

# NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

## CABINET

Wednesday, 20 December 2017

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

### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Hadland.

### 2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017 were agreed and signed by the Leader.

### 3. INTENTION TO HOLD PART OF THE MEETING IN PRIVATE

There were no items to be heard in private.

### 4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Mr Brian Hoare addressed Cabinet in respect of Item 8 – Draft General Fund Medium Term Financial Plan 2018/19 – 2022/23 and Draft Budget 2018/19 and referred to Appendix 6 and the special expenses. He commented that he did not consider there to be enough information contained within the appendix and questioned whether there would be an increase in special expenses. He reported that last year, his Council Tax had increased by 4% and the added increase incurred with special expenses equated to an unlawful increase. He noted that it appeared that these views were supported by the Department Communities and Local Government (DCLG). He further commented that he believed there to have been a lack of meaningful consultation on special expenses.

### 5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

### 6. ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were none.

### 7. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2018- 2019

Councillor Beardsworth addressed Cabinet and thanked them for the proposal to reduce staff hours from 40 to 37 hours a week but raised concerns about the proposed increased car-parking charges for staff and questioned how this would affect the lowest paid staff.

Councillor Stone commented that the Government had just confirmed that Council Tax could be increased by 6% but questioned whether or not it was fair and right to do so. She recognised that there was a need for residents to collectively pay for services but noted her concern about the wage freeze and benefit sanctions that may affect individuals and questioned whether increased Council Tax would lead to an increase in poverty and how this would affect children.

Councillor Eldred, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted his report and explained that there would be an increase of £5 per year for Band D properties and explained that Borough Councils could only increase Council Tax by up to 3% and not 6%. He commented that they had frozen the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTS) and noted claims of CTRS had

decreased which demonstrated that there were fewer people in need of it. Councillor Eldred noted that the figures for the special expenses had been calculated and checked and that the information that was contained was open and transparent.

The Interim Chief Executive explained that Government announcements would need to be looked at for clarification.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That it be recommended to Council to approve the tax base for 2018/19 at 66,873.95 Band D equivalent properties and associated parish tax bases within this report.

	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>Change</b>
Billing	2,678.57	2,761.23	82.66
Collingtree	513.75	522.77	9.02
Duston	5,471.83	5,521.83	50.00
Great Houghton	288.21	290.30	2.10
Hardingstone	795.44	804.99	9.55
Upton	2,993.14	3,015.72	22.59
Wootton, Wootton Fields & Simpson Manor	2,940.72	2,958.24	17.51
East Hunsbury	3,408.98	3,462.75	53.77
West Hunsbury	1,645.76	1,650.38	4.61
Hunsbury Meadow	501.41	505.45	4.05
Northampton (Unparished)	44,471.48	45,380.28	908.81
<b>Total tax base</b>	<b>65,709.29</b>	<b>66,873.95</b>	<b>1,164.66</b>

2. That authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance to make any technical adjustments necessary arising out of the Local Government draft settlement which impacts on the tax base, and to confirm, and inform the relevant authorities, the estimated surplus/deficit on the Collection Fund and how much would be attributable to each council, including NBC, after the statutory date of the 15th January 2018.

**8. DRAFT GENERAL FUND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2018/19 - 2022/23 AND DRAFT BUDGET 2018/19**

Councillor Beardsworth questioned whether there was a business case for Vulcan Works and Horizon House. She commented special expenses had been introduced by Labour and reported that whilst it generated income for the Council, there was a need for fairness to be across the board. He commented that she appreciated the decrease in staff hours but increasing carpark charges hit not only staff but also adding expense to customers and residents using the Town Centre facilities.

Councillor B Markham commented that the proposed increase in Council Tax was as a result of recent Council Tax freezes and noted that the surge was partly due to the new Environmental Services contract, which would require extra funding in comparison to the current one. He stated that residents would feel a difference, especially during the time of economic uncertainty and further suggested that the financial problems experienced at the County Council were as a consequence of Conservative policies.

Councillor Stone expressed her gratitude at the detailed work that had been undertaken as part of the draft budget process. She expressed some concern with regards to value for

money and commented that there were efficiency savings and service cuts but that there was currently severe capacity issues and suggested that the administration needed to display a more entrepreneurial and bold approach in identifying areas to generate capital.

