

CORNWALL COUNCIL

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MINUTES of a Meeting of the Cornwall Council held in the Council Chamber, Cornwall Council, County Hall, Truro TR1 3AY on Tuesday 20 February 2024 commencing at 10.30 am.

Present:- Councillors: Giles (Chairman)
Rowse (Vice-Chairman)

Alvey, Arthur, Barnes, Bastin, Bunney, Channon, Chopak, Clemens, Cole, Conway, Crabtree, Craker, Cruse, Desmonde, Donnithorne, Double, Dwelly, Ellenbroek, Ewert, Fairman, Fitter, Foreman, Frank, Frost, Gardner, George, German, Glasson, Guest, Harris, Harvey, Jenkin, Jewell, Jordan, Keeling, Kirkham, Lennox-Boyd, Long, Luke, Magowan, Marrington, Martin, J Martin, McKenna, McLening, P Mitchell, Monk, Moorcroft, Mould, Mustoe, Nolan, J Pascoe, L Pascoe, Paynter, Perry, Rich, Rogerson, Saunby, Seeva, Soady, Taylor, M Thomas, Tilbey, Tivnan, Toms, Tudor, Virr, Weedon, Wells, Widdon, Williams-Pears, Williams, Wills and Worth.

Also in attendance:- Councillors: (None).

Also in attendance (virtual):- Rushworth and Towill

Apologies for absence:- Councillors: Kirk, La Broy, A Mitchell, Morgan, Parsons, J Thomas and White.

PRAYERS

(Agenda No. 1)

CC/453 Reverend Lorraine Mellor, Chair of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Methodist District, led the Council in prayer.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda No. 3)

CC/454 There were no declarations of interest.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Agenda No. 4)

CC/455 The Chairman congratulated the Vice Chairman on the birth of his son.

She informed Members that she had written to the King on behalf of the Council to wish him well in his treatment and for a fast recovery.

She expressed sadness at the death of Roger Bonney, who had been a former Cornwall County Councillor, Falmouth Town Councillor and Mayor of Falmouth

She also expressed sorrow at the recent death of Councillor Edwina Hannaford, who had been the Member for Looe West, Pelynt, Lansallos & Lanteglos. Councillor Hannaford had served on the former Caradon District Council and Cornwall Council, also serving for eight years as a Cabinet Member at Cornwall Council and as Liberal Democrat Group Leader for almost three years.

The Chairman concluded by inviting Group Leaders to pay tribute to Councillor Edwina Hannaford before a minute's silence was observed.

LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Agenda No. 5)

CC/456 The Leader informed Members that the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had visited Cornwall to announce new planning requirements for properties let for more than 90 nights a year. It was hoped that in conjunction with existing schemes this would help to alleviate the housing crisis, which was a recurring priority in residents surveys, as well as assessments such as the Economic Growth and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Tourism Panel's findings which were to be considered by Cabinet.

She also advised Members that Cornwall Council was short listed for the Diversity and Inclusion category in the Local Government Chronicle Awards 2024. This was a reflection of the culture of Cornwall Council, with more work ongoing in this area.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2024

(Agenda No. 6)

CC/457 It was moved by Councillor Giles, seconded by Councillor Rowse, and

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 16 January 2024 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman, subject to the time of the meeting being amended from 10:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

(Agenda No. 7)

CC/458 Seven questions were received from members of the public as the eighth had been withdrawn by the questioner.

PLANT BASED TREATY

CC/459 A public question had been received from Mr Heslop-George of Falmouth who was not in attendance at the meeting so the Vice Chairman asked the question on his behalf.

“Vegan diets result in 75% less GHG emissions and land use than diets with 100g of meat daily. They cut wildlife destruction by 66% and water use 54%. Will Cornwall join 24 councils, including Edinburgh, Exmouth and Norwich by endorsing the Plant Based Treaty and developing a plant-based food strategy?”

The following response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change:-

“Recently Cornwall Council has almost unanimously supported motions in support of our local farmers and growers, and separately, our fishers. Cornwall Council recognises that if we are to address the challenges of climate change, biodiversity decline and the crisis in public health, we must tackle the fundamental issues in our food and farming systems. The debate about the role of livestock in climate-friendly farming systems has become too simplistic – reduced to ‘animals versus plants’. This fails to differentiate between livestock that are part of the problem, and those which are a key part of the solution. Cutting all meat consumption is not the simple answer. Instead, we must look at the sustainability of all foods, both plant and animal-based, and make a more nuanced choice about what we should eat to be healthy and sustainable, on the basis of how these foods are produced and harvested. I

can confidently state that those choosing a plant based diet are not being ignored by the Council.

