

Decisions of the Policy and Resources Committee

8 February 2021

Members Present:-

Councillor Daniel Thomas (Chairman)
Councillor David Longstaff (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Dean Cohen	Councillor Ross Houston
Councillor Val Duschinsky	Councillor Alison Moore
Councillor Anthony Finn	Councillor Geof Cooke
Councillor Peter Zinkin	Councillor Arjun Mittra
Councillor Sachin Rajput	Councillor Gabriel Rozenberg
Councillor Barry Rawlings	

1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting dated the 8 December 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

None.

3. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS (IF ANY)

Councillor Peter Zinkin declared a pecuniary interest in item 9 of the agenda – Business Planning – Corporate Plan, Budget 2021/22 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-25 by virtue of being a Director of London Energy. Councillor Zinkin had been granted a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer.

Councillor Ross Houston declared an interest in item 9 of the agenda – Business Planning – Corporate Plan, Budget 2021/22 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-25 by virtue of being a Council appointed Non-Executive Director of The Barnet Group.

Councillor David Longstaff declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 9 of the agenda – Business Planning – Corporate Plan, Budget 2021/22 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-25 by virtue of being a Board Member on the Barnet Education & Learning Services (BELS).

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

None.

6. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Geof Cooke introduced the Member's Item.

Members Item Request:	Instruction from Committee
<p>While enquiring about a particular case, I have discovered that the registration of properties for Council Tax after new-build, renovation, extension or sub-division depends on the developer or owner volunteering to the relevant authority that the work has been completed.</p> <p>There is little incentive for the developer to do that and so delays of years may occur and even a permanent loss of revenue to the council. No interest is charged on retrospective liabilities. It appears that this problem exists largely because of a lack of any comprehensive process for cooperation between public bodies to prevent it. Using computers to cross-reference information from disparate sources is already standard practice for the council in combatting fraud.</p> <p>I propose that the relevant senior officers review the situation, devise a suitable process and report their proposal back to Policy and Resources committee by September 2021 after considering proactive information sharing and cross-referencing between those responsible for</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Council tax (Capita CSG) 2. Property banding (Valuation Office Agency, part of national government) 3. Building Control (Re) 4. Planning (Re) 5. Street Naming and Numbering (Re) 6. Benefits (Capita CSG) 7. Electoral Registration (Barnet Council) 8. Corporate Anti-Fraud (Barnet Council) <p>and any other agencies which hold relevant information. If automatic</p>	<p>That this item is brought back to the September meeting of the Committee covering the details set out in the Members request, paragraph 3 and outlining the process and measures in place.</p>

cross-referencing with publicly available records of private sales and/or lets is possible, that should also be incorporated into the process.	
--	--

RESOLVED that the instructions as set out in the table above are noted.

7. REVIEW OF COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND GUIDANCE

The Chairman introduced the report which outlined the background and current arrangements in respect of Area Committees budgets, including the allocations of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding. Also set out in the report was more specific guidance to enable funding applications to be assessed in accordance with local priorities as determined by Members.

Upon being put to the vote the recommendations as set out in the report were carried.

RESOLVED – That the Committee

- 1. That the Committee note the background and current arrangements in respect of Area Committees allocations of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding.**
- 2. That the Committee agree that each Area Committees should develop and approve their own CIL funding priorities for each financial year starting in 2021/22.**
- 3. That the Committee agree that the funding limit for each individual CIL funded scheme be increased to £30,000.**

8. CHARGING SCHEDULE REVIEW BARNET COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

The Chairman introduced the report which sought the Committee's agreement to consult on a new Draft Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule. Set out in the Draft Charging Schedule was the proposal to revise the Barnet CIL rate to £300 per square metre for residential development and introduce a charge for employment and leisure uses of £20 per square metre. Independent viability evidence had been commissioned and indicated the new proposed rates were both viable and would not unduly prejudice development coming forward in the borough.

Upon being put to the vote the recommendations as set out in the report were carried.

