

COUNCIL

A meeting of the Council was held on Wednesday 23 February 2022.

PRESENT: Councillors J Hobson, R Arundale, D Branson, C Cooke, B Cooper, D Coupe, D Davison, S Dean, C Dodds, T Furness, TA Grainge, A Hellaoui, T Higgins, A High, S Hill, C Hobson, B Hubbard, N Hussain, L Lewis, L Mason, T Mawston, D McCabe, M Nugent, J Platt, E Polano, A Preston (The Mayor), G Purvis, J Rathmell, D Rooney, J Rostron, R Sands, M Saunders, M Smiles, J Thompson, Z Uddin, G Wilson and C Wright

OFFICERS: C Benjamin, S Bonner, B Carr, A Hoy, A Humble, D Johnson, S Lightwing, T Parkinson, S Reynolds, K Whitmore and I Wright

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors A Bell (Vice-Chair), L Garvey, N Gascoigne, D Jones, C McIntyre, J McTigue, M Storey, P Storey, J Walker and S Walker

21/103 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

21/104 **PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022/2023**

The Director of Legal and Governance Services and the Executive Member for Environment, Finance and Governance submitted a report, the purpose of which was for Council to agree the Pay Policy Statement 2022/23.

The Executive Member for Environment, Finance and Governance advised that the Pay Policy Statement set out the Council's policies on remuneration of its staff in accordance with Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011. The policy was required to be approved by full Council and was subject to annual review.

The Pay Policy Statement set out details of the various employee policies relevant to the remuneration of Chief Officers in operation within the Council. The actual content of those policies included within the statement would continue to be determined by current mechanisms.

The Pay Policy highlighted that where an employee was contractually entitled to a payment in excess of £100,000 on the grounds of compulsory redundancy, failure to comply with this would place the Council in breach of contract and leave it exposed to litigation. Therefore, there was an exemption from the requirement to give Council an opportunity to vote on those cases where the payment of a severance package did not involve any discretion, this was because the Council was legally bound to comply with severance terms in any event.

The planned HR policy for settlement agreements, to outline the procedure and approval routes, had been delayed as a government consultation had taken place which would cover such payments (attached at Appendix 1 to the report). Following the publication of the results of the consultation, a policy would be developed.

Following a vote, it was:

ORDERED that the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 be approved.

21/105 **APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS 2023/24 TO 2027/28**

The Director of Finance and the Executive Member for Environment, Finance and Governance submitted a report, the purpose of which was for Council to approve participation in the National Appointments Scheme for the procurement and selection of external auditors from 1 April 2023.

The current auditor appointment arrangements (the 'National Scheme') covered the period up

to and including the audit of the 2022/23 accounts. The Council opted into the 'appointing person' national scheme established by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the period covering the accounts for 2018/19 to 2022/23.

PSAA was now undertaking a procurement for the next appointing period, covering audits of the accounts for the financial years, 2023/24 to 2027/28. During autumn & winter 2021, all local government bodies needed to make important decisions about their external audit arrangements from 2023/24. They had options to arrange their own procurement and make the appointment themselves or in conjunction with other bodies, or they could join and take advantage of the national collective scheme administered by PSAA.

The report considered the options available and requested Council to approve participation in the National Appointments Scheme, following endorsement by Executive and Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee.

The Council had three options under the Audit & Accountability Act 2014. The options were as follows:

- To appoint its own auditor, which required it to follow the procedures set out in the Act.
- To work jointly with other authorities to procure an auditor following the procedures in the Act.
- To opt into the national auditor appointment scheme administered by a body designated by the Secretary of State as the 'appointing person'. The body currently designated for this role is Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA).

Councillor McCabe queried whether any savings would be achieved by opting into the National Auditor Appointment Scheme. The Director of Finance advised that it was not clear at this point, as the report was requesting approval of participation in the National Appointments Scheme for the procurement and selection of external auditors from 1 April 2023.

Councillor Cooke indicated that paragraph 26 of the report suggested that it would be more cost effective to participate in the scheme.

Following a vote, it was:

ORDERED that participation in the National Appointments Scheme for the procurement and selection of external auditors from 1 April 2023, be approved.

21/106

LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT 2022/23

The Director of Finance and the Executive Member for Environment, Finance and Governance submitted a report, which sought approval for the amendment of the Council's Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for 2022/2023.

The Local Government Finance Act Section 67 (2012 Act) inserted into LGFA 1992 (Functions to be discharged by the Authority) making or revising a Council Tax Support Scheme – Section 13 (2) confirms that each billing Authority in England must make a Council Tax Support scheme by no later than 11 March each year. Any scheme cannot be made by officers, with the above legislation confirming that authorisation of the full scheme is subject to member approval.

