

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Monday, 23 December 2019

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

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2019 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 none.

7. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2020/21

Councillor Eldred, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted his report and elaborated thereon. Councillor Eldred highlighted that it was recommended that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) remains at a 35% reduction in 2020/2021.

Councillor Stone addressed Cabinet and commended the report as excellent. She added that she was pleased that it was being recommended that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) remains at a 35% reduction but she conveyed her concerns regarding any associated costs, such as those in relation to training, supporting people, debt recovery and court costs. Councillor Stone queried how the total associated costs would compare to the income. Councillor Stone commented that she was aware of other Local Authorities that had kept costs to a minimum and she asked for further information. The Cabinet Member for Finance confirmed that this information would be obtained.

The Leader advised that it was important for there to sufficient budget for training and support.

RESOLVED:

- 1 That the recommendation for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) to remain at a 35% reduction in 2020/21 be approved.

- 2 That Cabinet recommended the CTRS for approval at Council on the 20th January 2020.

8. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2020/2021

Councillor Eldred submitted his report and elaborated thereon. He drew Cabinet's attention to paragraph 3.1.2 of the report that summarised movement in the tax base. He went on to refer Cabinet to paragraph 3.1.9 of the report.

Councillor Stone addressed Cabinet and commented that she felt that caution should be applied regarding the number of properties that would be liable for 200% premium charge for being unfurnished; she queried how many properties this applied to and how much furniture needed to be in the property before it was no longer classed as unfurnished. She further commented that 97.8% appeared to be a very good collection rate and asked how this compared to neighbouring Authorities. The Cabinet Member for Finance confirmed that he would obtain this information.

RESOLVED that:

- 2.1 Cabinet recommended to Council to approve the tax base for 2020/21 at 69,376.28 Band D equivalent properties and associated parish tax bases within this report.

'Band D' is used as a denominator value and changes to discounts, exemptions and collection rates will impact on the calculated 'tax base', in addition to any gains or losses in the number of physical properties.

	2019/20	2020/21	Change
Billing	2,804.54	2,820.81	16.27
Collingtree	528.4673	536.15	7.68
Duston	5,562.62	5,581.06	18.44
Great Houghton	294.8073	289.50	-5.31
Hardingstone	816.3065	818.18	1.88
Upton	2,723.61	2,788.69	65.07
Wootton	2,980.14	2,990.71	10.57
East Hunsbury	3,510.44	3,506.83	-3.60
West Hunsbury	1,661.73	1,667.27	5.54
Hunsbury Meadow	888.343	972.28	83.93
Northampton (Unparished)	46,647.54	47,404.79	757.25
Total tax base	68,418.55	69,376.28	957.73

- 2.2 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 2020.
- 2.3 The detailed breakdown of how the tax base and the associated parish tax bases are calculated is shown as a band D equivalent in appendix 1 be agreed.
- 2.4 It be recommended to Council that the long-term empty property premium of 200% is

implemented for properties vacant for over five years, to take effect from the 1st April 2020.

9. GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS 2020/2021

Councillor Eldred elaborated on his report and highlighted the proposed increase for Council Tax and the envisaged costs of around £1 million for Unitary costs. He added that temporary accommodation was a key issue and work is taking place getting people out of temporary accommodation into permanent accommodation.

Councillor Birch addressed Cabinet and posed a number of questions. She queried whether the proposed charge for the collection of green waste would increase fly-tipping and what the associated cleaning costs would be. She further queried what the administration costs were and whether each household would be charged the same rate for the collection of green waste, irrespective of the size of the gardens. Councillor Birch asked whether the Cabinet fund of £70,000 would exist for 2020/21 and what this fund had been spent on previously. She added that she was concerned regarding any restructuring of the budget for community and other grants. In response to Councillor Birch's queries, she was advised that it was expected that there would be no impact on fly-tipping in relation to the proposed charge for the collection of green waste. An update on grants would be given to CEFAP and it was proposed that Councillors' empowerment funds would be each reduced by £1,000 to £2,000.

