

**MINUTES AND REPORT OF THE POLICY & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2024**

- * Councillor Follows – Chair
- * Councillor Weightman – Vice Chair

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| * Councillor Adam | * Councillor Holliday |
| 0 Councillor Clayton | 0 Councillor Kiehl |
| * Councillor Crooks | * Councillor Martin |
| * Councillor Crowe | 0 Councillor PMA Rivers |
| * Councillor C Downey | 0 Councillor Steel |
| * Councillor S Downey | * Councillor Thomson |
| * Councillor Duce | * Councillor Williams |
| * Councillor Heagin | |

* Present # Absent & No Apology Received 0 Apology for Absence L Late

351. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2024, having been previously circulated were signed by the Chair as a true record.

352. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and recorded as above.

353. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER REGISTERABLE INTERESTS

Members made no declarations of interest in relation to any item on the agenda for this meeting, which is required to be disclosed by the Localism Act 2011 and the Godalming Members' Code of Conduct.

354. PETITIONS/STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No petitions/statements/questions had been received from members of the public in accordance with Standing Order No 4.

355. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

No questions from Councillors were submitted in accordance with Standing Order 6.

356. ACCOUNTS PAID SINCE LAST MEETING & SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

	£
Godalming Town Council	
Accounts paid since the 18 October 2024	384,138.32
Receipts received since the 18 October 2024	278,712.20
Balance held in HSBC Current Account	
Balance at 28 November 2024	131,085.05
Balance held in the HSBC Business Deposit Account	
Balance at 28 November 2024	992,294.46
CCLA Deposit Account	
Balance at 28 November 2024	950,000.00

A schedule of the accounts paid was tabled for the information of Members and a copy is attached to record minutes. The vouchers relating to these payments were also tabled at the meeting for inspection. All payments made were in line with the agreed budget or other resolution of this Committee or Full Council.

Members agreed that the Chair should sign the schedule of accounts paid.

357. BUDGET MONITORING

Members noted the budget monitoring report to 31 October 2024 (detailed report attached to record minutes).

358. RESERVES POLICY

Members considered it appropriate that Godalming Town Council adopts a Reserves Policy to ensure it is following the best practice issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG).

Having considered a draft policy Members of the Policy & Management Committee resolved to agree the policy and to recommend its adoption by Full Council (attached to the record minutes).

Members noted that whilst the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) reserve is required to be included within the reserves total on the annual return, CIL funds cannot, even by resolution of the Council, be used for any purpose other than those stated in the CIL regulations. As such Members determined that when presenting the reserves balances, CIL should be clearly identified as a sub total of earmarked reserves. This would enable Members to easily identify GTC 'controlled reserves' separately from CIL reserves.

359. BUDGET 2025/26

The Committee Chair, Cllr Paul Follows, presented the draft budget for the financial year 2025/26, the forward projections 2026/27-2029/30 and the statement of predicted reserve balances.

Revenue Budget 2025/26

Cllr Follows reiterated that GTC receives no core funding from central government, the borough council or from business rates and therefore is reliant on generated income and the parish precept to fund services for the benefit of residents.

In preparation of the draft 2025/26 budget, known factors were applied such as the 2024/25 staff pay award, changes to Employers' National Insurance Contributions (ERNIC), loss of localism income and changes to the Non-Domestic Rate Hospitality, Retail and Leisure rate relief. This provided the initial base to which were added the costs of the decisions made by the council or its committees over the preceding year(s), such as taking ownership of a new community building, adjustments to staffing structures and the continued implementation of the Corporate Plan. The prudent use of reserves was incorporated into the proposed budget in order to smooth over a two-year budget cycle the predicted employment and insurance cost increases and loss of localism funding.

There being no proposals from Members for any amendments to the draft budget, the Chair, seconded by Cllr Heagin, called for a recorded vote on the following recommendation.

Members to resolve to recommend the draft budget and a precept of £1,236,391 for 2025/26, which represents a Band D increase of £5.80 per annum (4.98%), to Full Council.

