

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL  
HELD ON 7 FEBRUARY 2024 AT 6.00 pm**

Attendance:

The Mayor (Pepper ) (in the Chair)

Councillors Ms Ballard, Beavis, Bradley, Burgess, Casey, Chegwyn, Mrs Cully, Earle, Hammond, Herridge, Mrs Huggins, Hylands, Jessop, Johnston, Miss Kelly, Mrs Morgan, Pepper, Philpott, Raffaelli, Scard, Westerby, Durrant, Gledhill, Marshall, Maynard, Bradley and Cox

Also in attendance: Honorary Alderman Dickson

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**APOLOGIES FOR MEMBERS FOR THEIR INABILITY TO ATTEND THE MEETING.**

An apology was received from Councillor Hutchison.

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**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Declarations of interest were received as follows:

Councillors Burgess, Chegwyn, Huggins and Philpott declared that they were County Councillors and that in relation to agenda item 12 as there was an impact on the County Council. They would remain in the room and take part in the discussion and voting.

Councillor Bradley advised that she had a personal interest in agenda item 12

Councillor Ballard advised she had a personal interest in agenda item 12, although her role within the homeless provision had changed.

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**MAYORS COMMUNICATION**

The Council paid tribute to former Councillor Mike Parker, who had sadly passed away just before Christmas. Members paid tribute to his kind character and his recent hobby of allotments and writing children and had well served the residents of both Hardway and Bridgemary.

The Mayor advised that he would be writing to King Charles III to extend the best wishes of the Borough to him, following his recent illness.

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**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13 DECEMBER 2023**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 13 December 2023 be signed as a true and correct record.

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**DEPUTATIONS**

There were none.

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## QUESTIONS

There was one public question in the name of Carmen Lea to the Leader of the Council.

824 people are determined by GBC as having overwhelming public support for the criterion in a 6 week consultation.

In the first 2 weeks of our petition for reinstating the live monitoring of CCTV, has well over 1000 supporting and is rapidly growing by the day.

Given this petition has twice the amount of support in such little time, will the GBC leader explain why this isn't enough to support its reinstatement.

Answer: Thank you for your question for which I am very grateful and welcome to the Chamber. The question allows the administration to explain their position in relation to CCTV live monitoring.

To date there are 1417 valid signatures with 371 rejected. This could be for a number of reasons, including duplicated signatures and incorrect address details.

I am grateful for your campaign and congratulate you on being passionate about the issue, as it is absolutely correct to want monitoring 24/7, part time monitoring would encourage those prepared to undertake crime to do so outside of the hours of live monitoring.

The joint partnership had stopped under the Conservative administration, along with the full coverage. The ending of the partnership had required Gosport to cover the costs, and the projected costs of full coverage would be approximately £200k.

The reason for the high figure was that the coverage required full time staff, these staff would require specific training. It had been suggested that monitoring could be covered by volunteers, however this would not be possible due to GDPR rules and the requirement to be trained.

The Council do not have the funds to re instate the live monitoring, however others do, in addition, the Police had repeatedly advised that if they were alerted to an incident, they could not guarantee that they would be able to attend. It would depend on the resources available at the time. If the Police did not respond, what would be point of monitoring the CCTV 24/7 and whilst its reintroduction was welcome. The Police and Crime Commissioner should pay for it from their own budget.

There has been misinformation spread that the cameras had been switched off, but this was untrue. The 44 cameras are recording 24/7, 7 days a week and 365 days a year and recordings were kept for 28 days. Crime was important to the Council and the Councillors and it was important raise awareness of the safer streets campaign.

CCTV covered 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the High Street, and was very effective in monitoring entrances and exits to the peninsular, however it was not effective in areas it was not present. What was significantly important was the lack of streetlights and the darkness that creates and the impact darker streets had on safety within the Borough.

I am happy to discuss this further with you and take it forward with you and also want to acknowledge the danger to men too, as a victim of an assault that was recorded and allowed action to be taken. Cameras would make life easier not half the time, but 24/7, the Police needed to be persuaded to react to incidents and there would be a meeting with the Mayor and Sam Warne and Chris Spellaberg to discuss this and request help from the PCC to not only cover the cost but support the response.

Congratulations once again on your campaign based not on party political issues but on values and the cause would be worked on with you.

There were four Members questions.

A question in the name of Councillor Hammond to the Leader of the Council

When was it decided to scrap 24/7 live monitoring of Gosport's CCTV cameras and by whom?

The decision to scrap 24/7 CCTV monitoring was taken by the Conservatives in 2021 when Fareham Borough Council withdrew from the joint CCTV partnership.

Neither Fareham nor Gosport had had live monitoring since 2022 but the cameras in Gosport remain in use, 24/7, 365 days a year, with recordings kept for 28 days and available. There were no plans to switch off the cameras, and it is disappointing that the protest was being led in part by someone who had voted to end 24/7 recording.

Question in the name of Councillor Beavis to Councillor Westerby as the Chairman of the Community and Environment Board.

