

Present: Councillor Ric Metcalfe (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Chris Burke, Councillor Sue Burke,
Councillor Bob Bushell and Councillor Neil Murray

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Donald Nannestad

71. Confirmation of Minutes - 4 January 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 January 2022 be confirmed.

72. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

73. Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-2027

Purpose of Report

To consider the draft Medium-Term Financial Strategy for the period 2022-2027; the draft budget and council tax proposal for 2022-23; and the draft Capital Strategy 2022-2027.

Decision

- (1) That the Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-2027, and the Draft Capital Strategy 2022-2027 be approved for consultation and scrutiny.
- (2) That it be noted that the Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-2027, and the Draft Capital Strategy 2022-2027 include the following specific elements:
 - (a) a proposed council tax Increase of 1.89% for 2022/23;
 - (b) a proposed housing rent increase of 3.6% for 2022/23;
 - (c) the Council's membership of the Lincolnshire Business Rates Pool in 2022/23;
 - (d) the draft General Fund Revenue Forecast 2022/23 - 2026/27, detailed in Appendix A of the report, and the main basis on which this budget had been calculated, as set out in section 4 of the report;
 - (e) the draft General Investment Programme 2022/23 - 2026/27, detailed in Appendix B of the report, and as the main basis on which the programme had been calculated, as set out in section 6 of the report;
 - (f) the draft Housing Revenue Account Forecast 2022/23 -2026/27, detailed in Appendix A of the report, and as the main basis on which this budget had been calculated, as set out in section 5 of the report; and
 - (g) the Draft Housing Investment Programme 2022/23 - 2026/27, as detailed in Appendix A of the report, and as the main basis on which the programme has been calculated, as set out in section 7 of the report.

- (3) That the Chief Finance Officer be delegated authority to approve the final Business Rates Base for the financial year commencing on 1 April 2022 and ending 31 March 2023 and submission of the base (via the NNDR1 return) to the Department of Levelling Up, Communities and Housing by 31 January 2022, with changes to the base estimated in the Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/27 being reported to the Executive as part of the Final MTFS 2022-27 on 21 February 2022.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

As detailed throughout the report.

Reasons for the Decision

The Medium Term Financial Strategy detailed the overall framework on which the Council planned and manages its financial resources to support the direction of the Council's vision and strategic priorities. The Medium Term Financial Strategy integrated revenue allocations, savings targets and capital investment and provided the budget for the next financial year and provides indicative budgets and future council tax and housing rent levels for the period covered by the strategy.

Prior to the submission of the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2022-2027 and budget and council tax proposal for 2022/23 to the Council on 21 February 2022, the initial draft would be subject to public consultation and member scrutiny.

74. Collection Fund Surplus or Deficit - Business Rates

Purpose of Report

To inform the Executive of the estimated balance for the Business Rates element of the Collection Fund and the surplus or deficit to be declared for 2021/22.

Decision

- (1) That the action of the Chief Finance Officer in declaring a business rates deficit of £8,907,238 for 2021/22 be confirmed, subject to the confirmation of the business rates base by 31 January 2022, with any amendments to the declared deficit being notified to the relevant preceptors and being included in the Final Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-27, to be presented to the Executive 21 February 2022.
- (2) That the spreading adjustment of a £1,202,848 deficit to be distributed in 2022/23 be noted.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None. The Council was required by law to estimate whether there would be a surplus or deficit on its business rates collection prior to setting its budget for the following year.

Reasons for the Decision

The Council would declare a deficit on the Business Rates Collection Fund of £8,907,238 for 2021/22. This figure would be subject to the confirmation of the Business Rates base by 31 January 2022, of which its share was £3,562,895.

Much of the deficit had been offset by government grants to compensate local authorities for the business rate reliefs awarded to businesses in 2021/22, as part of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition, as part of a spreading adjustment in respect of 2020/21 deficits, a deficit of £1,202,848, with the City Council's share being £481,139, would be distributed in 2022/23. The net position to be distributed in 2022/23, for the City Council's share, was therefore a deficit of £4,044,035.

75. Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23

Purpose of Report

To provide information regarding the outcome of consultation regarding 2022/23 Council Tax Support Scheme options. To propose options for a Council Tax Support Scheme for the 2022/23 financial year, which must be approved by Council before 31st January 2022.

Decision

- (1) That the responses received as part of the consultation and the current / modelled spend of the existing scheme, as well as outcomes from modelling and testing of proposed schemes, be noted.
- (2) That it be recommend to the City of Lincoln Council that:
 - (a) the continuation of proposed 'no change' to the core Council Tax Support scheme for 2022/23, as set out in Section 4 of the report, be approved, subject to the technical amendments described in paragraph 5.3; and
 - (b) an increase in the Exceptional Hardship Payments scheme from £20,000 to £25,000, for the financial year 2022/23, be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reasons for the Decision

National council tax benefits had been abolished by the government on 31 March 2013 and replaced by the Council Tax Support Scheme, which could be determined locally by the City of Lincoln Council, as the billing authority, after consultation with precepting authorities, key stakeholders and residents.

On 31 of August 2021, there had been 8,870 residents claiming Council Tax Support in Lincoln, with 2,704 of these as pensioners protected under the legislation and receiving Council Tax Support, as prescribed by the Government, broadly similar to the level of Council Tax Benefit.

A local scheme could be determined for the 6,166 working age claimants, of whom 598 were of working age and employed; 3,069 were of working age and vulnerable; and 2,499 were of working age and not employed.

76. Fees and Charges at De Wint Court

Purpose of Report

To consider the proposed fees and charges for De Wint Court Extra Care accommodation, which would be effective from 31 January 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Decision

- (1) That the fees and charges for De Wint Court extra care accommodation, as set out in section 4 and appendices 1 and 2 of the report, be approved for implementation for the week commencing on 31 January 2022 until 31 March 2023, with the aim of ensuring an ongoing full cost recovery position.
- (2) That the level of fees and charges for the De Wint Court extra care accommodation from 1 April 2023 be reviewed as part of the Council's annual review of fees and charges.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reasons for the Decision

In May 2017, the Executive had approved the demolition and rebuild of De Wint Court, with a view to delivering a flagship extra care housing scheme to meet the growing needs of older people. The redevelopment would be modern and fit for purpose, user friendly and compliant with current housing design standards, and would increase the provision from 37 to 70 units, thus representing an increase of 33 units. The development enabled the investment of £3.22 million by Homes England and of £2.8 million by Lincolnshire County Council.

The report set out the fees and charges to be implemented from 31 January 2022 for intensive management support; utilities (electricity, water and heating); and the guest room.

77. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business because it was likely that if members of the public were present there would be a disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

This item was considered in private as it was likely to disclose exempt information, as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. No representations had been received in relation to the proposal to consider this item in private.

78. Hartsholme Country Park Flood Alleviation Project

Purpose of Report

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.

Decision

That the recommendations to the Executive, as set out in the exempt report, be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.

Reasons for the Decision

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.