Improving 'on farm' productivity levels, reducing artificial fertiliser use, making more use of home-grown forage, making better use of livestock manure (especially on farms with no livestock), reducing energy use, supporting on farm renewable generation that is used on site, as well as taking steps to improve biodiversity and nature recovery on all farms are all tools we can use. These will help farmers transition towards a more secure and sustainable livelihood that will contribute - rather than distract from - our climate objectives.

As consumers we also have a role to play in this agenda. The choice about what food we buy and where we buy it is important. In an ideal world we should align our diets as far as reasonably possible with what can be produced sustainably in the regions in which we live as re-localising our food systems is an important factor in our own personal climate impact. The work of our Carbon Neutral team, the support we are providing the emerging Cornwall Sustainable Food Network, our work on nature recovery and biodiversity net gain and the work we are doing to support the agricultural industry to transition are designed to deliver a system change - but this change will take time.

The constitution for Cornwall Council enables any Councillor, with a seconder and three supporters to bring forward a motion on the lines suggested by your question, and I know that in the years that I have been a Councillor that members frequently receive a 'chain' email with the same content. Given that the economy of Cornwall relies heavily on farming and to a lesser extent fishing, and the majority of those farm businesses are livestock and dairy based (for sound agricultural business reasons) you will understand why nobody has ventured to bring forward such a motion."

BOSCASTLE PARKING POLICY

CC/460 This question was withdrawn by the questioner.

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF A CHILD

CC/461 A public question had been received from Mr Bennett of Tregony who was not in attendance at the meeting so the Vice Chairman asked the question on his behalf.

“Is this Council aware that it is a full and committed signatory to United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - when is this Council going to honour its commitment to UNCRC ?”

The following response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Children: -

“Cornwall Council takes its commitment to the UNCRC very seriously. Over the last four years, the Council has proactively worked to embed a Children’s Rights approach into the organisation to support the priority of Cornwall being a Brilliant Place to be a Child and Grow Up. This includes employing a dedicated Children’s Rights Team, delivering training on the UNCRC to better understand duty and entitlement, and working across the organisation to improve children’s experiences and access to their rights. We have an active Youth Council and each year we hold an Annual Conversation which enables children and young people to talk directly with Elected Members and Council Directors, upholding their right to be heard and taken seriously and to challenge the Council on its response to their concerns at a local, national and global level. Children and Young People across Cornwall are currently voting in the national Make Your Mark process which enables them to say what they see as the biggest issues nationally and globally. One option this year is International Relations.

Cornwall does not condone situations where children are experiencing or likely to experience fear, pain or suffering or breaching of wider rights. We have a strong commitment to supporting families who have experienced war and displacement. We work hard to support separated children seeking asylum and refugee families access their rights in Cornwall to recover from trauma, to reintegration, education, housing and health care.”

TAMAR CROSSINGS

CC/462 A public question had been received from Miss Carter of Saltash who was not in attendance at the meeting so the Vice Chairman asked the question on her behalf.

“Why are Tamar Toll payers expected to pay towards the extortionate and rising costs associated with the Tamar Crossings Learning Centre when it has no relevance to providing a 'safe and reliable' crossing?”

The following response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Transport: -

“The Tamar Bridge Act 1998 introduced specific provision of powers to promote the Bridge and Ferry and encourage visitors, reflecting the aspirations of the parent authorities.

Reflecting the spirit of this provision, the ‘Bridging the Tamar’ Visitor and Learning Centre was set up in 2018 to celebrate the heritage and engineering of the Tamar Bridge and Royal Albert Bridge, and to provide educational opportunities for schools and local community groups. The Centre was established using 75% funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and 25% from Tamar Crossings, and since June 2022 the Centre has been funded solely by Tamar Crossings.

An accredited social value evaluation tool commonly used by local authorities found that for every £1 invested by Tamar Crossings in the Visitor Centre in 2022/23, the Visitor Centre provided a social return of over £3.

The Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee and this Council consider that the Visitor and Learning Centre continues to deliver a very valuable social benefit to the local community, and that the expenditure incurred is well justified.

We can also assure residents that as part of the Tamar 2050 Plan we will continue to review all expenditure going forward to ensure good value for money is delivered.”

ANTI-SEMITISM

CC/463 A public question had been received from Mrs Bennett of Tregony who was not in attendance at the meeting so the Vice Chairman asked the question on X behalf.

“Following my previous question to you re Cornwall Council’s adoption of definition of anti-semitism and your response, please tell me if you accept and agree with the statement by 3 of the world's most respected human rights organisations that Israel is an inherently racist state?”