Since the planned upgrade of the Stokes Bay Splash Park was cancelled, it has continued to deteriorate, suffer closures and require frequent repairs. When will there be a proper refurbishment and upgrade?

Answer: The facility was poorly constructed by the Conservative Council, converting an old ticket office into a plant room and creating a facility that was not efficient or cost effective. There had been numerous breakdowns which had not been repaired correctly. There was a commitment to improve all leisure facilities to bring up to standard, but poor installation had led to the splash park issues and others including the skate park at Lee on the Solent which had also been poorly installed and was now unsafe for public use.

Supplementary Question:

I would like to point out that the Liberal Democrat Council had presented the upgrades to the Stokes Bay Splash Park in the capital programme last year and the work had not been undertaken and it was expected to be the same this year, but there was nothing in the plan for it this year. Stokes Bay Splash Park was a popular facility for young people and could reassurance be given that it would be properly maintained.

Answer: I can assure you it will be maintained and the facility will continue. The money allocated for the Stokes Bay Splash Park had needed to be amended to what had been planned following assessment but it would keep being improved. The difficulties with the splash parks included the availability of parks, with the yellow bucket for the Lee on the Solent facility only being available in Canada. However, work would continue to ensure that

both splash parks were up and running and coupled with a glorious summer the residents of Gosport and further afield would enjoy them.

Question in the name of Councillor Raffaelli to the Leader of the Council

On 26 July, Cllr Chegwyn was informed by the Deputy Monitoring Officer that he had breached the Councillors' Code of Conduct by bringing the Council and his role as a Councillor into disrepute by his actions because the wording he had used "in respect of the use of funds for the (new Gosport Borough Council) logo was open to misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the actual position.". Cllr Chegwyn was required to provide a short written confirmation that his "Facebook posts could have been misinterpreted by members of the public as suggesting that no funds left Gosport Council." The written statement was eventually provided to Cllr Raffaelli on 7 January. In that statement, Cllr Chegwyn states that he "will always choose my words carefully in the hope that Councillor Raffaelli and everyone else understands them."

In light of that commitment, and for the public record, what was the cost to Gosport Borough Council for the new GBC logo design work?

Answer: Councillor Raffaelli already knows the answer to this.

Supplementary question: Making a complaint against another Councillor is not something that is taken lightly, numerous opportunities had been given to confirm the £3465 spent on the design of the new logo but there had been a refusal to do so. A decision had been made by the Deputy Monitoring Officer in July that a statement should be made, so the public, very openly could understand what had been said. A statement was not received in a timely fashion and as had been pointed out, two Standards Board complaints had been upheld and for misleading behaviour. How therefore can Councillor Chegwyn not resign?

Answer: This is the sort of behaviour that happens because there is an upcoming election, why are you wasting people's time when you already know the answer.

Question in the name of Councillor Hammond to the Leader of the Council.

Would the Leader agree that the decision by the Conservative-run Hampshire County Council to switch off street lights overnight leaving many residential streets in Gosport in complete darkness poses a threat to pedestrians, male and female, walking home late at night?

Answer: Yes I would agree and condemn that there is not street lighting available for people to use. It is unsafe, creates a greater risk of crime, the 3 Members that are also Hampshire County Councillors, plus Cllr Meenaghan voted to reduce street lighting.

A great percentage of women and men feel unsafe as a result when the street lights aren't on, and this was as well as falling over all of the pot holes present. There is a clear link to street lighting provision and safer streets, but the County Council was cutting £125million in services, this would mean that people would not be safe walking home, the cuts to the buses would mean there were no buses to take and the campaign to reinstate street lights should be carried forward as a serious issue.

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**TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING PART I MINUTES OF THE BOARDS OF THE COUNCIL**

The Part I Minutes of the Housing Board on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024 were presented to the Council.

The Council were advised that the National Housing Framework process would be completed in the coming days.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) That Council Dwelling rents increase by CPI + 1% (7.7%) as set out in the Social Housing rent guidance.
- ii) The revised HRA Business Plan Financial Model extract (Appendix A) and associated 2023/24 revised budget and 2024/25 Budget (Appendix B) is agreed.
- iii) Service charges decrease on average by 2.1%
- iv) The rent for all garages increases in line with inflation as agreed in the garage renewal strategy.

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**TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING PART II MINUTES OF THE BOARDS OF THE COUNCIL**

The Part II Minutes of the Community and Environment Board on 10 January 2024 be presented and accepted by the Council.

The Part II Minutes of the Policy and Organisation Board on 23 January 2024 be presented and accepted by the Council.

A Member advised that as the former Chairman of the CCTV Partnership and seeing that there was a campaign to reinstate the CCTV Monitoring, it should be noted that whilst the reduction in CCTV live monitoring happened in July 2021, at a Board of the Council. The Council being constituted as a fourth option Council take decisions at Board meetings of Boards and Committees that are cross party, the decision in July 2021 was undertaken in this manner, on confidential papers to avoid highlighting the hours monitoring was not being undertaken. The decision to remove live monitoring entirely was not made by a Board, so under what authority was it taken and why was it not a Board decision.