RESOLVED – That the Committee

- 1. Considered the proposed CIL rates set out in the Draft Charging Schedule, at Appendix A**
- 2. Considered the proposed rates authorises consultation on the Draft Charging Schedule and associated documents in accordance with requirements set out in the CIL Regulations.**

3. Noted that the results of consultation will be reported back to Policy and Resources Committee and that if appropriate, the committee will be asked to agree submission of the draft Charging Schedule and other evidence documents, including updates to the Council's draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan, to the Planning Inspectorate for examination.
4. Noted that the Charging Schedule, post consultation and examination, will need to be approved by the full Council in line with s.213(2) Planning Act 2008 and Government Guidance on approving and implementing the Charging Schedule

9. BUSINESS PLANNING - CORPORATE PLAN, BUDGET FOR 2021/22, AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2021-25

The Chairman introduced the report which set out the proposed budget for 2021/22 and the council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which include the assumptions for 2021-25 with regards to council tax, other funding, expenditure forecasts and the savings and income generation plans necessary to set a balanced budget. This would help to ensure resources were aligned to the strategic outcomes set out in the council's revised Corporate Plan set out at Appendix A.

With regards to the Food Waste Service referenced twice in Table 10, page 29 the Executive Director for Environment clarified this was a typographical error and it should only be a single entry. The revised figure would be circulated to Members.

With regards to Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) the Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) clarified this was not a cash reduction but rather that it reduced the amount the MRP would have to be increased by over the MTFS.

With regards to the planting of [XX] number of tree reference on page 88 of the Draft Corporate Plan, Councillor Dean Cohen Chairman for Environment confirmed the Council was committed to planting 5000 trees over the next 5 years

Upon being put to the vote the recommendations as set out in the report were declared carried. The vote was recorded as follows;

For	7
Against	6
Abstentions	0

RESOLVED – That the;

In respect of the Corporate Plan (included as Appendix A)

1. That the Committee note the update and future proposals for development of the plan for referral to Full council.
2. That the Committee agrees to delegate design decisions and non-material changes to the text to the Chief Executive in consultation with The Leader of the Council.

In respect of the Budget and Council Tax for 2021/22 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-25, that the Committee:

3. Recommend to Council for approval, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy attached as Appendix B and the detailed revenue budgets in Appendix C1, including the proposed savings and funding for pressures in 2021/22;
4. Recommend to Council for approval that the budget for 2021/22 is prepared on the basis of an increase of 1.99% for the general element Council Tax in 2021/22 as discussed in paragraph 1.5.15 to 1.5.18;
5. Recommend to Council for approval that the budget for 2021/22 is prepared on the basis of an increase of 3.00% for the Social Care Precept, to help fund social care paragraph 1.5.18 to 1.5.19;
6. Recommend to Council for approval the resolutions relating to Council Tax contained within Appendix C Council Tax Resolutions;
7. Recommend to Council for approval, on the advice of the Chief Finance Officer, that it determines that the council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2021/22 as set out in Council Tax resolution Appendix C 2(iv) is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under section 52ZB and 52ZC of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, set out in the Referendums relating to Council Tax increases (Principles)(England) Report 2021/22.
8. Recommend to Council that in accordance with Section 38(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 the Chief Executive be instructed to place a notice in the local press of the amounts set under recommendation 6 above within a period of 21 days following the Council's decision;
9. Note the use of the Local Council Tax Support Grant in 2021/22 as set in paragraphs 1.5.21 to 1.5.22
10. Notes within Section 1.8 that the financial position in 2020/21 remains stable despite the pressures on the council arising from the pandemic, and that an overall breakeven position is currently anticipated for this year (after making some targeted contributions to reserves).
11. Consider the issues that have emerged from the consultation discussed in Appendix G when making their decisions. The committee make the decisions below also being mindful of the equalities impact assessments including the cumulative equalities impact assessments;

In respect of Debt Write-offs requested relating to the current financial year:

12. Approves the debt write-offs for Council Tax and Business Rates in paragraphs 1.9.2 to 1.9.7, Housing Benefit Overpayments in paragraphs 1.9.8 to 1.9.9, HRA and GF Tenant Rents in paragraphs 1.9.10 to 1.19.18 and Sundry Debt in paragraphs 1.19.19 to 1.19.20;

In respect of proposed capital expenditure, the Capital Strategy, and the policy on Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP):

13. Recommend to Council for approval the Capital Programme as set out in Appendix J1 and set out in paragraph 1.11.2, and that the Chief Officers be authorised to take all necessary actions for implementation;
14. Approves the changes to the existing Capital Programme in relation to slippage discussed in paragraphs 1.11.3 to 1.11.6, additions discussed in paragraphs 1.11.7 to 1.11.22 and summarised in Appendix J1;
15. Recommend to Council to approve delegation to Chief Financial Officer to adjust capital programme and financing in 21/22 in line with the 2020/21 outturn position;
16. Recommend to Council the approval of the Capital Strategy as set out in Appendix J2;
17. Recommend the change in MRP policy for 2020/21 to Council for approval as discussed in section 1.12;
18. Note, subject to Council approval of the change in the MRP policy, the S151 Officer's intention to make an additional Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP) in 2020/21 as outlined in paragraphs 1.12.10 to 1.12.13

In respect of the Treasury Management Strategy:

19. Recommend to Council the approval of the Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22 as set out in Section 1.13 and Appendix K1 and the Mid-Year Review Report for 2020/21 in Appendix K2

In respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and proposed tenant rent increases:

20. Recommend to Council the approval of the following in relation to the Housing Revenue Account:
 - a) The proposed rent be increased by CPI+1% for council dwellings as set out in paragraphs 1.14.4 to 1.14.6 to take effect from 1 April 2021;
 - b) The proposed increases to service charges for council dwellings as set out in paragraphs 1.14.11 to 1.14.13 to take effect from 1 April 2021; and,
 - c) The proposed rent increase of 1.5% for council garages as set out in paragraphs 1.14.11 to 1.14.13 to take effect from 1 April 2021.
21. Recommend to Council the approval of the proposed temporary accommodation rents be increased in line with the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate as in paragraphs 1.14.7 to 1.14.10 to take effect from 1 April 2021;

In respect of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG):

22. Recommend to Council the approval of the Gross Schools Budget of £379.223m for 2021/22 as per paragraphs 1.5.42 to 1.5.52;
23. Approve Post 16 Funding of £5.209m as per paragraph 1.5.45;

24. Recommend to Council that any changes to the Schools Budget reasonably required as a result of the final 2021/22 DSG and Post-16 settlement are delegated for decisions to the Strategic Director – Children & Young People in consultation with the Director of Finance;

In respect of general Fees and Charges and other matters:

25. Note the fees and charges as detailed for referral to Full Council in Appendix F1 to F5 and approves the proposed parking charges for green spaces in Appendix F6 and discussed in paragraph 1.4.12;

26. Note the Adult Social Care Fees and Charges consultation report in Appendix F7 and discussed in paragraph 1.4.11;

27. Note the summary equality impact assessment (EIA) and cumulative assessment set out in Section 5.6. Appendix H provides the cumulative impact and individual Delivery Unit assessments;

28. Recommend to Council approval of the revised reserves and balances policy as set out in Appendix L and indicative amounts as set out in paragraph 1.6.3 and the Director of Finance's assessment of adequacy of General Fund Balances in section 1.6.2. The Committee recommend to Council that the Director of Finance is authorised to adjust balances in 2020/21 after 2019/20 accounts are closed and the amount of balances carry forward required are known;

29. Approve the underlying Financial strategy of the Council as set out in the paragraph 1.5.1;

30. Notes the corporate risk register and recommend it to Council as set out in section 1.10 and Appendix I.

10. ANY OTHER ITEM(S) THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

None.

The meeting finished at 7.43 pm