Councillor Birch commented that people were already suffering financial hardship and that community groups would lose out as a result of the proposed reduction in Community funding. She stated that the Community Groups had been providing a value for money service to valuable, and sometimes vulnerable, groups and that cuts to funding could lead to problems such as isolation and loneliness.

Councillor Haque commented that the administration should be working alongside the market traders more and that they should be giving them help rather than penalising them through proposed charges for Market rubbish collection and suggested that some traders would feel compelled to leave especially as their business could also be negatively affected by a potential decrease in footfall due to increased parking costs in some car parks and asked that consultation be carried out.

Councillor Nunn commented that the markets traders were not obliged to use the market rubbish collection service and noted that it was for traders who did not currently pay for commercial waste.

Councillor Larratt explained that the Conservative administration had worked with the market traders, specifically freezing their rents for 6 years when many other market holders in neighbouring boroughs had seen annual increase of 3%.

Councillor Eldred, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted a report and elaborated thereon. In response to questions asked he confirmed that they were not cutting funding and that the CEFAP would receive £1 million and money would continue to be invested in community groups. He further reported that the Vulcan Works business case was presented to Cabinet on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017. Councillor Eldred explained that the administration was looking at investment opportunities that would help to bridge the 5 year gap and noted that it was hoped that a £5 increase to a Band D property would not be noticed too much. He further noted that the new environmental services contract had to be paid for and that it would be of benefit to everyone and noted that there were few places where people could park for £2 per day in a public car park.

Councillor Eldred explained that the proposed Capital Programme included £1.4 million on Disabled Facilities Grants, Central Museum development, St James Mill Link Road and Leisure Centre improvements.

Councillor Larratt stated that he endorsed the comments made by Councillor Eldred and noted that he considered it to be a good proposed budget. He further commented that he would like to see the transfer of freehold land to parish councils as much as possible. He further stated that value for money was still being provided for parking but that people had abused the system and a simple charge of £2 per day would help to reduce the levels of abuse.

## **RESOLVED:**

- 2.1 That the draft General Fund Revenue budget 2018/19, as summarised in Appendix 1 of the report for public consultation be approved.
- 2.2 That the proposed growth and savings options set out in Appendix 2 of the report for public consultation be approved.
- 2.3 That the proposed Council Tax increase for 2018/19 of £5 a year per Band D

property for public consultation be approved.

- 2.4 That the draft General Fund Capital Programme and Financing 2018/19 to 2022/23, as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report, for public consultation be approved.
- 2.5 That the proposed set aside of £10m of corporate earmarked reserves to fund Environmental Services vehicle provision be approved.
- 2.6 That the draft Capital Strategy as set out in Appendix 3 of the report, for consultation be approved.
- 2.7 That the draft Treasury Management Strategy for consultation be approved.

## **9. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET, RENT SETTING - 2018/19 AND BUDGET PROJECTIONS 2019/20 TO 2022/23**

Councillor Beardsworth addressed Cabinet and commented she was deeply concerned that the number of people in temporary accommodation over the Christmas period in the Borough alone was 369 and stated. She commented that the rate in which Council houses were being sold off as part of the 'Right to Buy' scheme in comparison with new build Council houses was not acceptable.

Councillor Nunn commented that he was sympathetic to her comments and reported that there were a few proposals relating to housing that would become more visible in the New Year.

Councillor B Markham noted that Horizon House would be very beneficial for Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) and commented that there was a real need for secure places for those who were in temporary accommodation.

Councillor Eldred, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted his report and noted that it was undesirable for children to be housed in temporary accommodation and ongoing efforts were being made to reduce the numbers and progress had been made with to address the issue with NPH. He stated that the administration were committed to building 1000 new council homes over the next 10 years which would go some way in alleviating temporary accommodation. He further commented that the proposed budget included the reduction in rent for Council dwellings by 1% for the third consecutive year.

Councillor Hibbert, as the Cabinet Member for Housing, stated that recognised the hard work and progress made between NOP and the finance team in putting forward a very good capital programme.

Councillor Nunn thanked senior officers and Cabinet Members for their hard work during the difficult financial period.

### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget including charges and rents as detailed in Appendices 1 and 4 of the report for public consultation be approved.
2. That the draft HRA Capital Programme and financing, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report, for public consultation be approved.
3. That the draft Total Fees proposed for NPH to deliver the services in scope be noted.

The meeting concluded at 6.56pm