The Council advised that the report published to Policy and Organisation Board had not been confidential as there was a right to know the information.

The decision had been taken to end the live monitoring as the CCTV monitoring tender had expired and it did not need to be taken back to Board. If it was to be reinstated it would come back to a Board, but it would need to be for 24/7 coverage, not half coverage and it would be requested that the Police and Crime Commissioner paid for it. A campaign had been undertaken to install a camera in Alver Valley and Grange Ward, by the Police and Gosport Borough Council, however this funding had been refused by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

A Member advised that there was lots of misinformation circulating about the subject, so requested to put it into context.

The decision to reduce monitoring in July 2021 was taken because Fareham Borough Council pulled out of the partnership. In October 2022 the Liberal Democrat run Council had cancelled the CCTV completely without taking it to a Board and no one was made aware this had happened. The situation in July 2021 was sensibly taken in a confidential meeting so as not to alert criminals to when the monitoring was not being undertaken, but also not to alarm the public. However, in 2022 the decision taken was not considered by a Board at all and now the public were more concerned as it had been realised there was no monitoring at all.

It had been claimed that to reinstate monitoring would cost £200k however the report to the Policy and Organisation Board stated that the previous costs were £82.5k. The public were not interested in the who, what and when, they just simply wanted to feel safe in their community. Would the Liberal Democrats be bringing back, acknowledging the concerns of the 1400 people that had signed the petition.

A Member raised a Point of Explanation to remind the Council that the CCTV cameras had not been switched off, they were no longer monitored.

A Member advised that that they felt it was a Borough choice and deferring the responsibility to the Police was unfair. The sums involved were questioned as the report had stated previous costs were £82500. The issue had also been raised to the Minister of Women and equalities in Parliament, who had been dismayed at the live monitoring removal.

Members of the public were urged to read the report to the Policy and Organisation Board on the 23 January 2024 to understand the difference between the removal of some of the monitoring and all of it. As previously advised the reduction in 2021 was a choice made by the Board covering at a level of 84 hours at peak time to offer reassurance.

The value of the monitoring had been described as immeasurable and this was an efficiency saving made at the cost of safety. The adverse workload to the community safety team had not been considered, and prioritisation should have been made over the continuation of the 84 hours monitoring instead of the choice of spending money on the community skips or the Criterion.

A Member advised that there was CCTV located all around and that the coverage provided by GBC was a fraction of what was available. Door bells, dash cameras, shops, pubs and car parks. Even in London, with its extensive network of CCTV cameras, the recent perpetrator in the acid attacks remained at large.

It was reiterated that the cameras would be operated, 24/7, 365 days a year, recording constantly and Gosport Borough Council shouldn't have to cut services to pay, the Police and Crime Commissioner should use their £50m budget.

A Member advised that they had previously worked in the CCTV control room and that there were three sets of screens to cover and requests would be received from officers to view specific angles by operatives, or if there were no officers in the locality, directed filming could take place, the Police could then request copies of the footage as evidence.

A Member advised that they were astonished that the Conservatives could be so concerned about safety on the streets when they had decimated safety on the streets through a reduction in Police on the streets, probation officers, and street lighting.

A Member advised that they also felt that there had been misinformation and misrepresentation, the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Organisation Board described the Police's response to the removal of live monitoring as immeasurable, when it had actually previously been quoted as unmeasurable, not possible to be measured. This suggested that the Police felt the live monitoring was more important than it was to train new Police Officers, of which Gosport had been allocated one.

The Member felt that the issue had been made into a political game and that the administration would do all they could to make women, children and men safe.

They advised that they had recently been speaking to a resident about local shortcuts and that the resident had advised that they did not use them at night as there was no street lighting, similar issues were faced with those in jobs that finished after 1am, faced with walking home in dark roads. It was felt that the English language had been distorted to exaggerate and scare people. The benefit of CCTV monitoring was unmeasurable, as you could not tell what was missed if it wasn't being monitored.

A Member advised that a lot had been commented on how safe Gosport was as a Town but it had been the most dangerous town in Hampshire in 2022/23 and 24<sup>th</sup> dangerous overall including cities and other areas. They also advised that the statement given to the Head of Corporate Policy and Community Safety had stated that the value of the monitoring was immeasurable in response to a Member's question at the Board. It was acknowledged that CCTV was good, but live CCTV monitoring was very very good with evidence in its efficiency in helping to solve crime.

It was unfair to suggest that the PCC was not supporting safer streets, when they had funded additional cameras including in Leesland Park. There had been a very significant impact on the Community Safety Staff, handling footage requests. The cost predicted in the report were for 84 hours monitoring and would allow for identification of times that were most risk.

A Member advised that they believed that there were three elements that were important, Police, Lighting, and CCTV Cameras. The College of Policing advised that Hampshire had the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest amount of Police Officers per 100000 people and that street lights were a successfully reducing crime and that whilst CCTV were successful reducing crime a considerable amount of the Borough was not covered by them. Improved lighting would be an improvement for all, and crimes would take place whether or not CCTV was monitored.

