

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 24 February 2014 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

PRESENT: HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR Councillor Marriott (in the Chair).

COUNCILLORS: Marriott, Caswell, Ansell, Aziz, Beardsworth, Begum, Bottwood, I. Choudary, N Choudary, Conroy, Duncan, Ford, Glynane, Golby, Gowen, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, Lynch, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Mason, Mennell, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Palethorpe, Patel, Sargeant, Strachan and Yates

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mennell declared that she was required by section 106 of the Finance Act 1992, to notify Full Council that, as of today's meeting, she had council tax arrears of 2 months or more. Consequently she would not be voting on items 8; 10; 12 and 13.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 20th January 2014 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillor Stone, Wire DL, Eales, Flavell, Capstick, Davies, Lane, Larratt and Subbarayan.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor expressed his condolences for Councillor Larratt whose mother had sadly passed away earlier in the week.

The Mayor announced that his fundraising event at 'Tamarind' had raised over £1000 for the Mayors Charity and thanked those who had attended the event and those who had helped organise the event.

The Mayor further noted that due to an administrative error by one of the Parish Councils, Item 11 - Council Tax 2014/15 could not be considered at the meeting. Therefore, Item 11 would be moved to the end of the meeting's agenda and that the meeting would be adjourned after Item 13 - Robustness of Budget Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves to be reconvened at 6.30pm on Monday 10th March 2014.

The Mayor proposed a suspension of standing orders under Rule 25 which would enable the mover and seconder to speak for a maximum of 10 minutes and that no other speech exceed 5 minutes in relation to Item 10 - General Fund, Revenue and Capital Budgets and Item 12 - Housing Revenue Account -Rent setting, Revenue

and Capital Budgets.

Councillor Mackintosh seconded the proposal.

The proposal was agreed.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mr Brian Hoare addressed Council and commented that the original budget was under consideration and being consulted on; people would have expected some minor amendments to be made during the period. However, he noted that the projected deficit has shifted in 2 months from £10.6million to £14.9 million – a 40% increase. He suggested that the budget consulted on was very different from the one that was actually being considered.

6. RECORDED VOTES AT BUDGET COUNCIL MEETINGS

Councillor Mackintosh submitted a report that sought the adoption of change to the constitution and to apply recorded votes to Budget and Council Tax decisions at meetings of the Council in accordance with the principles of the 2014 Regulations.

Councillor Markham seconded adoption of the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the amendments to the Constitution shown at Appendix 1 of the Report, to take effect when the 2014 Regulations come into force; be adopted
2. That recorded votes be applied to the budget and council tax decisions taken at this meeting of Council, in accordance with the principles of the 2014 Regulations be agreed.

7. CORPORATE PLAN

Councillor Mackintosh submitted a report that set out the updated Council's Corporate Plan 2012-2015 and noted that it continued to focus on the Administration's election manifesto.

Councillor Markham seconded adoption of the report.

RESOLVED:

- 1 That the Corporate Plan 2012-2015 (2014 Update) be approved (as appendix 1 of the report)
- 2 That the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council be delegated the authority to finalise the Corporate Plan and associated action plan in line with the budget decisions, service plans and any other consequent changes.

8. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Councillor Bottwood submitted which sought the approval of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy. He noted that the report be considered in conjunction with Item 13 - Robustness of Budget Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves, which requested consideration for the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2014/19 for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Budgets for 2014/15, Capital Programme 2014/15 and Treasury Management Strategy 2014/15.

Councillor Mackintosh seconded adoption of the report.

In accordance with the principles of the 2014 Regulations a recorded vote was held:

There voted for the Council's Treasury Management Strategy: Councillors Ansell, Aziz, Begum, Bottwood, Caswell, I Choudary, N Choudary, Duncan, Eldred, Ford, Golby, Gowen, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, Lynch, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Mason, Nunn, Oldham, Palethorpe, Patel, Sargeant, Strachan and Yates.

There voted against: Councillors Beardsworth, Conroy, Glynane and Meredith.

There abstained the Mayor.

The recommendations in the report were agreed.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That Treasury Management Strategy for 2014/15 at Appendix 2 of the attached Cabinet report be approved, which would incorporate:
 - (i) The Capital Financing and Borrowing Strategy for 2014/15 including:
 - The Council's policy on the making of Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) for the repayment of debt, as required by the Local Authorities (Capital Finance & Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008.
 - The Affordable Borrowing Limit for 2014/15 as required by the Local Government Act 2003.
 - (ii) The Investment Strategy for 2014/15 as required by the CLG revised Guidance on Local Government Investments issued in 2010.
- 2) That authority be delegated to the Council's Chief Finance Officer, in liaison with the Cabinet member for Finance, to make any temporary changes needed to the Council's borrowing and investment strategy to enable the authority to meet its obligations.

9. BUSINESS RATES RETAIL RELIEF - 2014/15

Councillor Mackintosh submitted a report that sought the approval of the implementation of the nation Retail Relief Scheme for National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR).

