



Cabinet Member Report for Finance

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 23 January 2017

Finance

The draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Plans covering the General Fund and Housing Revenue Accounts were presented for to Cabinet on 14th December for consultation. Since this date the consultation process has been taking place through a number of routes including through the Council's website and a public meeting held on 12th January. The proposals for the final budget will be considered at Cabinet on 15th February and then for approval at Council on 29th February.

The provisional local government finance settlement was announced by Government on 15th December. This confirmed the government funding for Revenue Support Grant and Business Rates baselines were in accordance with the allocations the Council accepted from the Government through their four year funding offer in the autumn. The Government also announced the outcome of its consultation on changes to New Homes Bonus (NHB). As expected the changes included reducing the period over which NHB is paid from 6 years currently to 4 years by 2018 and introducing a threshold for growth of 0.4% before any NHB will be paid. As forecast in the draft Budget these changes will lead to reductions in the amount the Council receives through NHB in the coming years. In addition the Government is undertaking further consultation about whether NHB should be paid if approval is given for homes to be built following an appeal against the original decision. The outcome of this is expected in 12 months' time and a key issue for this Council is whether the approved on appeal proposal is to be applied retrospectively.

Revenues and Benefits

The performance of the service remains on target for the end of this financial year, with results in responding to calls from customers at an all-time high at over 92% over the past period. This level of performance is expected to continue over the next few months and the service will also go live with its first point resolution service from April 2017. This service aims to complete more enquiries at the earliest opportunity or through the automation of transactions via our website. In turn this will improve our service and reduce repeat contact to the Council.

Northampton Borough Council have delegated the decision on the formation of a new separate joint committee for Revenues and Benefits to the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive. LGSS are currently developing plans for the formation of this committee, which will provide resilience to our service users alongside efficiency savings to the Council over the next 5 years and beyond. In partnership with LGSS and Milton Keynes Council the new service represents one of the biggest shared services of its kind in the Country.

Councillor Brandon Eldred
Cabinet Member for Finance