Councillor Stone addressed Cabinet conveying her concerns regarding the Environmental Services contract and the proposed increase in costs of 3% for next year' compared to inflation of 1.5% and forecast inflation for 2020/2021 of 1.9%. She added that inflation is often written into such contracts.

RESOLVED that:

- 2.1 The draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget including charges and rents as detailed in appendices 1 and 4 be approved for public consultation.
- 2.2 The draft HRA Capital Programme and financing, as detailed in appendix 2 be approved for public consultation.
- 2.3 The draft Total Fees proposed for NPH in appendix 3 to deliver the services in scope. Report Title Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget, Rent Setting 2020/21 and Budget Projections 2021/22 to 2023/24 Appendices 4 147 Agenda Item 10 be noted.
- 2.4 A further £500k amount in 2019-20 for buybacks and spot purchases of properties by bringing forward the amount proposed from 2020-21 within the HRA capital programme, as set out at paragraph 3.2.34 be approved.
- 2.5 Up to a further £1.5m of capital spend in addition to the £6m previously approved by Council for the NCC Supported Living Provision property schemes. The total budget of up to £7.5m to be managed by NPH with NBC as part of the revised Capital Programme for 2019-20, as set out at paragraphs 3.2.35-3.2.37, be approved.
- 2.6. It is noted that the above approval is subject to the completed amended financial appraisal review.
- 2.7 Authority be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer, the authority to approve any variations within the £7.5m budget.

2.8 Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing, the Head of Housing and Wellbeing and the Chief Finance Officer, the authority to approve any variations required to be made to the Management Agreement between Northampton Borough Council and Northampton Partnership Homes dated 5 January 2015 that may be required to implement any Cabinet approvals arising from this report.

10. HRA REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS 2020/2021

Councillor Eldred elaborated on his report and highlighted the proposed rent increase; advising that this was the first increase to rents for many years.

Councillor Stone addressed Cabinet commenting that she was pleased that a fund had been set up for “buy back”. She queried how many properties this applied to and how many were now in the ownership of private landlords. She was concerned that private rents would be much higher than social rents. The Leader advised that 24 properties are currently in the scheme in relation to “buy back”; 10 had been completed and 14 were going through the system.

RESOLVED that:

2.1 The draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget including charges and rents as detailed in **appendices 1 and 4** be approved for public consultation.

2.2 The draft HRA Capital Programme and financing, as detailed in **appendix 2** be approved for public consultation.

2.3 The draft Total Fees proposed for NPH in **appendix 3** to deliver the services in scope be noted.

2.4 A further £500k amount in 2019-20 for buybacks and spot purchases of properties by bringing forward the amount proposed from 2020-21 within the HRA capital programme, as set out at paragraph 3.2.34 be approved.

2.5 Up to a further £1.5m of capital spend in addition to the £6m previously approved by Council for the NCC Supported Living Provision property schemes. The total budget of up to £7.5m to be managed by NPH with NBC as part of the revised Capital Programme for 2019-20, as set out at paragraphs 3.2.35-3.2.37 be approved

2.6 The above approval is subject to the completed amended Financial appraisal review be noted.

2.7 The authority to approve any variations within the £7.5m budget be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer.

2.8 The authority to approve any variations required to be made to the Management Agreement between Northampton Borough Council and Northampton Partnership Homes dated 5 January 2015 that may be required to implement any Cabinet approvals arising from this report, be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing, the Head of Housing and Wellbeing and the Chief Finance Officer.

11. CORPORATE PLAN 2019-2021

The Leader submitted the report and elaborated thereon. He advised that the Corporate Plan for 2019-2021 had been refreshed.

Councillor Stone addressed Cabinet commending the format of this version of the Corporate Plan. She added that that it would be useful for other statistics to be presented in a similar format, such as data in relation to vulnerable children and air pollution.

RESOLVED that:

- 2.1 The draft Corporate Plan for 2019-2021 be recommended to Council on 20 January 2020, and the Chief Executive be authorised to finalise the document and publish this alongside the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

The meeting concluded at 6:35 pm