Councillor Bottwood seconded adoption of the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the implementation of the national Retail Relief Scheme for National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) with local variations as detailed in paragraph 3.2.2 of the report be approved.
2. That the revised scheme will come into effect from 1st April 2014 be agreed.
3. That the Chief Executive be empowered to give the necessary instructions to LGSS to implement the scheme in Northampton with effect from 1st April 2014.
4. That delegation be granted to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council the consideration and determination of extensions to the scheme to include other businesses which add to the vitality and viability of key retail areas including the Town Centre.

10. GENERAL FUND, REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS

It was noted that updates in respect of Great Houghton precept was tabled and distributed – which has subsequently been published in an updated agenda.

Councillor Mackintosh submitted a report that set out the outcome of the consultation process on the 2014/2015 General Fund Revenue and Capital Budget and the final formula grant settlement for 2014/15 and sought Council's approval of the Cabinet's proposals for the 2014/15 and indicative levels for 2015-16 to 2018/19.

Councillor Bottwood seconded adoption of the report.

Councillor Palethorpe proposed and Councillor Mason seconded;

“The Northampton Labour Group propose the following amendments:

- 1.) Reduce Councillor Special Responsibility Allowances to the levels agreed by Council on 22nd May 2006 (Subject to a corresponding report from an Independent Remuneration Panel)
- 2.) Increase the funding available for small grants

Labour Budget Proposals					
Description	Budget 2014/15	Budget 2015/16	Budget 2016/17	Budget 2017/18	
Increase funding	47, 486	47, 486	47, 486	47, 486	

available for Small Grants					
Labour Budget Proposals	47, 486	47, 486	47, 486	47, 486	
237, 430					

Labour Budget Proposals					
Description	Budget 2014/15	Budget 2015/16	Budget 2016/17	Budget 2017/18	Budget 2018/19
Increase Savings on Cllr Special Responsibility Allowances	(47, 486)	(47, 486)	(47, 486)	(47, 486)	(47, 486)
Labour Growth Items	47, 486	47, 486	47, 486	47, 486	47, 486
Net Change in Annual Budget	0	0	0	0	0
0					

In accordance with the principles of the 2014 Regulations a recorded vote was held:

There voted for the amendment: Councillors Aziz, Begum, N Choudary, Gowen, Mason, Palethorpe and Strachan.

There voted against the amendment: Councillors Ansell, Bottwood, Caswell, I Choudary, Duncan, Eldred, Ford, Golby, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, Lynch, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Sargeant and Yates.

There abstained the Mayor and Councillors Beardsworth, Conroy, Glynane and Meredith.

The amendment was lost.

Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Glynane seconded that:

Remove Growth Item GF 61 – Saving of £250,000
 Remove interest cost associated with £3 million Capital Scheme for Abington Street
 Draw down £64,000 from Retained Business Rates and £100,000 from New Homes Bonus

Lib Dem Budget Proposals					
Description	Budget 2014/15	Budget 2015/16	Budget 2016/17	Budget 2017/18	Budget 2018/19
Investment in Abington Street	350,000	150,000	50,000	0	0
Promoting a Town Centre Empty Shop Policy	100,000	100,000	100,000	0	0
Investment in Town Centre Footfall	50,000	50,000	50,000	0	0
Lib Dem Budget Proposals	500,000	300,000	200,000	0	0
1,000,000					

Summary of Budget Line Changes					
Description	Budget 2014/15	Budget 2015/16	Budget 2016/17	Budget 2017/18	Budget 2018/19
Remove Growth Item GF61	-250,000	0	0	0	0
Saving on Abington Street Capital Scheme	-86,000	-300,000	-300,000	-300,000	-300,000
Retained Business Rates	-64,000	0	0	0	0
New Homes Bonus	-100,000	0	0	0	0
Lib Dem Growth Items	500,000	300,000	200,000	0	0
Net change in Annual Budget	0	0	-100,000	-300,000	-300,000
-700,000					

In accordance with the principles of the 2014 Regulations a recorded vote was held:

There voted for the amendment: Councillors Beardsworth, N Choudary, Conroy, Glynane, Gowen, Mason, Meredith, Palethorpe.

There voted against the amendment: Councillors Ansell, Bottwood, Caswell, I Choudary, Duncan, Eldred, Ford, Golby, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, Lynch, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Nunn, Oldham, Patel, Sargeant and Yates.

There abstained the Mayor and Councillors Aziz, Begum and Strachan.

The amendment was lost.

In accordance with the principles of the 2014 Regulations a recorded vote was held on the recommendations contained within the report.

There voted for the recommendations: Councillors Ansell, Bottwood, Caswell, I Choudary, Duncan, Eldred, Ford, Golby, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, Lynch, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Nunn, Oldham, Patel and Sargeant.

There voted against the recommendations: Councillors Aziz, Beardsworth, Begum, N Choudary, Conroy, Glynane, Gowen, Mason, Meredith, Palethorpe and Strachan.