Recorded Vote:

Cllr Adam	For	Cllr Heagin	For
Cllr Crooks	For	Cllr Holliday	Abstain
Cllr Crowe	For	Cllr Martin	Abstain
Cllr C Downey	For	Cllr Thomson	For
Cllr S Downey	For	Cllr Weightman	For
Cllr Duce	For	Cllr Williams	For
Cllr Follows	For		

The recommendation was carried with eleven votes for, none against and two abstentions.

Reserves

In presenting the predicted balance of general and earmarked reserves, the Chair reiterated that the intention is to retain the general reserve within the range set out in the proposed Reserves Policy and that as of 31 March 2026 the general reserves is estimated to be £707,953 equating to 57% of the 2025/26 precept with a forecast to be at 46% of precept by 2030/31.

In addition to the general reserve, the council currently has £244,460 allocated to earmarked reserves for specific purposes. Members noted that the CIL reserve currently stands at £373,895. Additionally, Members noted that a sum of £106,449 is due to be received from WBC before the end of this financial year.

Having considered the budget report, including the forward projects, level of general reserves and the purpose and level of the earmarked reserves, Members resolved to recommend to Full Council that:

- a. The forward projections 2026/27-2029/30 indicated in the Statement of Variation (attached to the record minutes) be noted.
- b. The forecast level of the council's general reserve is at an appropriate percentage of the precept.
- c. The purpose of the council's earmarked reserves is valid and at an appropriate level.

360. COMMITTEE REPORTS & KEY DATES

Members noted the Committee's Reports' Schedule and Key Dates Programme.

361. CONSULTATION ON ENABLING REMOTE ATTENDANCE AND PROXY VOTING AT LOCAL AUTHORITY MEETINGS

Members considered the government consultation on enabling remote attendance and proxy voting. Whilst broadly welcoming the consultation and the prospect of the Council being able to conduct remote and/or hybrid meetings, there was debate around whether remote attendance should be the norm or by exception. However, at this stage Members indicated that they would wish any outcome to enable a Council to determine the detail of any arrangements to best reflect the circumstances of the particular Council, the needs of its Members and residents.

Members were generally not in favour of proxy voting.

Consultation Response

Members noted that they could respond to this consultation on an individual basis, with a number indicating they had already done so. With regards to a collective response to be submitted on behalf of Godalming Town Council as a body corporate, Members resolved to agree that the Town Clerk should prepare a submission based on the views expressed by

Members during the debate and circulate it for comment before finalising the submission with the Leader of the Council.

Responses to this consultation can only be made through the online consultation platform, Citizen Space. [Respond via Citizen Space](#).

362. GODALMING & VILLAGES COMMUNITY STORE

Members noted the report from The Godalming & Villages Community Store, reiterated their support and thanks to the Trustees and Volunteers who operate the store and to all residents who support the community store through their continued donations, without which the store could not continue to function and support those in our community who find themselves in need.

363. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Members noted that whilst GTC has recruited a new Finance Officer, the position remains vacant until 7 January and it is anticipated that the new Finance Officer will need at least 1 month of direct support with a period of remote support being available thereafter.

In doing so, Members also noted that the 16-week period agreed at Min No 48-24 will shortly expire, and therefore resolved to approve up to an additional 3 months of direct and/or remote support from LGRC at an estimated cost of £16,500 to be funded from the existing salary budget.

364. TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATION ON EXTERNAL BODIES

Councillor Heagin provided an oral report on her attendance at the Surrey Association of Local Councils conference, which was held on 19 November.

365. COMMUNICATIONS ARISING FROM THIS MEETING

Members wished the Town Clerk to write to the Chair of Trustees of the Godalming & Villages Community Store to express their thanks.

366. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Policy & Management Committee is scheduled to be held in the Council Chamber on Thursday, 9 January 2025 at 7.00pm or at the conclusion of the preceding Environment & Planning Committee meeting, whichever is later.

367. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

IN PURSUANCE OF THE PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960 S.1(2), THE COMMITTEE RESOLVED TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC AND PRESS FROM THE MEETING AT THIS POINT PRIOR TO CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA ITEM(S) 18 BY REASON OF THE CONFIDENTIAL NATURE OF THE BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED I.E STAFFING MATTERS.

368. STAFFING MATTERS

Members received an update on staffing matters from the Chair of the Staffing Committee.