there are a number of ways this can be done. The developers can do some of it, we can get consultants working in the stakeholders forum to do it, we can do some of it ourselves and through external consultants but until we know exactly who is going to put their hand up to do what, we don't know which external consultants we are going to get to do it and it may be that external consultants will be very good at some of it and it might be better for us to other part – that is what is part of the conversations we will be having within the Stakeholders Forum, Landowners Forum and the Opportunity Board.

**Mr David Turver asked:**

- 2 What is the anticipated level of spend on external consultants to deliver all of the required studies across all of the Thematic Groups?

**Councillor Cockarill responded:**

I refer to the answer I gave to your first question, at present on this basis we cannot confirm the level of use of internal workforce resources versus support from other stakeholders as opposed to external commissioning. All I can say is as things become clearer on this it will all be monitored and recorded through the Shapley Heath Opportunity Board to Cabinet and ultimately to Full Council.

**Mr Turver asked a supplementary question:**

What level of support do you expect to see from the developers in both workday effort and cash spend.

**Councillor Cockarill responded:**

That is an ongoing conversation with the developers so I can't give you an answer right now. All of these details need to be worked out and the costs will be available publicly as we get to them. It is in the nature of projects that you start with an estimate of what you think things will cost and then as you progress the project you find costs might change up or down and sometimes you find that different sources of funding become available. This project is no different to that.

**Mr David Turver asked:**

- 3 The budget before you this evening for the new settlement shows that you are assuming no further grants from the Government. Could you give an update on the status of the application for additional grant funding please?

**Councillor Radley responded:**

The budget being presented tonight is completely open and transparent. It is careful to ensure that all potential liabilities are called out, both in the revenue and the capital budgets. As you will be aware Mr Turver, the Council previously received a grant of

£150k in 2019-20 from Central Government towards funding the garden village project.

The council sees no reason why when the next round of funding is announced in March that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will not continue to help fund this important initiative, one which they themselves have highlighted as being a worthy scheme.

Should for any reason funding not be forthcoming, or in light of the Covid crisis reduced, then the cabinet will consider how it should continue with the Garden Village project. This administration is acutely aware of the funding pressure we are under and will respond accordingly to unexpected events as they occur throughout the municipal year.

**Mr Turver asked a supplementary question:**

What is the status on the application for the additional grant funding you made in September?

**Councillor Radley responded:**

We are awaiting The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to make the announcement in March and then we will know what the status of our application is and for them to tell us the answer.

**Mr Turver asked:**

- 4 The budget pack shows that the budget for the New Settlement has fallen from the £406K you indicated at the Council in January to £279K. However, the staff costs are £128K of this and recharge overheads a further £122K. The recharge overheads include almost £26K on "Financial Services Recharges" and the best part of £24K on "Corporate Admin Support". How is it possible for such a small project team to incur such large overhead charges?

**Councillor Radley responded:**

The figure of £406k previously mentioned by my colleagues in his reply of January reflects the amount that we have applied for from the MHCLG.

The organisation has significant fixed costs in terms of buildings, back office functions and overheads yet outsourcing decisions have meant that there are only 130 staff where this overhead can be charged against in accordance with CIPFA regulations. The recharge reflects 2.9 out of 130 for overheads to be recharged. Larger Authorities have economies of scale and higher FTEs which mean that overheads per person may be lower. The bulk of these overheads would still be present even if we did not have 2.9 staff allocated to the Garden Village project and most of the overhead charge of £122k would still be present in Hart's structural revenue budget.

**Mr Turver asked a supplementary question:**

The budget also includes £25k for external consultants, less than you spent on Shellgate PR year to date according to the project transparency report, can

you please explain the sense in spending less than 10% of the overall budget on the main deliverables and over a quarter of a million in managed expenditure.

**Councillor Radley responded:**

A number of things have been going on in the past year one of which is the Covid crisis and when we get to the end of the year we are currently in, we will be able to reconcile how much time officers have spent dealing with the Covid crisis as opposed to working on things that are previously allocated to and when we do that exercise, it will be clearer to everybody concerned, how the sums of money and officer time have been utilised over the course of the year. That will get balanced in due course.

**Mr Turver asked:**

- 5 Given that you are still forecasting a deficit of £381K for 2021/22 and no doubt a further large deficit for 2022/23. How can you justify spending £279K overall on the unnecessary Garden Community when the homelessness budget (GL Code: 44069) is being cut by more than £100K next year, and grants to voluntary services (GL Code: 47010) are being cut by more than £600K from their pre-Covid level?

**Councillor Radley responded:**

The £279k is being funded from earmarked reserves and does not impact base budget. The allocation to earmarked reserves was approved in the previous budget in February 2020. The £381K is an ongoing deficit which increases over time. Structural deficits need to be met by reducing ongoing expenditure or increasing ongoing income.

You will no doubt have seen in paragraph 7.2 of the budget paper that overall Hart will receive £319k less in government funding this coming financial year. We are also having to absorb £250k in reduced income due to Hampshire County Council withholding recycling credits from us. We are also prudently factoring in a cushion of £220k in anticipated income loss due to reduced demand arising from the Covid crisis. This along with the cost of having to exit more aspects of the ill-fated Five Councils contract which the previous Conservative administration saddled us with has given us a total of £610k in significant pressures to weigh into the budget.

I therefore assert that Hart's financial management team have done an excellent job in bringing forth a budget which we can balance with a one-off draw down on reserves of £381k. In doing this I can assure you that we are not cutting the homelessness budget nor the grants which we pay to the voluntary services. These budgets are themselves funded by specific government initiatives and the money is effectively 'pass through' funding – which gets balanced in the budget when the money is received or offset elsewhere in joint ventures with neighbouring authorities.

To reassure you Mr Turver, there are no cuts to services in this budget. Indeed, the Council is proud that when other local authorities have had to reduce payments to voluntary services, ours have been protected in the face of our budgetary challenges.

So to answer your question, given there are in reality none of the cuts which concern you, and neither the full time employees nor consultants allocated to the Shapley Heath project are being funded from 2021-22 council tax then therefore there is

nothing for me to justify in regards to the way this potential expenditure is being ringfenced.

**Mr Turver asked a supplementary question:**

You don't know whether you've got the support of the Government or not, you don't know what level of support you are going to get from the developers and despite an eye-watering budget, there's clearly not enough of the £25k to meet all of the requirements you set out yourselves and your time scale so essentially you are set up to fail. So wouldn't it be better just to cancel Shapley Heath and use the money to help those most in need or balance the budget?

**Councillor Radley responded:**

We are balancing the budget, we are legally obliged to balance the budget and today I am presenting to this Council a balanced budget. When we hear from the MHCLG if we have a grant and what extent that is, Cabinet can make decisions and reassess the programme that we have in place but I would point out to you, that the budget that we are balancing is a revenue budget and this is a budget in which we look at our cost base and our likely assured income and we make it balance. As I have explained before, the FTEs and the consultants are funded out of a ringfenced budget and no matter what we did to adapt today the £381k needed to draw off reserves will still be there, similar to moving money between savings accounts when you are trying to reduce an overdraft – you move money from savings into current account in order to do that, and that is why changing the way we ringfence the money for Shapley Heath would make no difference to the £381k we need to draw out of reserves this evening.