A Member advised that they felt that it was important for the Council to focus on things it could change. The Council could not change Police numbers, or the lighting, but it did have powers over the CCTV cameras in Gosport and the support they provided to hotspots in the Borough. The cameras had the ability to rotate and could zoom in when live monitored. Reinstatement would also free up Council staff.

A Member advised that they felt there had been a lot of backwards and forwards with regard to the CCTV monitoring, whether 50% was acceptable, or 100% and recognised that the ideal would of course be 100% monitoring, if it was achievable.

The small Community safety team did an excellent job and recognised there was to be an increase in staff and also that the previous monitoring had allowed the police to report matters directly to the control room. In addition it was acknowledged that they could not deter criminals or arrest them and that only active police could do this. If police could not respond to incidents happening nor was monitoring effective if places such as the esplanade were dark. The County Council needed to address the lighting situation within the Borough.

A Member advised that they had served as a Police Officer and welcomed the value of the cameras as they had used them previously to request support in monitoring ongoing incidents and that the reintroduction either of full or 84 hours monitoring would be beneficial.

It was suggested that to deflect to the Police and Crime Commissioner to pay was not acceptable as it was a function of GBC and that the use of monitoring was valuable. It was felt that if the live monitoring supported anyone in either not being a victim of crime, or in the resolution of crime it was worth it at any cost.

This was not to disagree that there was a desire for improved lighting and increased policing, but felt that the monitoring needed to also be reinstated.

The debate concluded with a Member reiterating that it had been the Conservative Council that had cut the monitoring 3 years ago and that this was also being seen in other councils including Basingstoke and Fareham. The issue had turned into a political football, and safer streets affected everyone but now the issue had been publicized further criminals had been advised the coverage had been removed.

The petition wanted full coverage, as did the Liberal Democrat group, but the Conservatives were happy with half coverage. The full coverage quote was estimated to be £200k allowing for the cost of price increases and inflation if the Police and Crime Commissioner brought it back. The budget of the PCC was £50m, which far exceeded that of the Council and should also use their funding for more officers in the Borough, rather than just the one extra that had been provided. The Police station was currently closed, despite being told it would reopen and was decaying badly.

Bringing back 24/7 monitoring would allow for safer streets, as would turning back on the street lights and more police officers to ensure people felt safe.

There were 44 cameras in the Borough including four new ones, Gosport Park, Jackie Spencer Bridge, Elson Park and Leesland Park. A request had been made for Grange but this had been refused, though it was deemed important not only for crime prevention but for things like fly tipping.

The impact of CCTV monitoring on crime was not debatable, but there was still no assurance that the police would attend any incidents. In addition one of the most useful benefits of the monitoring was when a vulnerable person went missing, the cameras were incredibly supportive in locating them. For all of these important reasons the Police and Crime Commissioner should pay for the reinstatement of live monitoring.



The Council adjourned between 20:00 and 20:10

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## **BUDGET REPORT**

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Treasurer detailing The Council is required to set a "Balanced Budget" and to maintain adequate levels of Reserves. The primary purpose of this report is to set the Council's overall Budget for the forthcoming year 2024/25 (both Revenue & Capital) and the associated level of Council Tax necessary to help fund the Budget.

The report also considers the overall financial position for 2024/25 and the forecasts for future years considering the outlook for both spending and funding, and the likely consequences for Council services moving forward.

In line with Standing Order 4.11( C) 5 members of the Council requested that speeches be extended to up to 7 minutes.

The Leader of the Council introduced the budget and advised that it was a pleasure to do so. The budget was good for Gosport with a less than inflation rate increase in Council Tax, over £1million in service improvements with no cuts to services. The increase was minor in comparison to Hampshire County Council, who had doubled their share of Council Tax and still had to cut £125 million from their budget, including Street lighting.

The budget provided more support for voluntary events and cultural events, it was supporting the High Street and helping to improve play areas. The increase for the Gosport element of the Council Tax would only increase by 11 pence a week one of the lowest in the County. With inflation still at 6% the increase to Gosport was less than half of that at 2.99%.

Over £1m had been invested into published and the budget was the best since 1995 it was sound financial management following the inheriting of £1.7m deficit from the previous administration and that this had to be factored in to make the budget workable for future years. The predictions for the budget on inflation had been based on 2% and that the budget had been worked to ensure the Council had dealt with the prediction being incorrect and the risk of bankruptcy that was being seen at other Councils it was in a good position, presenting a value for money budget where the Council did not need to borrow money ensure essential services continued.

The budget was robust and compared to the decisions being taken by Hampshire County Council it was positive. Hampshire County Council's increase on Council Tax was nearly double Gosport's and Gosport's was half the rate of inflation. Gosport had also made no service cuts, but Hampshire were making £125m of them, including bus subsidies, street lighting, dial a ride. All essential services. In addition repairs to pot holes and roads were not going ahead. School crossing patrols were being cut and allow this was impacting on the most vulnerable members of society. Cutting tips would increase rubbish and fly tipping,

cutting library services had led to independent libraries having better opening hours and more stock, and in addition the Council were being asked to remove skips, when the removal of some tips was creating an issue.

