

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Wednesday, 19 February 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Nunn (Chair); Councillor Larratt (Deputy Chair); Councillors Eldred, Hadland, Hallam and Hibbert

APOLOGIES: Councillor J Hill and Councillor King

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Hill and King.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2020 were agreed and signed by the Leader.

3. INTENTION TO HOLD PART OF THE MEETING IN PRIVATE IF NECESSARY

There was no intention to hold any part of the meeting in private.

4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

6. ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no issues arising from Overview and Scrutiny Committees

7. GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS 2020/2021

Councillor Eldred as the relevant Cabinet Member stated that he was privileged to be able to present the last budget for the Council. Difficult decisions had had to be made, and he thanked Cabinet colleagues and officers for their efforts in achieving a balanced budget. Council tax would be increased by £5 for a Band D property. There was also significant investment for the museum and Vulcan Works, which would hopefully result in increased tourism for Northampton. The key changes were outlined at 3.25 and 3.26 in the report.

Councillor Larratt was pleased to note the provision for investment in assets such as footbridges and monuments.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That the feedback from consultation with the public, organisations and the Overview and Scrutiny and Audit Committees be considered and welcomed (**detailed at appendices 9, 10 and 11**).
- 2.2 That the changes to the proposed budget (detailed at paragraph 3.2.6), in light of technical adjustments and the provisional local government funding settlement, be agreed.
- 2.3 That a general fund revenue budget for 2020/21 of £27.770m (excluding parishes, or

£29.006m including parish precepts) be recommended to Council for its own purposes (detailed in paragraph 3.2.4 and **appendices 1 and 2**).

- 2.4 That the Council be recommended to increase the council tax for its own purposes (excluding county, police, fire and parish precepts) by £5.00 (2.21%) per year per band D property for 2020/21.
- 2.5 That the Council be recommended to approve the general fund capital programme and proposed financing for 2020/21, including the inclusion of schemes in the development pool, as set out in **appendix 4**.
- 2.6 That Council be recommended to confirm a minimum level of general fund balances for 2020/21 of £3.0m that reflects the risks being faced by the Council, with a prudent level of £4.0m included in the budget setting, and also note the position on earmarked reserves (**appendix 7**).
- 2.7 That authority be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, and where appropriate the relevant Head of Service and Cabinet Member to:
 - Transfer monies to/from earmarked reserves should that become necessary during the financial year.
 - Update prudential indicators in both the prudential indicators report and treasury strategy report to Council, for any budget changes that impact on these.
- 2.8 That the draft fees and charges set out in **appendix 8** be approved, including immediate implementation where appropriate.
- 2.9 That Council be recommended to approve the treasury management strategy (and associated appendices) for 2020/21 at **appendix 5** of this report.
- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 That authority be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer to make any technical changes necessary to the papers for the Council meeting of 24 February 2020, including changes to the finance settlement and changes relating to council tax precepts set by other precepting bodies.

8. ROBUSTNESS OF BUDGET ESTIMATES AND ADEQUACY OF RESERVES

Councillor Eldred as the relevant Cabinet Member outlined the report and noted that although reserves were adequate and investment was continuing, the situation was fragile and careful management was needed, particularly with the extra pressures arising from the move to a unitary council.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That Cabinet recommend to Council to carefully consider the content of this report with regards to the general fund and HRA prior to recommending the approval of the

Council's MTFP 2020/21, the revenue budget for 2020/21, capital programme 2020/24 and the treasury management strategy 2020/21.

9. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET, RENT SETTING 2020/2021 AND BUDGET PROJECTIONS FOR FUTURE YEARS

Councillor Eldred as the relevant Cabinet Member outlined the report and noted that it was pleasing to see the level of investment which had been made. Rents would be increased by 2.7% in line with legislation.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That Cabinet recommend to Council to approve:
 - a) An average maximum rent increase of 2.7% per dwelling, in line with the legislation and the government's national rent standard, to take effect from 6th April 2020.
 - b) The HRA budget for 2020/21 of £53.7m expenditure detailed in Appendix 1.
 - c) The HRA capital programme for 2020/21, including future year commitments, and proposed financing as set out in Appendix 2.
 - d) The proposed service charges listed in Appendix 3.
 - e) That Cabinet be authorised, once the capital programme has been set, to approve new capital schemes and variations to existing schemes during 2020/21, subject to the funding being available and the schemes being in accordance with the objectives and priorities of the Council.
 - f) The Total Fees proposed for NPH to deliver the services in scope for 2020/21 detailed in Appendix 4.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet acknowledged the issues and risks detailed in the Chief Finance Officer's statement on the robustness of estimates and the adequacy of the reserves.
- 2.3 That the Council be recommended to confirm 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 2020/21 having regard to the outcome of the financial risk assessment.
- 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 24 February 2020.
- 2.5 That Council be recommended to delegate authority to the Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer to implement any retained HRA budget options and restructures.
- 2.6 That authority be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, and where appropriate the relevant Head of Service and Portfolio Holder to:
 - Transfer monies to/from earmarked reserves should that become necessary during the financial year.
 - Transfer monies to /from HRA working balances between the Council and NPH for cash flow purposes should that become necessary during the financial year.
 - Transfer monies, within the Capital Programme, between Developer Affordable Homes opportunities (budget head) and Buy backs and Acquisitions (budget head) during the financial year subject to the funding being available and the schemes being in accordance with the objectives and priorities of the Council.
 - 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.

10. ST GILES CONSERVATION AREA RE-APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

In the absence of Councillor Hill, Councillor Hadland outlined the report seeking Cabinet approval to adopt a review of the St Giles' Conservation Area following public consultation.

RESOLVED:

2.1 That Cabinet approve the adoption of the St Giles' Conservation Area Re-appraisal and Management Plan (Appendix B).

The meeting concluded at 6:12 pm