The following response was provided by the Leader of the Council:-

“Like so many people across the world, I’m deeply troubled by the escalating tensions across the Middle East and whole-heartedly support the UK Government’s stance in calling for an immediate pause to get aid in and hostages out of Gaza, then progress towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.”

TAMAR CROSSINGS

CC/464 A public question had been received from Dr Priston of Saltash who was not in attendance at the meeting so the Vice Chairman asked the question on his behalf.

“Regarding the proposed uplift to the Tamar Crossing tolls, would Cornwall Council consider asking the Joint Committee to quantify the consequences of no uplift after reducing their spending plans (eg on electrified ferries and the visitor centre) rather than approving another toll uplift so soon after the last one?”

The following response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Transport: -

“Cornwall Council will determine its position on the proposed toll revision and proposed budgets when it considers the recommendations in Agenda Item 8.2 of today’s meeting.

Tamar Crossings is a joint undertaking, and the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee that governs it comprises five Members from each of the parent authorities – Plymouth City Council and Cornwall Council. Cornwall Council is therefore strongly represented on the Joint Committee.

Over the past four years the Joint Committee has had to respond to the unprecedented and unexpected financial pressures presented by Covid and subsequently by the high levels of inflation following the start of the war in Ukraine. During that four year period the Joint Committee has held numerous workshops as well as its routine quarterly meetings, to examine and control costs and review service delivery levels to ensure value for money is achieved in all areas of the undertaking. Both the decarbonisation of the Ferry operation and the operation of the Visitor and Learning Centre were within the scope of those deliberations. The revenue budgets and capital programme developed by the Joint Committee ensure that service delivery levels are appropriate and that the crossings remains safe, reliable and efficient, and that the key assets of the undertaking – the Bridge, the Ferries and associated infrastructure - are maintained to appropriate standards to remain serviceable into the future.

At its meeting on 8 December 2023 Members resolved to reduce the proposed toll increase being recommended by officers and voted by a casting vote majority to recommend a lower level of toll increase that provides less financial resilience but gives greater weight to minimising the burden on users. The budgets endorsed by the Joint Committee at its meeting on 12

January 2024 and being presented to this Council at today's meeting incorporate that lower level of increase.

Cornwall Council places trust in its representatives on the Joint Committee and in those of its partner Plymouth City Council, to deliver value for money and determine an appropriate balance between service delivery and cost and is satisfied that in reluctantly proposing a toll increase and developing its revenue budgets and capital programme the Joint Committee has taken into account all relevant factors."

TAMAR TOLL TAX

CC/465 A public question had been received from Mr Allen of Saltash who was not in attendance at the meeting so the Vice Chairman asked the question on his behalf.

"In the item on the Tamar Toll tax will councillors be able to vote with their conscience or will the Leader or Section 151 Officer direct the way they vote?"

The following response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Transport:-

"Thank you for your question. The Conservative Group is not directed how to vote. Of course, I cannot speak for other Groups. However, it should be the case that it is a matter for each Member as to how they vote on the future financing of the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry, where they will take account of the debate later in this meeting and the full range of information presented within the report, including the recommendations from the Joint Committee on the matter, the responses to the public consultation and the legal, financial and risk implications in respect of the proposed increase and any officer advice. "

TAMAR TOLL TAX

CC/466 A public question had been received from Mr Carter of Saltash who was not in attendance at the meeting so the Vice Chairman asked the question on his behalf.

"Sheryll Murray MP has publicly stated she is against an increase in the Tamar Toll Tax this year. How can Cornwall Council make a resolution for an increase given this position?"

The following response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Transport:-

“Thank you for your question. The Tamar Bridge Act 1957 requires that a Joint Committee of the parent authorities, that is Cornwall and Plymouth City Councils, be established and part of its role is to consider the future financing of the crossings, including potential toll revisions. It has undertaken this duty and its recommendations are before the Council today for consideration and will also be considered by Plymouth City Council shortly. While Sheryll Murray has her views, both parent authorities have a responsibility to come a decision on this matter in a timely manner due to the need to ensure that the undertaking has a budget in place from 1 April.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET

CC/467 The following recommendations had been received from the Cabinet.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN, MEDIUM TERM BUDGET AND RENT SETTING FOR 2024-2025

(Agenda No. 8.1)

CC/468 The Portfolio Holder for Housing expressed his support for the recommendations in the report, stating the three main priorities were to invest in current housing stock, acquire new housing stock, and to pursue carbon net zero. He emphasised that improvements at Cornwall Housing Ltd. (CHL) were ongoing. The Leader of the Council also spoke in favour of the recommendation in the report, stating that the 7.7% increase in rents had carefully been considered to balance the needs of potentially vulnerable residents and the financial needs of CHL.

