

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Wednesday, 19 December 2012

PRESENT: Councillor Mackintosh (Chair); Councillor Caswell (Deputy Chair);
Councillors Bottwood, Caswell, Eldred, Hadland and Markham

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 12th December 2012 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

3. INTENTION TO HOLD PART OF THE MEETING IN PRIVATE

There were no items to be held 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 none.

7. REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS 2013-2014

Councillor Beardsworth addressed Cabinet and questioned whether Members were mindful of the impact that the proposed review would have on the Housing Revenue Account. She commented that the proposed changes could have a financial impact on some residents who had previously been exempt from paying Council Tax and questioned what steps had been put in place to address potential problems.

Councillor Bottwood, as the relevant Cabinet Member submitted a report. He commented that the proposed changes would bring empty houses back into use.

RESOLVED:

That the following changes in Council Tax discounts and exemptions to Council take effect from the 1st April 2013:

- a) That Class A (vacant properties undergoing alterations as defined by the regulations) attract a 100% charge from the day they become vacant
- b) That Class C (empty unfurnished properties as defined by the regulations) attract a 100% charge from the day they become vacant
- c) That Second homes (as defined by the regulations) to be charged at 100%
- d) That Class L (repossessed properties) attract a 100% charge from the day of repossession should the necessary legislation be in place to allow this from the 1st

April 2013.

- e) That the long-term empty property premium of 150% is implemented for properties vacant for over two years.
- f) That the above policy position in respect of discretionary discounts and exemptions be kept under review in respect of future years

8. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

Councillor Beardsworth requested that Cabinet Members answer the questions she had asked and further questioned the amount of money that would be received from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for a localised support scheme.

Councillor Bottwood, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted a report. He explained that Councils had been given responsibility to design their own Council tax Support Schemes; failure to devise and adopt a scheme would result in a default to the government scheme, the details of which had yet to be disclosed. In response to the question from Councillor Beardsworth, Councillor Bottwood commented that an answer could not be provided as information had not been released by the DCLG.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the results of the consultation process undertaken be noted.
- 2) That the financial implications and analysis associated with the chosen scheme be noted.
- 3) That the design of the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme detailed in paragraph 3.4.6 of the report and the associated protection the scheme provides for the residents of Northampton be approved
- 4) That the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for approval at Council on the 21st January 2013 be recommended.

9. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2013/14

Councillor Bottwood, as the relevant Cabinet Member submitted a report.

RESOLVED:

- 1) Cabinet recommended to Council to approve the tax base for 2013/14 at 58,074.34 Band D equivalent properties and associated parish tax bases within this report.

	2013/14	(2012/13)
Billing	2,394.26	2,702
Collingtree	443.35	515
Duston	4,748.13	5,486
Great Houghton	246.80	287
Hardingstone	658.39	767
Upton	1,687.65	1,566
Wootton & East Hunsbury	5,442.79	6,357
West Hunsbury	1,447.71	N/a
Hunsbury Meadow	369.95	N/a
Northampton	40,635.31	49,520

(Unparished)		
Total tax base	58,074.34	67,200

- 2) Cabinet delegated to the Director of Resources 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 taxbase.

10. NNDR DISCRETIONARY RELIEF SCHEME

Councillor Beardsworth addressed Cabinet and asked what charities would be affected by the NNDR Discretionary Relief Scheme and what information had been provided to inform them of rate changes.

Councillor Eldred, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted a report. It was noted that a consultation process had been undertaken with local charities and similar organisations and asked that Cabinet approve the recommendations as set out at section 3.2.1 of the report, to take effect from April 2013.

RESOLVED:

1. Cabinet approved the changes to the Discretionary Scheme for National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) Relief as detailed in paragraph 3.2.1 of the report.
2. Cabinet agreed that the revised scheme will come into effect from 1 April 2013.

11. NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATES 2013-14

Councillor Bottwood, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted a report which explained was an Annual document to be completed for National Government.

RESOLVED:

1. That the approval of the NNDR1 form for 2013/14 to Council as attached in appendix 1 of the report be recommended.
2. That the Director of Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for finance be delegated to make any technical adjustment necessary arising from the draft local government settlement.

12. COUNCIL WIDE BUDGET 2013-16

Councillor Bottwood, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted a report. He explained that the budget was being set during a challenging economic climate and whilst there was a decrease in resources there had also an increase in service users and therefore a structure needed to be put in place to ensure sustainability. He commented that partnership working to deliver more efficient organisational working had been undertaken and as a result, an agreement had been made to enter into Local Government Shared Services. He further commented that partnership working should be viewed as a safeguard for securing jobs over a long term period and that the Council Wide Budget would enable Council Tax to be frozen for a third consecutive year. He thanked officers for their hard work during a challenging financial period.

Councillor Caswell commented that the Budget had allowed for the extension of park rangers services and over the past year there had been a commitment to invest in the area with the provision of an extra staff member and 2 new vehicles to provide greater efficiency.

Councillor Eldred commented that the proposal to allow sponsorship for events organised by the events team would secure successful future events and increase visitor and footfall in the town centre. It was noted that a proposed cost saving measure would be the termination of support for the Ground Works Scheme.

Councillor Markham commented that a review of CCTV had been undertaken to examine the use of the least effective cameras. It was explained that after consulting with residents associations who had expressed some concerns, it had been agreed that only 14 of the least effective cameras be switched off.

Councillor Hadland commented that there had been an increase in usage of town centre car parks of 6.5 percent. It was explained that the Greyfriars bus station currently housed buses overnight, but that from March 2013 this would cease and £35,000 would be made available to ensure the security of the premises prior to its demolition. It was noted that provisions had been made to improve the facilities at the town's Skatepark. It was further noted that money had been secured to prevent public spaces from being accessed illegally.

The Leader commented that the Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government had spoken of the challenging financial times facing local authorities. However, it was noted that through identifying savings in a number of areas, the Council had again been able to freeze Council Tax.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That that the General Fund draft budget proposals for 2013/14, and indicative budgets for 2014/15 and 2015/16, as summarised in Appendices A and B of the report be approved for public consultation.
- 2) That the proposed Council Tax freeze for 2013/14 be approved for public consultation.
- 3) That the draft Capital Programme and financing, as detailed in Appendices D1, D2, and E of the report, be approved for public consultation
- 4) That the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget including charges and rents for public consultation be approved
- 5) That the Director of Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance be delegated the authority to make any technical changes arising from the draft Local Government Finance Settlement.
- 6) That the decision to enter into a pooling arrangement with other authorities across Northamptonshire with regard to the localisation of business rates be noted.
- 7) That the consultation leaflet be delegated to the Director of Customers and Communities in consultation with the Leader and Accountable Cabinet Member for Finance be approved.
- 8) That the Chief Executive and Management Board, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet members, be agreed to undertake the preparatory work in relation to the savings and efficiencies built into the draft budget proposals, subject to any actions being rescinded should any budget options not be approved at Council on 25 February 2013.
- 9) That Council's response to any Formula Grant settlement consultation will be prepared by the Director of Resources in consultation with the Chief Executive, the Accountable Cabinet Member for Finance and the Leader of the Council be noted.

13. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Chair moved that the public and Press be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that there was likely to be disclosure to them of such categories of exempt information as defined by Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 as listed against such items of business by reference to the appropriate paragraph of Schedule 12A to such Act.

The Motion was Carried.

The meeting concluded at 6.16pm