The Government continued to make cuts to Local Authority funding putting Councils under pressure. In addition, national policies were failing and Councils were having to use their reserves. Thanks to sound management, the amount used from reserves at Gosport Borough Council was reducing, from £494k to £315k to £179k and this was thanks to good financial management but there was not a money tree, and more careful planning needed to be undertaken.

The budget was such that a balance had been set with adequate reserves and protecting services.

The Council was being impacted by a number of financial demands, the pay award was positive for staff, but had impacted on the Council's finances by £174k in 2023-24 and would be another £50k in 2024-2025. The Council had also lost income on mixed recycling and from the Portchester Crematorium Committee.

There were ongoing pressures on housing and homelessness services, with constant demand on the Council's duty to help. There were becoming less available properties and the concern was expressed this would increase when the IRC reopened.

Inflation had peaked at 10% and this had impacted on people's ability to pay essential bills, there was a greater need for food banks and there were greater pressures on voluntary organisations such as CAB. The Council was supporting them with funding and had also introduced a Grants Sub-Board to try and help those that needed support.

The Council was supporting reinvestment into the Town Centre, using heritage grants to improve and invest and was also investing in and developing the Criterion, transforming it into a multipurpose arts centres. It was noted that recently in Parliament that Kettering Council, Conservative lead had been congratulated by the Prime Minister on their investment and development of an old building into an arts centre.

The Liberal Democrat Council were committed to invest in arts and culture, something that had been neglected previously. Rather than flats, the Criterion would be brought to life, as well as work with Historic England and market providers to deliver on promises to improve Gosport all done in a prudent manner.

There had been an improvement in the town since 2022 as well as a reduction in the deficit, but it was clear there was still work to do.

Funding had been cut by the Conservative government, equating to 40% in real terms, and Councils were having to find the funds to replace this. It was difficult to plan ahead with inflation soaring as a result of poor decisions. This needed constant reassessment as a result of additional cuts, such as those from Hampshire County Council and Portchester Crematorium.

Pressures on the budgets would continue with an increase demand to save money, the Borough Treasurer had forecast that more savings at a greater level would need to be made.

In response to questioning over the validity of the skips scheme. The public welcomed the locality of them, they welcomed that they did not have to make a booking for them and so far over 250 tonnes of waste had been collected which would otherwise be dumped.

The Council had provided free events across the High Street and had also held party in the park events and the sunset festival. These events were all free of charge so helping families in the Borough. The People's Park would be developed using some of the £18million levelling up funding which had been received after the Conservative administration had failed to receive anything in previous rounds.

It was acknowledged that tough decisions would need to be made, but the administration would not shirk away from these. The CCTV had not been renewed because it was believed that 24/7 monitoring needed to be provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner, more cameras were in situ. Investment was being made into play areas, and sports facilities, and the capital programme was being reviewed constantly.

The budget needed to be balanced and this was difficult with cuts to funding, but the administration were committed to protecting and improving services without additional borrowing to try and reduce the deficit. Over £1m of improved services was being delivered and additional funds being allocated to the market and regenerating the High Street and Stoke Road as well as the waterfront redevelopment.

The Leader thanked the officers for their hard work in producing the budget, as well as the Councillors that were involved. It was recognised that it had not been an easy task. It was recognised that the skill of the Borough Treasurer had been complimented by the recent appointment of the Head of Finance and that this provided a sound financial team for the Council's budgets and spending.

The budget presented delivered a low increase of 2.99%, over £1m investment in public services and low tax and high services was a commitment the Liberal Democrats were making.

A notice of amendment was given that at the end of the recommendations the following was added as 2.18a.

That mindful of the Council's budget situation the Police and Crime Commissioner be asked to fund the reintroduction of 24/7 CCTV monitoring in Gosport.

### **The Council adjourned from 20:00 until 20:10.**

A Member sought clarification that in line with point 2.19 of the report, the Section 151 Officer had a duty to report to Members on the robustness of reserves and must also include a written by the Section 151 officer on any amendments.

The Section 151 Officer confirmed that as the amendment did not propose a financial burden on the Council he was satisfied and that it was robust in line with 8.6 of the report and no written statement was required.

A Member advised that the budget should be robust and spent wisely, and that several times the Criterion had been mentioned and looking at the capital programme there was £1,025,000 in the budget for the Criterion. This did not include the outlay of £600,000 spent to purchase the building as well as £600k on essential maintenance so this already came to

£1.2m, greater than what was stated in the Capital programme. It was important to know how much the criterion would cost and that the public knew where the money to pay for it was coming from.

A Member advised that they considered the proposed amendment to be void without a statement from the Section 151 officer.

Concern was expressed that the Council had forfeited a government grant of £1.35million and the chance for affordable housing on the bus station site at the expense of a park and a burger van.

