

LEAD MEMBER FOR RESOURCES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

DECISIONS made by the Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change, Councillor Nick Bennett, on 1 November 2024 at Remote Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Councillor Glazier spoke on item 5 (see minute 46)

41. DECISIONS MADE BY THE LEAD CABINET MEMBER ON 15 OCTOBER 2024

41.1 The Lead Member approved as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2024.

42. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

42.1 Councillor Redstone declared a personal interest in item 5 as the vice chair of governors for the Genesis Federation (Beckley and Peasmarsh primary schools) stating both schools use Rye Sports Centre. He did not consider this to be prejudicial.

42.2 Councillor Glazier declared a personal interest in item 5 as the chair of the Rye Regeneration Partnership. He did not consider this to be prejudicial.

43. URGENT ITEMS

43.1 There were none.

44. REPORTS

44.1 Reports referred to in the minutes below are contained in the minute book.

45. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME: CONSULTATION RESPONSE

45.1 The Lead Member considered a Report by the Chief Operating Officer.

DECISIONS

45.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to approve the response to Eastbourne Borough Council on proposed changes to their Local Council Tax Reduction Schemes for 2025/26 as set out below:

As you will be aware, in common with all local authorities, the County Council continues to face significant financial challenges, with the Council facing a budget gap of £55.3m in 2025/26, growing to £83.6m by 2027/28, with limited reserves to draw upon. The proposal would increase the projected deficit to £56.1m in 25/26, adding to the already challenging financial position. Council Tax is the County Council's most important funding stream (65.4% of net budget in 2024/25) and we rely on certainty of this income to enable us to effectively plan services for the future.

We wait for the government to provide further details of funding through the Budget Statement of 30 October 2024, but the Council has been left with no choice but to seek savings to a range of services to help manage the deficit. On 26 September 2024, our Cabinet approved the launching of public consultations for a range of savings proposals: [Agenda and draft minutes for Cabinet on Thursday, 26th September, 2024, 10.00 am | East Sussex County Council](#)

Residents needing support often receive services from both the County Council and yourselves, with the County Council's support often being targeted to specific needs. For the Eastbourne area, there are potential impacts on older people's services at Milton Grange and learning disability services at Lindon Court, as well as proposed reductions to housing related support services that will impact vulnerable residents in Eastbourne. We continue to explore further savings options, as current plans do not bridge the gap between the cost of meeting the increasing demand for our services and the available funding.

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) recognises the impact the ongoing cost of living crisis is having on local communities, particularly, those who are vulnerable, both financially and for other reasons. For example, ESCC continues to seek to support low-income residents via the Financial Inclusion Partnership. However, any further reduction in its council tax base will only increase the magnitude of savings required to address the budget gap, in many cases increasing the pressure on partners, including district and borough councils.

Should the decision be made to implement the change to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, ESCC would ask EBC to seek to maximise any action that maintains, or increases, the overall Council Tax collection rates.

REASONS

45.3 Eastbourne Borough Council are consulting on proposals to change their Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme which will see a reduction on Council Tax income received by the County Council. Whilst the proposals address particular concerns within the authority, the impact of the reduction in income will be felt for County Council services that support the needs of residents across the Eastbourne area and the whole of East Sussex. The response to the consultation reflects the adverse financial impact of the proposed changes on what is already a significant financial challenge facing East Sussex County Council.

46. NEW PROPERTY ARRANGEMENTS FOR RYE SPORTS CENTRE, THE GROVE, RYE, TN31 7ND

46.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Chief Operating Officer together with exempt information in a later agenda item.

DECISIONS

46.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to:

- 1) Subject to Rother District Council agreeing to terminate the existing property arrangements and their contract with Freedom Leisure by April 2025:
 - (a) Approve the surrender of the existing property agreements at Rye Sports Centre and Swimming Pool;
 - (b) Approve the County Council entering a 20-year lease with Rye Town Council at Rye Sports Centre and Swimming Pool to facilitate ongoing curriculum and community use. This represents best value under s123 of Local Government Act 1972 and is supported by a formal valuation report;
 - (c) Approve the grant of a sub-lease between Rye Town Council and Rye Health and Well-Being Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO); and
 - (d) Approve the capital investment to be undertaken at Rye Sports Centre and Swimming Pool following successful grant awards secured by Rother District Council (RDC) from Sports England and RDC Levelling Up Funding, having regard to the specific grant conditions.
- 2) Agree that a further report be brought to the Lead Member should Rother District Council not agree to terminate the existing arrangements as set out in 1 above; and
- 3) Delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer to agree the terms of the property lease and other associated agreements and to carry out all actions necessary to give effect to the recommendations in the report.

REASONS

46.3 The County Council is keen, wherever possible, to seek ongoing community use of the dry and wet side facilities, but with the understanding that the County Council is not a leisure commissioner. The County Council owns the freehold of the dryside and wetside assets and therefore has sought to facilitate a smooth transition of services currently provided by RDC and Freedom Leisure (FL) to be managed by Rye Town Council (TC) and the CIO from 1 April 2025.

46.4 Under Option 1 detailed in the report, if the CIO is successful and continues to operate for the next 20 years, there are low scale risks to the County Council. However, this preferred route does present some potential risk to the County Council if the CIO was to fail within the next 20 years as set out in the exempt report later in the agenda. In essence, the County Council could at a future date be responsible for the wet side facilities and holding costs on an ongoing basis. The CIO has secured working capital as outlined in its business case and capital investment via Levelling Up Partnership (LUP) and Sport England as outlined in the report which will ensure the facilities are fit for purpose. The CIO are seeking to tap into latent demand from local residents to increase usage of the facilities and their business case has been reviewed and approved by Rye TC.

46.5 Proceeding with Option 1 above, noting the commercial aspects outlined in the exempt report, will enable the continuation of both the curriculum and community use of the facilities. At the same time, significant capital investment is taking place from external funding secured by RDC as outlined in the report.

47. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

47.1 It was RESOLVED to exclude the public and press for the remaining agenda items on the grounds that if the public and press were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as specified in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

48. NEW PROPERTY ARRANGEMENTS FOR RYE SPORTS CENTRE, THE GROVE, RYE, TN31 7ND - EXEMPT INFORMATION

48.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Chief Operating Officer which provided exempt information in support of an earlier item on the agenda.

DECISIONS

48.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to note the exempt information in the report which relates to an earlier item on the agenda.

REASON

48.3 The report contained exempt information in relation to an earlier item on the agenda.