During the discussion a number of issues were raised, including: -

- (i) Concern was expressed that this was the second consecutive year of rent increases, with some tenants stating that this was an unsustainable increase.
- (ii) The view was expressed that the number of empty houses owned by CHL was too great, and the length of time it took to fill empty houses was too long.
- (iii) It was confirmed that a written response would be provided on whether there was a legal requirement to include the full response from the Tenants Forum in the report
- (iv) Members were informed that in some instances it was not cost effective to renovate empty properties, due to the high cost to bring them to an acceptable standard and the asset disposal process

being potentially lengthy. Members were further informed that the average length of time a CHL property remained empty was on average 40 days. This was significantly longer compared to private sector housing due to the amount of checks conducted on a property before it was made available again to rent.

- (v) Members were advised that CHL sought to house residents in appropriate housing, dependant on their individual needs.
- (vi) A written response would be provided on whether moving to more suitable homes meant those owner by CHL or the private rented sector.
- (vii) Members were advised that health and safety issues were a priority, with maintenance issues such as damp and mould being dealt with as quickly as possible.
- (viii) The view was expressed that CHL housing stock was making insufficient progress towards Cornwall Council's carbon net zero plans.
- (ix) Members were informed that construction costs had increased by around 30% in the previous year.
- (x) Members were advised that capacity to undertake improvements on housing stock was a greater issue than financial concerns. Programmes were in place to train local workers to be able to work on improvements, with new staff becoming qualified to ease the shortage in the future.
- (xi) The view was expressed that Government was aware of the pressure on Cornish housing, and that measures such as the recently announced changes to short term lets would help alleviate pressure on the system.
- (xii) The view was expressed that increases in affordable rent levels should not exceed inflation tracked by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and it was confirmed that a written response would be provided as to whether CPI +1 would take affordable rents above the regulated level.
- (xiii) Concern was expressed over the number of people housed in bed and breakfast accommodation.
- (xiv) It was confirmed that all Members would be sent a copy of the latest report from CHL on its compliance standards
- (xv) Members were informed that the Empty Homes Team which investigated CHL and private sector vacant residential properties had taken on additional tasks and was no longer solely focused on empty houses.

It was moved by Councillor Monk, seconded by Councillor Taylor and

RESOLVED

1. That the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and budget for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.
2. That both social and affordable dwelling rents for existing tenants increase by CPI (September 2023) plus 1% for the 2024/2025 financial year.
3. That both social and affordable dwelling rents for new tenants on new lets to be charged at formula rents for new tenants increase by CPI (September 2023) plus 1% for the 2024/2025 financial year.

TAMAR BRIDGE AND TORPOINT FERRY - FUTURE FINANCING AND 2024/25 REVENUE AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME

(Agenda No. 8.2)

CC/469 The Portfolio Holder for Transport spoke in support of the proposals, noting that the previous to the last toll increase, tolls had remained unchanged since 1991, with increasing operational costs and traffic levels on the crossings remaining at 90% of pre-Covid levels. He emphasised that this was the lowest possible toll increase out of the options considered and if new funding for the crossings could be secured, then the proposed toll revision could be reconsidered.

It was moved by Councillor Williams-Pears, seconded by Councillor Harris and

1. That, having considered the contents of the report, including the responses from the public consultation, set out in Appendix 1 to the report, an application for a toll revision based on £3.00 cash and £1.50 TAG. Where the application is successful but prior to the toll revision being implemented the Government provide funding to the Tamar Bridge which can be used to offset expenditure, then the proposed toll increase will either not be implemented or will be decreased in line with that funding.
2. That the 2024/25 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme and the 2024/25 draft Business Plan, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.
3. That the longer-term forecast to 2027/28 be noted.

A proposed amendment by Councillor Desmonde which sought to defer a decision on recommendation 1 until the April Council meeting was confirmed by the Monitoring Officer as not permissible as it would result in an unlawful action by the Council.