It was highlighted that the savings detailed in staff costs in 2022/23 and 2023/24 had not been delivered and therefore it was anticipated that the cost predictions for 2024/25 would also not be delivered.

Car parking charges had increased by up to 57.5% and permits had increased by 53.3%, sports fees to 46.4% with some increased by 62.3%. These are increases to fees and charges that real people were being faced with and having to pay and people would eventually vote with their feet as was being shown with half empty car parks and reduced income from them.

It was noted that the community safety priorities had been allocated £420 in the budget which was less than the increase for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's allowance for 2024/25.

A Member advised that they felt the amendment was a cheap shot and that and not within the budget process. They advised that they had worked with the Borough Treasurer who had been incredibly helpful but there were a number of projects listed that simply did not deliver the savings promised and missed opportunities. The bus station project had handed back money from the government to support additional housing, the levelling up fund had been very specific in its designation, work on the rum store and work on linking the walkway to Royal Clarence Yard. The levelling up funds had also been applied for under the previous administration and the current administration had done nothing to achieve it.

There were no plans for the People's Park, no idea of what was going to happen there no detail to any of the plans proposed and delivery on projects failed.

A Member clarified that with regard to the Crematorium, there was a need for a new cremator, the cost of which would be taken from the upcoming budgets for the Crematorium. Whilst the Committee had budgeted for this replacement work, it did mean that until it was paid for, there would not be a surplus to return to the owning Councils, Fareham, Gosport, Portsmouth and Havant. The proposed spend and budget had been agreed by those that were on the Portchester Crematorium Joint Committee.

A Member recognised the importance of the Borough Treasurer and his team recognising his guardianship over the budget and also felt that the amendment was void as it did not impact on the budget proposed. They felt that the promotion of sport, the increased use in leisure facilities and that money to support this could be given from axing the community skips when there was already the option to visit the tip.

Proposals were being presented to Boards with no detail, including the criterion, there had been constant increases in costs including parking. Flood defences had not been delivered and it was requested that a specific update be given on the progress of the work for

Anglesey and Alverstoke. It was confirmed that there was still an issue with the cable that had been found.

A Member advised that they were disappointed at the attitude shown towards council officers, the Borough Treasurer was content with the proposed amendment and that should be accepted. They noted that it was interesting that with such criticism of the Community Skips, that Fareham Borough Council were considering doing the same.

A Member advised that they also supported the Borough Treasurer, that things were moving forward for Gosport and that this all need to be done whilst providing value for money. The budget situation was better than that inherited at the change of administration and the administration were making a good job of taking positive steps. There were challenges ahead, but the opposition had shown that they could not deliver.

A Member advised that the budget had been introduced criticising decisions made by Hampshire County Council, when the budget being set was that of Gosport Borough Council, who had no influence on Hampshire County Council.

The fees set were the highest ever, claims that the administration had delivered were wrong, and choices were being taken that the residents did not want, this included the removal of live monitoring CCTV, the increase in sports pitch charges, car park charges that had increased 3 times in 18 months and an increase in the times charges were made.

The refurbishment of Brookers pavilion was not being undertaken, all of these were an attack on those that liked to exercise.

The CCTV report that had previously been taken to the Policy and Organisation was confidential to protect those that were vulnerable and 24/7 live coverages could be reinstated to ensure residents safety.

It was reiterated that the Levelling up funding had not been secured by the Liberal Democrat Council, the application had been made under the Conservative administration and the government had decided to award funding to those projects that had previously missed out. This money was for the development of the rum store and to connect the areas. Money had been returned because a development had not been undertaken on the brownfield bus station site providing much need housing.

Splash parks were not being refurbished, but skips were being contracted. The grants sub-board had been established but it was paying out sums to football clubs for sports jackets. Investment was said to have been made in the market but to date there had only been one present and the perceived saving of £125k on staff was meant to be 37 staff leading to low pay rates or hours.

Despite all of the cuts funding was being made available for the criterion, but with no indication of where the funds would come from. If the opposition were in power they advised that they would withdraw the People's park, reinstate CCTV monitoring, and invest in sports fields.

A Member advised that there was very little room to reduce the Council Tax Increase without services being cut, and that as a result, difficult decisions needed to be made.

It was currently difficult times in which there was an increase need for help and support for people, particularly with housing.

It was felt more police were needed and that skips provision supported those unable to travel to the tip. It was hoped that initiatives like community clean ups could also be introduced.

The Easter market was welcomed and the inclusion of stakeholders was welcome as was the schemes that promoted restoration of heritage assets and promoted conservation and welcoming visitors to the Borough.

The finding of free events was encourages and welcomed as was the support for Stoke Road as it was good to be working for the residents. Support for the voluntary sector was welcome, the Willow Garden had been a great success and was supporting people and establishing communities.

It was important to protect both the heritage and the waterfront and it was good to see progress with the bus station. It was important that the views were protected. When the transport hub was finished it would be an asset.

Thanks to Council staff was reiterated as was the welcome opportunity to increase services for the residents.

