



Please ask for: Democratic Services
Direct Dial: (01892) 554413
E-mail: committee@tunbridgewells.gov.uk
Date: Dddday DD Mmmm YYYY

Dear All

FULL COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 14TH DECEMBER, 2022

I enclose, for consideration at the next meeting of the Full Council on Wednesday, 14th December, 2022, the following items that were unavailable when the agenda was published.

Agenda No Item

6 Questions from members of the public (Pages 2 - 4)

To receive any questions from members of the public, of which due notice has been given in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8, to be submitted and answered.

7 Questions from members of the Council (Pages 5 - 7)

To receive any questions from members of the Council, of which due notice has been given in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10, to be submitted and answered.

Kind regards,

Name

Democratic Services

Encs

Questions from members of the Public

For Ordinary Full Council on Wednesday 14 December 2022

Question 1

From: James Tansley

To: Cllr Chris Hall

“The Council claims it has a wealth of information on residents’ views on the way it spends their money from previous budget consultation exercises and surveys. Yet the most recent comprehensive consultation, according to an earlier draft of this year’s budget, was in 2015 i.e. pre-CoVid, pre-Brexit, pre-£8 million Amelia overspend and pre-£11 million Calverley Square debacle. Will the Council conduct a full and open consultation with local Council taxpayers before agreeing this year’s budget, in particular, around their desire to see any increase in Council Tax?”.

Question 2

From: David Scott

To: Cllr Chris Hall

“Will you please confirm that during 2022/3 Financial Year (post COVID year), Tunbridge Wells Borough Council income has recovered with income which was substantially confirmed in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 reports (Q1 & Q2, 2022/3):

1. Extra income from existing car parking charges of approximately £300,000
2. Over £750,000 of investment income earned on the large cash reserves held by the Council
3. Increases in new Business Rates
4. Supported by post COVID income recovery from entertainment, (including the Assembly Hall, The Amelia Scott and likely income from the Ice Rink), and income from other services including garden brown bin collections, planning etc

Please confirm that these anticipated receipts were not included in the 2022/3 revenue budget due to the level of prudence in the budgetary system”.

Question 3

From: James Tansley

To: Cllr Chris Hall

The draft 2023/24 Budget Projection and Strategy presented to Cabinet earlier this month makes no reference to any plans to improve the efficiency of Council operations. Please can you provide details of the Council's target for efficiency savings next FY, and the value of efficiency savings achieved in the 2021/22, 2020/21 and 2019/20 FYo: Cllr ?".

Question 4

From: James Tansley

To: Cllr Pound

"How much has the Council so far spent on consultants in compiling the Local Plan?".

Question 5

From: James Tansley

To: Cllr Chris Hall

"According to the Council's budget figures, staff costs rose by 30.2% between the 2016/17 FY and the 2021/22 FY, which in real terms represents an increase of around 15%, significantly more than the increase in average real wages in the UK in that period (5.2%). Given this, the fact that the Council is facing a budget deficit of £1.376 million and the fact that local residents are facing a cost of living crisis, why does the latest draft of the 2023/24 budget propose increasing staff pay by over 7% in the coming year, costing an estimated £1.115 million

Question 6

From: James Tansley

To: Cllr Everitt

"According to the Council's Carbon Action Plan Progress report, despite spending significant amounts of taxpayers' money – just under £1.5 million - the Council has fallen seriously behind the carbon dioxide reduction targets set in its Corporate Carbon Descent Plan, and will not meet its zero emissions target for 2030 unless,

inter alia, it abandons waste collections (or else spends even more taxpayers' money on carbon credits). In light of this, will the Council abandon its virtue signalling climate action plans, and, instead, seek to reduce carbon emissions (and expenditure) through effective management (such as stopping subsidised parking for Councillors and officials - a perk that only incentivises car use)?

Question 7

From: James Tansley

To: Cllr Chapelard

According to the Autumn edition of Local, the Council's Town Hall Pravda, in response to a Council survey, fewer than 5% of respondents said that they wanted to be kept updated about events in the Borough by a leaflet (such as Local). In light of this, the environmental damage caused by printing and distributing Local, and the fact that Ministers have described Town Hall Pravdas as a "corrosive abuse of taxpayers' money", will the Council finally put an end to this unwanted and unnecessary propaganda sheet?