During the debate a number of issues were raised, including:-

- (i) Concern was expressed that the proposed toll increases were too high for residents during a cost of living crisis.
- (ii) Reference was made to the fact that 57% of respondents to the public consultation had said that there should not be an increase in tolls.
- (iii) The view was expressed that long term plans for Tamar Crossings' desired levels of traffic flow were in contradiction to Cornwall Council's carbon net zero ambition.
- (iv) Alternative income generation methods should be considered.
- (v) The view was expressed that many users of the Tamar Crossings had no choice whether to use the crossings so as to access employment, healthcare or other services and any toll to use the crossings had a detrimental impact on the local economies.
- (vi) There was general support for the view that National Highways and Government should contribute to the funding of the crossings and that tolling was an unfair means of revenue generation.
- (vii) The view was expressed that any toll revision should be deferred, and that expenses such as toll booth renovation would be unnecessary after the implementation of free flow tolling.
- (viii) Members were informed that a budget for Tamar Crossings was required to be agreed by both parent Authorities before the new financial year and that toll rates would have an impact on budget setting.
- (ix) Members were advised that if toll rates did not increase, Tamar Crossings may have to consider other options of revenue generation such as reducing the TAG discount, which could adversely affect local residents.

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor C Martin, seconded by Councillor Frost

1. That, having considered the contents of the report, including the responses from the public consultation, set out in Appendix 1 to the report , an application for a toll revision based on £3.00 cash and £1.50 TAG, be made

to the Secretary of State in accordance with the applicable legislation, be deferred until after the General Election. Where the application is successful but prior to the toll revision being implemented the Government provide funding to the Tamar Bridge which can be used to offset expenditure, then the proposed toll increase will either not be implemented or will be decreased in line with that funding.

2. That the 2024/25 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme and the 2024/25 draft Business Plan, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved as amended to remove the additional income from the toll increase from November 2024, a reflection of the draw on reserves in 2024/25, and the business plan forward from there reflects the lack of income from toll and the draw on reserves and from the Council that will be required, with delegated authority to amend accordingly.

3. That the longer-term forecast to 2027/28 be noted.

During the debate on the amendment, a number of issues were raised, including:-

- (i) The view was expressed that deferral would allow time for Members of Parliament to lobby Government for additional funding to operate the Tamar Crossings.
- (ii) Reference was made to the fact that the crossings had an impact on the whole of Cornwall, not just their surrounding area.
- (iii) The view was expressed that as lobbying for additional Government funding had been ongoing, it was unlikely to be secured in time to formulate a budget for the crossings in a timely manner with the parent Authorities not in a position to provide any emergency funding.
- (iv) Members were reminded that the amendment proposed to allow Tamar Crossings to run an operational deficit, funded by reserves until they were exhausted and would then require financial support from the two parent Authorities.
- (v) **Members were reminded that if Cornwall Council did not approve the toll revision but Plymouth City Council did approve it this could be reputationally difficult and, an arbitration process would have to be embarked upon to resolve the issue.**
- (vi) Members were advised that the current level of approximately £500,000 of financial reserves held by Tamar Crossings was significantly lower than the recommended minimum of £2 million.

On a vote, the amendment was lost.

During the debate on the original proposal, a number of issues were raised, including:-

- (i) The view was expressed that if revenue had increased, why was there a need for additional toll increases.
- (ii) It was considered that parent authorities could divert funding away from other infrastructure projects, such as Cornwall Airport Newquay to provide Tamar Crossings sufficient additional funding to avoid the need for toll increases.
- (iii) The view was expressed that Tamar Crossings could pursue cost cutting exercises, such as closing the visitor centre.
- (iv) Members were advised that any cuts to the ferries would significantly impact service levels, with emergency services using the crossings regularly.
- (v) It was confirmed that the Council could not seek to amend its main budget through an amendment proposed on this item.

The proposer of the motion confirmed that there should be a vote on the motion, subject to the inclusion of the toll revision application being delayed for 55 days.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16.4, more than a third of those Members present requested that a recorded vote be taken on the motion.

On a vote, the recommendation was won (38 for and 36 against with no abstentions).

Those Members voting for the motion:-

Councillors Alvey, Barnes, Bastin, Channon, Crabtree, Cruse, Desmonde, Donnithorne, Double, Ellenbroek, Foreman, Gardner, Giles, Glasson, Guest, Harris, Jewell, Jordan, Keeling, Kirkham, Magowan, McLening, Monk, Mould, Mustoe, L Pascoe, Perry, Rowse, Soady, Taylor, Tilbey, Tudor, Virr, Weedon, Wells, Williams, Williams-Pears and Worth

Those Members voting against the motion:-

Councillors Arthur, Bunney, Chopak, Clemens, Cole, Conway, Craker, Dwelly, Ewert, Fairman, Fitter, Frost, George, German, Harvey, Jenkin, Lennox-Boyd, Long, Luke, Marrington, C Martin, J Martin, McKenna, P Mitchell, Moorcroft, J

Pascoe, Paynter, Rich, Rogerson, Saunby, Seeva, M Thomas, Tivnan, Toms, Widdon and Wills.