There abstained the Mayor.

The recommendations in the reports were agreed:

RESOLVED:

1. That the feedback from consultation with the public, organisations and the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, be considered and welcomed (detailed at Appendices 1 to 3 of the attached Cabinet report).
2. That the draft Fees and Charges set out in Appendix 9 (of the attached Cabinet report) be approved.
3. That authority is delegated to the Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer to implement all budget options and restructures.
4. That authority be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance, and where appropriate the relevant Director and Lead Cabinet Member to transfer monies to/from earmarked reserves should that become necessary during the financial year.
5. That a General Fund budget for 2014/15 of £29.363m (excluding parishes), be approved (detailed in Appendices 4, 5, and 6 of the attached Cabinet report) for its own purposes.
6. The Council confirms the reserves strategy of protecting balances wherever possible to allow the option of supporting future years' budgets, aiming for a minimum level of unallocated general fund balances of £4.9m for 2014/15 having regard to the outcome of the financial risk assessment and remaining at this level over the medium term.
7. That Council does not increase the Council Tax for its own purposes, that is, excluding county, police, and parish precepts.

11. COUNCIL TAX 2014/15

Item 11 was not considered and was deferred to the meeting on the 10th March 2014.

12. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT -RENT SETTING, REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS

Councillor Bottwood submitted a report that sought the approval of the Housing Revenue Account 2014/15 budget and the HRA forecasts for 2015/16 to 2018/19, rent increases, services charges and other charges for 2014/15 and provided a brief update on the ongoing work on the direction of the HRA.

Councillor Markham seconded the report.

In accordance with the principles of the 2014 Regulations a recorded vote was held:

There voted for the recommendations: Councillors Ansell, Bottwood, Caswell, I Choudary, Duncan, Eldred, Ford, Golby, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, Lynch, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Nunn, Oldham, Patel, Sargeant and Yates.

There voted against the recommendations: Councillors Beardsworth, Conroy, Glynane, Gowen and Meredith.

There abstained the Mayor and Councillors Aziz, Begum, N Choudary, Mason, Palethorpe and Strachan.

The recommendations in the report were agreed:

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That Council approved:
 - a) An average rent increase of 5.55% per dwelling, in line with the Government's national rent and rent restructuring policy, with the last year of convergence being 2014/15, to take effect from 1st April 2014.
 - b) The proposed service charges listed in Appendix D.
- 2.2 That the HRA budget for 2014/15 of £54.1m expenditure (including options detailed in Appendix A of the report) be approved
- 2.3 That the issues and risks detailed in the Chief Finance Officer's statement on the robustness of estimates and the adequacy of the reserves be acknowledged.
- 2.4 That authority be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer to make any technical changes necessary to the papers for the Council meeting of 24th February 2014.
- 2.5 That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer to implement all budget options and restructures.

- 2.6 That authority be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, and where appropriate the relevant Director and Cabinet Member to:
- transfer monies to/from earmarked reserves should that become necessary during the financial year.
 - update the budget tables and appendices, prior to Council should any further changes be necessary.
 - update prudential indicators in both the Prudential Indicators report and Treasury Strategy report, for Council for any budget changes that impact on these.
- 2.7 That the reserves strategy of protecting balances wherever possible to allow the option of supporting future years' budgets, aiming for a minimum level of unallocated Housing Revenue Account balances of at least £5m for 2014/15 having regard to the outcome of the financial risk assessment and remaining at this level over the medium term be confirmed.

Council approved:

- a) The Housing Revenue Account capital programme for 2014/15, including future year commitments, and proposed financing as set out in Appendix C.
- b) That Cabinet be authorised, once the capital programme has been set, to approve new capital schemes and variations to existing schemes during 2014/15, subject to the funding being available and the schemes being in accordance with the objectives and priorities of the Council.

13. ROBUSTNESS OF BUDGET ESTIMATES AND ADEQUACY OF RESERVES

Councillor Mackintosh submitted a report that advised Council on the robustness of the estimates in the budget and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.

Councillor Bottwood seconded the recommendations.

In accordance with the principles of the 2014 Regulations a recorded vote was held:

There voted for the recommendations: Councillors Ansell, Bottwood, Caswell, I Choudary, Duncan, Eldred, Ford, Golby, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, Lynch, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Nunn, Oldham, Patel, Sargeant and Yates.

There voted against the recommendations: Councillors Aziz, Beardsworth, Begum, N Choudary, Conroy, Glynane, Gowen, Mason, Meredith, Palethorpe and Strachan.

There abstained the Mayor.

The recommendations in the report were agreed:

RESOLVED:

That Council carefully considered the content of the attached report prior to approving the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2014/19 for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Budgets for 2014/15, Capital Programme 2014/15 and Treasury Management Strategy 2014/15.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting to the Council meeting on Monday 10th March 2014 at 6.30pm.

The meeting concluded at 8.21pm