Question 8

From: James Tansley

To: Cllr Fitzsimmons

"In April, the then Portfolio holder for Culture Leisure and Tourism said that the council would work closely with Kent Cricket and Tunbridge Wells Cricket Club to enable County matches fixtures to be held at the Neville Ground in the summer of 2023. Yet, Kent County Cricket Club has now announced that the venue facilities are not considered to meet the necessary standards and will be playing no matches in Tunbridge Wells next season. How much will it cost to bring the facilities at the Neville Ground up to the standard required to bring first class cricket back to Tunbridge Wells?

Questions from members of the Council

For Ordinary Full Council on Wednesday 14 December 2022

Question 1

From: Councillor Rands

To: Cllr Fitzsimmons

“Noting that the land on which Tunbridge Wells Target Shooting Club sits is on the list of assets for disposal and recalling this council voted on the 7th of July 2021 as follows:

“Mindful of the potential for changes in the allocation and use of sports facilities within the Borough, we recognise our commitments under the National Planning Policy Framework in general and paragraphs 96-101 in particular. This Council welcomes the policies in the Pre-Submission Local Plan (in particular Policy OSSR1) on the retention of open spaces and the requirement that losses should be made good by alternative equivalent or better provision. At the same time, we urge Cabinet to commit to always seek to ensure that alternative provision is available before any site is withdrawn for use or, if there **are** exceptional reasons why this cannot happen, **all reasonable efforts are made to ensure** that temporary facilities are made available to bridge the gap.”

What reasonable efforts has cabinet made to ensure the continuity of the club after a potential sale of that land and how much is that expected to cost?”

Question 2

From: Cllr Roberts

To: Cllr Chris Hall

“The council is to get around £800,000 in additional income from its investments, an additional £300,000 in carparking fees and extra income from Business Rates. So will the coalition now admit that the Conservative budget of last February, which we are still under, is set to return a surplus. And will you further admit that because of

good Conservative management, the £944,000 black hole in our finances the Coalition claimed to have inherited is now, and always was, a myth used for political sloganeering with no financial reality, come about as a result of poor understanding of how council finances operate.”

Question 3

From: Cllr Bailey

To: Cllr Nancy Warne

“In July, Cabinet gave council officers the authority to draw up Terms of Reference for the Community Support Fund to set out the basic details of how the fund will work. Given that we are now in December, has this document been completed and, if so, can it be shared with Full Council?”

Question 4

From: Cllr Holden

To: Cllr Chapelard

“Your election material said, this would be an administration "committed to more open and consultative politics and to listen to the public and act accordingly". So will you accept that the 2/3 majority in favour of all out-elections in the recent consultation is a decisive expression of public opinion and will you listen and act accordingly and support all-out elections”

Question 5

From: Cllr White

To: Cllr Rutland

“Can Councillor Rutland please provide information as to how many applicants there were to Rural England Prosperity Fund and how many were successful?”

Question 6

From: Cllr Rands

To: Cllr Hall

“Cabinet may be aware that it is common practice for employers of reserve personnel to grant some additional paid leave to enable to complete their annual training commitment (typically a two week "camp" but not less than eight days consecutively deployed). As an employer of reserve personnel and a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant does Tunbridge Wells Borough Council have a policy on reserve forces leave?”.

Question 7

From: Cllr Bailey

To: Cllr Everitt

“At the October Cabinet meeting, Cabinet agreed to a very late change giving the s151 officer, the Monitoring Officer and the Portfolio Holder for Finance the power to terminate the decarbonisation works at the Weald Sports Centre if the project becomes financially unviable. Given the importance this Council places on reducing its carbon emissions, and given that the Weald Sports Centre is a large source of CO2, can Cabinet give assurance that the decarbonisation works won't be permanently terminated without first presenting all relevant evidence and options to Full Council?”