RESOLVED

1. That, having considered the contents of the report, including the responses from the public consultation, set out in Appendix 1 to the report, an application for a toll revision based on £3.00 cash and £1.50 TAG be made 55 days hence. Where the application is successful but prior to the toll revision being implemented the Government provide funding to the Tamar Bridge which can be used to offset expenditure, then the proposed toll increase will either not be implemented or will be decreased in line with that funding.
2. That the 2024/25 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme and the 2024/25 draft Business Plan, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.
3. That the longer-term forecast to 2027/28 be noted.

COUNCIL BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL PLANS 2024-2028 AND BUDGET 2024/25
(Agenda No. 8.3)

CC/470 The Deputy Leader spoke in support of the recommendations, emphasising that the pressures on Cornwall Council's finances, including rising demand for services, rising costs and insufficient assistance from Government.

The Leader also spoke in support of the recommendations, emphasising the importance of balancing maintaining service levels with the need for a balanced budget.

Each of the political Group Leaders made a statement on the proposed budget which reflected the views of their respective groups.

During the debate a number of issues were raised, including:-

- (i) The view was expressed that the proposed budget represented a decline in Cornwall Council's financial position, with areas such as housing, home to school transport, adult social care and Cornwall Airport Newquay exacerbating the problem.
- (ii) The view was expressed that as no alternative budgets had been put forward, there was no viable alternative to the proposal.

- (iii) Members were informed that many ongoing projects were long term projects across multiple budgets and administrations, such as Langarth or Cornwall Airport Newquay, where, in respect of the latter, a strategic partner was currently being sought to minimise costs.
- (iv) An extension to the Shared Prosperity Fund deadline of March 2025 had been requested, so as to allow for as many projects to receive funding as possible.
- (v) The view was expressed that there were insufficient council tax rates on second homes, which could be used to generate revenue.
- (vi) Members were advised that a large majority of Councils were increasing council tax by 4.99%, with the view being expressed that council tax was an unfair and regressive form of taxation.
- (vii) The view was expressed that any outstanding loans to Cornwall Council should be pursued, and repayment should be sought.
- (viii) Members were reminded that Cornwall Council received full compensation from Government for any business rate lost due to the owner being a small business.
- (ix) Members were advised about the difficulty in finding areas of potential income generation.
- (x) Members were advised that progress had been made in relation to housing concerns, with the high levels of spending attributed to fixing long term problems. Although house building had not significantly increased year on year, this was a result of national trends in the construction industry.
- (xi) The view was expressed that Cornwall Council's use of consultants could be reduced, with more reliance on officer expertise.
- (xii) Members were informed that when Government calculated funding for Local Authorities, it assumed that a year on year rise in council tax of 4.99% had been introduced.
- (xiii) Members were informed no new Lender Option Borrower Option (LOBO) loans had been agreed.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024, the Council was required to hold a recorded vote on the budget.

On a vote, the recommendation was won (45 for, 28 against and no abstentions)

Those Members voting for the motion:-

Councillors Alvey, Arthur, Bastin, Channon, Clemens, Conway, Crabtree, Craker, Cruse, Desmonde, Donnithorne, Double, Ellenbroek, Foreman, Gardner, Giles, Glasson, Guest, Harris, Harvey, Jewell, Jordan, Keeling, Lennox-Boyd, McLening, Monk, Mould, Mustoe, J Pascoe, L Pascoe, Perry, Rowse, Seeva, Soady, Taylor, Tilbey, Tivnan, Tudor, Virr, Weedon, Wells, Williams, Williams-Pears, Wills and Worth.

Those Members voting against the motion:-

Councillors Barnes, Bunney, Chopak, Cole, Dwelly, Ewert, Fairman, Fitter, Frost, German, Jenkin, Kirkham, Long, Luke, Magowan, Marrington, C Martin, J Martin, McKenna, P Mitchell, Moorcroft, Paynter, Rich, Rogerson, Saunby, M Thomas, Toms and Widdon.

It was moved by Councillor Harris, seconded by Councillor Taylor and

RESOLVED

1. That the budget proposals for 2024-2028 (Appendix 1) are approved in order to provide the financial resources that maintain strong delivery against the [Council Business Plan](#), and that the Cumulative Impact Assessment of these proposals (Appendix 2), together with the results of the public consultation (Appendix 3), are considered and acknowledged.
2. That the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes be set at £393.699m and it be confirmed that the Cornwall Council element of the Council Tax be increased by 2.99%, plus a levy of 2% to be spent solely on Adult Social Care (ASC), for the financial year 2024/25 (an overall increase of 4.99%, equivalent to a Band D charge of £1,892.75).
3. That indicative future increases in Council Tax, subject to changes in Council Tax limiting principles and future budget requirements, are agreed for budget planning purposes at 1.99% for the financial year 2025/26 to 2027/28.