The Leader thanked Members for their support and reiterated commitment on skips and the Criterion and that the Grants Sub Board was specifically helping more of the Borough that needed it.

For the first time in 25 years things were moving forwards in the Borough and the change was what people wanted whilst continuing to protect services. The criterion would provide the Borough with an arts venue and the commitment to do this was reflected in Hampshire Cultural Trust's willingness to support projects such as the museum, when in Fareham funding was being withdrawn from the Ashcroft and Westbury Manor.

A named vote was taken on the amendment as follows.

Proposed Amendment

That at the end of the recommendations the following was added as 2.18a.

That mindful of the Council's budget situation the Police and Crime Commissioner be asked to fund the reintroduction of 24/7 CCTV monitoring in Gosport.

FOR: Councillors Ballard, M Bradley, K Bradley, Chegwyn, Cox, Cully, Durrant, Earle, Hammond, Herridge, Hylands, Johnston, Kelly, Marshall, Maynard, Westerby. (16)

ABSTAIN: Councillor Beavis, Burgess, Casey, Gledhill, Huggins, Jessop, Morgan, Raffaelli, Scard, The Mayor. (10)

Councillor Philpott advised that he would not vote on an amendment that he did not believe to be valid in line with the Council's constitution.

The motion was carried and became the substantive motion.

A named vote was taken on the recommendation as follows:

- 2.1 A Revised General Fund Budget for 2023/24 of £11,582,410 as set out in Appendix A;
- 2.2 A General Fund Budget for 2024/25 of £12,434,500 as set out in Appendix A and broken down in Appendix C;
- 2.3 Any variation arising from the final Local Government Finance Settlement be accommodated by a transfer to / from the Revenue Financing Reserve;
- 2.4 That the level of Council Tax be increased by 2.99% for 2024/25;
- 2.5 It be noted that the Borough Treasurer has determined that the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2024/25 will be 26,980.9 [item T in the formula in Section 31 B(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")];
- 2.6 That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the financial year 2024/25 in accordance with Section 31 and Sections 34 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:

87,889	the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.
97,777	the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
0,112	the amount by which the aggregate at 2.6 (a) above exceeds the aggregate at 2.6(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.
37	the amount at 2.6 (c) above (Item R), all divided by Item 2.5 above (Item T), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.

(e) Valuation Bands (Gosport Borough Council)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
170.25	198.62	227.00	255.37	312.12	368.87	425.62	510.74

***Being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at 2.6 (d) 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 in different valuation bands.***

- 2.7 That it be noted that for the financial year 2024/25 Hampshire County Council will propose the following amounts for the precept to be issued to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of categories of the dwellings shown below:

Valuation Bands (Hampshire County Council)

<b>A</b> <b>£</b>	<b>B</b> <b>£</b>	<b>C</b> <b>£</b>	<b>D</b> <b>£</b>	<b>E</b> <b>£</b>	<b>F</b> <b>£</b>	<b>G</b> <b>£</b>	<b>H</b> <b>£</b>
1,022.16	1,192.52	1,362.88	1,533.24	1,873.96	2,214.68	2,555.40	3,066.48

- 2.8 That it be noted that for the financial year 2024/25, the Hampshire Police & Crime Commissioner has proposed the following amounts for the precept to be issued to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below:

**Valuation Bands (Hampshire Police & Crime Commissioner)**

<b>A</b> <b>£</b>	<b>B</b> <b>£</b>	<b>C</b> <b>£</b>	<b>D</b> <b>£</b>	<b>E</b> <b>£</b>	<b>F</b> <b>£</b>	<b>G</b> <b>£</b>	<b>H</b> <b>£</b>
174.31	203.36	232.41	261.46	319.56	377.66	435.77	522.92

- 2.9 That it be noted that for the financial year 2024/25, that Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority will be recommended to consider the following amounts for the precept issued to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below:

**Valuation Bands (Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority)**

<b>A</b> <b>£</b>	<b>B</b> <b>£</b>	<b>C</b> <b>£</b>	<b>D</b> <b>£</b>	<b>E</b> <b>£</b>	<b>F</b> <b>£</b>	<b>G</b> <b>£</b>	<b>H</b> <b>£</b>
55.23	64.43	73.64	82.84	101.25	119.66	138.07	165.68

- 2.10 That having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 2.6(e), 2.7, 2.8 and 2.9 above, the Council, in accordance with Sections 31A, 31B and 34 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for the financial year 2024/25 for each of the categories of dwellings shown on the next page:

**Valuation Bands (Total Council Tax)**

<b>A</b> <b>£</b>	<b>B</b> <b>£</b>	<b>C</b> <b>£</b>	<b>D</b> <b>£</b>	<b>E</b> <b>£</b>	<b>F</b> <b>£</b>	<b>G</b> <b>£</b>	<b>H</b> <b>£</b>
1,421.95	1,658.93	1,895.93	2,132.91	2,606.89	3,080.87	3,554.86	4,265.82

- 2.11 The Borough Treasurer be given delegated authority to implement any variation to the overall level of Council Tax arising from the final notification of the Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Police & Crime Commissioner and Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority precepts.
- 2.12 The Council determines in accordance with Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2024/25, which represents a 2.99% increase, is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved by the Secretary of State under Section 52ZC of the Act.
- 2.13 As the billing authority, the Council has not been notified by a major precepting authority (Hampshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire or the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority) that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2024/25 is excessive and that the billing authority is not required to hold a referendum in accordance with Section 52ZK of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.



