

Present: Councillor Ric Metcalfe (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Donald Nannestad, Councillor Rosanne Kirk,
Councillor Neil Murray and Councillor Fay Smith

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Pete West

113. Confirmation of Minutes - 8 January 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2018 be confirmed.

114. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Donald Nannestad declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in minute number 115 as he currently leased an allotment from the City Council. A dispensation had been granted to all members who had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest for any license to occupy land in the area of the authority for a month or longer and the nature of the business specifically related to the consideration of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy as a whole. Councillor Nannestad therefore remained in the meeting during consideration of the item.

115. Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy

Purpose of Report

To provide the Executive with an opportunity to consider the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2018-2023 and the draft budget and council tax proposal for 2018/19 for consultation and scrutiny.

Decision

- (1) That the Executive agrees the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018-2023 and the draft Capital Strategy 2018-2023, for consultation and scrutiny, including the following specific elements:
- a proposed council tax increase of 2.95% for 2018/19;
 - a proposed housing rent decrease of 1% for 2018/19;
 - the Council being a member of the Lincolnshire Business Rates Pilot for 100% Business Rates Retention in 2018/19;
 - the draft general fund revenue forecast 2018/19-2022/23 as shown in Appendix 1 of the report and the main basis on which this budget had been calculated;
 - the draft general investment programme 2018/19-2022/23 as shown in Appendix 2 of the report and the main basis on which the programme had been calculated;
 - the draft housing revenue account forecast 2018/19-2022/23 as shown in Appendix 3 of the report;
 - the draft housing investment programme 2018/19-2022-23 as shown in Appendix 4 of the report and the main basis on which the programme had been calculated.

- (2) That approval of the final business rates base for the financial year commencing 1 April 2018 and ending 31 March 2019 and submission of the base (via NNDR1 return) to the Department for Communities and Local Government by 31 January 2018 be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

Prior to submission of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018-2023 and the budget and council tax proposal for 2018/19 to Full Council on 27 February 2018, the initial draft as appended to the report would be subject to public consultation and member scrutiny via the Budget Review Group.

The report provided an overview of the general fund, which included updates on the following:

- provisional finance settlement 2018/19;
- council tax;
- spending plans;
- the Council's Towards Financial Sustainability Programme;
- robustness and adequacy of the budget and reserves.

An overview of the housing revenue account was also set out in the report and provided updates on the following:

- repairs and maintenance;
- financing the capital programme;
- housing rents;
- robustness and adequacy of the budget and reserves.

The report also provided updates on the general investment programme and the housing investment programme.

116. Collection Fund Surplus or Deficit - Business Rates

Purpose of Report

To report the estimated balance for the business rates element of the collection fund and the surplus or deficit to be declared for 2017/18.

Decision

That the action of the Chief Finance Officer in declaring a business rate surplus of £1,080,490 for 2017/18 subject to the confirmation of the business rates base by 31 January 2018.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

Prior to the setting of the council tax for 2018/19 the Council was required to estimate whether there was to be a surplus or deficit on both the council tax and business rates elements of the collection fund for the current financial year.

At the meeting of the Executive on 8 January 2018 the Council declared a surplus on council tax of £188,270 for the financial year 2017/18. The Executive noted that the Council would declare a surplus on the business rates collection fund of £1,080,490 for 2017/18, subject to the confirmation of business rates by 31 January 2018.

It was noted that any amendments to the declared deficit would be notified to the relevant preceptors and be included in the final Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018-23 scheduled to be presented to the Executive on 26 February 2018.

117. Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

Purpose of Report

To provide the Executive with an opportunity to consider a new Discretionary Rate Relief Policy to take effect on 1 April 2018.

Decision

That the new Discretionary Rate Relief Policy be approved, to take effect on 1 April 2018.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

This item was considered by the Executive at its meeting on 8 January 2018 prior to consideration by the Policy Scrutiny Committee on 16 January 2018.

An extract from the draft minutes of the Policy Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 16 January 2018 had been circulated, where the Committee outlined its support for the new Policy.

The current Policy had not been reviewed since September 2003, meaning that it took no account of subsequent changes in legislation. It was noted that approval of a new Discretionary Rate Relief Policy did not impact on the Discretionary Rate Relief the Council was required to implement this year following the Spring 2017 budget. The award of any future funded reliefs announced by the Government had been provided for in the new Policy.

A copy of the proposed Discretionary Rate Relief Policy was appended to the report. The new Policy did not include any proposal to change the criteria used by officers when awarding discretionary relief. Consequently, organisations would not face an increase or decrease in the percentage of relief awarded should the Policy be adopted.

118. Pay Policy Statement 2018-19

Purpose of Report

To provide the Executive with an opportunity to consider the Pay Policy Statement prior to consideration by Council on 23 January 2018.

Decision

That Council be recommended to approve the Pay Policy Statement.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to produce a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year. In order to comply with the Act the Pay Policy Statement must include the Council's policy on:

- the level and elements of remuneration for chief officers;
- the remuneration of the lowest paid employee and the definition of 'lowest paid employee';
- the relationship between the remuneration of chief officers and other officers;
- specific aspects of chief officers' remuneration, including at appointment, increases, termination and any other payments.

A copy of the Pay Policy Statement was appended to the report.