4. That the relevant basic amount of Council Tax for the 2024/25 financial year be determined as being in accordance with the Referendums Relating to Council Tax Increases (Principles) (England) Report 2024/25.
5. That the formal Council Tax resolutions set out in Appendix 6 be approved.
6. That a net General Fund Budget for 2024/25 of £769.577m be set.
7. That the Chief Executive and Strategic Directors be required to meet the revenue budget targets as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, for the delivery of Council activity in 2024/25 and future years to 2027/28, as set within the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan.
8. That consideration be given to the Section 151 Officer report on the level of General Fund Reserve.
9. That the Annual Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25, as set out in Appendix 4 to the report, be approved including:
 - i. The Prudential Indicators and Treasury Indicators 2024/25 – 2026/27 as detailed in sections 2 and 4 of Appendix 4.
 - ii. The Annual Investment Strategy 2024/25 as detailed in section 5 of Appendix 4.
 - iii. The Minimum Revenue Provision policy as detailed in section 2.3 of Appendix 4.
10. That the Annual Capital and Investment Strategy 2024/25, as set out in Appendix 5 to the report, be approved.
11. That the Council's total Capital Programme be uplifted by £755.045m, as detailed in Table 7 of the report.
12. That approval be given for the Council to continue to exercise the powers as set out in section 11B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023), in respect of empty properties, such that properties that have been empty for at least 1 year (previously two years) will now trigger a premium; and

That approval be given for the Council to exercise the powers as set out in section 11C of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the

Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023) in respect of dwellings occupied periodically (including second homes) and that from 1 April 2025 a Council Tax premium of 100% be charged.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

(Agenda No. 9)

CC/471 The following recommendations had been received from the Constitution and Governance Committee.

REVIEW OF THE CHIEF OFFICERS EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE, THE CORRESPONDING RESPONSIBILITY FOR FUNCTIONS AND THE OFFICER EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURE RULES

(Agenda No. 9.1)

CC/472 It was moved by Councillor Jordan, seconded by Councillor Wells and

RESOLVED that the proposed changes to Article 18 – Chief Officers Employment Committee, and the corresponding Responsibilities for Functions and the Officer Employment Procedure Rules as set out in Appendices 1, 2 and 3, be approved.

POLITICAL PROPORTIONALITY AND COMMITTEE SIZES

(Agenda No. 9.2)

CC/473 It was moved by Councillor Jordan and seconded by Councillor Wells that

“There be an increase to any even Committee numbers by 1 to make them an odd number from the new Council commencing in 2025.”

It was proposed as an amendment by Councillor Worth, seconded by Councillor Wills, that the words, “an increase” in the proposal be changed to “a decrease”. Speaking in favour of the amendment he expressed concern that an increase in numbers could increase the workload of Members.

During the debate a number of issues were raised including:-

- (i) The view was expressed that the original recommendation did not represent a significant change.

- (ii) Members were reminded that the Cornwall Harbours Board was established by statute and would be unaffected by these proposals.
- (iii) The view was expressed that an increase in numbers on committees would help with political proportionality, especially for smaller political groups.

The proposed amendment was withdrawn and on a vote on the original motion it was

RESOLVED that there be an increase to any even Committee numbers by 1 to make them an odd number from the new Council commencing in 2025.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN - PROCEDURE TO DEAL WITH EQUALITY OF VOTES
(Agenda No. 9.3)

CC/474 It was moved by Councillor Jordan, seconded by Councillor Wells that:

“When there is an equality of votes for both candidates for the position of Chairman that the procedure be changed from the toss of a coin to lot and that a formal addition be made to the Constitution in this respect (as follows):

Voting for Chairman where there is an equality of votes for both candidates.

Where there is an equality of votes for both candidates for Chairman, then the matter will be resolved by lot. Each candidate’s name will be put into a suitable receptacle and the individual presiding over the meeting at that time shall draw one name out of that receptacle.”

The Chairman of the Constitution and Governance Committee spoke in favour of the proposal, emphasising the need for fairness and transparency in any system adopted to resolve a tied vote. The Vice Chairman also spoke in support of the proposal.

During the debate a number of issues were raised, including:

- (i) Members were reminded that a coin toss was the traditional method, and it was suggested that no significant problems with this method had been experienced.
- (ii) Reference was made to the fact that tossing a coin was not a fair system.