- 2.14 That the Council approves the Savings Strategy for 2025/26 onwards set out in this report, requiring that £0.401m of Budget Savings are made in 2025/26 as a minimum and that indicative savings of a further £0.401m will be required in both 2026/27 and 2027/28, these indicative savings being subject to an annual review.
- 2.15 Members have had regard for the Statement of the Section 151 Officer in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003 as set out in the report.
- 2.16 The Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2026/27 as set out in Appendix D is approved.
- 2.17 That the Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix E are approved.
- 2.18 That the Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 as set out in Appendix F is approved.
- 2.19 That mindful of the Council's budget situation the Police and Crime Commissioner be asked to fund the reintroduction of 24/7 CCTV monitoring in Gosport.

FOR: Councillors Ballard, M Bradley, K Bradley, Chegwyn, Cox, Cully, Durrant, Earle, Hammond, Herridge, Hylands, Johnston, Kelly, Marshall, Maynard, Westerby. (16)

AGAINST: Councillor Beavis, Burgess, Casey, Gledhill, Huggins, Jessop, Morgan, Philpott, Raffaelli, Scard. (10)

ABSTAIN: The Mayor (1)

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## **LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME FOR 2024/25**

Consideration was given to a report of the deputy Chief Executive, Head of Benefits, Procurement and Insurance updating Members on the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme for 2023/24 and to proposing the scheme for 2024/25, for which no changes are intended.

The report provides an update on the 2023/24 LCTS scheme with regards to claimant caseload, expenditure.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Council approves the LCTS scheme for 2024/25, which

Maintains the current 2023/24 scheme for those of working-age, and

Notes the continuation of the unchanged statutory scheme for pension-age customers that will be updated to reflect the annual uprating of allowances, premiums and any statutory base legislation changes required, which are yet to be received from the Department for Levelling up, Housing & Communities (DLUCH).

A draft scheme for approval is included within Appendix 1 of the report.

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## **PROCUREMENT UPDATE AND WAIVERS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Benefits, Procurement and Insurance detailing the “Waiver/Exemptions” authorised since the revision of the Councils Contract Procedure Rules which were approved by the Standards and Audit Board on 17/11/22 and ratified by full Council on 22/12/22 when an undertaking was made to report such Waivers/Exemptions to Board on a regular basis.

It was noted that the list provided covered the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.

RESOLVED: That the Council note the report.

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## **COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Treasurer seeking approval to amend the current Council Tax Premiums charged on unoccupied and unfurnished properties with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and to introduce a new premium charge on second home properties – property that is furnished and periodically occupied with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025.

The Board was advised there was an addendum to correct some of the figures listed in the tables.

RESOLVED:

- i) that the Council implements a 100% premium for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for a period between 1 and 5 years. This will change the current policy of charging a 100% premium where a property is empty and unfurnished for period between 2 and 5 years.
- ii) that Council impliments a 100% premium for second homes which will be effective from 01 April 2025, the earliest opportunity for the Council to introduce this change.
- iii) delegated authority be provided to the Section 151 Officer to vary the premiums in line with government guidance.

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## **PSPO REPORT COUNCIL FEB 24**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Corporate Policy and Community and Safety seeking approval from Full Council for the extension of the Hardway Green Public Spaces Protection Order from the period 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024 to 6<sup>th</sup> March 2027.

It was noted that although Councillor Hutchison was unable to attend the meeting he was in full support of the proposal.

RESOLVED:

That the Council:

- Considers the results of the consultation exercise carried out between 05/12/23-02/01/24 and the content of this report;
- Approves the extension of the Hardway Green PSPO from 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024 for the period of 3 years to control Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in the area shown edged black in the accompanying plans as set out in Appendix 1 enforceable from 1<sup>st</sup> April – 31<sup>st</sup> October each year; and
- Delegates Authority to the Head of Corporate Policy and Community Safety to take the required steps to extend the Hardway Green PSPO from 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024 for the period of 3 years.

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### **ELECTION OF MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ELECT 2024/25**

Two nominations were received for Mayor Elect for the Municipal Year 2024/25, Councillor Earle and Councillor Huggins.

Both nominations were proposed and seconded and Councillor Earle was duly elected as Mayor Elect for the Municipal Year 2024/25.

Two nominations were received for Deputy Mayor Elect for the Municipal Year 2024/25, Councillor Kirsten Bradley, and Councillor Casey.

Both nominations were proposed and seconded and Councillor Kirsten Bradley was duly elected as Deputy Mayor Elect for the Municipal Year 2024/25.

The Meeting concluded at 9.31 pm

The Mayor.