Details of the existing Council Tax Support Scheme were outlined in the report. Following a review of the existing scheme, it was clear that the means tested CTS scheme, was too reactive to change, would not be viable in the longer term now that UC had been rolled out fully within the area and given the massive increase in UC claimants due to the COVID-19 crisis. Giving weight to those circumstances, it was considered that it would be appropriate to move to a more efficient scheme from 2022/23.

It was proposed that an alternative approach be taken from 2022/23, through the redesign of the scheme to address all of the main areas highlighted in the report.

Work had been ongoing since early 2021 on designing and modelling a proposed alternative scheme.

Following approval at Executive on 5 October 2021, consultation with stakeholders, partners and the general public had now been undertaken, as well as with Major precepting authorities. This consultation had resulted in a few minor suggested changes to the proposed scheme. If agreed by the Council, the proposed alternative scheme would take effect from 1st April 2022.

Details of the revised scheme and how it would operate were outlined in the report.

It was highlighted that any change in scheme or a transition to a proposed alternative scheme could result in a change to the entitlement of certain claimants.

The changes to the scheme, would mean those regarded as the most vulnerable would gain in award, with others having a reduced award (i.e. those with capital over £10,000). It was proposed that the alternative scheme would contain additional provisions to protect individuals who experienced exceptional hardship. Where any claimant was likely to experience exceptional hardship, they would be encouraged to apply for an exceptional hardship payment. The Council would consider all applications for exceptional hardship on an individual basis, taking into account available income and essential outgoings. Where appropriate, further support would be given to the claimant.

This approach would enable individual claimants to be dealt with in a fair and equitable manner. The Exceptional Hardship Scheme would form part of the CTS scheme and would be paid through the Collection Fund.

The proposed changes, would simplify a complicated scheme, further assist low income households and support the collection of council tax, whilst also fulfilling the obligations on Local Authorities to support the roll out of Universal Credit.

Changes to the existing scheme had been subject to full consultation which ran from the 14 October 2021 to 7 December 2021, a period of over 7 weeks. Responses informed the scheme, were broadly accepted, and resulted in minor changes to the proposed capital limit and income bands for couples with 2 or more children.

A number of members spoke in support of the scheme, highlighting the assistance it provided to those residents who were in need of additional support.

In response to a query from Councillor Wright, it was confirmed that Care Leavers were still classed as exempt. Following a query from Councillor Cooke, it was confirmed that child benefit would be disregarded when calculating the amount of Council Tax Support.

The Monitoring Officer conducted a Recorded Vote. The result of the vote was as follows:

Votes For: (37)

Mr A Preston (Elected Mayor) Councillors Arundale, Branson, Cooke, Cooper, Coupe, Davison, Dean, Dodds, Furness, Grainge, Hellaoui, Higgins, High, Hill, C Hobson, J Hobson, Hubbard, Hussain, Lewis, Mason, Mawston, McCabe, Nugent, Platt, Polano, Purvis, Rathmell, Rooney, Rostron, Sands, Saunders, Smiles, Thompson, Uddin, Wilson, Wright

Against: (0)

Abstentions: (0)

Following the vote, it was **ORDERED** as follows:

That the revised Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for 2022/23, be approved.

The Mayor advised that the Council's financial position was relatively stable but it still needed to be careful, as the future was still uncertain. As part of the budget, the Council was proposing a 2.99% increase in Council Tax, comprising of a 0% increase in general Council Tax, and an additional precept of 2.99% for Adult Social Care.

The Mayor advised that the budget did not propose any cuts to any Council services. The public and the politicians had been consulted on the budget and all suggestions had been considered.

The Mayor advised that a minor amendment to the proposed budget had been received and he advised that he aimed to support the proposed amendment.

Consideration was given to the proposed amendment to the budget, moved by Councillor Cooke and seconded by Councillor Rooney of which notice had been given in accordance with Council Procedure Rules as follows:

"The Motion proposed remains to adopt a revenue budget of £118,328,934, but to propose the following amendment:

Replacement of Paragraph 54 of the budget report as follows:

54. A budget of £495,000 per annum has been provided for investment in services provided to residents. It is proposed that this will be spent on delivering the following main priorities

- £160,000 per annum to create a tree maintenance squad in order to initially clear the backlog of works, and create an ongoing tree maintenance programme to reduce backlogs potentially re-occurring in the future.
- £90,000 per annum to enable the Council to offer a subsidised Pest Control service to residents. This would include the recruitment of two additional pest control operatives.
- £150,000 per annum towards expanding the current youth provision, targeting areas of the town where crime and anti-social behaviour are high.
- The remaining £95,000 per annum will initially be held centrally, and will be allocated to service directorates throughout 2022/23 as other priorities develop".