- (iii) It was confirmed to Members that currently neither coin toss or lot system were in the Constitution and the view was expressed that whichever system was preferred should be codified in the Constitution.

On a vote, the proposal was lost.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MISCELLANEOUS LICENSING COMMITTEE

(Agenda No. 10)

CC/475 The following recommendations were received from the Miscellaneous Licensing Committee.

LICENSING OF HACKNEY CARRIAGES, PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES AND OPERATORS - APPLICATION FEES

(Agenda No. 10.1)

CC/476 During the discussion a number of issues were raised including:-

- (i) The view was expressed that taxis were safer and more environmentally friendly than private car use.
- (ii) It was confirmed that taxis used for home to school transport were not affected by the proposals and were dealt with by separate regulations.
- (iii) The view was expressed that the proposal represented a small increase in fees, and it was confirmed that Cornwall Council operated the licensing system at a loss.

It was moved by Councillor J Pascoe, seconded by Councillor McLening and

RESOLVED that the fees and charges payable in respect of licences issued for hackney carriage vehicles, private hire operators and private hire vehicles be increased as set out in the Report.

LICENSING OF RELEVANT PROTECTED SITES - FEES POLICY

(Agenda No. 10.2)

CC/477 It was moved by Councillor J Pascoe, seconded by Councillor McLening and

RESOLVED that the amended Licensing of Relevant Protected Sites - Fees Policy document which has been updated with the agreed increase in fees and charges be approved.

PAY POLICY STATEMENT FOR 2024-2025

(Agenda No. 11)

CC/478 It was moved by Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor Harris and

RESOLVED that the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25, at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(Agenda No. 12)

CC/479 In response to questions from Members, the respective Portfolio Holders advised the following:-

1. The Mid Cornwall Metro project would have benefits across Cornwall, with stations east of Truro on the main line being fitted with 'tap on and tap off' technology which was also being introduced to Penryn station. The project would receive subsidies from Cornwall Council for the first three years as was standard practice amongst similar projects.
2. A new process had been introduced for the Asset Management Group to invite the local Member to discussions on any proposed asset disposal. Disposal of strategic assets such as the Dolcoath site were carefully considered by the Customer and Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which took into account multiple considerations, such as social benefit as well as financial value. Assets such as the Heartlands site had been complicated by the Heartlands Trust's responsibility for matters such as maintenance, with work ongoing in this area.
3. A written response would be provided on how much the Council had spent in compensation due to defects on the highway in the current financial year and whether that was a percentage increase compared to previous years.
4. Anti-social behaviour was an ongoing issue across Cornwall, with work being done by teams, such as the Housing Options Team and the Homeless Team to minimise the causes.
5. Information relating to the waste and recycling collection changes being rolled out across Cornwall by area was widely available had been

- advertised well in advance. Teething problems had been anticipated, with a grace period before stricter enforcement of the new rules to allow residents and providers to adapt to the new system.
6. A written response would be provided on the projected subsidy the Council would have to pay for the Cornwall Airport Newquay.
 7. Proposals on the Cornwall Hydrotherapy Pool would be considered and consulted on as a part of the consultation on the Leisure Strategy with the Integrated Care Board having an opportunity to respond.
 8. Any changes to planning legislation, such as the proposed changes to short term lets, would be implemented by the Planning Team. Any significant increase in workload would lead to an increase in staff capacity being sought.
 9. The Health and Safety Executive considered health and safety matters at Cornwall Airport Newquay, with location of infrastructure and storage of stock determined by the private operators and owners.
 10. Proposals around partnering with Lendology CIC to help provide housing insulation in Cornwall were being considered, however it may not be possible to take suggestions forward if they were not suitable.
 11. The recent successful trial of the tri-service safety officer scheme had led to its permanent introduction, with vacant positions currently being recruited for.
 12. A written response would be provided on the process for asset disposal, i.e. whether it still remained the case that assets were first offered to other services; then the potential for devolution explored and then offered to the open market. The response would also clarify whether if devolution was explored whether that was at market value.
 13. Expressions of interest for funding within the Community Area Partnerships on the Let's Talk website only displayed support or opposition to an item. Users were encouraged to use the chat facility also available for any more in-depth discussions.
 14. The most appropriate use of new powers such as changes to planning permission relating to short term lets, the council tax premium of 100% on second homes and the register of second homes and any associated changes to local plans would be considered by the Economic Growth and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with ongoing briefing to Members also being considered.
 15. Once the situation around the Heartlands site had become clearer, local Members would be involved in discussions around proposed next steps.

The meeting ended at 5.15 pm.