The amendment had been examined by the Council's Section 151 Officer and he had confirmed that should the amendment be approved, the Council would have a balanced and legally, implementable budget.

Councillor Cooke spoke in support of the amendment to the budget.

Councillor Cooke advised that the amendment centred on issues that had been raised by members of the public.

- The Council required a pest control service.
- The issues with trees including overgrown trees and the lack of on-going maintenance of trees.
- The Council required a Youth Service offering and funding was required to resource the service.

Councillor Rooney spoke in support of the amendment to the budget and thanked the Council officers for their hard work in pulling the budget together. Most Councillors had received complaints from residents about the issues included in the motion. The funding provided the opportunity to address the issues.

Councillors Hellaoui, Mawston, Saunders, Arundale, C Hobson, Furness, Higgins, Branson, Uddin, Rathmell, Mason, Hubbard and Cooper commented on the amendment to the budget.

The Monitoring Officer conducted a Recorded Vote on the Amendment to the Budget. The result of the vote was as follows:

Votes For: (36)

Mr A Preston (Elected Mayor) Councillors Arundale, Branson, Cooke, Cooper, Coupe, Davison, Dean, Dodds, Furness, Grainge, Hellaoui, Higgins, High, Hill, C Hobson, J Hobson, Hubbard, Hussain, Lewis, Mason, Mawston, McCabe, Nugent, Platt, Polano, Purvis, Rooney, Rostron, Sands, Saunders, Smiles, Thompson, Uddin, Wilson, Wright

Against: (0)

Abstentions: (1) Councillor Rathmell

The Monitoring Officer conducted a Recorded Vote on the original Budget with the amendment included. The result of the vote was as follows:

Votes For: (36)

Mr A Preston (Elected Mayor) Councillors Arundale, Branson, Cooke, Cooper, Coupe, Davison, Dean, Dodds, Furness, Grainge, Hellaoui, Higgins, High, Hill, C Hobson, J Hobson, Hubbard, Hussain, Lewis, Mason, Mawston, McCabe, Nugent, Platt, Polano, Purvis, Rooney, Rostron, Sands, Saunders, Smiles, Thompson, Uddin, Wilson, Wright

Against: (1) Councillor Rathmell

Abstentions: (0)

Following the outcome of the vote, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that the amended budget was approved in principle. It was clarified that the Mayor had five days in which to consider the amended budget. The Mayor confirmed that he wished to waive the five day period for consideration of the amended budget so that the budget could be approved with immediate effect. On that basis, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that the amended budget was approved with immediate effect.

ORDERED as follows:

That the Council approves the proposed budget strategy for 2022/23 as set out in paragraphs 30 to 70, subject to the replacement of paragraph 54 as detailed above.

Having taken into account the matters set out in Section 32 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the items set out within the report, that the Council approves the budget requirement for 2022/23 to be set at £118,328,934 as detailed in Appendix 1.

That the Council approves the actual amount of Council Tax (Band D) for areas without parish precepts (excluding Fire and Police) be set at £1,809.67. This represents a total increase of 2.99%. This comprises of a 0% increase in general Council Tax, and an additional precept of 2.99% for Adult Social Care (which includes 1% relating to 2022/23, and 1.99% of unused remaining allowable allocation from 2021/22), which has been continued by the Government to contribute towards the shortfall of funding for adult social care.

That the Council approves the actual amount of Council Tax (Band D) for areas with parish precepts (excluding Fire and Police) be set at :-

Nunthorpe Parish	£ 1,819.10
Stainton and Thornton Parish	£ 1,818.98

That the amounts of Council Tax for each category of dwelling be set in accordance with table 4 of Appendix 3 within the report, be approved.

That the refreshed Medium Term Financial Plan position for 2022-25 set out in the report in paragraphs 92 to 144, be noted.

That the updated Investment Strategy for the period to 2024/25 as outlined in paragraphs 145

to 150 and detailed in Appendix 4 of the report, be approved.

That the Capital Strategy Report (Prudential indicators, Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision) 2022/23 as outlined in paragraphs 151 to 162 and detailed in Appendix 5, and the Authorised Limit for external borrowing of £356 million for the Council for 2022/23 as set out in paragraph 161, be approved.

That following confirmation from the Mayor that he wished to waive the 5 day period for consideration of the amended budget, the budget be implemented with immediate effect.

The Chair announced that as the budget was approved with immediate effect, the Council meeting that was scheduled for 4 March 2022 was now cancelled.